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## The Soutane

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He ends by saying that *Religious Revolution in the Philippines* is a "timely" work. Father Myrick is not alone in his kind praise of the book. Moreover, the review-article in which we corrected the historical misstatements of Bishop Whittmore's *Struggle for Freedom: History of the Philippine Independent Church* (to which Mr. Scott also refers) has drawn praise from several Protestant leaders, including President Benjamin I. Guansing of the Union Theological Seminary, in a letter which he kindly wrote to us under date of 26 December 1962.

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### *The Soutane*

The French clergy of the Diocese of Paris have changed their clerical street wear from the soutane to a conservative dark grey or black suit with a clerical white collar. The change was authorized in July 1962 by Cardinal Feltin of Paris after a detailed inquiry among all the French Bishops. Thus far the change is in effect only in Paris, but it is expected to spread soon to all of France. The move is also expected to have repercussions in both Spain and Italy where the soutane is still worn in the street.

Newspaper reactions in Paris ranged from genuine shock to surprised gratification. "Revolution in the Church," editorialized one paper, while André Billy, writing in *Le Figaro* with tongue-in-cheek, said, "Will not ecclesiastical gentility be definitely lost with the advent of the dark grey suit? And how are its wearers to greet anyone? What will be substituted for the hat, already too often replaced by the simple *beret*? Ah! How one laments the disappearance of the old ecclesiastical headdress, and the sash with its silk fringe, and the "demoiselles," those small suspenders whose function was to support the sash at the waist. How one misses the buckled shoes, evocative of the little abbés of the eighteenth century! And what will become of the wadded greatcoat? The greatcoat is done for! It will be replaced by the hideous overcoat, ready-made just like the suit."

"Tradition Overthrown," but as one observer put it, tradition should never be followed simply for the sake of tradition. The thinking behind the new regulation would seem to be that in France the soutane had become more of a hindrance to the priest than a help. It stood as a psychological barrier between him and those he most wanted to reach, a class symbol which separated the priest from the worker. An adaptation was clearly in order.

Fr. Antoine Wenger, answering those who argued as though the soutane were "essential" to the priesthood, wrote in *La Croix*: "The sanctity of the priest, that is the essential thing. Woe to the priest for whom the clerical dress would be the sole mark of a consecrated state! Woe to the priest whose spirit of consecration and of detachment from the world were to vanish with the disappearance of the clerical dress! In his relations with people, what is important for the priest is the effectiveness of the witness he gives and the greater or smaller possibility of being present to men."

In a lengthy article on the "tradition" of the soutane, "Une centenaire: La soutane," *Etudes*, July-August 1962, Father Robert Rouquette wrote that in France it was only a hundred years ago, in 1852, that the diocesan authorities of Paris imposed the soutane as the clerical dress. Canon Law, he noted, requires a clerical outfit, but leaves its form to each bishop. He concluded: "In our laical society, the long black robe has become strangely archaic. It does not facilitate contact with the mass of indifferents, and often, in a proletarian and dechristianized *milieu*, it simply repels."

Following closely upon the decree of the Paris authorities was the announcement in January 1963 that Belgian priests from now on would wear a clerical suit and collar in the street instead of the soutane.

NICHOLAS P. CUSHNER

## *A Controversy, Made in Manila*

Dictionaries tell us that the word good-bye is a contraction of the phrase "God be with you!" Still, it would be a bold champion of separation of Church and State who would bring a teacher to court today for bidding her pupils good-bye in a State-owned classroom. The word is no longer, implicitly, a profession of faith in God; it has been voided of its religious content.

But the process of secularization took time. There was a period when those who used the phrase intended seriously to invoke the Deity. Keeping these facts in mind may help one to understand what was at issue in the thorny problem of the Chinese Rites two or three centuries ago.

The publication of George H. Dunne's book, *Generation of Giants*, reviewed by Father Austin Dowd, S.J., elsewhere in this issue of *Philippine Studies*, effected something of a break-through in modern writing by responsible Catholic historians on this question.