

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

II. The Graduates' Conference

Antonio G. Manuud

Philippine Studies vol. 8, no. 2 (1960): 370—378

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

2. The Graduates' Conference

If the experts measured the pertinence of the great religions to life in a metamorphic but shrunken world, the graduate delegates to Pax Romana's own conference for intellectuals (the first to be held in Asia) addressed themselves to a less generalized aspect of fundamentally the same question. Unlike the experts' conference, with some parts of which it overlapped, the graduates' meeting was strictly denominational in the sense that Catholic minds sought in a series of dialogues to examine, discuss, clarify, and consolidate Catholic thinking and Catholic positions with reference to the Asian situation.

The Asian orientation of the Pax Romana meetings was not accidental but a deliberate decision. Five reasons were offered for the desirability, indeed the necessity, of holding the conference in Asia: (1) Asian students and graduates, in general, exercise a much greater influence on the development of their countries than do their North-American or European confrères; (2) communist ideology has a powerful attraction for the Asian peoples; (3) in many Asian countries nationalism leads to scorn for Western civilization—which in turn leads to scorn for the Church on account of the unfortunate and mistaken identification of Western culture with Christianity; (4) Catholics, especially those who are in the minority in their respective countries—and there are many in Asia—tend to assume defensive attitudes; and (5) student federations, especially those affiliated to or organized in the spirit of Pax Romana, already exist in Asia and these organizations need to be strengthened and developed.¹

The Holy Father, in a message read before the first plenary session of all the Pax Romana delegates, underscored the Asian orientation of the Manila meetings by calling attention to a situation in which his "little flock" finds itself "scattered in the midst of cultures . . . not yet penetrated by the light of Christianity." For this reason he charged the delegates "earnestly to acquire a Christian formation that is in keeping with . . . national culture while in perfect conformity with the exalted

¹ *Lumen de Oriente*, December 1959, pp. 28-29.

teaching of the Church." It is in this way, according to His Holiness, that the Asian Catholic must "win the respect, the confidence, and the friendship of [his] people through... professional competence... ability, and... moral qualities... to make known the sweet message of Christ."

To determine how the Catholic graduate can contribute towards this end was therefore one of the main objectives of the graduates' conference. Accordingly, the graduates concerned themselves with "the responsibility of Catholic intellectuals ...to be present creatively in every field of national and international activity."² They tried to define what precisely is meant by the term *intellectual apostolate*, and to discover how associations should be formed: "what their objectives should be; the methods of organization; the subject matter for monthly discussions; relations between local Federations and the General Secretariat at Fribourg; and relations between regional Federations in one region."³

The better to undertake this task, the graduate conference followed an agenda divided into three parts: (1) a series of formation seminars during which Asian delegates presented the problems facing Catholic intellectuals in their respective localities and then listened to how similar problems have been met by certain European organizations; (2) a series of workshop sessions aimed at refining definitions and concretely delineating plans for establishing organizations, and thereafter establishing liaisons between such organizations; and (3) a series of lectures in which prominent Catholics spoke of the condition of the Church in the Philippines, in India, and in Japan. Included in the latter series were a symposium on the relationship between Christianity and Oriental cultures and an absorbing address on the Church and Nationalism by Mr. Raul S. Manglapus, formerly Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippine Republic. This third part of the graduate meetings more or less paralleled the UNESCO-Pax Romana experts' conference, the morning sessions of which the graduates attended.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*

The deliberations began lightly enough with a bit of Latin free-wheeling on the part of Mr. Thom Kerstiens, secretary general of Pax Romana, when in an admirable keynote address, he raised Adlai Stevenson's quip to the stature of a classic proverb: "*Via ovicipitum dura est.*" Exactly how hard the way of Asian "eggheads" happened to be was forthwith given expository treatment by leading delegates from each of the Asian delegations.

Mr. Horace Perera of Ceylon pointed out that his Catholic compatriots have to contend with Singhalese communalism and the pervading influence of a nascent interest in the establishment of an island civilization strongly anchored to Buddhism—all in the name of nationalism. For this reason, Mr. Perera entered a plea urging Asian Catholics to dissociate themselves from "nationalist" movements of a chauvinistic character.

Miss Astrid Santos felt that in India the problems of Catholic intellectuals centered around a basic lack of religious literature and the unfortunate duplication of Catholic organizations having identical ends. In her view, this last difficulty contributes considerably to the dissipation of Catholic energy.

Pakistani Catholics, according to Dr. A. P. R. Pinto, are continually harassed by Muslim fanaticism. Furthermore, the lack of Catholic graduate institutions inhibits the intellectual growth of the Pakistani Catholic. Add to this an embarrassing lack of funds and one has a fair picture of the Catholic intelligentsia's inability to compete effectively for attention, to the extent that it has not even been able to correct the mistaken but popular notion that the Catholic church is merely a "ritual" church.

Mr. Hubert Law Yone of Burma insisted that the Burmese are interested only in the basic problems of day-to-day living. Food, shelter, comfort occupy Burmese thoughts so persistently that even Communism, in his view, has never really been a problem in Burma. The people of his country, by and large, are just not excited by abstract ideas. He did, however, hint at what might presently become a serious difficulty, for national

leaders are beginning to speak of a common religion, and in this stronghold of Hinayana Buddhism, Catholics are a mere one per cent of the population.

According to the delegate from Singapore, the Catholic intellectuals' difficulty in his area comes down to five basic things: politics, which is all pervading; a very demanding family life; the Chinese mind, which tends to be engrossed with the things of this world; the dearth of Catholic publications; the small number of Catholic graduates.

Dr. Lydia Na Ranong, speaking for Thailand, noted a reaction among Thais diametrically opposite that evinced in the Pakistani misconception of Catholicism as merely a "ritual" religion. Thai Buddhists enjoy the intricate ritual of their own religion and as a result find Catholic rubrics meager. Besides, there is the problem of nationalism: Catholics in Thailand are Chinese for the most part, and local Buddhists continue to regard Catholicism as a religion for foreigners. As regards Catholic education, there is the problem of fixed school fees. Catholic schools receive no financial aid from the state but must charge fees no higher than those exacted by institutions enjoying state support. In the face of a rising cost of living, Catholic schools have therefore begun to depend more and more on set "contributions" from Catholic parents to subsidize operations. Often only moneyed Indians and Chinese are willing to take on this extra expense, to say nothing of the sheer incapacity, of most Thais to shoulder the added burden. Thus Thai Catholics, when they are not as wealthy as foreigners, are deprived by circumstance of a Catholic education.

Three belligerent groups of intellectuals have just about paralyzed productive activity among Catholic graduates in Vietnam, according to Mme. Marie Le Quang Kim. These are the graduates from France, the graduates from U.S. schools, and the graduates from Vietnam's own institutions of higher learning. While each group refuses to cooperate with the others, research in theology and philosophy is nil.

Missionary activity in Indonesia, said Mr. Lim Peng Liong, began only fifty years ago. Before that, clergymen took care

of the spiritual needs of European settlers exclusively. This identification of Catholicism with Westerners has caused many native Indonesians to regard Catholic graduates as being much too influenced by the West and therefore less than truly Indonesian.

If the Red threat to South Korea is well-known and if the same basic danger aggravates the refugee problem in Hongkong, the problem that today besets Catholic intellectuals in Japan is of a completely different nature. In the view of Father John Sawada, the Japanese Catholic intellectual must discover a means by which "the rupture between the Christian soul and the Christian mind" can be healed.

The Australian problem is again of another character. Paradoxically, the attitude of some Catholic intellectuals is for the most part anti-intellectual. Mr. James Bowler complained of "the apathy of our own church members towards intellectual activity" and "the reluctance of some of the clergy to admit the rights of the laity in the natural order." Also, he felt the need of "an intellectual minority to identify itself entirely with what is good in the society and culture in which it exists," especially when that society is characterized by strong sectarian feeling, as is the case in Australia.

The New Zealand delegate, Mr. John Strevens, drew a close parallel between Australian and New Zealand problems. Because of economic prosperity and its concomitant comforts, the biggest problem of the Catholic intellectual in his country is an appalling indifference to things intellectual.

Finally, speaking for the host country, Mr. Aristón Estrada took the position that all these problems are really reducible to one: the crying need for Catholic education properly understood.

The day following these discussions, a panel of European speakers disclosed how certain problems in specific fields are being met by Pax Romana organizations. We cannot here mention all the speakers, but Prof. Jan Terlingen of the University of Nijmegen spoke on graduate federations in the Netherlands;

the Rev. Pierre Briard on "Intellectual Formation in France"; Dr. Kevin G. T. McDonnell on the Newman associations of Great Britain; the Rev. Adalbert Hamman of Paris on artists' groups; and Prof. Lucien Morren of Louvain on scientific organizations.

Perhaps the most fruitful sessions of the graduates' conference were the workshops during which the delegates, dividing themselves into commissions, discussed and studied at close range the problems and opportunities facing the Catholic graduate in Asia today. The topics for these discussions were suggested at the plenary session by the President of Pax Romana, Prof. Ramon Sugranyes de Franch. They included a distinction between the *intellectual apostolate* and the *apostolate for intellectuals*; the need for the creation of an intellectual *milieu* against the background of which the work of the apostolate can be conducted; the manner in which the intellectual apostolate may be steadily promoted; and the organization of the work of the apostolate in the spirit at least of Pax Romana if not within the framework of Pax Romana itself. Since the general theme of the conference had special relevance to Asia, the workshops concerned themselves with laying the foundations for the work of the apostolate in this area, and the formation seminars mentioned earlier in this report thereby enjoyed special prominence.

There were three commissions, the first headed by Mr. Horace Perera, the second by Mr. Aristón Estrada, and the third by Dr. A. P. R. Pinto. The commissions studied the suggested topics simultaneously, and separately came to conclusions that were later integrated in a report representing the result of the two-week conferences. This report has been published elsewhere⁴ but it might be useful to recapitulate some of its more interesting points here. In the words of Dr. Kevin G. T. McDonnell:

[The] report drew attention to the part which the graduate and professional person has to play as a mediator who can both present the Church with all her riches to his countrymen and bring to the Church

⁴In the brochure entitled *Unesco Pax Romana Meeting at Manila and First Pax Romana Graduate Conference in Asia* (Manila, 1960), Part II, pp. 170-173.

the cultural values of his own people. This was felt to be a collective responsibility, as well as an individual one, and the mark thereby of the graduate apostolate. It calls for a dialogue between the Catholic graduates as a group and their non-Catholic confrères; it demands of the Catholics an involvement in national problems, and above all in the social problem; it depends for its success on a serious spiritual, intellectual, and theological formation.⁵

What the report did not mention, however, was the refreshing candor which marked the workshop discussions. Of particular interest, for instance, were many comments on the intellectual dishonesty which manifests itself in the smug arrogation by Catholics of superior airs over non-Catholic graduates and which engenders among Catholics an unfortunate "ghetto mentality".

The efficiency with which the commissions dispatched their duties is well worth noting. The chairman of the first commission, Mr. Horace Perera, the better to draw comment from as many delegates as possible, divided his commission into three sub-commissions headed respectively by Miss Deirdre O'Connor, Mr. Hubert Law Yone, and the writer of this report. The result was that the agenda was not only more speedily covered but also more deeply entered into. We speak particularly of one sub-commission, the work of which received special mention in Mr. Perera's report, thanks being due in great part to delegates like Dr. Raymond Panikkar, The Rev. Placide Pernot, O.S.B., the Rev. Sr. Liguori, O.S.B., Miss Angelina Barrera, Miss Cynthia Almeida, and others.

With the start of the experts' conference, the graduates divided their time between attending the morning discussions on the great religions and listening in the afternoons to lectures—save for one day when a symposium was held on the relationship between Christianity and Oriental cultures. This symposium was, in the opinion of some, less than satisfactory. The subject itself seemed unmanageably broad, and even the very terms stating the question were bandied about loosely until it

⁵ "Meetings in Manila," *The Tablet*, 214 (London, January 30, 1960) No. 6245.

was suggested that *culture* might not be co-extensive with *civilization*.

On the other hand, much information basic to any understanding of the Catholic situation in Asia today was presented in the lectures. Those on "The Church and Nationalism," by Mr. Raul S. Manglapus, and on "The Contribution of Laymen to the Church in India" by His Lordship the Most Rev. H. G. Raymond, Bishop of Allahabad, called attention to the fact that the most potent motive for political action in Asia today, if correctly conceived and judiciously directed, need not clash with Catholicism. Indeed, Catholicism can bring to Asia "the kind of peace in which true nationalism can thrive and seek its ends." In India, the Catholic educational system, the charitable work of Catholics among the sick, and the cooperation among the dioceses has not only resulted in a climate conducive to true national growth, but has also given the Church "an influence out of all proportion to her numbers." It is not, however, the intention of this report to repeat what both men phrased so admirably. The full text of their lectures appears elsewhere.⁶

Other lectures were delivered by Mr. José Feria ("The Church in the Philippines") and Miss Rosemarie Goldie ("The Role of the Layman in the Church with Particular Reference to Asia"). Prof. Augustine Akira Yamada of the St. Thomas Institute of Medieval Studies in Kyoto prepared a paper on "Adaptation Efforts in View of the Japanese Cultural Background". This was read to the delegates by the Rev. John Sawada.

The work of various individuals and committees deserves mention. This report would not be complete if, for instance, no advertence were made to the challenges faced by the documentation service of the Conference. Though terribly short-handed, the staff of secretaries (some of them observers pressed into service) tried its best to meet the demands of the meetings. As was to be expected, these demands were not always met; so

⁶ *Unesco Pax Romana Meeting at Manila and First Pax Romana Graduate Conference in Asia*, Part II, pp. 146-154; 161-169.

much so that during the closing session of the conference, Prof. Olivier Lacombe of the Sorbonne cautioned delegates against too much reliance on the uncorrected mimeographed texts distributed during the conference. Be that as it may, considering its limited resources and shortage of workers, the service kept more or less abreast of the proceedings.

The research arm of the service, while most useful in providing valuable background information as regards Pax Romana and the 1955 congress of the Asian lay apostolate, was at times less than scholarly and, as in the case of a paper entitled "The Student Press in the Philippines", embarrassingly inarticulate and incredibly naive. (To be sure, this paper was not meant for the graduates but for the IMCS Interfederal Assembly, which likewise made use of the facilities of the Research and Documentation Service. An IMCS delegate had requested us to look the document over for comment.) We mention this for no other purpose than to underscore the need for competence especially in research since any attempts at arriving at the truth in the practical order must inevitably depend upon the solidity of the theoretical and factual foundations. Happily, this instance cannot be said to be representative of the otherwise commendable work of the service.

The usual breakdowns which occur in international conferences occurred. There were days when the translating system would not work or when translators themselves were not available. But Pax Romana was fortunate in having, among others, Miss Rosemarie Goldie and Miss Bridaine O'Meara always ready to fill in as on-the-spot translators.

Not the least among the tireless women who labored to make the conferences a success was Miss Mary González of the Student Catholic Action Alumnae. Hers was the trying task of finding suitable billets for the numerous foreign delegates. It is to her credit that housing did not become the major problem it usually is whenever international meetings are held locally.

Reactions to the conference are as varied as the delegations themselves. Some have expressed fears, though not in so

many words, that the tag "ghetto mentality", so often condemned during the conference, was really a propaganda device that could lead to the promotion of an attitude favorable to syncretism. Others have embraced the principles of the conference enthusiastically. For our part, we noted that while the discussions were heavily speculative, the delegates never lost sight of their spiritual objectives nor of the essentially religious and *Catholic* orientation of their work. This was especially manifest when after their morning sessions the delegates would troop to Mass and after their afternoon meetings would take time out to chant Vespers.

We are thankful for this opportunity to get acquainted with our Catholic brethren from other lands in the many informal dialogues that took place between sessions, and for the chance, during those times when the graduates shared the hall with the experts, to discover what is unconsciously Christocentric in the faith of other peoples. This engendered in many what we expect is a genuine deepening of charity, and enkindled the hope that in the glory of the Parousia, all men of good will shall come face to face, having done what lay in their power *ut fiat unum ovile et unus Pastor*.

ANTONIO G. MANUUD

3. The Chaplains' Meeting

The chaplains spoken of here are chaplains at secular universities all over the world. These priests are entrusted with the safeguarding of the Faith of students in an atmosphere which is all too often unreligious, to say the least; and over and above that, with the intellectual advance of the students' vital mastery of religious truth in a way that will keep respectable pace with their maturing mastery of secular truths.

There were five formal meetings, the talks and discussions of each centering around these topics: 1) the relationship of the chaplain to his Ordinary; 2) the precise nature of the chaplain's function; 3) the problem of the preparation of students for university life; 4) the special problems of students going