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The Examination Records Of Gregorio Aglipay in The Manila Archdiocesan Archives

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Among the papers preserved in the archives of the archdiocese of Manila are the records of the examinations undergone by Gregorio Aglipay during the period 1891-1898. These examinations were in two fields: "rúbricas" and "materias morales y Latinidad." The term rúbricas applies obviously to the ceremonial of the Catholic Church and may be loosely translated "liturgy." The term materias morales refers to moral theology and to those allied disciplines (canon law, pastoral theology etc.), the knowledge of which is required for the solving of cases of conscience in the confessional. Since in the Church these matters are generally treated in Latin, an examination in the one involves knowledge of the other. Hence the term: materias morales y Latinidad.

In the Catholic Church the hearing of confessions is considered an essentially judicial act, involving as it does the granting (in some cases the withholding) of sacramental absolution. Being a judicial act, it presupposes in the judge the possession of competent jurisdiction over the penitent. The granting of this jurisdiction to a priest by a bishop or other prelate is called the granting of "faculties."
It is obvious that these faculties should not be given to anyone who does not possess the requisite knowledge to exercise the function of judge. But the priest in the confessional is not only a judex; he is healer, teacher, shepherd, guide—medicus, doctor, pastor, dux. To hear confessions properly he must know his business. He needs professional knowledge as does a physician or a lawyer or a dentist or an engineer. Hence it is that in some places the faculties for hearing confessions are given to the junior clergy for a limited period only, renewable upon the successful outcome of periodic examinations in liturgy and moral theology.

Aglipay took these examinations in April 1891, in April 1893, in March 1895 and again in May of that same year; then again in May 1897. He was due to take them again in May 1898 but he begged for, and obtained, a postponement.

In each of these cases, the records contain four parts. There is, first, a letter from the applicant to the archbishop begging for a renewal of faculties. This is followed by a reply directing the applicant to submit to an examination. Next comes the examiner's verdict. Finally, there is the grant of the desired faculties.¹

The examination marks were of course not the kind found in a modern school boy's report card. The examiner's verdict was expressed in such phrases as "bien instruido" or merely "aprobado" or even "suspensos." How such phrases were to be understood is explained quite clearly in a directive issued by the archbishop of Manila to the synodal examiner Fray Dionisio Ibañez under date of 14 October 1892. The examinees were to be classified into four categories:

(1) Muy bueno: for those whose knowledge was outstanding ("a los sacerdotes que sean sobresalientes");

(2) Bueno: for those who, without being outstanding like those in the preceding category, nevertheless possessed more knowledge than was strictly necessary ("a los que sin alcanzar la censura anterior posean más conocimientos que los necesarios");

¹ See for instance Documents 40-44 in the documentary appendix to this article.
(3) Aprobado: denoted minimal knowledge required for hearing confessions ("a los que manifiesten tener la suficiencia necesaria para oir confesiones");

(4) suspenso: those who did not possess the necessary knowledge and were required, after due preparation, to present themselves for reexamination ("a los que por no poseer los conocimientos suficientes sea conveniente señalarles algún tiempo para el repaso de los de las materias morales").

We now come to Aglipay's records.

1891

On 7 April 1891, a year and four months after his ordination, he presented himself for examination and received marks which, though far from brilliant, were certainly passing: 

Rúbricas: "suficientemente instruído";
Materias morales y Latin: "bien dispuesto."

His faculties were renewed for two years, until April 1893.

1893

In 1893 he received better marks. On 6 April he was found "bien instruído" in liturgy. The following day he took the examination in moral theology and received the grade bueno. As on the former occasion, the faculties were renewed for two years.

1895

In 1895 he appears to have run into some trouble. On 30 March of that year he took the examination in rúbricas and was given a passing grade ("suficientemente instruído"). There is no record of the other examination in moral theology; but his faculties were renewed for two months ("hasta el treinta de Mayo del presente año"), at the end of which period he took the examination and obtained a passing mark ("aprobado").

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2 The full text is published below; Document 39.
3 Documents 45-48 and 59 infra.
4 Documents 49-52 and 59 infra.
5 Documents 53-57 and 60 infra.
What was the reason for this examination in May? Was he merely granted a postponement? Or did he fail in March and had to submit to a re-examination in May? This latter interpretation would seem to be indicated, in view of the established practice described in the archbishop's directive of 14 October 1892, already quoted above, according to which, priests who did not pass an examination satisfactorily were to be assigned a certain period of time to review the matter, after which they were to undergo another examination.

1897

In 1897 he seems to have run into further trouble. Having obtained on 28 May 1897 a good mark in liturgy ("bien instruido"), he took the examination in moral theology the following day and apparently failed to impress the examiner. He obtained a passing mark, but the examiner took care to emphasize that it was a merely passing mark. His verdict was as follows:

*He examinado de Latín y materias morales al suplicante, habiéndome merecido la calificación de “APROBADO SOLAMENTE”.*

The words *aprobado solamente* are underlined and enclosed in quotation marks in the original document. It is as if the examiner were to say: "He gets a passing mark and no more"; or "He just about got by." As a result of this examination, Aglipay's faculties were renewed not for two years but for one, namely, until 29 May 1898:

*Proróguensele al suplicante las lic. de celebrar y conf. hasta el 29 de Mayo 98.*

1898

We know, from our last article, what happened next, Aglipay's faculties were to have expired on 29 May 1898, but

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6 Document 42 *infra.*

7 Document 43 *infra.*

8 Document 44 and 61. It will be noted in the case of Document 43 that in the margin, the notation "Dos Años" has been added in another hand. This notation appears to have been a mistake. Both Documents 44 and 61 mention a one-year renewal, namely, until 29 May 1898. See also Documents 36 and 37 previously published in this Quarterly: *PHILIPPINE STUDIES VI* (June 1958) 208-209.
on 23 May he wrote to the archbishop begging for more time as he had not been able to prepare for an examination. The archbishop replied the following day granting him a renewal of faculties for six months, until 29 November of that same year. The text and photostatic copies of both documents are found in a previous article.9

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCUMENTS

What picture do these documents give us of Aglipay?

We should remember that at this time Aglipay was in his thirties. He was thirty-one in 1891 when he took the first of these examinations; he was thirty-eight in 1898 when he begged for a postponement because he was not ready for an examination.

We should further remember that this period (1891-1898) belonged to his first decade as a priest. He was ordained in December 1889. Most priests will perhaps agree that they know more of the sacred sciences in the first five years after they leave the seminary than they will know afterwards, unless they constantly increase their knowledge by constant study. For this constant study, however, few priests have the opportunity, except those whose business it is to teach the sacred sciences in the seminaries or universities. Thus, while experience grows, it is quite possible that a minute knowledge of the niceties of the sacred sciences might diminish. Consequently, if a young priest, fresh from the seminary, does not show great proficiency in the sacred sciences, there is less likelihood of his showing such proficiency later, when he will have forgotten many things.

And that seems to be the case with Aglipay. In the first two examinations during the first five years of his priesthood (1891, 1893), his marks were mediocre. Later (1895, 1897) his marks were definitely inferior. It is said of some that their knowledge of their science is such that they can submit to an examination at any time without any special previous preparation. That cannot be said of Aglipay in 1898.

Rather, the picture one gets from these records is that of a priest who knew his priestly business well enough, but who could not be considered a man of outstanding qualities; who sometimes obtained a good mark in an examination, but sometimes managed just to get a passing grade; who on one occasion (1895) appears to have failed an examination in moral theology and had to take it again two months later; and who on another occasion (1897) gave such a poor account of himself that the examiner, while giving him a passing mark, felt it incumbent upon himself to emphasize that it was no more than a passing mark.

That seems to be the picture that these records give—an impression confirmed by the fact that other priests got much higher ratings in similar examinations.\(^{10}\)

This picture (and it is difficult to see how one could deduce any other from the documents) is of course at variance with the one ordinarily depicted in the biographies: of an Aglipay so brilliant in acumen, so superior in knowledge that he awed his examiners and covered himself with glory in academic disputations. Some even go so far as to say that he was offered (or obtained) chairs or lectureships.

One biographer, for instance, adduces the oral testimony of a classmate of Aglipay:

Young Aglipay distinguished himself even from the beginning as a talented student. As a reward he was appointed Reader in Logic and Metaphysics. One of his classmates, the late Professor Mariano V. del Rosario of the University of the Philippines, in later years, reminisced that to him the subject of Logic was so abstruse that he used to seek the help of Aglipay, who was then, according to him, a brilliant student in Letran.\(^{11}\)

What is to be said of such claims? Simply that there is no contemporaneous documentary evidence to support them, whereas there are records which paint a less impressive picture of Aglipay as a young priest.

\(^{10}\) For instance, Father Pedro Adoptante of Lipa. See Document 63 infra.

\(^{11}\) T. Fonacier *Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan: a short biography* p. 10.
ACHUTEGUI-BERNAD: GREGORIO AGLIPAY

BIOGRAPHERS VS. DOCUMENTS

It is regrettable that, despite diligent search, Aglipay's scholastic records while a student at Letrán, at Santo Tomás and at the Vigan Seminary have not been found. From the documents however, that have been published in these pages, it is possible to correct some misinformation that has hitherto been current. We append a list of these errors, listing what the biographers say in one column and the evidence of the documents in the other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT THE BIOGRAPHERS SAY</th>
<th>THE EVIDENCE OF THE DOCUMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.—Aglipay was born “about 1864” (<em>Encyclopedia Americana</em>); on 7 May 1870 (<em>Espasa</em>); on 7 May 1860 (<em>Foreman, Retana</em>); on 8 May 1860 (<em>de los Reyes Jr., Fonacier, Galang, et al.</em>); on 9 May 1860 (<em>Osias-Galang; Ruiz, et al.</em>).</td>
<td>1.—Aglipay was baptized on 9 May 1860 when he was “five days old.” He was therefore born on 5 May 1860.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.—Aglipay lost both parents when he was a child. (<em>de los Reyes Jr., Fonacier, et al.</em>)</td>
<td>2.—His father was “gravely ill” in 1895: therefore he was still alive when Gregorio was 35 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.—His mother supervised his early education. (<em>Osías-Galang</em>).</td>
<td>3.—His mother died in 1861, when he was one year and seven months old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.—He was imprisoned with his “only brother” Canuto (<em>Mandac</em>). Aglipay “was the younger of two children” of whom the elder was Canuto (<em>Fonacier</em>).</td>
<td>4.—Aglipay had a brother Benito; hence Canuto, if he existed could not have been an “only” brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.—He entered the “Dominican” seminary in Vigan (<em>Osías-Galang</em>).</td>
<td>5.—The Vigan Seminary was not Dominican. Aglipay studied under the Dominicans in Letran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.—He entered the seminary in 1888 (<em>Mandac</em>); in 1889 (<em>Galang</em>).</td>
<td>6.—He was ordained in 1889. He had begun his seminary training much earlier. The most probable date is 1883.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.—He was ordained in 1890 (<em>Directorio biog. filipino</em>); in 1899 (<em>Osías-Galang</em>).</td>
<td>7.—He was ordained on 21 December 1889.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.—His ordination was aided by the fact that Archbishop Nozale-  
dada of Manila had been his teacher at Letran (Wise).
9.—He was ordained in Ilocos (Artigas).
10.—He was ordained in Manila by reason of the intervention of his “padrino”, Sánchez-Luna (de los Reyes Jr.)
11.—He became “successively” co-adjutor of Indang, San Pablo, Bocaue, San Antonio, Victoria (Fonacier; aliter de los Reyes Jr.).
12.—At the outbreak of the Revolution (Aug. 1896) Aglipay was in prison (Calderon); he was co-adjutor in Victoria, Tarlac (Foreman, Robertson, Fonacier, Evangelista, Wise).
13.—In 1898 he “feigned” an eye defect in order to get permission to come to Manila; his arrival in Manila “coincided” with the coming of the Americans in May of that year (Fonacier, et al.).
14.—On 15 (or 16) May 1898 he left Manila on an errand for the archbishop and the governor to the insurgents (Aglipay ipse; Fonacier); and did not come back to Manila until August (Aglipay); from this errand he returned to Victoria (Fonacier).
15.—He was endowed with extraordinary brilliance and superior knowledge. (Almost all.)

8.—Nozaleda did not become archbishop until after Aglipay’s ordination. He was out of the country when Aglipay was ordained.
9.—He was ordained in Manila.
10.—He was ordained in Manila because there was no bishop in Vigan, that see being vacant.
11.—The correct sequence is: Indang, San Antonio, Bocaue, San Pablo, Victoria.
12.—He was coadjutor in San Pablo, Laguna. He was not transferred to Victoria, Tarlac, until 16 December 1896.
13.—The eye defect is attested to by two physicians of standing, and hence could not have been feigned. He arrived in Manila long before May; he was in Manila from February onwards.
14.—On 23 May 1898, eight days after the supposed departure from Manila, he wrote a letter to the archbishop, dated from Manila. The letter gives no indication of any mission being undertaken for the archbishop. The archbishop replied the following day, also dated from Manila.
15.—The examination records given to Aglipay as a priest between 1891 and 1898 do not seem to bear out this claim.

We have omitted from the above list all claims that are merely trivial, or that are patently false: for instance, such claims as that Aglipay had obtained the B.A. from the local college in his native town (in which there was no college); or
that after ordination he enrolled in the "Rizal University, now defunct," from which he is said to have obtained a degree in laws—which, if true, would have meant that there was a Rizal University in Rizal's own life time, when Rizal was in his twenties or early thirties!

AGLIPAY'S EXCOMMUNICATION

There is one other statement which seems to need correcting. George A. Malcolm, in his book *The First Malayan Republic*, says that Aglipay was excommunicated during the Philippine uprising against Spain. This is inaccurate. Aglipay was indeed excommunicated but during the Philippine uprising against America. Spain had ceded the Philippines to America in the treaty of Paris, signed in December of 1898 and ratified on 6 February 1899. The Philippine Republic was proclaimed in January 1899. The Philippine-American war began the following month, in February 1899. It was not until May 1899 that Aglipay was excommunicated.

APPENDIX

The Documents

**Note.**—In our previous article we published the text of thirty-eight documents from the Manila archdiocesan archives. For this reason the documents published below begin with number thirty-nine. On the upper right hand corner of each entry we have noted the place where each document can be found in the archives. Reference is made to docket number (*legajo*), sheaf number (*fajo*), leaf number (*folio*). Orthographical accents, sometimes missing in the documents, have been added.

**Document 39**

Octubre 14 (1892)

M.R.P. Fr. Dionisio Ibañez, Examinador Sinodal de este Arzobispado.—Con el fin de tener datos fijos para la concesión de las licencias de confesar y evitar vacilaciones acerca del término para que pueden concederse, creemos conveniente que los Examinadores Sinodales informen sus calificaciones; a cuyo efecto se atendrán a las siguientes: *Muy bueno*, a los sacerdotes que sean sobresalientes; *Bueno*
a los que sin alcanzar la censura anterior, posean más, conocimientos que los necesarios; Aprobado a los que manifiesten tener la suficiencia necesaria para oir confesiones.—Y Suspenso a los que por no poseer los conocimientos suficientes sea conveniente señalarles algún tiempo para el repaso de los de las materias morales.—Lo que participamos...


Documents 40-44

Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. Arzobispo de esta Diócesis

Dn. Gregorio Aglipay, Pbro. Secular de este Arzobispado y Co-adjutor del pueblo de Victoria, en la provincia de Tarlac, a V.E.Y. (sic) con la mayor consideración y respeto expone: Que estando para terminar sus licencias de celebrar y confesar a V.E.Yltma. humilde-mente suplica se digne prorogarlas previos los requisitos que estimara necesarios.

Gracias (sic en plural) que no duda alcanzar del bondadoso co-razón de V.E.Y cuya vida guarde Dios muchos años.

Manila, 28 de Mayo de 1897

Exmo. e Yltmo. Sr.

Grego. Aglipay

Manila, 28 de Mayo de 1897

Pase el suplicamente á examen de latinidad y materias morales, ante el Pbro. de la Congregación de la Misión Dn. Antonio Pérez, después de haber sido examinado de sagradasrúbricas, por el Maestro de Ceremonias de esta Santa Yglesia Catedral, Dn. José Consunji, quien se servira extender a continuacion su censura y remitirla cerrada a nuestra Secretaria.

SELLO x—Arzpo. (firma y rúbrica)

Por mandado de S.E.I. el Arzobispo mi Señor
Tomas G. Feijoo
Srío (firmado y rubricado)
Cómo a Vm. Sr. serviríe

En Oregón cheqüe, Pbro. señalo

de este inscripción y declarar del

pueblo de Victoria, en la provincia de

Buenos Aires, a 16 de septiembre,

con la mayor consideración,

un amigo amigo y confesor. Que esté mui

para que esté sumamente

alabado y bendito.

H. de Lima, 16 de septiembre,

Cuestos que no me alcanza

el amor del mismo corazón

para que esté

cien años, de mi muerte

a 16 de septiembre

S. de Lima.

Con esta

[Signature]
En la, 28 de Mayo de 1875

Por el suplicante, a expensas de la misma,

madre, se rinde ante el Señor, de la Congregación, por el favor de la música. En el Libro de la Misión, se dice que después de haber sido examinado de negocios recibidos por el Ministro de Comuniones de la Santa Sede, Cristo, P. José Comyns, quien me instruyó en lo que se me confirió, y no se le mandó que no se le mande.

Y se me dio una muestra de la misma.

H. Bernardo, 1875

Por mandato de S.D.J.

de Arcebal, en mi nombre.

Venceslau y Leifler.

Nuestra Señora.

El secretario se ha confirió y se le mandó.

M. N. 28 de Mayo de 1875

(Señor, en 1875).

Photostatic copy of Documents 41 and 42
(See pages 446 and 448)
ACHUTEGUI-BERNAD: GREGORIO AGLIPAY

42

Exmo. e Ilmo Sr.

He examinado al suplicante en las sagradas rúbricas y le he hallado bien instruido.

Manila, 28 de Mayo de 1897

Excmo. e Ilmo Sr.
José Consunji
(fdo. y rubricado)

43

Exmo. e Ilmo Sr.

He examinado de Latín y materias morales al suplicante habiéndome merecido la calificación de “Aprobado solamente.” Lo cual pongo en conocimiento de V.E. para los efectos que estime convenientes.

Antonio Perez

Manila, 29 de Mayo de 1897

44

Exmo. e Ilmo Sr.

Manila 29 de Mayo de 1897

Proróguensele al suplicante las lics. de celebrar y confesar hasta el 29 Mayo 98 (sic).

R. No. 1363

Documents 45-48

45

(Text identical with that of Document 40, but bears date) 6 de abril de 1981 (Aglipay is described as) Coadjutor del pueblo de Indan (and is signed) Gregorio Aglipay.

46

(Consunji’s verdict in the examination on “rúbricas”) suficientemente instruido (and bears date) 7 abril 1891.

47

Excmo. Sor. He examinado al Presbítero Suplicante y le he hallado bien dispuesto. Manila, 7 Abril de 1891.

Santiago Serrallonga.

48

Proróguensele... hasta el 9 de Abril de 1953

Sentado Raz. No. 6
(Text of petition identical with preceding except) Coadjutor (without indicating place, but bearing date) Manila 5 de Abril de 1853.

(Consunji's verdict on 6 April) bien instruido (in "rúbricas").

(Santiago Serrallonga's verdict) a mi juicio se le puede dar la nota de Bueno (in the examination in) materias morales y Latinidad (dated) Manila 7 Abril 1893.

Proróguensele al suplicante las licencias de celebrar y confesar hasta el 9 de abril de 1895. R. 394.

(Task of petition practically identical with preceding with the variant) Coadjutor del pueblo de Bocaue (and dated) Manila 28 de Marzo de 1895.

(Consunji's verdict in "rúbricas") suficientemente instruido.

(Faculties renewed) hasta el treinta de Mayo del presente año (and signed) El Arzpo (with rubric and dated) Manila 30 de Marzo de 1895 (and is made in favor of) Sr. Pbro. Dn. Gregorio Aglipay, Coadjutor de Bocaue.

(Examination mark) calificación de Aprobado (and dated) Manila 29 de Mayo de 1895 (and signed and rubricked) Antonio Perez.

2 años...hasta el 29 de Mayo de 1897. R. 911

En 7 de Abril (1891) se prorogan al Presbítero D. Gregorio Aglipay las licencias de celebrar y confesar las facultades acostumbradas hasta el 9 de Abril de 1893.

En 7 de Abril (1893) se prorogan...D. Gregorio Aglipay... hasta el 9 de Abril de 1895.
Examen de Amo Sr.

He examinado de Latín

7 materias visuales, al cumplir

habiendo una memoria la calificación de "Aprobado solamente".

Mano.

Lo cual pongo en conocimiento de SB

para los efectos y citar con conocimiento.

Antonio Pérez

29 de Mayo de 1877

Exrno. e Bf. Com. pr.

PP. 449 y 440

Photostatic copy of Document 43

(See pp. 449 and 440)
Examination mark of Father Pablo Adoptante
(See Document 63, page 153)
En 29 de Mayo (1895) se prorogaron...D. Gregorio Aglipay... hasta el 29 de Mayo de 1897.

En 29 de Mayo (1897 se prorogaron...D. Gregorio Aglipay... hasta 29 de Mayo de 1898.

En 24 de Mayo (se expidió en la) [sic el parentesis] se prorogaron al Presbítero D. Gregorio Aglipay las licencias de celebrar y confesar hasta el veintinueve de Noviembre del presente año (1898).

Visto el decreto, que antecede, compareció ante mí el Presbítero secular, Coadjutor de esta Parroquia, Dn. Pablo Adoptante, á quie...n examiné de latinidad, materias morales, y rúbricas, y en todas estás materias le califico de 'Muy bueno,'

Casa parroquial de la villa de Lipa, Noviembre 15 de 1892.

Fr. Benito Rara (firma y rúbrica)