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## The Religion of the Y.M.C.A.

Leo A. Cullum

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# *The Religion of the Y.M.C.A.*

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LEO A. CULLUM

On November 5, 1920, the Holy Office, the competent authority of the Catholic Church in matters of faith and morals, called the attention of all Bishops to the harm being done to Catholic youth by certain non-Catholic organizations. And the Holy Office singled out the Y.M.C.A. for special mention.

That document of 1920 is still the fundamental statement of the Catholic Church's position with regard to the Y.M.C.A. and is the basis of the uniform disapproval of the Y by Catholic authorities all over the world.

The position of the Catholic Church is uniform, but the steps taken in various places to implement the law have differed in various parts of the world, as the activities of the Y.M.C.A. have been considered by local authorities to constitute a greater or lesser threat to the faith of Catholic youth.

Not long ago in the Philippines several Bishops issued letters to the Catholics of their dioceses renewing the cautions of the Holy See, and insisting that Catholics may not join the Y.M.C.A., or aid it, or make use of its facilities. And their reason remained that of the Holy See: the Y is a Protestant organization.

This action of the Bishops called forth protests from Y.M.C.A. admirers that the Y is not Protestant but is non-sectarian. This claim was made by men of known

integrity and truthfulness, and therefore cannot be simply dismissed by Catholics as mendacious. It will therefore be profitable to examine the contention, to discover what is the exact religious position of the Y.

### HISTORY OF Y.M.C.A.

To understand the present religious position of the Y.M.C.A. it is necessary to review the history of this organization since its foundation a little over 100 years ago. The Y.M.C.A. was founded in London in 1844 by George Williams for the promotion of evangelical Christianity, namely Protestantism, in its members and in those who might be induced to join it. Tracy Strong, writing in *World Alliance*, says: "The young Protestants who first established the Y.M.C.A. prayed and worked to unite within evangelical Christendom all those who confess the name of Jesus." And he refers to a history of the Y by Professor Clarence Shedd of Yale University, in which Y history is divided into periods. The first period is from the foundation in 1844 to 1910, and is entitled: "Towards Protestant unity. During this period with evangelical, Christocentric, ecumenical passion, this lay movement became a laboratory for unity in action among Protestants in the work of evangelization."<sup>1</sup>

This was the character of the Y at its foundation and for many years thereafter. It consisted first of all of a control group of zealous Protestants, whose objective was to live and spread Protestantism; then secondly, of those members who were to be invited to join its ranks, and who were through their membership in the Y to be led to a more observant Protestantism.

It is important at the very outset to recognize the existence of these two phases of Y membership, what we may call the central and marginal, or the active and receptive, or the control and beneficiary groups. This division of the Y arose from the very nature of its evangelical purpose and is verified in every organization of similar

nature. Obviously, though it was of great importance that the central active element of the organization should be fervent and informed Protestants, it was not necessary, in fact it was not even particularly important, that the others should be. They were to be led to fervent Protestantism; it was not to be pre-required in them.

This division recurs again and again in Y literature. Pence quotes the very early Boston constitution (1851) to show the motives underlying the foundation: "Led by a strong desire for the promotion of evangelical religion among the young men of this city and impressed with the importance of concentrated effort for our own spiritual welfare and that of those from without who may be brought under our influence . . . ." This led to a dual membership, active and associate. Pence says: "Acceptance of associate members was at the beginning and long continued to be justified primarily on the ground of contact and fellowship, intended to lead into personal church membership in some Protestant evangelical Church." <sup>2</sup>

The presence in the Y of these groups gave rise to the problem of reconciling the presence of relatively indifferent Protestants (or even non-Protestants) with the preservation of the fervent Protestant spirit of the organization itself, in effect, therefore, of regulating the relations of the central and the marginal groups.

Hence we have during the course of Y history various "Bases," as of Boston, Paris, Portland, defining conditions of membership, suffrage and office-holding. In practice control was generally maintained by limiting the vote or the right to hold office or both. But this was not always so. In any case, there was always question of a *safeguard*, never of the *character* of the Y itself. Pence says: "There was no division among Associations about the desirability of this definition of membership as within Protestant affiliation, but there was a difference of view in regard to the measure of control necessary to secure this result permanently." <sup>3</sup>

Some have thought that the Paris basis of 1854 was non-sectarian, but that is to misunderstand the history of

the Y.M.C.A., and to read 19th century fundamentalism with the eyes of 20th century liberalism. The Paris Convention was a meeting of Protestant organizations, which decided not to prescribe Church membership as a condition of admission, but was satisfied with a Protestant profession of faith: "The Y.M.C.A.'s seek to unite those young men, who regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, etc." This is the central Protestant doctrine that the Sacred Scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith.

Up to this point we find the Y.M.C.A. clearly a Protestant organization in several senses. First of all, its original inspiration and continued motivation were Protestantism. Secondly, its message and objectives were the propagation and promotion of Protestantism in its members. But about the beginning of the twentieth century a change began to take place. This change followed changes in the parent religion, namely changes in Protestantism itself, which we must therefore examine briefly.

### RISE OF LIBERAL PROTESTANTISM

Under the influence of the higher criticism and in the face of multiplying interpretations of Protestant doctrine, more and more Protestants began to wonder about the importance of doctrines in their religious life. Desirous of bringing the numerous churches together in a unified effort, they found the way blocked by a divergence of doctrines. Because of this, doctrines began to lose their former importance and, where they were not simply considered irrelevant, were at least soft-pedalled in the cause of unity, and in favor of something that men felt they could come to grips with, namely in favor of what was called Christian life, that is, social welfare, education, and in general humanitarian endeavors.

This phase of Protestant evolution was described by Dr. S. Parkes Cadman in 1931 as follows:

The beginning of the Federal Council of the Churches of

Christ in America in which the new spirit finds objective expression anticipated the [first] World War and its appalling unveilings by about a decade. The founders of the Federal Council thoroughly understood the futility of attempting the reconciliation of denominational differences solely by theological discussion. So they wisely concentrated upon those joint activities which emphasize Christianity's social and humanitarian benefits. In other words, they sought fellowship in work, rather than in an impossible doctrinal harmony.<sup>4</sup>

We have here a new aspect of Protestantism. It is still Protestantism, a movement of Protestants inspired by evangelical principles, but it contains a new element. It is a movement *without a clear, distinctive Protestant message to convey*. It is true that some went so far as to formulate this compromise fusion itself into a message, and proclaimed it the pure Christianity, the Christianity above all Churches. But this was not of the essence of the movement. Most were content to treat dogmatic differences with respectful silence, and in the absence of unity on that score, to proceed on a plane where they felt unity was possible.

The movement which Dr. Cadman speaks of spread early to the missions. In 1932 the much discussed Protestant laymen's report on the missions appeared which, while professedly occupied with recommendations, represented in fact what had become widespread practice and theory in the Protestant missions long before this. *Rethinking the Missions: A Layman's Inquiry* expressed the ultimate in the evolution of this school of thought in the foreign field. It puts its conclusions in a series of succinct statements: The object of Protestant missions is to transform men from within, "by quiet personal contact." "Ministry to the secular needs of men in a spirit of Christ is evangelism." "The time has come to set educational and other philanthropic aspects of mission work free from organized responsibility to the work of conscious and direct evangelism." "To give largely without any preaching." "Rising above denominational and doctrinal barriers."

## LIBERALISM IN THE Y

This represents briefly the evolution of Protestantism in the United States and abroad in the early part of the twentieth century. The Y.M.C.A. took its cue from its parent religion and went through the same stages. It too began to show the two attitudes: the old dogmatism challenged by the new liberalism, with the latter, from the very character of the Y as an inter-denominational movement, naturally finding wide and ready acceptance. Thenceforth we find in the official Y documents less and less insistence on Church membership or even Protestantism in any form as a condition of membership, suffrage and office. The Y begins to be less concerned with an evangelical message and turns its attention to recreation, education and similar humanitarian benefits. But it does not cease to be a Protestant organization, whose central control by one device or another was assured to Protestants.

It was just as this leaven of liberalism was stirring the American organization that the Y went abroad to the missions. At first it was simply an adjunct of the Protestant missionaries and shared with them the Protestant message. Thus, for example, in the very early days of the American occupation of the Philippines we find the Y secretaries doubling as Protestant pastors and Bible colporteurs. But the tendency which was weaning a large sector of American Protestantism from any positive evangel received support in the foreign missions from a new factor, namely, from the opposition encountered in largely pagan or Catholic countries. Therefore the liberal theory instilled from the United States received a practical argument in the field from the impossibility of enrolling any large number of young men, as long as direct Protestant evangelism was retained as an activity.

## THE Y IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Y.M.C.A. arrived in the Philippines in a spirit of

traditional dogmatism. Messrs. Gluntz and Jackson, who came with the U. S. troops in 1898, conducted the first Protestant services in Manila, and thereafter played a leading role in all Protestant efforts. Mr. Gluntz later became associated with Silliman University, where he was still teaching in 1945, "holding the longest record as a Protestant religious worker in the Philippines."<sup>5</sup>

Protestant writers on religious conditions of the Philippines in the first decade of this century simply include the Y as one of the Protestant missionary agencies. I shall quote just one because this particular statement has an interesting bearing on later developments. Arthur J. Brown wrote in 1903 commending the broad, i.e. the liberal, views of the Protestant missionaries, by which they were able to work together:

A union meeting of Protestant missionaries was held in Manila, April 24-26, 1901. There were present missionaries of the following Boards and Societies: Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian, Young Men's Christian Association . . . . At this meeting the Evangelical Union of the Philippines was formed with the following constitution . . . . Article II—Object: It shall be the object of this Society to unite all the evangelical forces in the Philippines for the purpose of securing comity and effectiveness in their missionary operations.<sup>6</sup>

This statement is of peculiar interest because it shows the fusion ideas of liberal Protestantism beginning to receive early application in the Philippines, and also shows the Y frankly a member of the Protestant missionary effort. There were dogmatists who refused to fall in with the liberal policy and even among the liberals there were degrees of liberalism. But it is a start. The Y itself was to go much further along the liberal road.

At the time of Mr. Brown's writing the Y was merely a mission from the United States, attached to the army. When the large body of troops in Manila was removed to permanent quarters at Fort McKinley in February 1905, an independent Association for Manila was organized under the direction of the Army and Navy departments.



Shortly after the organization of this Association, the directors made a formal request to the international committee of the Young Men's Christian Association in New York City for the assistance and cooperation of its foreign department. In response to this request Mr. John R. Mott, general secretary of the foreign department visited Manila in January 1907. The result of Mr. Mott's visit was the incorporation of the Y.M.C.A. of Manila under the law of the Philippines. It received its charter in June 1907.

There are two things about this inauguration that are interesting and significant. The first is the presence of Mr. Mott. This outstanding Protestant layman was to live many years and achieve international prominence as the leader at the same time of the Y.M.C.A. movement and of the ecumenical movement of Protestantism, namely that movement which endeavors to unite the various Protestant churches and to overcome the divisions due to doctrinal differences. The second significant fact is that the new Y adopted not the Portland basis, which was widespread in the United States, but the Paris basis. This act was unquestionably decided upon in view of the thoroughly Catholic character of the Filipino people, the Protestantism of the Paris basis being much more reticent than that of Portland.<sup>7</sup>

#### STRUGGLE OF LIBERALISM AND DOGMATISM

In this new Y.M.C.A. foundation Catholics were admitted to full membership, with the right to vote and hold office, and the organization was declared non-sectarian. This was a manifestation of the predominance of the liberal tendency, but it would be a mistake to think that the dogmatic influence had disappeared. Long after the new charter, the Y continued to be a member of the Evangelical Union of the Philippines whose object was the spread of Protestant Christianity in the Philippines. In fact in 1924, seventeen years after the inauguration of the Manila Y,

the Y.M.C.A. was still a member of the Union, and when the claim was made by the dominant liberals that the Y was non-sectarian, the dogmatic group publicly called their attention to this contrary commitment.

However, in spite of these dogmatic repercussions, we may say that the liberal group prevailed progressively, and that the Y became *in their sense*, and at least *in intent* non-sectarian. These words are chosen carefully; therefore let us see just what was happening at this stage.

Two interpretations of Protestantism were struggling for control of the Y. One of these interpretations, which we have designated as dogmatic, would have made the message of the Y a Protestant religious message. The other interpretation, no less Protestant, the liberal one, opposed this, and wished the Y to hold aloof from proselytizing, and to restrict its efforts to humanitarian benefits.

#### NON-SECTARIAN POLICY

I do not pretend that things were from the beginning as sharply defined as this, but now in retrospect we can see that this was what was happening. This liberal position was non-sectarianism of a kind, and therefore I have said "in their sense." But it was only so "in intent," because in effect it was not generally realized. Things were continually happening to indicate that it was not easy to translate intention into action. The Y's Protestant dogmatic past was constantly asserting itself, and its personnel were not always in tune with the professions of the ruling group.

Thus Archie Lowell Ryan wrote in 1930, twenty-three years after the foundation of 1907: "Every year a conference [of the Y.M.C.A.] is held in the mountains . . . . Missionaries and Filipinos from all Mission groups cooperate in these annual conferences, teaching classes and giving addresses."<sup>8</sup> These missionaries were Protestant clergymen and their presence and activities were not in harmony with the professed non-sectarianism of the official policy.

Even as late as 1951 Dr. Isidoro Panlasigui, writing in the *Philippines Young Men* would say:

The Y is for the training of young men whose spirit is nourished not for religious fanaticism nor Pharisaic attitude toward others but for tolerance and brotherliness . . . . The Y.M.C.A. is now paving another and a new way of religious life. It teaches its members to develop a deep and broad religious life, not a fanatical nor a Pharisaic church life. Religiously in the fold of the Y.M.C.A. there are no Catholics nor Protestants—they are all Christians . . . . the Y.M.C.A. in our country should take the initiative . . . . to develop . . . . true religious consciousness—true Christian life, not merely church life which is at best fanatic, bigotted and Pharisaic.<sup>9</sup>

This is Dr. Cadman's liberalism converted from a working compromise, as he proposed it, to a positive creed, and is sectarian not only against the Catholic Church but against all churches, which Dr. Panlasigui says without distinction have been astray. The Y presents a new way, a new religion.

I have quoted Dr. Ryan and Dr. Panlasigui not because I think they represent the official program of the Y but to point out that the official program of the Y is impossible of fulfillment because of influences that are inherent in the organization.

The official program of the Y may be found in a recent release called *The Religious Policy of the Y.M.C.A. in the Philippines* distributed by the Y.M.C.A. This publication states that the Y.M.C.A. is not concerned with the teaching of precepts, or with formal religious administration or the interpretation of religious dogmas. Nor does it seek to alter in any way the religion of its members. "It is not the responsibility of the Y.M.C.A. . . . to influence a change of their church affiliation." Therefore, despite discordant notes, struck from time to time and place to place, we may accept the *Religious Policy* as an exposition of the Y's official program with regard to religion, and therefore as an official revelation of the manner and degree in which the Y is non-sectarian.

## PROTESTANTISM OF THE Y

This non-sectarianism concerns solely the express message to be communicated to the marginal group. It is a modification of the program and has with perfect accuracy been called a religious *policy*. It does not affect the character of the organization as such, and of the control group at the core. These must remain Protestant as long as the Y remains the Y, and outside the field of polemics this is always taken for granted by Protestant authors. A few examples will make this clear.

In the First World War the Y.M.C.A. was the accredited Protestant agency for social work among the soldiers of the United States and at the end of the struggle, Mr. Mott, whose name has already appeared in this article, said:

When President Wilson wired the Y.M.C.A. that the United States needed it in the war, before I paid any attention to athletics, to educational work, I proceeded to form a committee on evangelical work in the churches . . . . When the story of the war is written, if the Y.M.C.A., yes and the Y.W.C.A., are not on record as the identified Evangelical Church of America, then I and many others will hand in our resignations, for the Y will have lost its interest.<sup>10</sup>

When in the Second World War in 1942 the United Service Organizations (USO) were formed to coordinate the work of various groups active in aiding the armed forces, the Y again represented Protestantism, as the National Catholic Community Service did the Catholics and the Jewish Welfare Board did the Jews. The Y was asked by the Federal Council of Churches to justify its position and did so as follows:

The Young Men's Christian Association, which had its birth in the evangelical revival of the early nineteenth century and has continued to find its sustaining life in the Protestant Churches, has as its traditional policy, service to men, young men and boys without regard to race, color or creed. The YMCA reaffirms this policy.

While the YMCA boards of management are composed almost entirely of laymen, YMCA-operated U.S.O. clubs are encouraged to include representative ministers in their boards, and most of them have done so. . . .

If we compare the Y in the First World War with that of the Second World War we find a significant change and a strong confirmation of the point we have been insisting on. The organization has remained Protestant as far as its spirit and control group are concerned. But its activity among the marginal beneficiaries has changed from religious evangelism to humanitarianism.

It may be objected that these examples are of the Y in the United States and are not applicable to the Y in the Philippines. Local Ys enjoy considerable autonomy and there can be a great difference between the Ys in different places. That is true; but it is only at the level of activities. Unless we are to believe that the Y in the Philippines is only a name, we must conclude that anything in the United States which reveals the essential nature of the organization and manifests its spirit and principles, must be everywhere applicable and relevant.

And it is in this sense that we have adduced these examples. They do not immediately show what the Y is *doing* in the Philippines but they do show what the Y *is*. The example of Mr. Mott is especially significant since, as pointed out, he fathered the Philippine Y in 1907. Pence writing in an official Y publication in 1939 assumes that the Y's everywhere are homogeneous in essence and speaks in general of:

... the significant place that identification with the Protestant Church movement has had throughout Association history. The variations represented by vigorous Association work in predominantly Roman Catholic countries like Poland, the Philippines, Mexico and certain South American countries ... need not lessen the force of this primary Protestant identification.<sup>11</sup>

The transition therefore is valid and the American examples do indicate the nature of the Y as an organiza-

tion in the Philippines and everywhere. That they do so for the Philippines can be seen from an actual survey of the control group in the Philippines. Obviously the present writer's knowledge of Y personnel is most cursory, picked up from newspaper notices and similar sources. But such as it is, it seems correct, and is revealing.

### CONTROL GROUP IN THE PHILIPPINES

The National Board of the Y.M.C.A. of the Philippines was composed in November 1952 of five officers, ten members and a secretarial staff of four. The President was Dean Conrado Benitez, currently (or at least until very recently) the highest Mason in the Philippines. The second Vice-President was Dr. Emilio M. Javier, President of the Silliman University Alumni Association, frequent speaker at Protestant religious services. In 1951 on the occasion of Silliman's golden jubilee Dr. Javier received from his alma mater "the Gold Medal of Merit and a Certificate of Award in recognition of his outstanding and meritorious achievements in the service of the Filipino youth and of his people and for his active leadership in the affairs of the Alumni Association and of the Evangelical Church." The Treasurer, Mr. Sixto B. Ortiz, is a Mason. Of the board members Mr. Cenon S. Cervantes was Grand Master of the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines in 1951; Dr. Gumersindo Garcia may well be considered the leading Protestant layman of the Philippines, onetime President of the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches, frequent speaker at Protestant religious services. Dr. Theo. L. Hall, an American, is an active Mason, Past-Master of Corregidor-Southern Cross Lodge No. 3, and a Protestant. Mr. Paul Parrette, another American, is a Protestant. Mr. Werner P. Schetelig was and perhaps is Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons. Dr. Alfonso SyCip is a Protestant. Don Toribio Teodoro is very widely known as an active Protestant. The Secretarial Staff consists of Dr. E. Stanton Turner, a

Protestant, Atty. Domingo Bascara, a Protestant, Worshipful Master of "High Twelve" Lodge No. 82, Manila, F. & A. M., speaker at Protestant services, Mr. Alvaro Martinez, a Mason, and Mr. Gerrit B. Dousma, also a Mason, affiliate member of Mr. Bascara's "High Twelve" Lodge.

The total number of names is nineteen. Concerning the religious position of three of these, I have no information: Messrs. Sergio Bayan, Vicente Bunuan and Florencio Tamesis. The remaining two men, Senator Gil J. Puyat and Don Ramon Rocas are Catholics.

Examining a little further into the Y Study Guide, from which these names are taken, we find that it was drawn up by Gilbert Perez, a Mason, and that a prominent collaborator was Dr. Sinforoso G. Padilla, presumably a Protestant, since his name occurs as addressing the congregation of the Cosmopolitan Students Church.

Looking elsewhere in the news of Y activities the same omnipresence of prominent Protestant churchmen and laymen high in the control group meets the eye. When a meeting was held in 1948 to plan the rehabilitation of the Y, Dr. E. E. Tuck, leading Methodist of the Philippines, and Rev. Harry Fonger, head of the Bible Society in the Philippines, were present. Juan Nabong, President of the Federation of Christian Churches, is also an active Y man. Isidoro Panlasigui, requested, as noted above, to discuss the Y and the Churches in a recent Y publication, is reported in the newspapers as addressing the Congregation at the Cosmopolitan Students Church. Mauro Baradi, a Protestant clergyman, Deputy Grand Master of the Masons of the Philippines, is an active Y man.

If we look back at the names famous in Y history we find the same characteristic. Teodoro Yangco was a Protestant; Judge Manuel Camus was once Grand Master of the Masons of the Philippines; Vicente Carmona was a Mason.

The fact therefore is that the Y.M.C.A. in its directive element has been and is in the hands of non-Catholics. It is idle to allege against this roll of names, the presence among the directors of some Catholics. There have been

and are men in the Y who identify themselves as Catholics, but for the most part, at least, they are nominal Catholics, whereas the Protestants and the Masons in the Y represent the very flower of their respective groups. To contend that the Catholic influence of those Catholics associated with the Y is comparable to the influence of the non-Catholics is to tax our credulity.

The incidence of Catholic names in the lower official echelons would be more frequent than on the national level. But this only strengthens the argument. If these men were scrutinized it would be found that for the most part they do not go to Mass on Sunday, do not receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, are at variance with the Church's stand on such vital points as Divorce, Marriage, Birth Control, Education, etc. In other words it would be found that the very weakening of the faith which is the fundamental complaint of the Catholic Church against the Y was present in these Catholics either beforehand as a previous affinity which led them to that organization, or as a consequence of their presence in it. They are in the control group because they have Protestant mentalities.

This Protestant-Masonic complexion of the control echelons of the Y is not an accident. It is a natural result of the history and the character of the Y as an organization. Men not only choose their organizations, but organizations exercise a certain selectivity in recruiting their men. The present control group are the ideological heirs of those that went before. They are the men who were naturally drawn to the Y at the beginning, and who have naturally stepped into the shoes of the original Philippine pioneers. The original pioneers were Protestants, and while it is true that Protestantism itself has undergone changes during the half century of Y history in the Philippines, the Y continues (in the words of the American Y at the beginning of the Second World War) to "find its sustaining life in the Protestant Churches."

Now this is the fact. The central active element of the Y is Protestant, and it is a fact which springs naturally



from the soil of Y'ism. But the accomplishment of this result in the Philippines is not left to this spontaneous influence. The complexion of the top echelon is safeguarded by a provision of the Constitution that not more than one-third of the members of the National Board of Directors shall belong to any one church. This was inserted in order to keep the board inter-dominational and non-sectarian, but its effect has been to keep it Protestant, since each Protestant denomination is considered a separate Church, and by this Article, two-thirds of the Board must always be non-Catholic, and in effect Protestant.

Therefore the Y in its central control in the Philippines is not non-sectarian but is in fact and must be Protestant.

#### A SUMMARY OF THE Y'S RELIGIOUS POSITION

We may pause here to sum up what we have found. For a proper understanding of the Y one must make three distinctions. The first is between the dogmatic and liberal Protestant groups, namely between those who considered the propagation of positive Christianity the work of the Y and those who are content with humanitarianism. The second distinction is between the active or control group and the receptive or marginal group. These first are charged with the Y's mission; the second are its beneficiaries. The third distinction is between the character of the organization and its professed purpose.

We have found that the central or control group never ceased to be Protestant, but that it changed from dogmatic Protestantism to liberal Protestantism, and that in so changing it ceased to have a positive Protestant message for the receptive or marginal members. Thus the Y is at once Protestant, and, in the matter of its formal official message, non-sectarian.

If we keep these distinctions in mind we understand remarks which at first reading sound self-contradictory. For example Dr. Ryan's: "While the membership of the Y.M.C.A. in the islands admits Catholics as well as Pro-

testants, their emphasis throughout the years has been decidedly Protestant in tone, though not anti-Catholic."<sup>12</sup> Or that of Osias and Lorenzana: "Though essentially non-sectarian, they [the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A.] are thoroughly Christian [Protestant]."<sup>13</sup> These ambiguous remarks simply reflect the idea that a Protestant organization accepts Catholic members and proposes not to disturb them in their faith.

I have stated that the Y proposes to leave Catholic recruits undisturbed in their Catholic faith. But I do not say that this is the whole story. There are other influences which tend to frustrate this profession and to make the claim barren.

First of all the Y.M.C.A. cannot shake its past by the formulation of a program. Even in the Y's most recent statement of its religious policy two expressions occur that are pregnant. The first states that members are to profess Christ as their Lord and Saviour "according to the Holy Scripture." This phrase is capable of an interpretation entirely acceptable to Catholics. But what interpretation should it have in view of the Y's history? It comes down directly from Martin Luther through George Williams. In the Portland basis, the signatories revealed this requirement's Protestant character more clearly by the addition of the word *only*: "only infallible rule of faith." But elsewhere in the long history of the Y, there has been no *only*, though the phrase was nevertheless aimed at the teaching Catholic Church on the one hand and the rationalist Unitarians on the other.

The second expression describes the Y as "a great ecumenical movement seeking to transcend the tragic differences of churches." Surely Catholics would agree that the split in Christendom which took place four hundred years ago was tragic. But that is not the sense which should be assigned to the phrase in this context and in view of its antecedents. In this context it is a liberal formula, an echo of Dr. Cadman and *Rethinking the Missions*, and means that doctrines should not be deemed of suffi-

cient importance to constitute an issue between churches. In this sense a Catholic must reject it outright.

These may seem to be very small things, but they are only introduced to show how the Protestant character and history of the Y continue to assert themselves. The outburst of Dr. Panlasigui and the account of Dr. Ryan, both quoted above, would be disavowed today by the Y authorities as not representing the Y's official opinion or program. But they do represent an *influence* that is in the Y, and cannot be absent from the Y in view of its Protestant constitution. Sincere men speak their heart. If the Y is composed of Protestants, it is a little too much to expect that they will restrain their feeling in matters of religion, especially considering the fact that these are not nominal Protestants but men of proved evangelical zeal.

In view of this constant silent or indirect evangelism, we can conceive of only one type of member for whom the Y might be non-sectarian in fact and effect. That would be the boy who restricted himself exclusively to the material benefits available: athletic, recreational and educational. It is conceivable that such a boy might possibly frequent the Y and in fact remain untouched in his faith.

But once a boy became interested in the Y as an organization, he would fall under the influence of a Protestant evangelizing force. This might happen in two ways. First a thoughtful boy would wonder about the principles of the Y, its motivation and history. He would ask whence these wonderful benefits that he is receiving. And he would find that he owes them to a group of Protestants, inspired by Protestantism and largely supported by Protestantism. And what more natural than that his gratitude and admiration should be aroused and that he should begin to believe that true which he has found beneficent. And the fact that the men with whom he dealt might be high-minded and unselfish would only increase this danger because it would enhance their influence. Certain aspects of the young man's *morals* might conceivably be strengthened by their example and association. But his Catholic *beliefs*, his *loyalty* to his Church, and consequently his

Catholic practice, would be weakened; and that is the whole point of the Catholic Church's objection. Such a member would not be sensitive to theological differences, and, therefore, he would be likely to pass from a fellowship in material benefits to an ideological unity.

Secondly such a boy would be very likely to go a step further. If he manifested interest in the organization and showed himself adept at its activities, he would easily pass from the receptive marginal group to the central control group. It is true that this mere transition would not in itself demand of him that he give up his faith, but it certainly would bring to bear upon him an influence that is in fact sectarian.

There are other facts connected with membership in the Y which have an implicit religious message and therefore are sectarian. The mingling of boys of various churches in a *religious organization* implies that religious differences are not important and thus tends to breed indifferentism. Secondly there is the fact that a Catholic boy would learn to look for *religious guidance and leadership* outside his own Church, to Protestants and Masons. This, even apart from the disloyalty it now involves since the condemnation, could easily have the effect of alienating him from the guidance of his own Church authorities.

These and other indirect sectarian influences are all facets of one truth. A tree brings forth fruit according to its nature. The Y.M.C.A. is a Protestant tree and will bring forth fruit accordingly. The directors may have the best intentions in the world and really wish to leave Catholic members undisturbed in their faith. But they cannot prevent a sectarian organization from exercising its connatural sectarian influence. That is beyond their control.

We believe that we have in the above study of the position of the Y with regard to religion an analysis which will enable Catholics to understand that when the Y authorities state that their organization is non-sectarian they are sincere. But they also will understand how this degree of non-sectarianism is not enough. They will see that the Church authorities are very wise in forbidding Catholics

to join an organization which must because of its character, and in spite of its professions, work to weaken the Catholicity of any Catholic members who rise above a mere material participation in its benefits. As for those others who by thoughtlessness achieve a certain personal immunity, no one can guarantee that they will remain unthinking and unappreciative and therefore immune, and, in any case, they cannot be allowed to contribute by their attendance, prestige and money to a movement whose overall effect is to weaken the Catholic faith in the Philippines.

And so we come to the ultimate reason why the Catholic Church will not allow her young men to join or come under the influence of the Y. The Catholic Church holds that she is the sole interpreter of Christianity and the sole authentic Christian Association for young men and old. The Y.M.C.A., like the rest of Protestantism, challenges this position with its own interpretation of Christianity. However much the Y may intend not to do so, it cannot help but propagate that interpretation. The issue is a doctrinal point and naturally liberal Protestantism is impatient with differences that arise from doctrines, and cannot understand how a boy is to be deprived of athletic facilities and educational opportunities because of what they would consider theological hair-splitting. Nevertheless there they fail to understand the Catholic Church, which holds the slightest point of doctrine, that is to say, of truth, of far greater importance than any material advantages that might be offered. Protestants and Y leaders will never understand the Catholic opposition to the Y unless they understand this. Any force that from its very nature weakens Catholic doctrine in Catholics is sectarian.

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<sup>1</sup> Geneva, Switzerland. 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Owen E. Pence, *The YMCA and Social Need* (New York: 1939), p. 13. Mr. Pence was Director of the Bureau of Records, Studies and Trends, National Council of YMCA's.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

- <sup>4</sup> "The Passing of Separatism in the Churches," *Handbook of Christian Churches* (1931), p. 7.
- <sup>5</sup> J. B. Rodgers, *Forty Years in the Philippines* (1940), p. 120.
- <sup>6</sup> Arthur J. Brown, *The New Era in the Philippines* (1903), p. 187.
- <sup>7</sup> E. K. & I. W. Higdon, *From Carabao to Clipper* (1941), p. 98.
- <sup>8</sup> *Religious Education in the Philippines* (Manila: 1930), p. 62.
- <sup>9</sup> "The Student YMCA in Relation to the Church," *Philippines Young Men* (July, 1951).
- <sup>10</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Supplement I. Art. "The Young Men's Christian Association."
- <sup>11</sup> *The YMCA and Social Need*, p. 265.
- <sup>12</sup> *Religious Education in the Philippines*, p. 62.
- <sup>13</sup> C. Osias and A. Lorenzana, *Evangelical Christianity in the Philippines* (1931), p. 167.
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