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Iglesian Ni Cristo: A Study in Independent Church Dynamics

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the abuses of both systems. Recently some Christians have looked into the possibility of using a Marxist analysis of the sociopolitical and economic situation as a tool in the struggle for justice. The question of Christians cooperating with Marxists is certainly a very important issue facing the Church throughout the world today. Many Christians dedicated to the struggle for justice are becoming frustrated with reformist efforts and moving toward a more radical stance. The Christians for Socialism movement is an example. However, critical questions must be answered. Does such a movement become more of a political movement using the name Christian to sanction its activities, or is it a genuinely Christian movement acting out its religious motivation in a concrete ideological program? Can one be both a Marxist and a Christian, or do they mutually exclude each other? Does the Christian's use of instrumental Marxism gradually lead one to accept its ideology, or may a Christian by using a Marxist analysis engage more effectively in the struggle for justice? Must one entering this process eventually be faced with the choice of becoming a Marxist and renouncing one's Christianity, or is one led to a more committed life as a Christian? These are the critical questions the Christians for Socialism movement raised. These are the questions being raised throughout the world by those involved in the struggle.

These are questions that the Church must face as she engages in the struggle for justice. To face these questions and challenges effectively, the Church herself must be liberated from the ideological presuppositions that keep her from truly engaging in the struggle for justice. The Church herself must be purified from the injustices and oppression within her if she is to effectively struggle against the injustices and oppression in society. The Church herself must share the life of the poor, realize their struggles and concerns, and make them her own.

The Church in the Philippines is already engaged in such a struggle. The Church in the Philippines would do well to reflect on the experience of the Church in Chile as she responded to the challenge of the Christians for Socialism movement.

Pasquale T. Giordano

IGLESIA NI CRISTO: A STUDY IN INDEPENDENT CHURCH DYNAMICS. By Arthur Leonard Tuggy. Quezon City: Conservative Baptist Publishing, Inc., 1976. 272 pages. ₱17.00.

One significant work about the *Iglesia ni Cristo* which came off the press recently is the book of Dr. Tuggy. Originally published as a doctoral dissertation, the work claims to have its "primary focus" on the Iglesia's "present doctrine, organization, life, ministry, and methods of propagation" (p. viii). It is made up of 10 chapters. The first four deal with various historical considerations from the turn of the century to the present while the succeeding

ones discuss such topics as organization, indigeneity, methods of propagation, similarities with other Third World independent churches, and implications for other churches. The work is interestingly written and generally informative. The author's knowledge of Protestant missionary work at the turn of the century has contributed a great deal toward correcting certain historical errors. At the same time it must be pointed out that certain inaccuracies are also found in the book.

Speaking about the religious condition of the Filipinos at the coming of the Americans at the turn of the century, Dr. Tuggy states that they were not really Christianized but "more accurately had been hispanicized," and that "American church leaders from all major denominations looked upon the opening of the Philippines to the Gospel as a God-given opportunity to preach and teach the biblical message" (p. 5). The reason, of course, is because the Filipinos "had never known the evangelical faith or even opened a Bible." Manalo is said to have rebelled "against the unbiblical Roman Catholicism."

The author notes that the Iglesia's doctrine on the reappearance of the Church in the Philippines and much of Manalo's ecclesiology are traceable to the Restorationist Movement which Manalo must have imbibed from his early association with the American Christian Missions. He corrects Sta. Romana's affirmation that Felix Manalo was an ordained minister of the Seventh Day Adventists. The testimonies brought forward show that Felix Manalo was only a lay worker. Moreover, it is pointed out that the separation of Manalo from the Seventh Day Adventists was not due to "certain questions about doctrine and practices" as commonly believed, but because Manalo was twice suspended, first, on account of his elopement, and second, because of moral indiscretion.

On the question whether Felix Manalo really studied in the United States, specifically at the "Pacific School of Religion in California" Dr. Tuggy states "there can be little doubt" about the "fact" that Felix Manalo studied in the United States. Unfortunately, there are no proofs to show that Felix Manalo really entered school in the United States. In the absence of any written record either in the possession of said school or of the Iglesia one can only take Manalo's word for it, which is evidently self-serving. One of the things which previous studies about Manalo have brought up is that before Felix Manalo's trip to the United States in 1919 he was honored by various Protestant leaders in a "testimonial ceremony for his profound Biblical knowledge." The author is surprisingly silent on this point.

It is said that Felix Manalo "strongly maintained the invulnerability of the church's [Iglesia's] doctrine, even though he did not pretend to personal infallibility" (p. 56). The author traces this doctrine to the Roman Catholic Church saying that this has been the "steady position of the Roman Catholic Church regarding its priests" (ibid.). Dr. Tuggy elaborates further

by stating that "the validity of a priest's ministry or performance of the sacraments is clearly separated from any question of his personal holiness" (ibid.). This is evidently a misunderstanding of the Catholic Church's teaching on infallibility. Catholic theologians have traditionally maintained the distinction between valid administration of the sacraments (*ex opere operato*) and the subjective condition of the minister of the sacrament (*ex opere operantis*). Infallibility, on the other hand, means that the Church through its General Councils with the Pope or the Pope alone through a solemn pronouncement *ex cathedra* on matters of faith and morals does not err. No Catholic priest or bishop can lay claim to infallibility.

On the teaching that Manalo is "God's Messenger" (Angel) in fulfillment of Revelation 7:1-3, it is said that "it grew out of Manalo's determination to establish supreme authority over the *Iglesia ni Cristo*" (p. 58).

The chronological account of the expansion of the *Iglesia* is interestingly presented, though incomplete even on the basis of the author's principal source. The rapid expansion of the *Iglesia* after World War II is due to some very important factors, identified by the author as: (1) a strong prewar base upon which to build, i.e., dedicated laymen eager to spread their message wherever they moved; (2) an effective deployment of ministers by a strongly centralized leadership; (3) the existence of receptive peoples in the various provinces of the Philippines, and (4) the charismatic leadership of Felix Manalo (p. 78). The rapid growth of the *Iglesia* is "the result of marshaling all its resources to this one end - the propagation of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*" (p. 164). In its expansion program the organization makes use of three principles: the principle of *extensive* propagation, which means moving on to other areas even before areas already reached are thoroughly "worked," the principle of *intensive* propagation, i.e., nightly visits by *Iglesia* lay workers to family homes to win converts, and the principle of *total mobilization*, which means that every member is involved in the *Iglesia* with a specific role to play.

It is rightly observed that the rapid expansion of the *Iglesia* in foreign countries is due to increased Filipino immigrations. The practice of "following their own" is a policy of the *Iglesia* not only for its expansion program abroad but even in the Philippines. The author notes that the *Iglesia* is unknown to the average American and is "probably unlikely to attract a mass following in the United States" (p. 104). The establishment of the *Iglesia* in foreign countries is fully exploited for propaganda purposes in the Philippines.

The treatment of the *Iglesia*'s doctrine and hermeneutics is quite a disappointment, especially if one considers the fact that Dr. Tuggy speaks of other authors as having "often failed to present a full view of *Iglesia* teaching." One is, therefore, led to expect a more extensive and in depth discussion. The author relies principally on a 263 page book entitled *Isang Pagbubunyag sa Iglesia ni Cristo*, which is actually a compilation of *Iglesia* teachings. No reference is made to the two books written by Felix Manalo himself which

bear the titles: *Ang Sulo Sa Ikatitiyak Sa Iglesia Katolika Apostolika Romana* and *Mga Katotohanan Dapat Malaman Ukol Sa Mga Aral Ng Iglesia Katolika Apostolika Romana*. These works would have given the presentation of Iglesia doctrine and hermeneutics greater depth.

The discussion of doctrines is briefly done and definitely far from complete. It is confined to the following areas: God, the Bible, Jesus Christ, the Church, Felix Manalo as "Sugo," the Way of Salvation, the Christian Life, and the Last Things.

After the presentation of the Iglesia's doctrine on God, the author concludes that the organization "clearly teaches that God is a Spirit . . . and worthy to be worshiped by all men, so placing itself squarely within the Judeo-Christian tradition" (p. 107). What the author fails to mention is that for the Iglesia, *only* members of the Body of Christ, which is identified with the Iglesia ni Cristo, can rightfully worship God. The worship of other people is not acceptable to God because they are unredeemed. God does not listen to their prayers.

Again concerning Christ, no emphasis is given to the *exclusive* claim of the Iglesia to the benefits of Christ's death. Christ, it is taught, died *exclusively* for his body which is the Iglesia ni Cristo. The Church's alleged total apostasy or disappearance as well as its reappearance in the Philippines are not clearly presented. There is again failure to show that *only* those who remain faithful to the Iglesia ni Cristo will rise to eternal life. The rest of mankind will all be condemned to the lake of fire. These exclusive claims are constantly being pounded into the heads of the members of the Iglesia ni Cristo through their preaching and in the pages of the *Pasugo*.

With regard to the organization of the Iglesia Dr. Tuggy notes that in the election of the Executive Minister, as was the case with Brother Eraño Manalo, there is no "true election." It is rather, according to him, the ratification of the choice of the leader by the followers. In the last analysis this observation may be true, but the fact is that in the last election for the position of Executive Minister three candidates were nominated on the floor by members of the Council of Ministers, which is charged with the election of the successor to the Executive Minister. The three candidates were: Eraño Manalo, Isaias Samson, and Isaias Reyes. The election was held on 28 January 1953 while the founder, Felix Manalo, was still alive. It was Eraño Manalo who won in that election.

Incidentally, two important bodies were omitted in the discussion of the organization and structure of the Iglesia, namely, the Council of Ministers, whose specific function is the election of the successor to the Executive Minister, and the Economic Council, which assists the Executive Minister in the acquisition and disposition of Iglesia properties, especially real estate. Apparently gone are those days when the Executive Minister depended on his sole judgment for decision on such matters.

The description of the worship-service of the Iglesia is accurate but certain comparisons could have been avoided. At one instance the author remarks in connection with the prayer for Brother Eraño Manalo usually recited by the minister during the worship-service that: "It was as if the Pope was being prayed for." Again, noting the "strict audience discipline" maintained by Iglesia members during worship a contrast is drawn to the effect that Iglesia discipline is "unlike Roman Catholic services with crowds milling around the doors and people going in and out during mass" (p. 169).

Although the book was published in 1976 some of the information given out is already dated. For instance, the author still speaks of the *Kapisanang Maligayang Pagtatagumpay* (KMP) although no organization bearing that name existed since 1973. Actually, the declaration of Martial Law brought about the abolition of the KMP and in its place the KADIWA (*Kabataang May Diwang Wagas*) for unmarried youth of twenty years and above and BINHI for the youth between the ages of thirteen and twenty were organized.

The magnificent and "extravagant" cathedral-chapels of the Iglesia are "a sign that the Iglesia is the true church." These were built with funds which Filipino politicians doled out to the Iglesia as gifts in order to get the Iglesia's alleged decisive votes during elections. Part of the fund comes from the twice-a-week contributions of every Iglesia member during worship-service, and the yearly *Pasalamat* (Thanksgiving) in which the members give as much as they can to the Iglesia as an act of thanksgiving to God for the year. Since the Iglesia pictures itself as "a suffering, persecuted church," the members find much pride and consolation in their cathedral-chapels which rival the big and old Roman Catholic churches in a number of towns and cities in the Philippines.

A unique contribution of Dr. Tuggy in his study is his measurement of the organization's indigeneity. In addition to the criteria used by Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, and more recently by Melvin Hodges and others, the author adds the element of "how the selfhood of the Church is expressed," originally proposed by Charles Kraft. Four characteristics are used in determining the indigeneity of the Iglesia, namely, *self-support*, *self-government*, *self-propagation*, and *how the selfhood of the Church is expressed*. For determining the last characteristic the concept of "dynamic equivalence churchness" is employed. This focuses on the New Testament Church in its historico-cultural context, and on the cultural context in which the INC is growing.

The analysis shows that the Iglesia ni Cristo has more of indigenous elements than foreign ones in the areas of music, organization, behavior or discipline, ceremonial, and education, but not in the area of belief, where it has many important borrowings from the Restoration movement and the Seventh Day Adventists. It must be noted that the Iglesia ni Cristo is not totally or fully indigenous in the other areas mentioned above.

On the matter of how dynamically equivalent is the Iglesia to the New Testament Church, Dr. Tuggy states at the end of his analysis:

"the evaluation depends on whether you are an *Iglesia* member or not. The *Iglesia* member's view (i.e., its *self-image*) is that the *Iglesia ni Cristo* is absolutely dynamically equivalent to the New Testament Church. To the outsider (whether Roman Catholic or Protestant) its *community-image* is that the *Iglesia* falls short, primarily because of heterodox belief, lack of Christian liberty, and lack of evidence of spirituality." (p. 199).

From the analysis of Dr. Tuggy it can be affirmed that the *Iglesia* is to a great extent indigenous, but it definitely falls short of being *the* church of the New Testament.

The author makes very pointed observations with regard to the rhetoric of *Iglesia* which are applicable to the articles in the *Iglesia's* official publication *Pasugo*, its mode of preaching, and its manner of arguing in public or private debates. Among the *negative* characteristics are:

1. The use of faulty hermeneutical principles. Texts whether of Holy Scriptures or any other written work are usually taken out of context and accorded meanings outside the intention of the original author.
2. Its logic is superficial and emphasizes "sharpness" rather than truth.
3. The use of *argumentum ad hominem*.
4. The employment of much sarcasm.
5. The emphasis on the weaknesses of the opposing view.
6. Paying more attention to the organization rather than the teaching.

Aside from these there are *positive* characteristics like its use of the Bible, its confining itself to a few basic themes which are repeated *ad nauseam*, etc., but the negative ones far outweigh the positive.

This writer adds the observation that on account of this *negativistic* attitude it is still not possible to dialogue with the *Iglesia* in search of the truth.

Dr. Tuggy has contributed a good deal toward a better understanding of the *Iglesia*. Despite certain misinterpretation, and incompleteness in certain areas the book is highly recommended for readers who desire to know the *Iglesia* in its diverse aspects.

Incidentally, the following errors in terminology and typographical errors are found in the book: "supreme unction" (p. 25), "Mehodists" (p. 26), "affdavit" (p. 47), "Junuerio" (p. 57), "Ceasar" (p. 92), "Meiban" (p. 101), and "captials" (p. 110).

Fernando G. Elesterio

THE TROPICS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A PROVOCATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE POVERTY OF NATIONS. By Andrew M. Karmarck. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. xiv, 113 pages.

A fresh review of the influence of tropical climate upon economic activity by a man whose labors at the World Bank have been devoted to understanding