

# philippine studies

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

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 12, no. 1 (1964): 32–50

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

# Father Joaquin Vilallonga: 1868-1963

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MIGUEL A. BERNAD

## I

**T**HE death of Father Joaquín Vilallonga on the 1st of February 1963 at the age of 95 was not only the end of a remarkable career spent in several countries of Asia and the West, but it was also like the snapping of a link: for Father Vilallonga was one of the few remaining links between us and our pre-Revolutionary past. He first came to the Philippines in 1892, the year Rizal was exiled to Dapitan; and he was still in Manila—watching from the windows of the Ateneo—when Rizal was marched to his death in Bagumbayan in 1896. During those years of uncertain calm, Father Vilallonga taught his classes of science and philosophy; and one of his pupils was Gregorio del Pilar, who was to die in Tirad Pass less than four years after his graduation as Bachelor of Arts.

After the start of the Revolution in 1896, the Jesuit Superior (Father Pio Pi) offered to mediate between Filipinos and Spaniards. There was gloom in the walled city of Manila when General Emilio Aguinaldo rejected the offer. There was rejoicing when the Pact of Biak-na-bato brought a temporary truce in December 1897. There was consternation when in May 1898 the Spanish fleet was destroyed by Commodore Dewey in the Battle of Manila Bay. Manila—or that part of it which lay within the walls — became a beleaguered city. To the south was the American army newly landed

from the United States; to the east and in the north beyond the Pasig were the Filipino soldiers of General Aguinaldo, whose headquarters lay beyond the American lines in Cavite; and to the west, the American fleet threatened from the sea. In August 1898 the Spanish garrison surrendered. The Walled City swarmed with American troops. The Spanish flag which had flown over Philippine soil for three centuries was hauled down, and in its place were hoisted the stars and stripes. Meanwhile, some thirty kilometers away to the south in the town of Kawit, a new flag was flying and a new anthem was sung—the flag and the anthem of the Filipino people.

To Joaquín Vilallonga and his colleagues at the Ateneo Municipal de Manila—as to their Spanish compatriots everywhere—all this must have seemed like the end of the world. It was certainly the end of an era. The nineteenth century was ending, and with it an entire culture and a way of life.

In that year, 1898, Joaquín Vilallonga returned to Spain. But he left his heart in the land of his adoption to which he was determined to return.

## II

Joaquín Vilallonga y Bernia was born in 1868 in the small seaport town of Burriana in the province of Castellón de la Plana of the former kingdom of Valencia in Spain. His secondary studies (bachillerato) were made in the Jesuit College of San José in Valencia. Those completed, he entered the Society of Jesus in August 1885 at the age of seventeen. The novitiate of the Province of Aragón to which he was admitted was housed in an old Cistercian monastery—the Real Monasterio de Veruela—built in the 12th century, which had been given to the Jesuits when they returned to Spain in 1829 after their long exile. There Joaquín Vilallonga spent two years of noviceship and three years of studies (two in the classics and one in philosophy). Years later, when he himself had become the head of the Jesuit Province of Aragón, Father Vilallonga was to preside over the centennial celebrations of the college and novitiate of Veruela where his first five years of Jesuit life had been spent.

From Veruela, as a Jesuit scholastic, he was sent to complete his philosophical and scientific training in the *Colegio Máximo* in the ancient fortified city of Tortosa (the Dertosa of the Romans) where the normal course of studies was two years: but at his Provincial's request, he completed the two-year course in one.<sup>1</sup>

From Tortosa he was sent to the Philippine Islands, arriving in Manila in 1892 to begin the teaching assignment (or "regency") which is part of the Jesuit training. Today, the regency normally lasts three years; but in former times there was nothing abnormal about a five or a six-year regency, depending on the Jesuit scholastic's age and the need for his services. Joaquín Vilallonga's regency at the Ateneo Municipal de Manila lasted six years, after which he returned to Tortosa to begin the study of theology.

The biographical note in Espasa telescopes his studies in summary fashion: "Sobresalió en las ciencias exactas y después de hacer los estudios de filosofía en el Colegio Máximo del Jesús de Tortosa, pasó a la Universidad de San Luís (Missouri, E.U.) para cursar la teología escolástica y moral."<sup>2</sup> That is true enough, but it omits nine of the most important years of Father Vilallonga's training, six of which were spent in Manila and three back in Tortosa for the first three years of the theological curriculum in preparation for the priesthood. It was only after this, and after his ordination to the priesthood on 28 July 1901, that he was sent to the United States for further theological studies at St. Louis University.

The reason for sending him to America was obviously to give him an opportunity to acquire a proficiency in English in preparation for his return to the Philippines, where English had begun to supersede Spanish as the official language of education and government. This proficiency was later to stand him in good stead, both in the Philippines and in India.

At St. Louis Father Vilallonga made an extraordinary impression as a student of theology. As a result, when his

<sup>1</sup> *Woodstock Letters*, XXXII (Baltimore, 1903) 82 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia universal*, 68:1213.

fourth year of theology was completed, the university authorities decided to give him a fifth year of private study to prepare for the public defense of the entire corpus of theology known in American scholastic circles as the "Grand Act."

### III

St. Louis University was founded in 1818 and was entrusted to the administration of the Jesuits in 1827. It was therefore the oldest American university or college west of the Mississippi, and the oldest in those territories which the United States had acquired from France by the Louisiana Purchase. In 1902, when Father Vilallonga was completing his fourth year of theology, the city was preparing for the centenary of the Louisiana Purchase to be celebrated the following year. The President of the United States was expected to go to St. Louis in April 1903 to inaugurate the St. Louis Exposition. The University, casting about for an appropriate contribution of an academic nature to the festivities, decided to hold that well-known exercise (common in Europe in former centuries but a rare thing in nineteenth century America): the scholastic disputation in which one champion (the "defender") undertook to explain, prove and defend against all comers a number of "theses" or propositions. It was this sort of thing that Luther undertook to do when he nailed his list of 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg. It was likewise this sort of thing that Edmund Campion offered to do before the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in defense of the Catholic Faith which the Elizabethan pursuivants were trying to wipe out. At St. Louis, Father Vilallonga was chosen the defender, but his subject-matter was not restricted to 95 propositions. His task was to defend the entire corpus of theology, crystallized into 212 theses, each containing several allied propositions.<sup>3</sup>

The forthcoming "Grand Act" attracted wide attention. The St. Louis newspapers were awed by its arduous character

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<sup>3</sup> Copies of the printed program and of press notices are on file in the Archives of St. Louis University. (I am grateful to Father E. R. Vollmar S.J., archivist, for supplying microfilm copies of this material.)

and intrigued by its novelty. Long notices were published, with big headlines, with pictures and personal data of Father Vilallonga. The press became especially interested when it was announced that upon his arrival in St. Louis, President Theodore Roosevelt would proceed from the railroad station to the University to attend the disputation.

The occasion was in fact a big academic event, and the University did not underestimate its importance. Large numbers of Catholic clergy—both secular and religious—attended, headed by Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore and Archbishop Kain of St. Louis. Protestant clergymen had also been invited, and there is record of at least one Baptist minister who followed the discussions with keen interest. The disputation was held in the University Library on 29 April 1903, with sessions both morning and afternoon. The special "objectors" (each of whom was allotted half an hour) were professors of theology or philosophy in various theological faculties and seminaries throughout the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The President arrived towards the end of the afternoon session, not having come directly from the railroad station as previously announced, but from a Convention which he addressed. He was met with military honors at the entrance to the University and was then escorted to the Library where the disputation (which had been conducted entirely in Latin) was interrupted, and a welcome address in English was given by Father Rogers, Rector of the University. The President responded, also in English. Both the Rector and the President in their speeches alluded to the relations of Church and State in the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> These formalities over, Cardinal Gibbons

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<sup>4</sup> Including St. Mary's (Baltimore), St. Bernard's (Rochester), Kenrick (St. Louis), St. Francis (Milwaukee), the Dominican Scholasticate in Somerset, Ohio, and the Franciscan friary in St. Louis.

<sup>5</sup> Alluding to Father Vilallonga's "long residence and apostleship" in the Philippines, Father Rector said: "May I take occasion to thank you, Mr. President, and to express our gratitude for the eminent fairness with which you have striven to handle that most difficult of questions, our Island possessions, and to express our admiration for the broad-minded generosity with which, both in Rome and in Manila, you have striven to do justice to the large

brought the proceedings back to theology and the Latin tongue by addressing Father Vilallonga in a brief and gracious speech of congratulation, to which the defender also responded in the same language.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the Grand Act established Father Vilallonga as a theologian of brilliant promise, with a solid grasp of doctrine and a facility for clear exposition in precise and elegant Latin. After such an exhibition a person would normally have been appointed to teach in a theological faculty in Europe or America. But Father Vilallonga belonged to the Jesuit Mission of the Philippines which at that time had no theological faculty. Consequently, on his return to the Islands in 1904 (after one more year in the Tertianship at Florissant, Missouri), he was assigned to humbler tasks.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV

On 2 February 1905 he was admitted to the Solemn Profession of four vows, which is the definitive act by which the

Catholic interests involved." President Roosevelt replied: "I would hold myself recreant to the principles upon which this Government is founded did I not strive as Chief Executive to do fair and equal justice to all men without regard to the way in which any man chooses to worship his Maker."—*Woodstock Letters*, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Said the Cardinal: "Doctissime Pater, nomine excellentissimi Praesidis Statuum Foederatorum, nomine huius coronae ornatissimorum virorum, et meo ipsius nomine, ex intimo corde tibi gratulor propter defensionem thesium . . . dignam certe clarissimi alumni Societatis Iesu."—*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> The Jesuits in the Philippines had been teaching theology before their expulsion from the Islands in 1768. At their expulsion, all their possessions, including the College of Manila (founded 1595) and the College of San José (founded 1601) were confiscated by the Crown. The endowment for the College of San José passed to other hands. But in 1910, Pope St. Pius X (*Paternam curam*, 3 May 1910, AAS, II: 326-327) ordered the endowment restored to the Jesuits, to be used for the original purpose intended by the donors, namely the education of priests. In due course, after the lapse of a century and a half, the Jesuits in the Philippines began teaching theology again. By that time Father Vilallonga was already Rector. His first assignment on his return to the Philippines was as "minister" and "oeconomus" (bursar) of the Escuela Normal de San Francisco Javier.

long training of a Jesuit priest is finally completed. In 1907 the Provincial Synod of Manila made use of Father Vilallonga's theological learning. He served the Synod in three humble but important capacities: he was one of the four theological consultants to Archbishop Jeremiah Harty of Manila; he was a member of the Fourth Congregation (i.e. committee) of the Synod, headed by Bishop Kendrick of Cebu, which dealt with problems of faith and education; and he was one of the two sub-notaries of the Synod, serving under the chief notary, Monsignor Juan Gorordo, afterwards Bishop of Cebu.<sup>8</sup>

In that same year of 1907 Father Vilallonga returned to the Ateneo de Manila as professor of philosophy, and in 1910 he became Rector. This was the first of the administrative positions that he held in the next four decades. His six years as Rector of the Ateneo placed him in contact with the most influential people in the country, and gave him charge over students who themselves would rise to positions of eminence. Perhaps the best tribute that has been paid to Father Vilallonga was the lifelong friendship and almost universal veneration accorded him by his former students.

One of his projects that did not succeed was his attempt to transfer the Ateneo de Manila from its cramped quarters in Intramuros to more ample grounds elsewhere. The project failed; the land he bought proved unsuitable; but the decision to remain in the Walled City proved a very costly one. It was paid for (after his departure) by the total loss of the Ateneo buildings (including the Rizal Library and the irreplaceable Museum) in the Intramuros fire of August 1932. In its new location on Padre Faura Street in Ermita, the Ateneo sustained a second total destruction during the Battle of Manila in February 1945. Father Vilallonga lived to see the rebuilding of the Ateneo at Loyola Heights outside the city, on a grander scale than he himself had planned.

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<sup>8</sup> *Acta et decreta Concilii provincialis Manilani I* (Romae, 1910), pp. xxvi, xxvii, and xl. —On the effects of the Provincial Council of Manila, see Achútegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, I (Manila, 1960) 349-364.



In 1914 while he was still Rector of the Ateneo de Manila, Father Vilallonga went to Vigan to deliver the principal discourse commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus by Pope Pius VII. The occasion was graced with a pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop Clos of Zamboanga, at which Bishop Hurth of Vigan preached. The bishops were present at Father Vilallonga's lecture.<sup>9</sup>

It was during this period that Father Vilallonga made an attempt to establish friendly relations with Father Gregorio Aglipay, the Catholic priest of the Manila archdiocese who had broken away from the Church in 1902 to accept the position of Supreme Bishop of the Philippine Independent Church. Father Vilallonga's attempt (seconded by his friend, Theo Rogers) to convert Aglipay did not succeed.<sup>10</sup>

In 1916, his term over, Father Vilallonga left the Ateneo and was sent to Davao to take charge of the mission station there. Not long afterwards he was again made Rector, this time of the Seminary and College in Vigan. Later on, as Superior of the Philippine Jesuits, it was his sad task to withdraw his men from Vigan, putting an end to all Jesuit work in the Ilocos regions.

Father Vilallonga assumed office as Superior of the Philippine Mission on 9 May 1921.<sup>11</sup> Almost immediately after his induction, a major change in the personnel of the Mission was effected. By order of Father Wlodimir Ledochowski, Superior General of the Society of Jesus in Rome, the Spanish Fathers of the Aragón Province, who had labored in the Islands since 1859, were to leave the Philippines and take over the Bombay Mission in India. Their place in the Philippines was taken over by the American Jesuits of the Maryland-New York Province. The first large contingent of American

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<sup>9</sup> This information was supplied by Father Isaias X. Edralin S.J., a student in Vigan at that time, and afterwards Father Vilallonga's superior in Culi6n.

<sup>10</sup> Achútegui-Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, I, 421-424. (Father Vilallonga's manuscript account, "Algunos datos sobre el padre Gregorio Aglipay," is in the Achútegui Collection.)

<sup>11</sup> *Memorabilia Societatis Iesu* (Rome), I, 540.

Jesuits arrived in Manila in July 1921 with Father Francis X. Byrne at their head; the first group of Spanish Jesuits left the Philippines for India on 10 November 1921.<sup>12</sup>

The transition in this change of regime was made gradually. The American Jesuits took over the administration of the Ateneo de Manila and of the Seminary-College of Vigan in August 1921. The other institutions and works (the Colegio de San José, the Manila Observatory, the missions of Mindanao, the Culión chaplaincy, and the editorship of the monthly *Cultura Social*) remained for the time being in the hands of the Spanish Jesuits until additional personnel arrived to replace them. The period of transition, from 1921 to 1926, was supervised by Father Vilallonga.

The reasons for this major shift in men and administration may be briefly summarized here. The Mission of Bombay in India had been entrusted to the Jesuits of the Upper German Province in 1855. With customary vigor they proceeded to build churches, schools, and mission stations, so that by 1914, on the eve of the first World War, there were 130 Jesuits as well as a good number of secular priests working in the vast territory comprised in the Mission. Of the 130 Jesuits, 100 were German, the rest Swiss. Upon the outbreak of the war, the British colonial government in India decided to remove the German Fathers from their posts: 77 of them were repatriated, the rest interned.<sup>13</sup> The loss that this entailed to the missionary work in India can well be imagined, and repeated efforts in Rome were made to send replacements to the abandoned missionary posts. After the war an attempt was made to send American Jesuit missionaries from the Maryland-New York Province, but the British government in India denied them entry.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Memorab.*, I, 583; *Cultura Social*, IX (Manila, Aug. 1921) 328-329; *ibid.*, (Dec. 1921) 551.

<sup>13</sup> *Acta Romana Societatis Iesu*, II (Rome, 1915) 76, 87, 226, 231.

<sup>14</sup> *Memorab.* I, 583. cf. *Acta Romana S.I.*, for Father Ledochowski's address to the Procurators on 27 Sept. 1920, in which he mentioned this refusal to admit American Jesuits to India. (The fact that many American Jesuits bear Irish and German names, is believed to have been the reason for this refusal.)

While the American Jesuits were apparently unwanted in India, they were very much wanted in the Philippines, where a growing need was felt for English-speaking priests to teach in the schools and to minister to the needs of university students. As early as 1906, the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Archbishop Agius, wrote an appeal to the Jesuit Superior General in Rome (Father Francis Wernz) begging for English-speaking Jesuits to conduct English-speaking schools and to counteract what he termed "the ravages of Protestant and other sects."<sup>15</sup> In view, therefore, of this twofold need — of American priests for the Philippines and of priests of any nationality for India—the exclusion of the American Jesuits from Indian territory must have seemed providential. Accordingly, the Spanish Jesuits were ordered to India, and the American Jesuits replaced them in the Philippines.

Logical and necessary though this was, the change was nevertheless not without psychological and cultural difficulties for all concerned, whether Filipinos, Spaniards, or Americans. But the difficulty might have been much greater if the Superior of the Philippine Mission during the transition years did not have the broad vision and the unusual tact and diplomacy of Father Vilallonga. There are emphatic testimonies to this effect.<sup>16</sup>

Physically, Father Vilallonga was tall in stature, with a robust but spare frame. But he was a big man in other respects as well. By 1926, when he left the Philippines for prolonged consultations with Father General in Rome, he was 58 years old. He had spent 41 years in the Society of Jesus,

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<sup>15</sup> The letter is printed in full in Achútegui-Bernad, *Religious Revolution*, I, 372-373.

<sup>16</sup> Among them: Father John F. Hurley S.J. and Henry A. Coffey S.J., both of whom subsequently became themselves superiors of the Philippine Mission and both of whom came in the first group of Americans in 1921. Likewise Father Henry B. McCullough, S.J. of the Ateneo de Manila and Father Joseph McGowan S.J. of New York. The latter knew Father Vilallonga both in the Philippines and in India. In honesty we must record two dissenting opinions of Fathers who thought that Father Vilallonga was too much of a politician.

27 of them in the Philippines. He had been Rector of two colleges and Superior of the Jesuit Philippine Mission. This would have been sufficient work for a normal lifetime: but in Father Vilallonga's case it was only the first half. More was to come in Spain and India.

## V

He left Manila in September 1921 and after six weeks in Rome he proceeded to Spain for his first visit in his homeland since 1901. There his new assignment overtook him. In Barcelona, on the feast of St. Francis Xavier (3 December 1926), he assumed office as Provincial of the Jesuit Province of Aragón.<sup>17</sup>

Three notable events occurred during his term of office. One was the Veruela centennial, mentioned earlier. The Cardinal of Granada officiated at a solemn pontifical Mass. On that occasion Father Vilallonga sent a telegram of homage to the King of Spain and received one in reply.<sup>18</sup> Another was the memorable and unusual visit paid by the Superior General of the Jesuits (Father Ledochowski) to the Province of Aragón. Events in the Iberian Peninsula made his presence in Spain necessary, and he stayed in Barcelona for over a month as Father Vilallonga's guest, from December 1928 to January 1929.<sup>19</sup>

A third event was the definitive transfer (at the end of the transition period) of the Jesuit Philippine Mission from the jurisdiction of the Province of Aragón to that of Maryland-New York. This was effected by decree of Father General Ledochowski on 2 February 1927, implemented at Easter, 27 April. On that occasion Father James Carlin S.J., former Rector of Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, assumed office as the first American Superior of the Philippine Jesuits.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Memorab.*, II, 653, 659. He was in Rome from 3 Oct. to 12 Nov.

<sup>18</sup> *Memorab.*, III, 374-376.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 357-360; (cf. *AR*, VI, 375-382.)

<sup>20</sup> *AR*, V (1927) 644-645 and 717-718; also *Memorab.*, III, 14, 53; *Cultura Social*, XV (1927) 254, 255, 284.

## VI

In March 1929 Father Vilallonga received an unusual commission from the Holy See: he was appointed Apostolic Visitor to the Philippines. Leaving his assistant (Father José Mundó) to govern the Aragón Province during his absence, Father Vilallonga repaired to Rome to receive a briefing on his mission. He then embarked for the Philippines.<sup>21</sup>

News of his coming brought joy to his many friends in the Philippines, and a large delegation of officials and friends were on hand to welcome him. Pier 7 was not then the turbulent Pier 13 that it is now, and the arrival of a dignitary could still be a dignified affair. Father Vilallonga's reception was both dignified and warm. At the head of the reception committee were the Archbishop of Manila (Michael J. O'Doherty), the Apostolic Delegate (Gulielmo Piani), the Superior of the Jesuits (James Carlin), the Auxiliary Bishop of Manila (William Finemann S.V.D.), and the Rector of the Ateneo (Richard O'Brien S.J.).<sup>22</sup>

The newspapers attached much importance to Father Vilallonga's visit and he was popularly referred to as "the eyes and ears of the Pope." He was given much favorable publicity both in Manila and the provinces, particularly in Cebu. His visitation lasted a year during which he went to all the major regions of the Islands. Wherever he went he was received with enthusiasm by officials of Church and State, as well as by the alumni of the two colleges which he had governed: the Ateneo de Manila and the College of Vigan.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Memorab.*, III, 408 and 741. His appointment was dated 8 March 1929, to take effect beginning May. He remained in Rome from 16 to 20 May.

<sup>22</sup> *Cultura Social* XVII (July 1929) 351 (photos on pp. 340, 352).

<sup>23</sup> It is said, apparently on good authority, that during one of his travels at this or at a later time, Father Vilallonga's visit to the island leprosarium of Culión was facilitated by General Douglas MacArthur who lent him his hydroplane. Requested for verification, the General through his administrative aide sent the following reply to the author, dated New York, 26 Sept. 1963: "Concerning the account of Father Vilallonga's visit to the Leper Colony in Culión, the General states that it may be accurate; however, at this late date, it would be impossible for him to provide any verification."

The precise nature and purpose of Father Vilallonga's mission was never publicly disclosed. The fact, however, that his appointment had come from the Sacred Congregation of the Consistory would seem to indicate that the condition of the Philippine hierarchy and the individual bishoprics were among the chief objects of his survey. Subsequent events tended to confirm this view: for shortly after his visit a re-organization of the Philippine hierarchy took place. There were changes in personnel, and new episcopal sees were created, culminating in the creation of a second ecclesiastical province in the Philippines, with the metropolitan see in Cebu.<sup>24</sup>

An important side-effect of Father Vilallonga's visit was the return to the Church and to the Sacraments of several lapsed Catholics, some of them prominent in government or in business and the professions. Some of these had joined the masonic fraternity which is forbidden for Catholics.

Toward the close of his visitation, while preparing his report in Manila, Father Vilallonga received a new appointment: this time as Visitor of the Jesuit Missions of Bombay and of Poona in India. His term as Provincial of Aragón had ceased in the meantime, his successor having assumed office on 28 July 1930.<sup>25</sup>

Father Vilallonga left Manila on 16 August 1930.<sup>26</sup> He completed his visitation of the two Indian Missions by the beginning of November. He returned to Rome to render his twofold report—on the Philippines and on India—remaining in Rome for nearly two months. Returning briefly to Spain, he was back again in Rome in April and May 1931. And

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<sup>24</sup> The new ecclesiastical jurisdictions were: Bacolod (1932); Mountain Province (1932); Cagayan (1933). Cebu was raised into an archbishopric in 1934. Lingayen (May 1929) was made a diocese prior to Father Vilallonga's arrival in the Philippines. Other jurisdictions were created a few years later: Mindoro (1936); Palo (1937); Surigao (1938); Tagbilaran (1941). For personnel changes, see AAS, XXV (1933) 130, 135.

<sup>25</sup> *Memorab.*, III, 777, and note.

<sup>26</sup> *Cultura Social*, XVIII (July 1931) 357.

then he was sent back to India to become Superior of one of the Missions he had just visited, that of Bombay.<sup>27</sup>

He was then 63 years old. He had spent 46 years as a Jesuit—only four years short of his Golden Jubilee. He was starting a new life. Arriving in Bombay, he assumed office as Superior on 14 June 1931.<sup>28</sup>

## VII

The Bombay Mission to which the Spanish Fathers went from the Philippines in 1921, and which was transferred to their jurisdiction by formal decree on 2 February 1922, was an immense territory that included what today are separate jurisdictions, namely: Bombay, Poona, Ahmedabad, and Karachi. The first dismemberment of this vast area was made in 1929 when the Mission of Poona was separated from that of Bombay and restored to the German Jesuits. The remaining territory was still large, and it was this territory which fell to Father Vilallonga's lot when he assumed office in 1931. He had at that time (1932) only 54 priests (besides scholastics and brothers) for all the various projects of the Mission, which included several schools. This number was increased the following year to 73. This vast area and the growing number of missionaries necessitated further dismemberment. The Mission of Karachi was accordingly entrusted to the Dutch Franciscans. The area around Ahmedabad was created into a separate Mission. In 1934 this new Mission of Ahmedabad was entrusted to Father Vilallonga in a double capacity: as Superior of the Jesuits, and as Ecclesiastical Superior of the territory under appointment from the Congregation of Propaganda.<sup>29</sup>

Father Vilallonga's dual capacity was an unusual arrangement, but it had obvious advantages. By thus combining the twofold jurisdiction in the hands of one man, the Holy See was doubtless trying to avoid the inconveniences consequent upon

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<sup>27</sup> *Memorab.*, III, 763, 777; and IV, 391, 392.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 405.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 445; V, 195, 358-541; X, 298. Also AR, VI (1929) 390-391, and VIII (1935) 303-305.

a divided jurisdiction that had so plagued the Catholics of Bombay.<sup>30</sup> The arrangement suited Father Vilallonga admirably, who continued to govern the Catholic Mission of Ahmedabad in that dual capacity for fourteen years.<sup>31</sup> When he resigned his duties in 1949, the twofold jurisdiction was separated: as Religious Superior, he was succeeded by Father Gregorio Conget and the Mission of Ahmedabad was soon raised to the rank of a Vice-Province; as Ecclesiastical Superior Father Vilallonga was succeeded by Edwin Pinto S.J., who was consecrated the first bishop of the newly created see of Ahmedabad.<sup>32</sup>

Freed from his duties after eighteen years in India, Father Vilallonga asked for, and obtained, an unusual request: he was allowed to return to the Philippines to spend the remaining years of his life as chaplain to the lepers in Culi6n. He was then 81 years old.<sup>33</sup>

## VIII

The rest of his life can be briefly told. He lived in Culi6n for thirteen years until he fell mortally ill. During those thirteen years he did not want to leave the island—except on direct orders from his superior—for fear lest he should die elsewhere, for it had become his wish to die among the lepers and to be buried with them.

His regular routine was relaxed but arduous. He began his day at 3:30 every morning, having had a seven-hour sleep, for he retired early for the night. He said Mass daily in the chaplains' chapel, his Mass being attended by the Sisters, doctors and nurses. He heard confessions before Mass. By nine

<sup>30</sup> *Memorab.*, X, 297.

<sup>31</sup> In his dual capacity as Ecclesiastical and Religious Superior, Father Vilallonga consecrated Ahmedabad to the Sacred Heart in 1936.—*Memorab.*, X, 297.

<sup>32</sup> *AAS*, 41 (1949) 469, 582; see also *Memorab.*, VIII, 196.

<sup>33</sup> The announcement from Rome read as follows: “. . . P. Ioachimi Vilallonga . . . , qui jam plus quam 80 annos natus, cum omnino erat liberatus a suis officiis, contendet in insulam *Culion* (Miss. Philipp.) ubi reliquam vitam pro leprosis impendere desideravit”—*Memorab.*, VIII, 196.



o'clock a.m. he was ready to walk slowly downhill, cane in hand, to the leper colony proper, to visit the patients in the wards and to hear their confessions. He would then walk back, more slowly, uphill to the chaplains' quarters. In the afternoon he read his Office, and in the evening he said the Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament. On Sundays and holy days this routine was varied somewhat: in the morning he would say a public Mass and preach a homily (in English); in the afternoon he would give Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>34</sup>

Being a very old man, and having been a governor of men and administrator of affairs for almost half of his long life, he had naturally become set in his ways. He did not take kindly to unforeseen changes in the daily schedule, which younger men on the island sometimes saw fit to make. He also did not take kindly to modern innovations—and this sometimes led to amusing results. For instance, on those few instances when he was persuaded to leave the island to go to Manila—on orders from his superiors—he refused to fly, because travel by air, in his view, was not fitting for a poor man like himself. The result was that his friend, Don Ramón Fernandez, informed of the situation, would radio one of his ships to change course and call at Culi6n to bring Father Vilallonga to Manila—which of course involved far more expense than if he had traveled by air. Similarly, with Old World severity he refused the ministrations of female nurses: the result was that when he got sick in Culi6n, a special infirmarian, Brother Felixberto Trinidad S.J., had to be sent there to take care of him. Similarly, when he had to be air-lifted to Manila for an operation, three Jesuit lay-brothers had to be assigned to do the work of hospital nurses.

These were crochets of an old man. But if he was strong in his ideas of poverty and the safeguards of priestly celibacy, he was also strong in his concept of obedience. He would reject suggestions vigorously as long as they remained suggestions: but once his superiors (some of whom were young enough

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<sup>34</sup> Information supplied in a written statement by Father Pedro Dimaano S.J., Father Vilallonga's first superior in Culi6n (Father Vilallonga outlasted many). This testimony is corroborated in many particulars by Father Anthony Gampp S.J. and Father Isaias X. Edralin S.J.

to be his grandsons) issued a direct command, he obeyed without question.<sup>35</sup>

If there were moments of intransigence, they were few. Father Vilallonga was ordinarily easy to get along with, and he treated his friends with great tact and consideration. The laybrothers who worked for him are almost unanimous in their praise of his courtesy and kindness: a Filipino laybrother who nursed him in his illness, an English laybrother now attached to the Farm Street Church in London, a Spanish laybrother who served as his amanuensis in India—all speak highly of Father Vilallonga.<sup>36</sup>

One explanation for this almost universal veneration is given by one who knew him well: "Besides being very humble, he was very discreet in his dealing with people. I never heard him talk about his past successes in life. If he made many friends...even among the rich and powerful...it was simply due, I presume, to his excellent quality of dealing very kindly with people, rich or poor, big or small. He was a born diplomat, I think. He made steadfast friends..."<sup>37</sup>

Even in his retirement in Culi6n, a few signal honors pursued him. On such occasions, despite his reluctance to leave the island, he obeyed his superiors' orders to go to Manila. In

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<sup>35</sup> Information supplied by Father Robert Rice S.J., Father Vilallonga's second superior in Culi6n.

<sup>36</sup> Brother Luis Tom6s first met Father Vilallonga in 1926 in Gandia, and it was the latter, as Provincial of Arag6n, who sent him to India. Bro. Tom6s writes: "During the three or four years in which he was Superior of the Bombay Mission, he used to call me almost every evening after the classes were over, to St. Xavier's College to write his correspondence. I was posted at St. Xavier's High School and needed only to cross the playground to be there. He used to dictate his letters either in English or in Spanish and when he was doing it in Latin, he most patiently used to pronounce it in such a way that I could easily understand it. No matter what mistakes I made he was always patient with me and very rarely he made me type the letter over again though at times I did it of my own accord. At the end there was always his grateful smile . . ."—Bro. Luis Tom6s to Bernad, from West Baden College, Indiana, 16 Nov. 1963.

<sup>37</sup> Father Dimaano S.J. to Bernad, Cagayan de Oro, 27 June 1963.

February 1959 he was the guest of honor at the centennial banquet of the Ateneo de Manila. In August of that year he was given the Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Award for Public Service. In December 1960 he received from the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Siino, the medal *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. The award was presented in the Ateneo chapel on Padre Faura Street, followed by a reception in the dining room at which the toast was offered by his former student and lifelong friend, Senator Claro M. Recto. Finally, in September 1962 he received from the hands of the Spanish Ambassador the decoration from the Spanish government "Encomienda Isabel la Católica." The ceremony was held in the auditorium of the Ateneo de Manila.

Perhaps much closer to his heart, however, was a different kind of honor. On the occasion of his 60th year in the Society of Jesus in 1955, live messages were collected by Mr. Luis Zíalcita from Father Vilallonga's friends in Manila, who talked into a tape recorder. The taped messages were brought to Cullión and played back to Father Vilallonga who sent a grateful message back.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Those who sent tape-recorded messages included the Archbishop of Manila (now Cardinal) Rufino Santos, the Apostolic Nuncio (Egidio Vagnozzi), Father José Ma. Siguión (from his hospital bed), Justice Cesar Bengzon, Justice Felix Bautista, Justice (afterwards Secretary) Manuel Lim, Senator Claro Recto, Mr. Theo Rogers, Mr. Gabriel Daza, Mr. Claudio R. de Luzuriaga, Mr. Paulino Sevilla, Mr. José Galán Blanco, Mr. Antonio Santisteban, Mr. Luis Gaskell, Mr. Gabriel Gaskell, Don Ramon Fernandez, Mr. Ricardo Summers, Mr. Jose Lauchengco, Dr. Jose Avelino y Basa, Dr. Agerico Sison, Mr. Emeterio Barcelón, Dr. Vicente Delfín, Dr. José Ma. Delgado, Dr. José López del Castillo, Dr. Carmelo Peñaflor, Hon. Aurelio Montinola, Mr. Francisco Dalupan, Mr. Justo López, Hon. Fabian Millar, Mr. Alfredo Carmelo, et al. There were others, close to Father Vilallonga, who were not included in the list, like Senator Oscar Ledesma and Hon. Paulino Garcia. There were also messages from the Jesuit Provincial and the Rectors and Superiors of all Jesuit houses in the Philippines. The outstanding message came from Father Pedro S. de Achútegui, Rector of the Theological Faculty in Baguio, who composed a poem for the occasion while the Spanish Scholastics sang Spanish songs. The original tapes are in the possession of Mr. Luis Zíalcita.

In October 1962 he suffered a fall in Culi6n, and when treatment in the island did not bring any improvement, he was brought to Singian Clinic in Manila. He continued to receive visitors until almost the last day. There on 1 February 1963 at 2:45 a.m. he died, and after the funeral Mass in the Ateneo de Manila on Padre Faura Street, he was buried in the tiny cemetery in the Jesuit novitiate at Novaliches. His death received prominent notice in the newspapers, some of which mourned his passing in their editorials.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> I wish to take this opportunity to thank all who have supplied me with information on Father Vilallonga. In particular I wish to thank Archbishop Hayes of Cagayan, Father Bernard Lockboehler, S.J., archivist of the Philippine Jesuit Province, and Father Nicholas Cushner S.J., now in Barcelona, who obtained microfilmed copies of certain documents in the archives at San C6gat del Vall6s, Barcelona.