

philippine studies

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

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Leo A. Cullum

Philippine Studies vol. 5, no. 1 (1957): 45–70

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President Magsaysay's Consecration of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart

LEO A. CULLUM

ON Saturday, 24 November, *The Manila Chronicle* carried a story headlined "RM plan to consecrate PI at eucharistic meet flayed." RM is, of course, President Ramon Magsaysay. The "meet" was the Second National Eucharistic Congress, and a reading of the subsequent account reveals that the choice of "flayed" was dictated rather by the exigencies of column space and the paper's editorial policy than by the tone of the protest itself. The news story which followed reported the letter of Dr. Gumersindo Garcia written to the President, protesting against the President's reading an act consecrating the nation to the Sacred Heart. The full text of Dr. Garcia's letter as reported in the press is as follows:

My dear President Magsaysay:

Many people are concerned about the publication in the press regarding your supposed consecration of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was stated also in the papers that Spain and Ecuador did the same thing and so we will be the third country in the world to consecrate ourselves to the Catholic church.

With regard to Spain and Ecuador, I believe it is proper for the heads of these nations to consecrate their countries to the Roman Catholic Church because in these countries, the Church and State are one.

But in countries such as ours which is democratic in form and in which the principle of the separation of the church and state is recognized and affirmed in our Constitution, it is the belief of many of us that your official participation in this coming Eucharistic Congress in consecrating our nation to the Roman Catholic religion, is a violation of that principle.

It is true that the Philippines is predominantly a Catholic nation, but in accordance with the principle of the separation of Church and State, the President of this country should not give any special preference or favor to any particular Church.

May God give you the wisdom, courage, power and strength to decide for the best interest and welfare of our country.—(Sgd) Dr. Gumersindo Garcia, Sr., Mary Johnston Hospital.

It will be noted that the letter does not state the facts correctly. "...your official participation in this coming Eucharistic Congress in consecrating our nation to the Roman Catholic religion is a violation..." But there was no question of consecrating the nation *to the Roman Catholic Church* but of consecrating the Filipino people to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Dr. Gumersindo Garcia is a regent of the University of the Philippines and will be remembered as one of those who offered vigorous opposition to Father John P. Delaney's apostolate in the state institution. He is also a member of the National Board of the Y.M.C.A. and a former President of the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches. He may well be considered the leading Protestant layman of the Philippines. We shall have occasion to consider Dr. Garcia's opinions below. Let us first recall the incidents which occasioned the letter.

THE CONSECRATIONS

The Second National Eucharistic Congress was held from Wednesday, 28 November, to Sunday, 2 December 1956. On Thursday, 29 November, Mrs. Luz Magsaysay, wife of the President of the Philippines, at the Women's Mass celebrated on the Luneta, read an act consecrating the families of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart. Then, on Saturday morning, 1

December, again on the Luneta, Felix Villaluna, a student of the Legarda Elementary School, read an act consecrating all the children of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart. Finally, on Sunday, 2 December after a Mass celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Spellman, President Ramon Magsaysay read an act consecrating the people of the Philippines to the Sacred Heart. This act was as follows:

The President

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, through whose redemptive love, all the nations of the earth have been blessed, graciously deign to accept the consecration which we make to You today, of ourselves and our beloved native land. Through this consecration we desire, singly as individuals and collectively as a nation, to thank You for present blessings, to make reparation for past disloyalty, and to implore with humble but confident hearts Your assistance in the future.

We desire to thank You sincerely for the blessings which surround us on every side; for the beauty of our land and the abundance of its natural resources, the riches of our rivers, and seas, our forests and farmlands, our mines and our quarries; we are especially grateful for the light of faith, which we uniquely among the nations of the Far East enjoy, and for the air of freedom in which, shielded by our Constitution, we may live and act with the liberty and dignity befitting men who have been created in the image and likeness of God. If in the past we have taken these good gifts too much for granted, we now desire to make public avowal of our appreciation and gratitude to Your Sacred Heart, source of all blessings.

The People

Heart of Jesus, fountain and source of all blessings, we thank You sincerely for our beautiful land and its resources, for our faith and our freedom.

The President

We desire secondly, by this united and public manifestation of devotion, to make what reparation we can for the sins and offenses by which men throughout the ages have grieved Your Sacred Heart.

The People

Heart of Jesus, grieved by our sins, we shall strive to make this reparation by a renewed endeavor to lead lives nobler, purer and in every way more Christ-like.

The President

We desire, finally, to implore Your guidance and assistance in the future, so that as we advance in age as an independent nation, we may also advance in wisdom and grace before God and men. By Your light and inspiration, enable us to meet and solve, in a manner consonant with Your ideals, the manifold problems that perplex us today; help us to bring to a successful conclusion our struggle against Communism and lawlessness, want and misery.

The People

Heart of Jesus, heart of our Friend, hear our prayer and grant us effective aid in time of need.

The President

In a spirit of gratitude, reparation and reverent entreaty therefore, we the Catholics of the Philippines, gathered here today in swelling multitudes, with one heart and one voice, solemnly renew the consecration of our country to Your Sacred Heart. Take under Your strong and strength-giving protection our government, its executives, legislators, justices, diplomats and economists; our educational system and its directors, professors and teachers; our armed forces of land, sea and air, together with the policemen, firemen and other guardians of public safety and security; in a word, all government agencies whose cooperation is essential for the progress and prosperity of our Republic.

The People

Heart of Jesus, grant to each and all enlightenment ever to recognize what is right and the moral courage to do it. Foster within us an abiding sense of duty and an unwavering loyalty to the principles of honesty, justice and right order in the fulfillment of that duty.

The President

The youth of our land, upon whom our future depends, we wish to consecrate to You in a special way, that in them may be increased respect for all lawful authority, without which no nation can endure. Finally we consecrate ourselves, our hearts and minds, our families and homes to Your Sacred Heart in order that each and every one may be inspired to contribute loyally, and unselfishly, that measure of patriotic service required of us, so that our country may enjoy peace and prosperity within, and ordered tranquility in its relations with all other peoples of the earth.

Grant that our rising Republic may flourish and become increasingly influential for good in the council of nations, as a people impera-

tively commanding the respect of all for its adherence to the sacred traditions of our Christian way of life, and to the principles of justice and charity of which Your Heart is the ultimate source.

The People

Heart of Jesus, through these prayers and promises and through the intercession of our Immaculate Mother, patroness of the Philippines, may this "land, dear and holy" to us the Filipino people become ever more and more dear to You and ever more holy in the sight of Your heavenly Father. And may Your kingdom of justice and love extend its sway over all people for the glory of God and for the salvation, peace and happiness of all men!

THE CONTROVERSY

Dr. Garcia's letter was the opening gun in a vigorous campaign against the President's action. Bishop Alejandro Remolino of the Philippine Independent Church (Aglipayan) echoed the protest but in much stronger language. *The Chronicle* was able with more justice this time (28 November) to headline "Minority churches flay RM's act of consecration." The letter was printed in *The Evening News* as follows:

Mister President: I have been duly authorized to protest in the name of the "Iglesia Filipina Independiente," and its two million faithful Filipinos against the plan of having the President of the Philippines dedicate our nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We believe in the whole humanity of Jesus as well as in His divinity. And we consider the plan of having the President of our Republic dedicate the whole Philippines to just the heart of Jesus, as token of paganism and a clear and criminal violation of our Constitution.

The "Iglesia Independiente" preaches freedom for the souls of our people, and considers the announced plan as a miserable attempt to disguise our religious colonialism and shameful dependence to Rome. Let the Roman Catholic Church dedicate its faithful to any saint or image, but we the loyal children of our Revolution protest against the inclusion of two millions of us in such consecration to the sacred heart. The President of our nation should be above such sectarian actions as such Chief of State(sic). Very respectfully, (Sgd) Alejandro Remolino, Bishop, Secretary General.

On 29 November, Jose A. Yap, executive secretary of the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches, wrote a long letter to the President, which was published in several papers in

whole or in part, voicing the objections of this Protestant group. The letter said:

Dear Mr. President: We have read that on December 2, you will perform a religious function by leading the act of consecration of the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We also noted the adverse reaction from many quarters among our people to your performance of a task which we definitely believe does not properly belong to the Chief Executive of a republican state. The widespread and vigorous reaction against your participation in a Catholic religious ceremony is a demonstration of the maturity of our people and their great love for democracy and religious liberty.

Mr. President, please be reminded that the task which you are about to do will greatly undermine the very foundations of democracy in our country and may cause the people of the world to revise their high esteem of you as the greatest champion of democracy in Asia. For unquestionably your public and official appearance in a Catholic religious ceremony is a violation of the principle of the separation of the church and state which is beautifully safeguarded by the statutes of our land.

Allow us to bring to your attention that when the great Manuel L. Quezon was invited to a similar occasion he responded, "I hope I am a good and practical Catholic. As such, in my individual capacity, there is nothing that I shall not be glad to do to give added solemnity to the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress...but, as President of the Philippines, I am not in a position to do what your program calls for." He refused to take part publicly and officially in the said Eucharistic Congress because of the fear that his participation might be interpreted as "an official participation of the government of the Commonwealth in these ceremonies."

With the best interest of the Filipino people in our hearts and the general welfare of the Republic of the Philippines in our minds, we, therefore, humbly and earnestly beseech you to refrain from performing the task which may bring dissension and disunity among our people. You are the symbol of our unity as a nation. Of what good will that symbol be, however, if it caters to a particular religious group, majority though it may be, with a complete disregard of the feelings and constitutional rights of the minority? As a wise father avoideth making evident his preference for a particular child to conserve the love and the affection of the rest of the children in the family, so must a wise President refrain from making known officially and publicly his preference for a particular church, thus conserving the spirit of unity and harmony among his people.

Let your crusade for righteousness and goodness continue. May God grant you the power and wisdom to help purify our country and our people by the example of your life. We want you to know that we are continually lifting you before His throne of grace that you may be better enabled to perform the staggering responsibilities of your Office. — Jose A. Yap, executive secretary, Philippine Federation of Christian Churches.

Again on 29 November, *The Manila Chronicle* gave front-page prominence to the protest of a group calling themselves "The Spirit of 1896." This protest was voiced by Judge Guillermo B. Guevara (unquestionably the most vigorous foe of the Catholic Church in the Philippines) and Juan Nabong, President of the Federation of Christian Churches.

The resolution signed by Judge Guevara as president of "The Spirit of 1896" and Mr. Nabong as executive secretary was printed in *The Evening News* as follows:

WHEREAS, uncontradicted news items scheduled President Magsaysay to dedicate the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the closing ceremonies of the Second Eucharistic Congress on the second day of December 1956;

WHEREAS, President Magsaysay has been elected by the people as their political leader and not as a religious one;

WHEREAS, there are many millions of Filipino Muslims, non-Catholics, non-believers and pagans whom President Magsaysay could not possibly represent in a religion of his own choice and much less to dedicate them to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or to Virgin Mary.

WHEREAS, the public consecration of the Filipino people by President Magsaysay to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is essentially a religious act and at the same time an official act or act of State;

WHEREAS, under our democratic Constitution the State cannot profess nor foster any particular sect or religion;

NOW THEREFORE, The Spirit of 1896, a society consecrated to the maintenance of individual rights and liberties and the preservation of the principle of the separation of the Church and State, through its National Directorate, convened in a special session today, hereby makes of record this respectful but vigorous protest against the proposed act of President Magsaysay of officially and publicly consecrating the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

A Moslem group according to *The Chronicle* (2 December 1956) added their voice to the chorus. *The Chronicle* news story ran:

Muslims' Views—On behalf of two million Muslims, considered the biggest minority religious group in the country, Datu Ahmad Badarrudin, secretary-general of the Muslim Association of the Philippines, issued this statement: "As head of a democratic state, President Magsaysay cannot foster a particular sect or religion."

The Muslims, Badarrudin said, do not question the act of the President to profess his own religion as guaranteed by the Constitution, but not to be "subservient to any particular religious dogma as head of the state."

Congressman Joaquin Rocas, Nacionalista from Manila, gained some public attention by attacking the President's act over Station DZMY. The issue, Congressman Rocas said, was not whether President Magsaysay had a right to practice his own religion but whether the President in his capacity as Chief of State had the right under the Constitution to pledge the whole nation and its people to any one religion.

"No one," Rocas said, "for instance, would deny the President the right to kneel among the crowd at the Luneta and pray in his own manner to his own God."

Though Congressman Rocas seems to have been the only political figure who spoke publicly against the President's act, there were according to a columnist (Eddie B. Monteclaro in "You and Your Congress") other "solons" who were dissatisfied but kept silent for fear of antagonizing the Catholic voters.

A number of columnists were critical. Ernesto del Rosario, editor of *The Chronicle*, thought that the protests of Dr. Garcia merited careful consideration and warned Catholics against "narrow-mindedness" in their reaction to it (25 November). Eddie B. Monteclaro did not like the President's participation, and thought that he was playing with fire. A columnist in *The Sunday Times* (19 November) thought that the President was "dipping his finger in the religious pot, a matter best left to the Archbishop."

On the whole however the columnists were surprisingly mild, contenting themselves with expressions of misgivings or of respectful dissent. Many who would have been expected to come out strongly against the President said nothing.

On the other hand the President's act found a rather large number of defenders among the columnists. Horacio Q. Borromeo was quantitatively if not qualitatively in the lead. He twice devoted his column ("On the Record," *The Philippines Herald*, 20 and 27 November) to a defense of the President. Teodoro F. Valencia took the President's side in a sensible column ("Over a Cup of Coffee"): "Being President should not inhibit him from individual expression of his faith. That's not favoritism. That's the individual freedom to worship which even he should be allowed to exercise." Alejandro Roces in "Roses and Thorns," (*The Manila Times*, 1 December) took a similar stand. "It is no secret that President Magsaysay is a Catholic. . . . Why should certain quarters begrudge him the right to practice his religion? . . . What right, or power, does any group have to prevent the President from leading his fellow worshippers in prayer? A man does not cease to be a Catholic, Protestant or Moslem simply because he is elected President of a Republic." Jose D. Aspiras in *The Evening News*, (Saturday, 1 December) in his column "Key-notes" said something similar.

Most spirited of all was B. M. Gancy's defense of Magsaysay's action ("Here and There," *The Evening News*, 1 December) and his rejection of the Quezon precedent as a valid argument. Gancy said the issue was simply whether the President as a Catholic citizen was forbidden to participate in liturgical functions, and the columnist's answer was that there was no law against it, only some personal interpretations of the meaning of the "principle" of separation of Church and State which certainly the President need not make his own.

Meanwhile the letter columns of the papers carried a flow of opinions for and against the act. As usually happens with "readers' views" some of these letters were good and to the point, others highly incoherent. Dr. Garcia had another letter, quoting at length from Ralston Hayden's book, *The Philip-*

pires. The main point made (and this occurs several times in the debate) was that Manuel Quezon had in 1937 declined to be associated in any way with the Eucharistic Congress of that year.

NATURE OF CONSECRATION

The objections brought against President Magsaysay's action were based on the whole on a misunderstanding of what the consecration implied. Also in some measure on a misunderstanding of what the "principle of separation of church and state" implies. It will clarify the issue to say something about both.

Consecration in its radical meaning is to make sacred, that is to say, to withdraw a person, place or object from "profane" i.e. non-religious, non-holy, uses and dedicate or set it aside for sacred uses. Thus chalices and altars are consecrated; priests and religious are spoken of as consecrated to God; a cemetery becomes consecrated ground.

When the word consecration is used regarding the "consecration to the Sacred Heart" it is used in a sense analogous to this primary sense. And it is used of several different acts which it is prudent to distinguish in order to avoid confusion. The basic "consecration" in the devotion to the Sacred Heart is *personal* consecration. This is an act by which a person professes his union with Christ and pledges himself and all that he has to Christ, as having been received from God. It is therefore an acknowledgement of and a return for the abundant love of God. Having received all, all is returned.

It should be observed that this consecration does not, so to speak, return to Christ anything not already His due. Man already has an obligation to lead his *whole life* (this may sound new to "Sunday" Christians) in harmony with God's will. The act of consecration adds nothing to this but a new motive, namely love. What man *must* in any case give to God, he now *chooses* to give, inspired by love which is awakened by a consideration of Christ's love for him.

This therefore is a personal permanent orientation. It has much of the character of a vow, demanding like a vow the personal will of the person and placing him in a state which outlasts the transitory act of dedication. Just as no one can make a vow for another so no one can make a personal consecration for another.

This personal consecration is associated with the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at least from the time of St. Margaret Mary onwards. Both she and Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, her spiritual guide, made these consecrations and urged others to do so. St. Margaret Mary says that she was instructed by Our Lord Himself to do so.

As hinted above, the practice springs from the very nature of the devotion. The consideration of the great goodness of Jesus to men, which is an expression of His love for them, naturally awakens a response of love in men, who are thus aroused to give what they can to Him. This is done in consecration. St. Ignatius Loyola in his well-known *Contemplatio ad amorem obtinendum* (Contemplation for Obtaining Love) has the retreatant consider God's favors to him, thus to awaken in himself a return of love. This return is expressed in what is really an act of consecration and is known in ascetical literature as the *Sume et suscipe*. (Take and Receive).

Reasons therefore both from the nature of the devotion and its history prompted Pope Pius XI to characterize personal consecration as of outstanding importance in the devotion and worthy of special emphasis (*pia eminent ac memoranda est consecratio*).

There are other consecrations which are not of individuals but of groups. Just as certain groups have a life which is something more than the life of their component individuals, so these groups must orientate this communal life to God. And they may make this orientation not only through a sense of duty but through a sense of love. If they do the latter, they make a community consecration.

FAMILY CONSECRATION

Consecration of the family, the most common form of community consecration, has come to be one of the most characteristic elements of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Though there is nothing about this practice in the writings of St. Margaret Mary, it nevertheless is suggested by those promises of the Sacred Heart which touch the family in a special way. "The Sacred Heart of Our Lord," she writes, "promised that not one of those who dedicated themselves to his Sacred Heart would ever perish, and that, as it is the source of all blessings, it would abundantly pour them forth *wherever* the image of this lovable heart should be exposed, in order to be loved and honored; that by this means, it should reunite families divided by discord and assist and protect those that would be in any need, and that it would shed the sweet unction of its ardent charity on all *communities* in which this divine image should be exposed." (*Italics ours.*)

The consecration of the family is an act whereby a family gives itself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and devotes itself to His service in order to live henceforth for Him alone and to accomplish in all things His holy will. By it the family recognizes Christ as its king and promises to make Him reign and rule over the whole family life.

What will this family consecration imply in the concrete? First of all the family has its common dwelling place; everything put there or done there will reflect the rule of Christ. The pictures that hang on the walls, the statues that grace the rooms, the literature on the shelves, the manner in which the members dress, the social activities held, the music and songs heard, the radio and television programs listened to—all these will have their character modified by the rule of Christ.

Not only the furnishings and activities of the home, but the life of the members outside the home will also be subject matter of this consecration. The obedience of the children, the care of parents, the fidelity and love of wives and husbands become a service of the Sacred Heart. It has been remarked above that personal consecration is the basis of all consecra-

tions. All the activities by which the family manifests its dedication are first of all personal acts. Nevertheless there is hardly anything the members do which does not have its social aspects and cannot as such be offered to the Sacred Heart as a pledge of love.

Moreover the family *as a family* will pray to God in joint attendance at Mass and reception of Communion, in the family rosary, in common spiritual reading, in shared works of charity and zeal, in group retreats, Cana Conferences, etc.

Because this consecration is an act of the family as such, it would seem proper that the family consecration should be made by the father of the family since he by nature is qualified to speak for the family and has the duty of leading the family to God. Nevertheless it is not necessarily made by him, and if for some reason he fails to give this leadership the family can still consecrate itself to the Sacred Heart through the mother or through whichever member seems best qualified in the nature of things to be their spokesman. And in such a consecration the *whole* family is included, even those who are opposed to it; but now these latter are recommended by their brethren to the Sacred Heart and dedicated to Him in *spe* if not in *re*. As said above, no one but the individual can actually obligate his own will whether it be in the family or elsewhere.

NATIONAL CONSECRATION

We have delayed somewhat long on the family because it suggests the principles which govern the consecration of nations. For nations too can be and should be consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

"The whole of mankind," wrote Pius XI in his Encyclical *Quas Primas*, "is subject to the power of Jesus Christ. Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men whether individually or collectively are under the dominion of Christ."

Now, as in the case of individuals and families, nations can recognize this obligation either merely through a sense of duty or also as a return of love. If they do it in this second manner

(which of course presupposes the first) we have national consecration. The consecration of a nation therefore is an act whereby a nation solemnly recognizes Jesus for its loving and beloved King and proclaims that it is willing to submit to His dominion out of love for Him.

Again, as in the case of families, this is something more than the sum of the personal dedications. The nation has its own life, the acts of the individual citizens have a social aspect. To take a clear example, the nation's role in international affairs is obviously something peculiar to civil society as such. Moreover the laws and their administration all reflect the national purpose and many of the laws (such as those on education, marriage, social work and industrial relations) will have a very intimate connection with Christian principles. Also the individual political life of the citizens, the use of the suffrage, the conduct of the officials in office, are things which transcend merely personal limits, and constitute the life of the nation as such. National consecration aspires to bring this life under the sway of Christ.

The movement of consecration, including that of civil society, acquired special momentum towards the end of the last century when the centenary of the French Revolution was being celebrated. Pius XI in *Miserentissimus Redemptor* recalls this origin. After describing the growth of the consecration movement from individual consecrations to the consecration of families and associations, of civil governments, cities and even nations, he goes on to say:

In former times and in our own the plotting of wicked men succeeded in depriving Christ of His rule, and in stirring up public war against the Church. They passed laws and spread among the people slogans contrary to the divine and natural law. Meetings were held at which the members cried out: "We do not wish this Man [Christ] to reign over us." Against all this, the consecration we spoke of, like a universal voice, burst forth from the lovers of the Sacred Heart to vindicate His glory and to assert His rights, and fiercely opposed those others with another cry: "Christ must reign. Thy Kingdom come." And the final happy result was that the whole human race, which Christ...by natural right possesses as His own,

was dedicated to the Sacred Heart by Leo XIII, amid the applause of the whole Christian world.

The centenary of the French Revolution was in 1889; ten years later the consecration of the human race to the Sacred Heart was an answer to the blasphemous boasting of the French Revolution.

WHO CONSECRATES A NATION

There have been many national consecrations, not merely two—Ecuador and Spain—as was repeatedly stated in the controversy. The consecration of Ireland took place on Passion Sunday, 1873. The Republic of Ecuador was consecrated under Garcia Moreno in 1873. Other national consecrations were those of the Republic of El Salvador (1874), Venezuela (1900), Colombia (1902), Belgium (1905), Spain (1919), Nicaragua (1920), Poland (1920), Costa Rica (1921), Brazil (1922) and Bolivia (1925).

It is not possible with the data at hand to say how many of these were performed by the head of the state and if so whether “in his official capacity” or in his “private capacity as a Catholic.” It is interesting to note that the consecration of El Salvador was renewed in 1942 by the President of the Senate, Dr. Francisco A. Reyes, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, of twenty archbishops and bishops, of the President of the Republic and magistrates of the Supreme Court. Similarly in Belgium the solemn consecration of 1905 was made in the presence of the royal family but apparently not by the king.

There is a question in regard to the consecration of nations which offers some difficulty. There is no doubt that civil society owes obedience and worship to God, precisely as a civil society. It may therefore by consecration offer this service and worship in a spirit of love, as a return for love. The question which arises is this: How far is the *government* the channel of this service and worship, and notably how far is the chief executive qualified to make a consecration to the Sacred Heart?

In a state which is by its constitution Catholic, the government should by its laws implement the life, doctrine and moral code of the Catholic Church and should by public attendance at religious ceremonies manifest official recognition of Christ's dominion in Catholic formulae. In all this due regard must be had for the limitations placed by the constitution itself, by the natural rights of parents, the inviolability of personal conscience. In such a state the ruler of the nation would therefore be the logical man to make the act of national consecration.

But what of a non-confessional state? Suppose in the United States there were a Catholic President. Could he, *precisely as* President, consecrate the nation to the Sacred Heart publicly and officially? We think not, because one of the things the President may not do is to set the state officially and publicly in the camp of one church. It is not now a question of *what should be done* or *what is right*, but a question of *who* may do it. In a constitutional democracy the chief magistrate may only do what he is authorized to do. His powers are circumscribed and limited. And one of the things he is not authorized to do is precisely that.

Could the American Catholics consecrate their country to the Sacred Heart? They most certainly could. The consecration would mean that they would try their best to render the service and worship due to the Sacred Heart and would by prayer and example and charity try to lead their fellow citizens to the same state of mind within the framework of existing just law. And since the action would best be done through some spokesman, they would select from the Catholics some outstanding man to speak for them, and, if the President happened to be a Catholic, what is more logical than to ask him to be their spokesman?

OBJECTIONS AGAINST CONSECRATION

The main reason urged against the act of President Mag-saysay was that it violated the "principle" of separation of church and state. It has been pointed out times without number that this is a very inept way of describing the provi-

sions which govern relations between church and state under the Philippine Constitution. At least Dr. Gumersindo Garcia seemed to state his case correctly. In other parts of his letter he loaded the question by speaking of consecrating "ourselves to the Catholic Church" "our nation to the Roman Catholic religion," but he does give a fair summary of the principle itself. "In accordance with the principle of the separation of Church and State, the President of this country should not give any special preference or favor to any particular Church."

The basic principle in church-state relations is that the government may not *establish* a church i.e. set up or give preference to one religion over another and, what is a corollary of this, may not prevent or hinder the exercise of any religion.

There are many states in the world—Catholic and Protestant—which have such establishments. In the Philippines however no church—Catholic, Protestant, Moslem, or any other—can be a state church or receive preferential treatment from the state.

There is one thing however which the principle does not say: It does not say that a church is deprived of a *de facto* preference it enjoys by the presence of its members in high position who thus reflect prestige upon it. For example, if a President, as a private individual, attends some Masonic function, he is certainly promoting one religion to the detriment of others but no one can allege that this is against the principle of separation of church and state.

Applying the above considerations to President Magsay-say's action, it certainly seems to this writer that, acting precisely as President in his public capacity, he could not consecrate the Philippines to the Sacred Heart. That seems obvious.

One writer in *The Manila Times* (27 November) pointed out that the objectives of the consecration were graces which the Protestants also should desire and therefore against which they should not protest. But that was not the issue. The issue was whether the consecration should be made by the President in a Catholic ceremony using an exclusively Catholic formula.

Not only Protestants but Catholics could ask that question. If this is permitted, the next president in a public official act might put on an apron and dedicate the nation to the Great Architect — a thing which Catholics would not reject in substance but would reject in its implications.

MAGSAYSAY'S ACTION

Therefore Ramon Magsaysay did not act *as* President in his official capacity but as a Catholic layman who is very prominent *because* he is President and is therefore a natural leader and spokesman for his fellow Catholics.

That this is the character of the consecration as actually made is evident from many arguments. First of all the President's office issued a release which said:

President Magsaysay Sunday morning (2 December) as a Catholic attended the solemn Pontifical High Mass at the Independence Grandstand on the Luneta and read the Act of Consecration of Catholics of the Philippines to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Ernesto del Rosario who had been among the first to express opposition to the President's act seemed to feel that this statement met his objections. On Monday, 3 December, in his column "Off the Beat" in *The Manila Chronicle*, he said that the release had "relieved a situation which could very well have aroused seriously the feelings of such elements of the community that uphold a cardinal principle of our government with due respect to all forms of religion." Similarly in the same paper, in "The President's Day" of the same date, a writer said: "Malacañan explained that the President participated in the rites as a Catholic and that the Act of Consecration referred only to Catholics. This clarification was obviously intended to answer criticism from religious minorities and independent Catholic quarters against a previous congress announcement that the President was consecrating the Philippines to the Sacred Heart."

The wording of the consecration itself supports this interpretation "In a spirit of gratitude, reparation and reverent entreaty, therefore, *we, the Catholics of the Philippines,*

solemnly renew the consecration of our country to Your Sacred Heart. . . ."

Other consecrations in previous years were made by persons in high political office but certainly by no stretch of interpretation qualified to act as political representatives of the whole nation. Thus in 1950 Fernando Lopez, then Vice President of the Philippines, consecrated the nation to the Sacred Heart. The two other consecrations of this present Eucharistic Congress were made by Mrs. Magsaysay, obviously speaking as a lay leader of the Catholics of the Philippines and in no political capacity, and by a public school boy chosen as spokesman for the children of the Philippines, by what principle we can not say, but certainly not as a political leader.

According to Eddie B. Monteclaro in "You and Your Congress," (Saturday, 1 December) "Senator Francisco Rodrigo summarized the Catholic position by saying that the consecration could be done by anybody, and that in this case the one chosen to lead in the religion rite is the president who would therefore be acting in his capacity as an individual Catholic without committing the state which he leads."

Therefore to the objection that the President, acting precisely as President, cannot consecrate the Philippines to the Sacred Heart, the answer was simple. The President acted as a private individual.

THE OBJECTIONS WEIGHED

This disposed of the difficulty of some; for example of Ernesto del Rosario as we have seen. Did it satisfy Bishop Remollino? He professed to speak for the Aglipayan Church and certainly the Aglipayans have not been scrupulous about the de facto joining of high ecclesiastical office and high government office in the same person. Bishop Aglipay ran for the presidency of the Commonwealth in 1935 and had he been elected we should have been treated to the spectacle of the President of the Commonwealth not merely reading an act of consecration as the head of a group of citizens but performing thousands of official religious acts as the head of a church.

We may therefore presume that Bishop Remollino was satisfied with the Malacañan release, and only had objected to such presidential acts as might commit the government to an official religion. Unless, of course, Bishop Remollino is more sensitive in this matter when Catholics are involved, a possibility that should not be lightly overlooked.

But was this official political involvement the real difficulty? It is hard in reading the various statements and letters to escape the conviction that the main critics objected to the President's taking a leading role in a public consecration *even in his private capacity*. These writers protested against the *public official* character of the act but it seems that they meant not public and official of the *state* but public and official of the *Church*. They objected to President Ramon Magsaysay doing what he did, but they did not mean *in his capacity* as President but simply *because he was* President. And the preference they resented was not any degree of state establishment but the preference inherent in and manifested by the exercise of his own religion.

Eddie B. Monteclaro in "You and Your Congress" understood the controversy to have taken this form. He said: "Can President Magsaysay consecrate the Filipino people to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as an individual Catholic and not as Chief of State?"

Dr. Garcia's language is ambiguous. He wrote: "It is the belief of many of us that your *official* participation... is a violation of that principle... The President of this country should not give any special preference or favor to any particular Church."

In the case of Mr. Yap there is less ambiguity. He says the religious act "does not properly belong to the Chief Executive of a republican state... Unquestionably your public and official appearance in Catholic religious ceremony is a violation of the principle... Manuel L. Quezon... refused to take part publicly and officially... because... his participation might be interpreted 'as official participation of the government of the Commonwealth'... What good will that symbol [of unity,

the President] be... if it caters to a particular religious group... A wise President refrains from making known officially and publicly his preference for a particular church."

Unless we wish to take the remarks about President Quezon as sheer tautology (Manuel L. Quezon feared that his public and official participation in his capacity as President would be interpreted as public and official participation of the government), Mr. Yap must mean that Quezon feared that his taking a leading (official and public) religious role even as a private individual would be interpreted as an official participation of the government.

Is this, too, what Congressman Roces objected to when he said: "No one, for instance, would deny the President the right to *kneel among the crowd* at the Luneta and pray *in his own manner to his own God*?" Does the Congressman mean that even as a private individual the President could only kneel *among the crowd* but not *at the head* of the crowd, and *murmur his own prayers* but not *lead the people in common prayer*? It seems so, and so Eddie Monteclaro understood him.

The force of this objection depends upon its being conveyed in catchwords. As soon as the double talk of "official and public" and "as President," "as Chief of State" is brought out into the open and the constitutional provisions, the "principle of separation of Church and State," are scrutinized, the flimsiness of the case is manifest. There is no reason in the Constitution why the President may not take a public and even a strictly official role in the exercise of his religion. He was not only entirely within his constitutional rights when he read the act but he could have been the priest who said the Mass, for all the Constitution has to say on the subject.

In a speech delivered at the Conference for Men, 1 December, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Raul Manglapus deplored this attempt to impose a secularist interpretation upon the Philippine Constitution and "to dispute the right of the individual Catholic to the external manifestation of his love for God... invoking such impressive things as constitutional tradi-

tion and fundamental democracy in disputing the extent to which an individual may publicly display his love for God."

Undersecretary Manglapus showed that this interpretation has no support in the Malolos Constitution, the Constitution of the United States or the Constitution of the Philippines. He concluded:

This then is the correct interpretation of our Constitutional tradition. It is a tradition which allows us whether in public office or not to display to the world our love of God. To interpret our tradition otherwise is to distort the spirit of the Filipino nation and the Filipino soul.

Closely woven into the above objection is another that the President should not have consecrated the *whole* Philippines and *all* Filipinos to the Sacred Heart, that he could not speak for any but Catholics. This was a sore point with Bishop Remollino, Messrs. Guevara and Nabong, and the Moslems.

Actually the Malacañan release seems to have taken cognizance of this objection because it expressly said that the President had read "an act of consecration of *the Catholics* of the Philippines". Is "of the Catholics" here—in the language of grammarians—a subjective or objective genitive? Does it mean that the Catholics consecrate or are consecrated? The second is the more obvious meaning.

Eddie B. Monteclaro may have been the author of this *via media*, for he said in his column, "You and Your Congress," (Saturday, 1 December): "If RM really wants to please both sides, there is only one recourse left for him; consecrate Filipino Catholics or Catholic Philippines, instead of the Filipino people, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

Nevertheless the consecration itself seems to have omitted any such distinction and the President consecrated the Philippines and Filipinos without distinction.

Really, the objection was based on a false understanding of what a consecration does. No one can consecrate another person in the sense of pledging his loyalty and obedience. Only the individual himself can promise that. Above we noted that

in a family consecration even recalcitrant members can be consecrated in the sense that they can be recommended to the care of the Sacred Heart and a hope can be expressed that they will come to accept the rule of the Sacred Heart willingly. Thus for example Pius XII consecrated Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This meant that the Supreme Pontiff (whose leadership was certainly not recognized by the majority of the Russian people and by none of its leaders) together with the Catholic people of the world would recommend the Russian people to the special care of the Mother of God and undertook to do what was possible to bring this people to acknowledge her Son's dominion.

Therefore the act of consecration read by President Mag-saysay, speaking for the Catholic people, did not limit itself to the Catholics of the Philippines. But it meant different things with regard to different Filipinos. Those Catholics who shared it—and no one had to —pledged themselves to endeavor to promote the reign of Christ—the Sacred Heart—in the Philippines in their private and public acts. It is certainly nothing novel and a threat to no liberty, that men should resolve to have their religion give the tone to their private and public lives. Secondly, as regards those who were not associated with the Catholic group making the consecration, the consecration meant that they were recommended to the Sacred Heart and the hope was implied that they too in time would come under His rule. Surely this is a fundamental liberty to think charitably of our neighbor and to pray for him. Can anyone seriously pretend that religious freedom *excludes* that?

Another objection voiced by Aglipayan Bishop Remollino and by one Pit Sheng Su in a letter to *The Manila Times* was that the idea of consecrating Filipinos to "a part of Christ" was repulsive. This objection does not understand the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Consecration to the Sacred Heart is dedication to the whole Christ with emphasis on His *love* for us, and implying a pledge of our love to Him. The Heart is the symbol of His love which, however, as a part of his

living body is in itself also deserving of veneration. An author says:

It is evident that by the homage which we render to the Heart of Jesus we intend to honor, and we really do honor, Jesus Himself, the Person of Christ, with all that He is and all that He has. When we pay honor to a portion of the body of a person, we wish to render this homage to the person himself; for instance, when we kiss the hand of a prelate, we express this mark of respect to the prelate himself. So it is also with regard to the Heart of Jesus. Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Annum Sacrum* recalls the fact: "All homage or love paid to the Divine Heart is really and properly addressed to Christ Himself."

Some critics grew very vehement over Magsaysay's "yielding to pressure and influence" and charged that he was acting as he did in order to cultivate the Catholic voters. What made this form of protest ludicrous was that it contained a veiled threat that if the President persisted in his intention he would lose a bloc of votes. In other words it was an example of the very "influence" it deplored! It is reported that the President was visited by numerous delegations and received more than a thousand letters. It is to his credit that he stuck to his principles.

A final objection and in a way the most suasive was that derived from the conduct of President Manuel L. Quezon in 1937 when invited by the then Archbishop of Manila, Michael J. O'Doherty, to officiate in the Eucharistic Congress. The story as recounted by Hayden is as follows:

In requesting that all references to the President or government of the Commonwealth be eliminated from the program of the Eucharistic Congress, lest they be construed as indicating "an official participation of the government of the Commonwealth in these ceremonies," the President wrote to the Archbishop of Manila: "I hope I am a good practical Catholic. As such in my individual capacity, there is nothing that I shall not be glad to do to give added solemnity to the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress . . . but as President of the Philippines, I am not in a position to do what your program calls for."

Some months later in September 1937 President Quezon was asked to exert his influence to obtain a Filipino Archbishop

for Manila. His answer has also been widely quoted in this present controversy but as it dealt with a completely different issue and has to be understood in the light of that issue, it is only confusing to introduce it here.

I confess that I find the distinctions implied in Pres. Quezon's statement regarding the Eucharistic Congress somewhat unrealistic. They seem to visualize three characters. The first is a political character in which the President signs bills, appoints to office, receives ambassadors, etc. The second character is that in which he performs the ordinary social functions of any mortal—plays golf, goes to the movies, entertains guests—but in which he receives the deference and preference due him as President of the Commonwealth. Then there is a third character, which is almost an incognito, in which the President neither acts officially nor is treated honorifically but sloughs his presidential character and sinks into the anonymity of John Doe. This is apparently what Congressman Roces meant when he would allow the President to pray his own prayers among the crowd.

We think that this third manner of conduct is incompatible with loyal practice of religion; that even if the President knelt among the crowd he would nevertheless be morally at their head. A city built upon a mountain cannot be hid. It is impossible to divest the President of his office. He will wear it wherever he goes, and even as an individual he will still be President and will surround his acts with prestige. Practically speaking what these critics demand is that the President *conceal his religion*.

It would have been interesting to know what President Quezon had in mind when he said that he would be happy to help as a private individual. Unfortunately we were deprived of this experience because the President—as he wrote the Archbishop of Manila—found it “absolutely necessary to leave for the United States” at a date which made it impossible for him to be present in Manila during the Congress.

In any case Columnist Gancy has given reasons why President Quezon's conduct need not be taken as a binding prece-

dent. It is significant that Quezon does not say his conduct would be a *violation* of the principle of the separation of church and state. He is afraid of a *construction* that might be put upon his act. That an unfavorable construction would have been justified is a minority opinion which President Magsaysay chose to reject for sound legal and historical reasons.

Dr. Garcia wrote a third letter to *The Chronicle* on 2 December in which he said, "I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to thank your paper for taking the lead in publishing my letter to the President."

The Chronicle deserved this gratitude; three times the paper gave front page prominence to the protest. Its editor personally endorsed it. Without this publicity the controversy would not have assumed the proportions it did, for the force of the protest was derived from relatively few centers. On the whole we may hope that good will come of the discussion and that in the future Catholic public officials will not be afraid to exercise their constitutional rights through some vague but unfounded apprehension about separation of Church and State.