

philippine studies

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

Institute for Mission Apologetics

J. Hofinger

Philippine Studies vol. 3, no. 2 (1955): 211–213

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

the doors of a Catholic Church. Their secular instruction is taken from books written by Protestants, and taught to them by Protestants...

Many readers will have recognized in this statement an exaggerated criticism of the situation which up to recently prevailed in regard to Religious Instruction in the Public Schools. And they will lament the fact that the writer's indignation caused him to be so careless of his facts. Certainly his statistics are away off. Moreover all the teachers are not Protestants. An unusually large number of the superintendents and principal teachers may be, but the rank and file of the teachers are Catholics. Obviously the present system has been open to some criticism; but one must be careful not to exaggerate.

It is not surprising that some discrepancies are noted between the contemporary Religious Instruction situation and the above description. The remarkable thing is that there should be any resemblance, because the quoted passage is a description of the condition of Catholic children in the English poorhouses in August 1860, and appeared in the *Dublin Review* for that month from the pen of Father John Morris.

It cannot but tickle the fancy of the reader that the Catholic children of this overwhelmingly Catholic nation should encounter, in however small a degree, the treatment meted out to the pauper children of English Catholics, at a time when Catholics were an underprivileged minority, but recently emancipated, and still hardly safe from physical persecution. It is only fair to add that things in the Philippines have taken a turn for the better and that responsible officials are alert to remove the hindrances which were so widespread a few years ago.

LEO A. CULLUM

Institute for Mission Apologetics

"It is an ill wind that blows no one good." The Communist persecution which forcibly expelled thousands of foreign missionaries from China has also occasioned some few useful by-products. There were some aspects of Missionary work for which it was thought—erroneously, perhaps—that men could not be spared from the active apostolate, at least not as a full-time occupation. Among others, there was the problem of how the Faith should be presented to pagans.

Many missionaries had experienced the need for re-vitalizing that presentation—religious instruction, catechesis, initiation—but they lacked the specialized preparation necessary; the specialists who also had mission experience were usually carrying a full load as professors of theology in seminaries. The enforced exile of those who have both the experience and specialized knowledge offered the opportunity of establishing a Missionary Catechetical Research Center in Manila, cross-roads of the Missions of the Far East. Under the direction of Father Franz Burkhardt, S.J., Rector of the Kingsien Seminary in exile, this group proposes to re-examine the whole problem of religious instruction in pagan lands and thus contribute to the great pastoral revival which is going on in the Church, and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to help pastors in their Christ-given responsibility of teaching all nations.

The purpose of the center is two-fold: first, to *re-think* the *Christian message itself* in order that, by the grace of God, we may give to our fellow-beings, children and adult, a living faith. In Christian countries this important pastoral problem has been the subject of a great deal of research by specialists for some time. In mission countries this problem merits at least the same care.

For thirty years now, beginning in Germany and France, the objectives in catechetics have been to adapt modern methods to religious instruction. At present catechetics is concentrating on the message itself. Why strain oneself in teaching a doctrine which is not at the same time a way of life? Jesus said: "I am the Way." Why can't His gospel be a beautiful road leading to salvation and not a bone-dry catechism class? How many missionaries have felt that they were not getting their message across because it was too complicated, too much theological speculation, and too little the glad tidings which they were passing on? A multitude of details to be learned, or duties to be known and fulfilled—a burden rather than a liberating message. The problem has to be re-thought in its historical setting and then a solution tried.

The second purpose of the Center is to *work out in the concrete pastoral methods*. "Among the causes that explain the spiritual distress of modern man there is, by the unanimous admission of those who give it, the lack of method in religious teaching." (P. Motte, *Elements de Doctrine Spirituelle*). Recently great progress has been made in this field in Christian countries. But what about the missions? Without denying the excellent beginnings made here and there, we must admit that the greater part of the task remains to be done. The Center proposes to study methods now being used in the missions, evaluate them, suggest necessary or useful adaptations.

The high pedagogical value of a liturgy adapted to the needs of the people, a truly living liturgy for the instruction both of pagans and of neophytes must be obvious to all. The progress already accomplished in Europe will be invaluable. But ought we not to be able to hope even for more? In those Christian communities in the missions where community praying has for a long time had a most special importance, for whom symbols retain a vigor elsewhere unknown, may we not hope for even greater success with a popular liturgy?

We can only hope and pray that this Center, born of persecution, may, with the help of those who oppose materialistic atheism, contribute, as English exiles long ago at Douay and Rheims contributed, to save the most precious possession of our persecuted Chinese Catholics, their faith in God and respect for the dignity of the human person.

J. HOFINGER