

philippine studies

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

Proceedings of the Conference / Dialogue on the Role of Christianity in Philippine Education

Review Author: Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 28, no. 3 (1980): 370–372

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>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Book Reviews

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE/DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN PHILIPPINE EDUCATION. Edited by Armando F. de Jesus. Manila: ACEAM-ECERI Office, University of Santo Tomas, 1979. 87 pages.

The Manila Synod and the International Mission Congress will no doubt be recognized as the two most significant accomplishments of the Quadricentennial (1579-1979) celebration of the Archdiocese of Manila. But it would have been an oversight on the part of the Archdiocese, if nothing had been said or done to highlight the unique contribution of Christianity to Philippine education not only in the Manila Archdiocese but in the Philippines in the past four centuries. Hence, thanks to the Education Committee commissioned by Cardinal Sin, Bishop Legaspi, and the Sub-Commission on Cultural Activities, at least a one day Conference/Dialogue on the Role of Christianity in Philippine Education was held at Villa San Miguel, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila on 5 September 1979.

Although participation in this important meeting was only upon special invitation, there was a total of 251 participants and guests. Cardinal Sin gave the welcome address while Bishop Legaspi presided over the meeting. About sixty-five schools in Metro Manila, mostly Catholic and a few non-sectarian were represented by school heads, Deans, Principals, and Superintendents. Moreover, there were guests from MEC, FAPE, IBP (Perfecto and Benitez) and from other educational associations, religious orders and congregations, seminaries, and the Embassies of India and Spain. There was one representative from San Pablo, Cebu, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Bacolod, Davao, and from the Mt. Province. One could not have gathered a more impressive body of educators; the impression of this reviewer and participant, however, was that there were more administrators than actual classroom teachers. Furthermore, apart from "consciousness-raising," one can hardly expect decisive action to come from such a large and heterogeneous body.

No doubt each of the invited guests and participants had their own *post-factum* evaluation and future recommendations as a result of this meeting.

The proceedings have been published for the benefit of all those who were unable to participate in the Conference/Dialogue. Likewise, this review is primarily meant for the same non-attending public and is necessarily limited to the impressions and perspective of only one participant. The format of the Conference/Dialogue consisted of four position papers, a panel of three/four reactors, and a brief interchange among participants. It was simply impossible in terms of time to tap the valuable insights and contributions of the significant majority of the participants. In the future, a much longer, on-going dialogue with a smaller and select group may hopefully prove to be more fruitful and effective.

Of the four papers, Fr. Bernad's paper, "Our Ages of Discontinuity," stands out as an "all too true" critique of the history of Philippine education. Fr. Bernad contends that, first, Philippine education suffered in the past from discontinuity; and, secondly, that it is suffering at present from too much continuity in precisely those areas where discontinuity is called for (p. 5). For Fr. Bernad, the task of Christian education remains: (1) to preserve, and even to improve, to enhance, to build upon the native culture; (2) to impregnate it with the spirit of the Gospel; and (3) to purge it of those elements which are unchristian and inhuman (p. 7). A strong reaction was expressed by Fr. Ruano, OFM (pp. 15-16) and especially by Fr. Merino, OP (p. 78) to Fr. Bernad's endorsement of Rizal's indictment that the Spaniards all but destroyed our early and rich native culture.

The other three papers substantiated with facts the problems of Catholic education and of Catholic teachers, of which all the participants are only too aware. One of the most serious and pressing problems of Catholic education is financial viability. The audience expected Mr. Vicente T. Jayme, a businessman by profession, to devote the main, if not the whole, of his paper, "Christian Education: Present Resources and Challenges of Tomorrow," to this problem of financing Catholic or private education. Instead Mr. Jayme summarized the role of the Catholic school system in education, the contribution of Catholic schools, and the challenge to Catholic schools of the task of evangelization and development through education. In this reviewer's opinion, Mr. Jayme would have done better to address himself to the question of taxation, tuition, and the problem of scarcity of management, pointed out in the reactors' period by Prof. Ernesto Franco (pp. 36-37).

Mr. Felixberto C. Sta. Maria's paper, "The Teacher in Philippine Society Today," substantiated with factual data and figures the truth that the teaching profession, though held in high esteem by Philippine society, is one of the lowest paid professions. It seems that Philippine society and the government in its priorities and budget allocations pay only lip-service to the "noble" profession of teaching. The reaction of the participants to Dr. Sta. Maria's paper was best reflected by the humorous comments of Dr. Bonifacio Sibayan and Fr. Bienvenido Nebres (pp. 50-52) on the plight of teachers

under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Fr. Nebres' last comment is worth quoting: "If we do not move, I do not think things will move by themselves and when the time comes for us to celebrate the Fifth Centenary of the Archdiocese of Manila, they will then dig up these proceedings and they will say: Look, they were saying the things that we are saying now" (p. 51).

The last paper which was supposed to be on "Manila, A Center of Education," was changed by the speaker assigned, Dr. Antonio T. Piñon, to "What the Church Expects of Catholic Schools," for very good reasons explained by the author himself in his introduction. After presenting a long and well documented paper on what is expected of Catholic schools by the Catholic contact Church, Dr. Piñon questioned an implied conclusion of Bro. Andrew Gonzalez in one of his published addresses that Catholic schools should stop pretending by calling themselves "Catholic" schools when they are not and are no different from secular schools. Unfortunately, Bro. Gonzales was not present at the meeting to answer for himself and it would be presumptuous for this reviewer to answer Dr. Piñon. As far as the audience was concerned, Dr. Piñon's paper left much to be desired. But the reactions to Dr. Piñon's paper by Dr. Antonio Isidro (p. 79) and Prof. Ariston R. Estrada (pp. 79-80), did not address themselves to the main query and challenge of Dr. Piñon.

From the perspective of this reviewer and participant, the main and distinct task and challenge of Catholic education for the eighties remains *the communication of the Christian faith* and education towards *maturity in the faith*. The theme of the Manila Archdiocese's Quadricentennial celebration is "*living and sharing the Christian faith*." It is hoped that in the follow-up of the Conference/Dialogue, the "think-tank" of Catholic educators will try to find ways and means of implementing the goal of communicating more effectively the Christian faith through the Catholic educational system in these rapidly changing times.

Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J.

DEATH IN A SAWMILL AND OTHER STORIES. By Rony V. Diaz.
Hongkong: Raya Books, 1978. 102 pages.

Three sentences from "Black Sand," one of eleven stories in Rony V. Diaz's slim collection, *Death in a Sawmill and Other Stories*, graphically illustrate the writer's favorite theme.

Here [in the peninsula of San Martin], the sea has harrowed the sand to form a tidal estuary that feeds a patch of swamp where crabs abound. Every morning, this part of the beach is inscribed with delicate markings left by scavenging crabs. One may read in these eloquent hieroglyphs the history of a truceless battle, but the indifferent sea pulses at high tide and