

HISTORICAL SECTION

Notes on

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES*

1521-1898

(continued)

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Chapter Seven

THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION

We shall consider the education which the Church gave to the Filipino people in the past centuries under the three-fold aspect of primary instruction, secondary teaching and university education.

A. Primary Instruction

The religious missionaries who came to evangelize the Philippine Islands did not plan to create a system of primary instruction, but were content, with a few exceptions perhaps, to open schools inasmuch as they considered them a means to win souls for Christ.¹ In the beginning, they had to be satisfied with oral teaching for there were no books. Even if there had been some, few Filipinos would have been able to read them. Later, they trained some bright, perceptive Filipinos who

* An essay towards a history of the Church in the Philippines during the Spanish period 1521-1898, translated by Jose Arcilla, S.J., faculty member of Ateneo University, Department of History.

¹ "... the primary and principal concern of the parish priest is that the teacher be a man of virtue, since the principal end which we ought to aim at is that in the schools the boys learn Christian Doctrine, form themselves in good conduct, all of which depends on the man who is teaching them." (Díaz, Casimiro O.S.A., *Párroco de Indios instruido*, Manila, Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesús 1745, fol. 110v.)

in turn would teach their compatriots with the few books that began to be published how to read, write, count and, above all, Christian Doctrine. Because there were no special buildings for teaching, this was held in the church, in the *convento* in particular instances, or in the open air.

The first school started by the missionaries was the one in Cebu in 1565. Shortly after their arrival, the Augustinian fathers obtained permission from the city residents to bring together their sons in order to teach them deportment and Christian doctrine. The Cebuanos, for their part, attracted by the purity of life of the missionaries, presented no difficulties against entrusting their sons to the fathers for the purpose for which they had been invited.²

The Provincial Chapter of the Augustinians in 1598 decreed that schools be opened in towns, ranches, and barrios, and that they oblige the boys to attend them. The Franciscans, for their part, contributed as much to primary instruction in the Philippines as their means allowed. In this task the efforts of Fr. Juan de Plasencia since his arrival in the Philippines in 1577 were outstanding. This innovator and scholar, in the manner of so many of his contemporaries, seems to have taken on himself the civilizing mission of founding towns and schools wherever he went. His plan was to form good and responsible Christian citizens by teaching them the rudiments of learning, namely, reading, writing and some basic arts and tasks.³

In a minor scale, the Dominican Fr. Pedro Bolaños did the same work in Bataan, beginning in 1587.

Neither did the Jesuits neglect this means of evangelization. We see them hardly arrived in the Philippines, opening primary schools in Tigbauan (Panay island), Antipolo and around Manila. Of a school they opened in Carigara (Leyte), Father Colín says: "The second task we undertook was to start a school for boys, supporting them in our residence with the alms received from the *encomenderos*. With the help of some bright Indios brought along for the purpose, we teach them

² *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1965, p. 273.

³ Pérez Lorenzo, O.F.M., "Origen de las misiones franciscanas en el Extremo Oriente," *Archivo Ibero-americano*, I (1915), pp. 388, 393-94; Marín, Valentín, O.P., *Ensayo, etc.*, II, pp. 575-77.

how to read, sing, draw, as well as the divine office which is now sung solemnly. It is cause for praising God, watching the fervor with which these boys have dedicated themselves to learn matters of our Faith such that, grouping themselves in fours, or more, and using some pebbles or short sticks they are wont to mark the words, they have learned in a few days all the prayers in the language, some in Latin, and how to serve Mass."¹

Such were the humble but praiseworthy beginnings of primary instruction in the islands under the aegis of the Church. Progress through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the first half of the nineteenth century was slow and painful. Reading the mountain of documents for this period leads to the conclusion that neither the State nor the Church could give the schools the attention that in our days we give them. It is because the times did not care as much, for even in cultured Europe practically the same thing happened.

A certain author has said that in the seventeenth century there were already a thousand parroquial schools in the Philippines. If we reduce the figure to 100, we would be nearing the truth. All the parishes and missions put together would not total more than 250, and in many of them, it must be admitted, there was no school at all, at least in any formal sense.

Nonetheless, the missionaries, supported by the Government, worked in such wise that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was, as a general rule, two schools in each town: one for boys, and another for girls.

This was the situation when, in 1863, the Government took control of primary instruction which till then had been borne almost exclusively on the shoulders of the missionaries and parish priests. This year, the Superior Government decreed the establishment of a Normal School for primary school teachers, entrusting the fathers of the Society

¹In 1697 the Dominican Provincial Vicar wrote to the Master General, the Most Rev. Cloche: "...in which no little aid has come from keeping schools in all the towns, where they teach reading, writing, counting, chanting and playing every kind of musical instrument, and many times the religious missionaries themselves are the teachers." (*Relación* in AUST [Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomás], Sección de "Libros," tomo 60, fol. 176v.)

of Jesus with its administration. The decree also provided that in the future education would be obligatory, charging with this responsibility the parents, the teachers, and the guardians of the children.

Among other dispositions on behalf of education which were issued by the Supreme Authority in the archipelago, the one of 30 October 1867 is worth noting. Instructions were sent to the parish priests that, henceforth, they would be the local inspectors of primary instruction in order to insure the better progress of education.

But all of these instructions, as well as others that followed, did not effect the desired results. There was a dearth of public funds; there was no provincial inspector who could have coordinated the activities of the parish priests; there was no interest among many *gobernadorcillos* and parents to oblige their children to school; there was not enough good teachers; or, there were too many children in the individual classes; there was an absence of educational facilities, such as desks, blackboards, books, paper, etc.

However, the parish priests tried to ease the situation within their limited means, often paying the teachers from the parochial funds, purchasing equipment, constructing schools, and allowing at times the use of the lower floor of the *convento* as a classroom. Because of these difficulties, the parents of many families truly concerned about the education of their children were forced to send them to study in Manila or entrust them to private tutors.

School buildings were made of bamboo and nipa, wood or brick.⁵ Christian Doctrine and Sacred History were principal subjects of the school curriculum.

The number of schools, which in 1877 reached 1,016, had risen to 2,500 in 1898, with an enrollment of 200,000 school children.⁶

B. Secondary Teaching

There was no secondary education, according to the modern system of education, until 1865 in the Philippines. On 9 January of this year,

⁵ Carrozal, Francisco, O.P., *Memoria sobre la provincia de Pangasinan*, Ms in APSR, "Pangasinan," 1885.

⁶ *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1965, p. 281.

the Superior Government memorialized the Metropolitan Government on the need to improve the program of secondary education. In accordance with the wishes of the insular government, after listening to the opinions of the Council on Public Instruction, Queen Isabel II enacted, by way of experiment, that the University of Santo Tomás and the colleges affiliated to it by the corresponding Royal Order, should restructure their program of education in conformity with the reform projected by the Superior Government. By another Royal Order, dated 28 January 1867 and endorsed in Manila by Governor Gándara on 4 April, the Spanish government definitively laid the ground for implementing the new norms of education.

In this decree, centers of secondary education would henceforth be classified as *public* or *private* schools. Only the University of Santo Tomás would enjoy the rank of public school. The private colleges would be divided into private schools of the *first class* and private schools of the *second class*. The first class private schools were those that offered in their program of studies all the subjects required for the degree of Bachelor of Arts; those that offered only some subjects were classified as second class. Among the first were the Colegio de San Juan de Letrán and Ateneo de Manila. Only the University of Santo Tomás, as a public institution of learning, had the power to grant academic degrees. It had the right, besides, to inspect the instruction given in the other colleges.⁷

Based on these arrangements, let us now see how those colleges fared through the Fil-Hispanic period, those schools for boys and for girls which approximated the secondary level of teaching. But before doing so, we must note that the majority, especially the schools for girls, were boarding schools rather than colleges. Let us begin with the schools for boys, according to the order of their antiquity.

1. **San Juan de Letrán.** This college had a double origin. Towards the year 1620 there lived in Manila one Juan Gerónimo Guerrero, a Spaniard. Touched by the lot of many Spanish orphans, ordinarily sons of dead soldiers, he gathered them into his house and provided them with food and education from the alms he collected from

⁷ Fernandez, Pablo, O.P., *Dominicos donde nace el sol* (Barcelona, 1958), pp. 375-76.

charitable persons. His Majesty gave his approval to this project in 1623. Years later, a lay brother; Fray Diego de Santa María, started a similar work in the rooms adjacent to the lobby of Santo Domingo. The latter absorbed the first when, in his old age, Guerrero entrusted his foundation, together with an *encomienda* the Governor had granted, to the Dominicans in 1638. Officially accepted by the Order of Preachers in 1652, it bore the name *Seminario de niños huérfanos de San Pedro y San Pablo* (Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul for Orphan Boys) for more than half a century. Its program of studies did not go beyond the level of elementary schooling until about 1707, when two chairs on the Humanities were added. The students had until then attended the secondary school of the University of Santo Tomás. From 1867 on, the first four courses of the secondary curriculum were given jointly for the Letranites and the Tomasites in the building of Letrán college; but the former had to go to the halls of Santo Tomás for the fifth course. Letrán reached a high level of development from the implementation of the decrees on secondary education.⁸ During the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, many of its graduates, after completing higher studies in Santo Tomás, reached sacerdotal ordination. Although in the beginning only the sons of Spaniards were accepted, many mestizos and natives were in time given the same privilege if they paid about ₱50.00 annually.⁹

2. **Ateneo de Manila.** The college of the Immaculate Conception, named Ateneo Municipal de Manila, started in 1859. While the first Jesuit arrivals in Manila in 1859 were awaiting the opportunity to proceed to Mindanao, at this moment beset with difficulties, the Captain General, Don Fernando Norzaragay, insinuated to the city council of Manila that they approach the Superior of the Mission, Father José Cuevas, and ask that the Jesuits take charge of a primary school for about thirty boys which was at that time run by a lay man. Father Cuevas welcomed the idea, foreseeing the undeniable benefits

⁸ Bazaco, Evergisto, O.P., *Historia documentada del Real Colégio de San Juan de Letrán* (Manila: Imprenta de la Universidad de Santo Tomás, 1933), p. 9 ff.

⁹ Arias, Evaristo Fernandez, O.P., *Memoria-histórico-estadística sobre la enseñanza secundaria y superior en Filipinas* (Manila: Establecimiento tipográfico de la Oceanía Española, 1883), pp. 17-19.

which the proposed change would bring to Filipino youth. It was in this way, briefly, that the Society of Jesus took charge on 10 December 1859 of what was called the "*Escuela Pía*" of Manila.

In 1865, Her Majesty Queen Isabel II elevated the school to the rank of a college of secondary teaching, now entitled Ateneo Municipal de Manila. In succeeding years, the Jesuit Fathers added important improvements to the building, and set up a Laboratory of Physics and a Museum of Natural History.¹⁰

3. Other Colleges. The Dominican Fathers inaugurated a college of the first class for secondary teaching in Dagupan 1891, under the patronage of Saint Albert.¹¹

At this time, another college of secondary education was opened in Bacolod (Negros) under the direction of the Recollect Fathers.¹²

4. Colleges for Girls. Philip II, in the Instructions for the Good Government of these Islands which he gave to Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas on 9 August 1589, recommended the foundation of a college for girls in Manila. On his arrival in the islands, Dasmariñas, with the consent of the City, set aside for this purpose the church of Saint Andrew. This was how the College of Saint Potenciana began. According to the Instructions for the Proper Government of the College, drawn up by Governor Fausto Cruzat y Góngora, the school could admit up to 20 interns whose support was charged to the Royal Treasury. The building passed through various vicissitudes which disturbed the peaceful existence of this institution.¹³

Finally, by a Royal Order of 29 May 1866, His Majesty ordained that the twenty-four collegians of Saint Potenciana whose support came from the Royal Patronage, should transfer to the College of Santa Isabel, marking the disappearance of the oldest institution of learning in Manila.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹ Ocio, Hilario Maria, O.P., *Monumento Dominicano*, Ms., in APSR, tomo 609, fol. 117.

¹² *Marín, Ensayo*, p. 239.

¹³ *Fundación y establecimiento del colegio de Santa Potenciana*, Ms., APSR, Sección "Historia eclesiástica de Filipinas," hacia 1800, fols. 381-82.

¹⁴ Un sacerdote de la Congregación de la Misión, *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

Next to it in antiquity is the College of Santa Isabel which the Brotherhood of Mercy founded in 1632 for the education of Spanish orphan girls. This institution was maintained, thanks to an *Obra Pía* administered by the *Mesa de la Misericordia* and to the *encomienda* in Tagudin which the King had granted on 14 March 1680. A total of 13,000 girls had been educated in it until 1800. In 1863, the Daughters of Charity took charge. In 1879, following the order of Governor Moriones, it opened its doors to extern students and half-boarders, and in 1880 the Council of Directors established new chairs which made the college the most complete institution for the education of girls of European descent. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the girls who were accepted there had title to a dowry of P500.00 on condition that they first obtain the grade of teacher.¹⁵

All through the 300 years that occupy our attention, there were also other colleges run by Sisters. But we would rather leave them aside now and study them when we shall review the work of the religious communities of women in the Philippines during this period.

2. Higher or University Learning

Only the Dominicans and the Jesuits engaged in the task of higher learning, the latter from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the former through the three centuries that embrace the period which we are investigating.

Hardly arrived in the Philippines, the Jesuit Fathers immediately gave serious thought to the establishment of a center of higher studies. We have already seen how their first essay, begun in 1583, ended. Much later, in 1595, they finally succeeded amid great difficulties in laying the foundations of a college which would afterwards be called *Máximo*, or University of San Ignacio. This college, or University, set up in the residence of the Fathers near the church of San Ignacio, was a different entity from the College of San José which occupied a separate building.

The foundation of the College of San José, which by its renown came to eclipse almost completely the *Colégio Máximo*, is due to the

¹⁵ Arias, *Op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

Visitor, Fr. Diego García. In 1599, he told Fr. Chirino to settle its foundation under the patronage of Saint Joseph. With the corresponding permits, the college was inaugurated on 25 August 1601 under the administration of Fr. Luis Gómez, its first Rector. In 1610, after the Fathers of the Society took possession of the property bequeathed them by Adelantado Esteban Rodríguez in a testament legalized in Arévalo (now Iloilo) on 16 March 1596, the college began a second foundation, as it were, so that it could admit scholars who had to be, according to the will of the founder, "sons of Spaniards of good birth." In 1636, Humanities, Philosophy and Theology were being taught. From 1640 to 1643, the building of San José gave shelter to the *Colégio de San Felipe de Austria*. Founded in 1639 by Governor Corcuera, the latter was suppressed by royal order in 1643.

On 3 May 1722 San José was granted the title *Real Coligio*, and in 1734 it received license to open the faculties of Civil and Canon Law. When the Jesuits lost this school in May 1768, the Archbishop of Manila immediately converted it, with the consent of Governor Raón, into a conciliar Seminary. But the king's Royal Cedula of 21 May 1771 disapproved this move, decreeing that San José be reverted to its original character. However, with the change in administration, the College led a languid life under the direction of a secular priest, until by a Royal Order in 1875, the government ceded the administration the property and the buildings to the Rector of the University of Santo Tomás in order that he could make use of them to support the Faculties of Medicine and of Pharmacy. While San José was under the charge of the Jesuits, the college trained a pleiad of priests who gave great honor to the Church, both as parish priests and as prebendaries and dignities of the Manila Cathedral.¹⁰

The University of Santo Tomas

The center of higher learning which left the deepest imprint on the history of the Church in the Philippines is, without doubt, the Univer-

¹⁰ Anonymous, *Colégio de S. José de Manila. Informe de S.E. el Rmo. Sr. D. Fr. Bernardino Nozalceda de Villa*, Manila, no date, pp. 1-62, in AUST, "Folletos," tomo 25; Colin, *Labor evangélica*, II, p. 414 ff. Concepción, Juan de la, *Historia de Filipinas*, Tomo 3, p. 403, ff.

sity of Santo Tomás. At times we hear mention of the *college*; at other times, of the *university*, of Santo Tomás. The college was only a boarding school. Founded in 1611 by the Dominican Province of the Most Holy Rosary, with the aid of a bequest of Archbishop Benavides and others, it offered free shelter, free food and clothing and free education to about 40 poor students, sons of Spaniards. Mestizos and native sons also formed part of the boarding school at diverse periods, but they were classed as servants, or *capistas*. Others gained admission, if they paid some amount of money as a kind of tuition. From this college proceeded graduates who later brought distinction to their Alma Mater in the episcopate, in cathedral dignities, in magistracies, and in civil administration.¹⁷

The University, which included different faculties, was inaugurated on 15 August 1619. In the beginning, only the faculties of Arts, Philosophy and Theology were open. In the course of the years, others were opened in this order: Civil and Canon Law (1734), Spanish Law (1835), Medicine and Pharmacy (1871), Notary Public (1878), Philosophy and Letters (1896), Sciences (1896).

This Institution received the power to grant academic degrees by a Brief of Pope Paul V on 11 March 1619; the title of *University* from Pope Innocent X on 20 November 1645; the title of *Royal* from King Charles III on 7 March 1785; of *Pontifical* from the Pontiff Leo XIII on 17 September 1902; finally, the qualification *Catholic* from His Holiness, Pope Pius XII on 30 April 1947.

The building was located for more than three centuries in Intramuros, next to the Church of Santo Domingo, the site which the founders had purposely acquired. In 1945, when the whole building was completely destroyed, the Dominican fathers moved to the present campus in Sulucan the Faculty of Laws and Medicine, the only ones that had remained in the former site when the new building was inaugurated in Sulucan in 1927.¹⁸

¹⁷ Sanchez, Juan, O.P., *Sinópsis historia documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila* (Tip. de la Univ. de Sto. Tomás, 1928), p. 9 ff.

¹⁸ *University of Santo Tomás Bulletin*, 1965-66, 1966-67, pp. 369-80.