

Editorial

THE THINGS OF CAESAR

Recently, the religious minority found occasion to squeak their lungs out in protest to a department order issued by the Secretary of Education, Gregorio Hernandez. The directive was entitled: "More Effective Implementation of Optional Religious Instruction." This purported to give full effectivity of the optional religious instruction clause as embodied in our Constitution. (Section 5, Article XIV)

What made them raise hell was this: They feared that "while the directive did not favor any particular sect in principle, it would favor the Church in practice . . . anything that tends to bring state and church together, directly or indirectly, could work only to the advantage of the Catholic Church."

Fanning the flames of the protestants' outcry, a **Philippines Free Press** columnist took a side dig at the Roman Catholic Church through his personal "evaluations" on the directive. His main observations dovetailed in two points: (1) that the Church is "forever committed to oppose the democratic principle of separation of church and state; and (2) that She is "likewise eternally opposed to the democratic concept that the state has the prior right to control education of children."

It is an undisputed fact that Catholics compose the majority of this country's populace. As of 1948, they comprised eighty-one per cent of the over-all number of inhabitants. There are about eighty non-Catholic denominations scattered all over the islands. Most of these denominations belong to the Protestant group.

The drafters of the Philippine Constitution were, predominantly, Catholics. They could have easily made Catholicism the official religion of the state, as in Argentina. **But they did not.** They thought it best. . . or fair. . . for all concerned, to legislate the Church (though not completely) out from State affairs. They elected to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." But this separation should not, however, be construed to indicate a complete indifference or a hostile attitude of one towards the other. It means **distinction**, and not disruption. There should be less of enmity and more of amity. In divorcing the State from the Church, the Catholic drafters, though personally opposed to such principle, nevertheless sanctioned the severance. They were just being democratic. Now, why should the religious minority protest to the directive — or, indirectly, to the constitutional provision by which the directive stemmed from? **What are they trying to prove?** Clearly, they are just trying to push their luck too far. The drafters of the Constitution were charitable to have given the religious minority an inch. . . now they clamor for a mile!

The state has no prior right to control the education of the children. Section 4 of the **Declaration of Principles** clearly states that: "The natural right and duty of **parents** (bold types ours) in the rearing of the youth for civic efficiency should receive the **aid and support of the Government.**" The meaning is clear. The education of the children is the primary concern of the parents and **not of the State.** What, then, is the duty and corresponding right of the State? It is merely secondary and negative. To encroach upon the parents' rights would dangerously open the eyes of the youth to atheism or nihilism.

The Hernandez directive is in good order. Equal opportunity is afforded to all religious groups desiring to teach their respective faiths and doctrines in the public schools. If any rumpus should be made about this order, it should be in praise of the Secretary. . . and not, in protest of him or his directive.

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