

The Church in the Political Order

SR. CHRISTINE TAN (Religious of the Good Shepherd): The term "church" in current theology stands for "the people of God", which means all Catholics. This is distinguished from the traditional concept of "church" identified with the college of bishops, cardinals, and the pope. I feel, however, that in this forum, we can use the common understanding of "church" in this country, which is the church of sisters, priests, bishops, cardinals, and the pope, sometimes called "the institutional church".

For a moment, let us scrutinize the character and composition of this institutional church, weighing her capacity to intervene in the political field, with her history, pronouncements, and kind of membership, as basis.

Unfortunately or fortunately, the Catholic Church as an institution is not monolithic, in the manner the Iglesia ni Kristo and the Opus Dei are. There is barely no one who can speak for the church. Dissenting voices are tolerated to a certain degree, and even when they are not allowed, they manage to be heard through kindred voices, non-government organizations, peoples' movements. Moreover, diverse theologies, methodologies, and interpretations of scripture have stimulated new thinking in tradition-bound ecclesial modes.

When one becomes a member of this official church, as a sister or a seminarian, one brings into this institution the complexities of one's background. He may come from urban or rural roots, from peasant or capitalist stock. She may possess an elementary or post-graduate degree, be moneyed or marginalized. One's analysis of present reality and its inter-connectedness to world structures also contributes to one's totality, playing an extremely important part in one's handling of fears in the future, when one is suddenly thrust into the arena of political exigencies.

Experience has painfully shown us that a vast difference exists between what our church says, and what our church does. Our track record during the Marcos dictatorship bears evidence of this gap. We have, by and large, neither been consistent nor inspiring. For how many years have bishops, priests, sisters condoned the dictatorship through public approval? For how long has our Catholic leadership preserved the regime with the excuse of "not knowing all the facts" or by using the grandfather attitude of "Marcos is also my son"? So many in this room perhaps remember the sight of bishops streaming into Malacanang every New Year's Day or during birthdays, extending scandalous public homage to the almighty dictator. How painfully some of us in the AMRSP (Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines) recall the censure imposed on us by the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Pope, for our alleged involvement in politics as we condemned martial law and denounced the immorality of the mock referendum. Certainly, our track record as a church bore no prophetic dimension.

As for the present government, our actions can be confusing. Some of us condemn gambling with our lips, but with our hands, accept substantial donations from PAGCOR. We have skillfully and at tremendous material cost, identified the spirit of EDSA with the Catholic Virgin.

Churchmen stand with government officialdom, praying publicly for peace, while in other fora, advocate the retention of the foreign military bases and their devastating power for world annihilation. Is it any wonder that church statements invite cynicism or total disbelief from the enlightened Filipino?

With this as a background, it may be easier to understand why and how difficult it is for our church to speak out with one voice, to stand in protest, and above all, to enjoy the trust of the Filipino in the street. In the Leveriza slum area where I have lived for 11 years now, the institutional church is as distant as Shakespeare. There seems to be no connection with our lives, except the sight of the "pari na nagba-basketball".

Historically, through social teachings, particularly since *Rerum Novarum* in 1890, our church in words has shown a bias and compassion for the poor. Early encyclicals, however, discouraged the poor from taking definite action to claim their rights. Instead, patience was encouraged, and a heavenly reward promised. After Vatican II, our church tried to be responsive to the world's suffering. The question, however, has been and is until now -- how far will the church seriously commit herself to the demands of justice? It was, therefore, not without reason that the bishops' synod in 1971 addressed the issue of justice within the church itself:

"Anyone who ventures to speak about justice must first be just. Hence, she must undertake an examination of the modes of action and of the possessions found within the Church itself."

Immediately after EDSA, we were gripped with that tremendous opportunity to trigger off a genuine revolution within our ranks -- by divesting ourselves of our surplus in lands, stocks, buildings, ornaments, and by shifting the target of our ministry in urban areas from the very wealthy to the very poor. Tragically, this grace passed us by. A few months after, during the constitutional commission, our church became very much alive in the galleries of the Batasan, rooting for tax exemption.

And so, speaking of the "proper terrain" on which our Church should act in the future, I find two places -- the peaks and plains. The peaks are the EDSAs, coups, rebellions, earthquakes. Here, the Church speaks through different languages. She initiates the lighting of candles by windows, boycotts crony companies, celebrates Mass at the shrine, denounces coups d'etat. Notice these are all external and reactionary, but nonetheless, the Church does not play blind.

It is, however, in the plains, that is, during most of the "everyday" days of the year, during most of our lives, when members of the Church -- chiselled in courage, seared in peoples' suffering, nurtured in commitment -- are exposed to the same violence that threatens the majority: typhoons and floods, transportation, inequality of opportunity, injustice, even bullets. It is in the plains when our everyday lives and priorities are identical to that of the majority, when our hard labor, anxiety, anguish, are no different from theirs, when we walk with the farmers in Mendiola, denounce the arbitrariness of Marubeni, when together or without the multitudes of marginalized, we search without ceasing for jobs, for better wages, for honest money lenders, for medical care, coffins, true freedom, effective government. Churchpersons need not pontificate on how their hearts are with the poor, when their feet are sunk deep into their squalor and struggle. Our church is not a computer. When events force themselves upon us for a response, her members will respond only in proportion to the measure they have immersed themselves in with the poor, during the months and years before peaks.

And so, we need not be anxious about peaks. A few churchpersons will always rise with God's anger and passion -- Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador who was shot while saying Mass;

Dom Helder Camara of Brazil, whose famous lines, "when I give food to the poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why the poor are hungry, they call me a communist", are appropriate even today; Father Rudy Romano of Cebu; even LapuLapu, who fought against the Spanish conquistadores. But the Church as an institution, I am afraid, shall hardly be able to squeak. Indeed, she has great potential, but she is muzzled for she carries too much baggage. Precisely, the miracle of EDSA was that despite all this baggage, the Roman Catholic Institutional Church got her act together, and moved. Today, the lay cannot wait for the Church. The lay must lead.

DEAN JEREMIAS MONTEMAYOR (Federation of Free Farmers): The controversy regarding the relations between the Church and the State has been raging for several years now and appears likely to rage in the years yet to come. Most observations, however, have so far been from the perspective of the State looking at the Church. It will be helpful to know what the Church herself teaches on the matter.

The fundamental teaching of the Church is clear and categorical: There should be both separation and cooperation between the Church and the State. Most of the controversy arises from the tendency of many people to deny either the principle of separation or that of cooperation. Another source of controversy is the lack of a clear understanding of the precise nature of separation and cooperation.

Under the Old Testament, the chosen People of God may be said to have been governed by a form of theocracy whereby the rulers were appointed by God, directly or through his prophets. The law contained, together with the universal moral precepts of the Ten Commandments, religious and civil norms which were to govern the life of the people. Hence, there was then a kind union between "Church" and State.

Subsequently, however, through Christ's sacrifice, the cultic regulations of the Old Testament became obsolete. The juridical norms governing the social and political life of the people were no longer binding on the Apostolic Church. This enabled the Christian community to understand the political systems of other nations, who were all invited to enter into the Church of Christ in order to form with the children of Abraham one people of God whose nature is spiritual and universal. In this way, the separation between the Church and State started to develop. Thus, on one occasion, Christ said: "Render to Caesar things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"; and on a later occasion, Jesus told Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world...", clearly implying that His Kingdom, the Church, is distinct and separate from that of Caesar: the State.

Later, the Church, through its magisterium or teaching authority, repeatedly expounded the principle of separation in clear and categorical terms; for instance: "The Almighty... has given the charge of the human race to two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, the other over human, things. Each in its kind is supreme, each has fixed limits within which it is contained, limits which are defined by the nature and special object of the province of each other..." (13, *Immortale Dei*).

The principle of separation between Church and State now affirmed, the teaching of the Church on cooperation between the two will now be better understood. This is only logical because without separation there can be no cooperation; for without separation, who will cooperate with whom?

The basis of cooperation between the Church and the State is the fact that both institutions serve the same people; in fact, both are often constituted by the same people. The same people

who are members of the Church are also citizens of the State. And so: "There are many things belonging to them in common in which both societies must have relations with one another. Remove the agreement between the Church and State, and... from these common matters will spring the seeds of disputes which will become acute on both sides..." (3, *Vehementer Nos*)

"The Church and the State alike possess individual sovereignty; hence, in the carrying out of public affairs, neither obeys the other within the limits to which each is restricted by its constitution. It does not hence follow, however, that Church and State are in any manner severed, and still less antagonistic." (30, *Sapientine Christianne*)

Ironically, the very basis of cooperation, i. e., the identity of subjects, is often cited to support a denial or a "blurring" of separation. This happens mainly because the precise mode of separation is not clarified or is claimed to be undefinable. But while it is not always easy to draw the precise lines of separation and cooperation, it is not too difficult to do so.

The magisterium or teaching authority of the Church has provided clear guidelines on the matter. Pope John Paul II clarifies the ends and the means proper to the Church when he said that "its action is not political, or economic or technical"; that "it is not competent in the fields of technology or science, nor does she assert herself through power politics. Her competence, like her mission, is religious and moral in nature." (3, *Speech to the Diplomatic Corps in the Philippines, 18 February 1981*)

In other words, the role and competence of the Church in political affairs and in her relations with the State lies precisely in the moral, spiritual, and religious dimensions of such affairs and relations. Thus, while the Church is not competent in politics as such, she has said and will continue to say a great many things about, for instance, the moral basis and moral binding force of State authority, the moral inviolability of human rights, the religious and spiritual dimensions of wealth and poverty, the morality or immorality of rebellion, etc. On the other hand, the State's jurisdiction and competence embrace the secular or earthly aspects of the lives of its citizens and the practical, organizational, technical, administrative, and civic aspects of political affairs. It is in this sense that the Church and the State "deal with the same objects though in different ways" (18, *Libertas*) and that "both are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles." (76, *Gaudium et Spes*)

The Church has repeatedly stressed that the State should not disregard the laws of God, nor "render them abortive by contrary enactments". State authorities "owe it to the commonwealth not only to provide for its external well-being and the conveniences of life, but still more to consult the welfare of men's souls in the wisdom of their legislation".

The Church expounds the moral and spiritual foundations of the State and of good citizenship, and thereby ennobles and strengthens the political community. For instance, from the apostolic times the Church has been teaching that since the need for a political community has been implanted in the nature of man, it is actually God who has ordained the existence and the political authority of the State, that, therefore, in general, citizens are morally bound and urged to obey the State authorities. Moreover, the Church has been laying down the moral norms and motives that should apply to State and civic behavior and should be constantly elaborated on by the Church.

All these explain the Church's stand against complete separation between the Church and State.

On the other hand, the Church has pointed out the error of identifying the Church with the State. *Gaudium et Spes* states that "the Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not

identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system. In the same document, the State declares: "By its nature and mission the Church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system." (42)

If the Church is not and should not be identified with the State, with more reason is she not and should not be identified with any political party or any partisan position. In a letter to the Bishops of the Philippines dated 28 June 1986, Pope John Paul II declared that "the Church is called not to take positions of a political character or to take part in partisan conflicts...". This finds precedent in the declarations of Pope Leo XIII in 1882 in his encyclicals, *Cum Multa* and *Sapientiae Christianae*, in which he warned against the identification of the Church with a political party or its involvement in "party strife" as this may inevitably result in "an intrusion of political factions in the ... Church", something that is "worthy only of partisans". Those who cannot distinguish between the Holy and the Civil are held to be "lend(ing) the name of religion to a political party".

The two basic principles of separation and cooperation need further explanation in how they are concretely acted out by each of the Church's sectors -- the sacred ministers, the religious, and the laity -- with their own specific functions.

The three functions of the sacred ministers in the Church are: to teach and preach the message of the Gospel, to sanctify the faithful principally through the administration of the sacraments, and to rule or govern the People of God.

Because of the triple function of the sacred ministers, the sphere of competence laid down for the Church also circumscribes their area of competence. This is clearly indicated by Pope John Paul II in his June 28th letter: "Preferential love for the poor, which already in the past has not failed to inspire your pastoral ministry, must become one of the principal lines of action of that ministry...". This is qualified again by a reminder on the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal aspects, the former being "the nature of the mission of the Church".

Accordingly, sacred ministers and pastors are not to have political ambitions, they are to respect the specific area of responsibility of the State without interfering in the tasks of the politicians. Neither are they to participate directly in the management of temporal affairs or "intervene directly in the political construction and organization of social life".

On the other hand, the sacred ministers and pastors are citizens of the State. They have the same political rights as all other citizens, but the exercise of some of these rights may be said to have been waived in consideration of the higher good of their position in the Church, their commitment to the demands of their state of life, and the order and discipline of the Church. Thus, among other things, they are forbidden "to assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power". They are likewise "forbidden to practice commerce or trade... except with the permission of the lawful ecclesiastical authority".

Also, clerics are always to do their utmost to foster among people peace based on justice.

As teachers and sanctifiers of the People of God, they also stand for the universal spirituality and the eternal and transcendent finality of the Church. Violation by the sacred ministers of the principle of Church-State separation and cooperation would, either through total identification -- reduce the concept of the Church to merely temporal and partisan dimensions, or through absolute separation -- render it totally irrelevant to the world.

The lay faithful also have a dual character. They are members of the Church and citizens of the State. Each of them has the right to join a political party, aspire for government office, be associated with a political persuasion, and publicly promote and defend a particular political school of thought, party, or system.

Acting as a member of the Church means acting as one with the pastors of the Church and in the name of the Church. The pastors and members of the Church act as one insofar as they resolve to follow the same Christian conscience and act by the same Christian motivation in the choice of particular political options and in the specific and concrete performance of their secular tasks as citizens, they act on their own responsibility, and do not involve the responsibility of their pastors or of the Church.

This distinction regarding the acts of lay people in the political field is emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes* which holds as supremely important the distinction between civil activities of Christians and those undertaken with their pastors in the name of the Church. Thus, every act done by the layman-citizen under his own individual responsibility retains its spiritual, moral and theological dimensions.

Some of the religious are sacred ministers. As such, their activities in political affairs are governed by the same parameters as those applicable to other sacred ministers. How about the religious who are not sacred ministers?

Lay religious who are members of so-called "religious institutes", i. e., who pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common, are subject to those restrictions imposed by Canon Law as enumerated under the sub-title "Sacred Ministers in Political Affairs" (cf. Can. 672, Code of Canon Law). The action of these religious, then are governed by the provisions of Canon Law and of other Church laws applicable to them, and in addition, by the charisms and the constitutions of their respective institutes.

Accordingly, they are forbidden, among other things, to "assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power". "They are not to play an active role in political parties or in directing trade unions unless, in the judgment of the competent ecclesiastical authority, this is required for the defence of the rights of the Church or to promote the common good." (cf. Cann. 285-287, Code of Canon Law)

On the other hand, the members of so-called "secular institutes" of consecrated life, who live in the world and strive for the perfection of charity and endeavor to contribute to the sanctification of the world, do not appear to be restricted by the above-cited provisions of Canon Law. They live in the ordinary conditions of the world, either alone, with their families or in fraternal groups in accordance with their constitutions (cf. Can. 714, Code of Canon Law). Obviously then, their activities in the political field may be broader than those who belong to "religious institutes", depending on the constitutions of their respective orders.

(MR. FRANCISCO TATAD of Newsday also shared his views on the topic; unfortunately, his presentation could not be reproduced here due to technical problems. - Ed.)

PROF. MARIO BOLASCO (St. Scholastica's College): This talk is limited to two observations on the topic: determinants of church opposition in the event of a successful coup; and the "police aspect" of hierarchical intervention in politics.

According to a widely-read practical handbook on coups d'etat, it is necessary to identify which organized groups will oppose a coup and to neutralize them before the coup. The church, clearly one such group especially in the Philippine conjuncture, has been deploying what Edward Luttwak called "technology of God" to channel the sentiments of believers against another military political adventure.

In a 1987 letter to the *Manila Chronicle* (17 October), Bishop Bacani wrote that given the hierarchy's support of the 1987 Constitution and its recognition of the legitimacy of the Cory government, "those who assume power through a coup d'etat will be deemed to rule without any moral basis". Continued the bishop, "There will almost certainly be a call for active non-violent resistance from the Catholic hierarchy".

More authoritatively, the hierarchy in their 31 January 1990 pastoral letter declared as a collegial body that "one cannot morally support (a coup against the present government); rather one is obliged to resist it and prevent its recurrence."

Together with the CCDPJ's Primer and so-called impact programs on TV, the immediate aim of this moral blitz is deterrence; the ultimate objective is intimated in the plot of a street drama outlined by Fr. James Reuter. Wrote the drama director: "If there is another attempt at a coup d'etat, two million Filipinos will pour into the streets of Manila// If the coup succeeds even temporarily... if a military junta entrenches itself in Malacanang, the people will close in on Malacanang. They will pin that junta down by sheer numbers and drive them out.// The rebels with armalites might wage war.// But the people will wage peace.// That "congress of peace" that the bishops are talking about might take place in Manila soon -- sooner than expected. // If this is another attempt at a coup d'etat, the patient Filipinos are going to stage the most powerful street drama that the world has ever seen." (*Veritas*, 12 February 1990)

Whether or not Bishop Bacani's near certainty will become an actual call, whether the hierarchy's moral obligation will be translated into practice, and whether Fr. Reuter's two million will materialize in the event of a successful coup is a matter that, I think, is contingent upon two factors, first of which is the support and active participation of the church's traditional base, the middle and the upper classes. The groups comprise what has been called the Center between the extreme right and the extreme left; this is the tiger the Institute of Church and Social Issues is trying to awaken and imbue with social conscience. If this Center is consolidated and especially if it urges the church to take a stand as it did at EDSA, then we can reasonably expect a strong call from the church. In Manila where this non-violent battle will be waged during the junta's delicate transitional phase, this configuration is critical.

If the junta is driven out in a matter of days, then the church will have another occasion to celebrate yet another miracle. If, however, there is a slaughter, it is very likely that the concern for the security of the institution, which even now underpins opposition to a coup, will dictate that some accommodations be made.

The second factor has to do with Rome and the ability of the bishops to withstand Vatican pressure to accommodate, especially if resistance drags on. It is well known that Rome tried to dissuade the hierarchy from moving against Marcos. To their credit, our bishops rebuffed the

Vatican. Sin is quoted to have complained that the nuncio Torpigliani is "too much". The cardinal, for being successful, evaded a public papal dressing-down, but he certainly was no hero in Rome. As has been well documented in Penny Lernoux's last book, **People of God**, current Vatican integralism frowns on independent hierarchies who wage oppositionist politics against non-Marxist governments.

Of those that composed the EDSA coalition, the church seems to have emerged as the most consistent proponent of what was gained during the revolution, at least according to its own reading. In that remarkable February 1988 statement that the honeymoon between Cory and the church was over, Bishop Bacani declared that the most telling criticism of Cory Aquino is that "despite her own personal goodness and unquestioned good intentions, she seems incapable or unwilling to take the necessary drastic measures to bring about desired changes. She goes a long way, but not quite all the way."

Hence the moves of the hierarchy to bring about reforms -- by its support for CARP (despite threats from landlords to stop their contributions), proposals for zones of peace, promotion of ecology, etc.

So, Joan of Ark is not quite up to it, trying to rule and lead with a coalition whose components are each cashing in on their investments in February 1986. RAM is merely the most notorious example. But so is the church capitalizing on its moral ascendancy at EDSA by exerting efforts to recoup its position as sole fount, guide, and guardian of morality in civil and political society.

To be sure, the 10-point agenda of the bishops for the decade of peace is laudable. But there is a price to be paid for church advocacy: an ecclesiastical policing reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Some recent manifestations:

- activities of certain key church people in Malacanang;
- the guidelines of the Catholic Bookfair screening out books on liberation theology and consequently, new models of being church. True, churchmen, Fr. Bernas in particular, scored the guidelines for making the bookfair one for fragile Catholics. But the Jesuit's plea to the non-Catholic as well as Catholic friends "who do not relish pre-digested intellectual pap", to be kind in their judgement of the Catholic Church, as his assurance that the church is not a global hothouse, points less to democracy in the church and more to the present inadequacy of its police powers;
- the move of CEAP to produce math and science textbooks exclusively for Catholics in order to ensure proper values;
- lobbying for certain appointive officials; and
- the Nudas proposal for UP (which is to appoint a Vice-Chancellor for Moral Affairs in order to revive "moral values" in the academe - Ed.). (Such a mentality is by no means eccentric in the post-EDSA scene.)

The phalanx of nuns and seminarians during the 8 December mass at EDSA, by design ensuring that only the correct groups and the right slogans would be at the core of the ceremonies, gives us a physical feel of ecclesiastical policing. To be sure, the cordon sanitaire was intended to maintain the religious character of the celebration. One would wish that the thanksgiving mass was a liturgy of life, a celebration of plural opposition to all schemes of unilateral imposition.

Such moves can perhaps be expected from an institution that claims to have called a democratic revolution against Marcos while proclaiming in the same breath that church power is essentially hierarchical power.

In the *Veritas* article cited earlier, Fr. Reuter wrote about the dawning of a peaceful realization "that the country does not belong to the politicians. It does not belong to the rich. It does not belong to the military." Neither, it must be added, does it belong to the hierarchical church. Filipinos have the cultural tendency to repose solutions to their problems in magical and miraculous men and women as well as institutions. I suppose it would take a revolution in society and in the church to transfer the magic of big men to the magic of communities of resistance and solidarity.

DISCUSSION

QUESTION: How would our speakers evaluate the church's "preferential option for the poor"? Does it transcend the separation between the church and state, or is it a form of cooperation with the state in the latter's efforts for national development?

SR. CHRISTINE TAN: Ang masasabi ko lang ay itong pagtuturo sa mga maralita ay ginawa na noong panahon pa ni Hesus. Malayung-malayo pa ang simbahan sa pagtuturo ng pagkakaisa. Sana itong maliit na efforts para sa mga maralita ay suportahan imbes na sabihing communist o anti-communist. Konting-konti lang ang mga madre at pari na nasa maralita -- siguro one percent -- so let us encourage these efforts because our country is dying. Dead.

QUESTION: I think that we all agree that for the religious clergy to be relevant, they must have a preferential option for the poor. Thus, we have to change the social structure; to be able to do this, we must have access to power. But then, wouldn't it be entirely wrong for a member of the clergy to run for the Presidency or join the revolutionary movement?

DEAN MONTEMAYOR: As Sr. Tan pointed out, advocating a preferential option for the poor has been there since Christ. The work one does demonstrates one's options. It means working not only for the material needs of the people, but also their human needs. It does not require political power, but requires fidelity to the gospel. And so we go back to the original proposition that it is not necessary for sacred ministers of the Church to be involved in active partisan politics, or how to dispense civil powers from a civil office. Their role is simply to push lay persons with Christian consciousness to the larger arena, respond to political questions of justice, and so on. To execute programs like running communities is the job of lay persons.

SR. CHRISTINE TAN: If political power is what is needed to bring about change, then it is our duty to help the poor to be in power. But it should not be us who should be in power.

QUESTION: How powerful is the church? From Dean Montemayor, we gather that the church is the one that leads the people. According to Sr. Tan, the people must lead the church. But Prof. Bolasco states that the church has certain police powers.

DEAN MONTEMAYOR: If there are no sheep, the shepherd has no meaning. So, in that sense, the sheep are more important than the shepherd. If the church's concept of power is one of service, then that power means service. You wield that power as an instrument of service.

QUESTION: Halos araw-araw nae-enkuentro ni Sr. Tan ang pagdedesisyon sa spiritual o temporal na bagay sa kanyang pagmiministro, lalung-lalo na sa mga maralita, but every political or economic or social decision has a moral dimension. How do you resolve this, Sister, as a church person, and as a Catholic, and know that this is the right, or the Christian, thing to do?

SR. CHRISTINE TAN: Kapag nahihirapan ang tao, maski anong klase, basta ka na lang tumutulong. Pag may taong gumagawa ng masama, kailangang sawayin. Basta ka na lang magbubuhos ng buhay para sa taong nangangailangan.

QUESTION: Why are there still too few people doing the same kind of work, considering the amount of work you have done?

SR. CHRISTINE TAN: As I have said, we have too much baggage, too many fears, too many comforts. We are often over-rationalizing and over-weighting things until we are paralyzed and don't move anymore. I have seen nuns die as heroines and martyrs, but there have been many who died as shells.

QUESTION: Why does the very male-oriented and feudal institutional church take a feminine pronoun?

MR. FRANCISCO TATAD: Maybe because sometimes the church is referred to as the Holy Spouse of God; also because Iglesia in Latin is feminine.

PROF. MARIO BOLASCO: I think that the church is masculine and clericalist. Celibacy has been made the focus of total commitment because the church is dominated by males. The whole issue, however, is not between God versus marriage or sex. The whole issue, as I see it, is between God and mammon, so the basic challenge of the church is the problem of poverty. The problem with the Church, let's say, the religious orders, is that individuals make all sorts of vows of poverty, but the whole institution never makes a vow to be poor. The real test is for the whole church to make such a vow so that it can dedicate all its resources to uplifting people from poverty.

QUESTION: Ano ang maaaring kinalaman ng tinatawag na Roman Catholic Church sa paghihirap ng ating bayan? At kaya ba ang mga bansang nasa Latin America ay naghihirap tulad ng Pilipinas dahil predominant ang Catholic Church? Meron bang kagagawan ang relihiyon sa pagka-bansot ng ating ekonomiya?

MR. FRANCISCO TATAD: Sa palagay ko, walang kinalaman ang simbahan sa paghihirap ng bansa. Alinsunod sa ating mga napakinggan mula kanina pa, ang itinuturo ng mahal na simbahan ay mga prinsipyo ukol sa etika, na walang kinalaman sa ekonomiya pulitiko. Kung susuriin natin, maraming bansa, na kung saan ang nakararami ay hindi Katoliko, na sumulong at umunlad. Ngunit sa mga bansang iyan, gaya ng Amerika, maraming mga Katoliko na mas mayaman kaysa sa Protestante. Kaya hindi ko nakikita na relihiyon ang batayan ng ating paghihirap o pag-uunlad. Wala lang sigurong economic planning, political vision o hangarin na magkakaroon ng social transformation dito sa ating bansa.

PROF. MARIO BOLASCO: I propose a broad historical hypothesis. I do not think that the majority of the Filipinos really got converted to Catholicism. It is only now, I think, with the Basic Christian Communities, that the evangelization of lower class Filipinos is happening.

Philippine culture has two aspects: materialist and magical. Materialism is a matter for political studies, which does not teach the concept of original sin or of the afterlife. How then can the Spanish religion, which premises itself on original sin, be in touch culturally with people who have no concept of the fall? This materialism of Philippine culture accounts for the fact that we seek solutions to problems in this world; it also accounts for the fact that NPAs had appeal in the early years. So NPAs are not counter-cultural; rather, they are within the Philippine

culture. Then there is the magical aspect of Philippine culture, which allowed people to seek solutions with *anting-antings*, or look to great men as saviors. This kind of culture allowed Filipinos to oppose Spanish colonialism, even while seemingly accepting the sermons of Padre Damaso. We say people are superstitious, but it is their way of subverting religion because it did not really become part of their culture. Who got Christianized? The *maginoo* who became *principalia*. It was advantageous for the *maginoo* to become *principalia* because the Spanish colonial system gave this class great privileges within the traditional system.

So I would say that Catholicism has something to do with the oppression of the Philippines, insofar as the Philippine elite oppresses Filipinos. You can see that right away in EDSA. Who responded to the Cardinal's call? Who asked Cardinal Sin to speak in the first place? Christian Monsod said he wrote what the Cardinal read over the radio. So it was at the urging of the elite that the Cardinal spoke out and it was basically the middle class and the elite that responded. So the Church asked, where were the poor at EDSA?

Catholicism is an elite religion. But when to protest is to be Catholic, and people like Sr. Tan start to re-invent the concept of Church and talk about liberating the poor, I believe that we are experiencing an evangelization of the Philippines, maybe for the first time.

COMMENT: Naniniwala akong ang kahirapan ng ating bansa ay hindi nakabatay sa anumang meta-pisikal, kundi sa konkreto at istruktural na dahilan, at iyan ang panghihimasok ng Estados Unidos. Subalit, sa halip na mamulat ang mata ng aking mga nakakausap (hal., mga magulang ko na born-again Christians), ang relihiyon nila ay naging sagabal sa pagtanggap nila ng paliwanag na iyon. Samakatuwid, ang relihiyon o ang paniniwala ay may kaugnayan din sa kahirapan ng ating bansa, dahil sa halip na ma-mobilize ang mga tao para malabanan ang batayang problema ay nagiging sagabal ito at nagiging passive na lang sila.

DEAN MONTEMAYOR: Ang katuruan ng Iglesia Katolika noong pang 1800s nagsasabi na inaapi ang mga workers at kaya kailangan maimulat ang mga mata nila, ma-organize, and that the clergy must attend to this. One hundred years later, we see imperialism and neo-colonialism around. They are attacked as being against the dignity of the human being, but the fight against these has not been an all-out effort. Why? Dahil sa simula pa lang, ang karamihan ng kontribusyon sa Iglesia galing sa landlords, sa capitalists. If the church promotes unionism, baka wala nang magbigay ng contribution. Paano na lang ang mga seminaryo at kumbentong kailangan nila?

MR. FRANCISCO TATAD: Sa palagay ko, ang nagiging sagabal ay ang kakulangan ng pagkakaintindi ng ating relihiyon. Marami sa atin, gaya ng sinabi ni Prof. Bolasco, "Katoliko by name", ngunit hindi naman naiintindihan ang kanilang katesismo. Halimbawa, ang Beatitudes nagsasabi na "Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Ang kadalasang interpretation na binibigay ay mapalad silang walang-wala sapagkat sila iyong mga pinagpala. Ang totoong interpretation ng Catholic Church ay kung anumang ari-arian meron tayo, dapat nanginigabaw ang ating pagkatao at pakikipag-kapwa-tao at hindi natin gawing mas mahalaga ang ating kayamanan kaysa sa ating relasyon sa mga mahihirap. Kung kailan ka merong ari-arian, lalong tumitindi ang iyong responsibility. Pero kung ang interpretation natin ay mapalad ang mahirap na mahirap ay talaga sigurong maraming tao ang mabubulagan at hindi na magsusumikap. Sa mga baryo, marumi ang mga bata, samantalang iyong tubig umaagos; hindi nalilinis ang paligid, wala namang trabaho iyong tao, natutulog. Sapagkat ang paniniwala nila kahirapan ang magdadala sa kanila sa langit.

Thus, it is not religion, but faulty understanding which is the culprit.

PROF. MARIO BOLASCO: I would agree with that. But another factor is the bad example of people who are supposed to be promoters of religion. In the fifties, it was the nuncio in the Philippines who promoted this teaching of social doctrine. Because of his efforts, a good number of Catholic groups began to form unions and staged strikes, like the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) at the University of Santo Tomas (UST). The nuncio, however, reversed himself, saying, "Tama iyang unyon, but not in a Catholic institution because it is non-profit". The Nuncio made the whole hierarchy believe that the UST strike was immoral. The Jesuits, who supported all these unionists, were caught in a bind. Thus, teachers have something to do with what has been happening (or not happening).

QUESTION: Is the practice of the Iglesia ni Kristo (INK) of naming its candidates for political office a case of political manipulation and, therefore, a sacrilegious act?

DEAN MONTEMAYOR: According to the INK, their theology requires that all members of their church should be one in all things, including politics, and choice of candidates. The Catholic Church, however, has its own teachings, i. e., that no one is bound to any political denomination; political choices are left instead to the individual.

QUESTION: What are the implications of the teachings of the document, "The Road to Damascus", and the fact that Christians from the Philippines were part of the production of this document, as far as the development of a more socially committed church is concerned?

SR. CHRISTINE TAN: God is with the people's struggle, not just in the church, but he is very much present in what has been happening everywhere, for instance, in Eastern Europe. And that is the God I believe in now. I believe that only such a God could move Eastern Europe or allow and encourage people to persist, without money, agenda, planning, vision, etc. He is there with them.



Pete Reyes, People Power