

## VALUE EDUCATION/MORAL RECOVERY AND THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

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### INTRODUCTION

Two recent national events have sparked renewed interest among religious educators in value education and moral renewal. The first is the introduction into all secondary schools, beginning in June 1989, of a government required course in value education. The second is the report submitted to the Senate's Committee on Education, Arts and Culture, entitled "A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People — Building a Nation."<sup>1</sup> Both events raise a fundamental question for all engaged in religious education: what is the role of Catholic Faith in Filipino values and moral life?

This subject has already been widely discussed.<sup>2</sup> But further open and critical discussion of this vital question seems necessary because of the importance of the two events just mentioned. In both cases, the full import of Catholic faith on Filipino values and morality seems to have been missed, at least as seen from the point of view of religious education. This article simply wishes to bring to the attention of educated Catholics, especially religious educators, the danger of reducing our Catholic Faith's true role in daily moral life if inadequate methodology is used in value education and moral renewal.

### BASIC POSITION

The central insight proposed in this article is that both the

1. "A Moral Recovery Program: Building a People — Building a Nation." Submitted by Senator Leticia Ramos Shahani to the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture, and the Committee on Social Justice, Welfare and Development, 9 May 1988.

2. See the extensive bibliography cited in the article "Value Education and the National Catechetical Directory," *Docete* 9, no. 45 (Jan./March 1987) 2-13; see also "Imagination and Integration in the NCDP," *ibid.* 9, no. 45 (April/June 1986) 2-7.

government sponsored Value Education Program, and the Report on "A Moral Recovery Program" are characterized by the distinctive methodology proper to the behavioral and social sciences. Consequently, from a religious faith point of view, both miss an essential dimension of Filipino values and moral life.

This position in no way denies or belittles the substantial worth of both documents. Much can be learned and much profit drawn from them. They are the result of serious, conscientious, honest work which is truly admirable. This article merely wants to alert adult Catholics, and religious educators in particular, to what should be obvious to everyone, namely, that both documents are NOT presenting "all reality," and that our Christian Faith has much to add to both. The authors of both documents surely never claimed that they had presented the whole picture — so again, they cannot be faulted on that. What is truly surprising is the common acceptance by many Catholic adults, including religious educators, of a completely behavioral approach to values and morality. It is to this audience that this article is addressed.<sup>3</sup>

### ONE VALUE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

A recent article by an internationally recognized social scientist provides an excellent example of the significant contributions of social science to moral questions.<sup>4</sup> Peter Berger shows how "sociology can provide a guide for making morally responsible decisions by revealing the vested interests lurking behind lofty rhetoric." He distinguishes between an "ethics of responsibility" that takes seriously the "uncertain mass of means, costs and consequences," from an "ethics of attitude" that refuses such tedious, endlessly frustrating ways of proceeding.

It is the easiest thing in the world to proclaim a good. The hard part is to think through ways by which this good can be realized without exorbitant costs and without consequences that negate the good.<sup>5</sup>

3. This critique is similar to that of Matthias Neuman, O.S.B., in his "Am I Growing Spiritually? Elements for a Theology of Growth," *Review for Religious* 42 (Jan./Feb. 1983) 38-49.

4. Cf. Peter L. Berger, "Moral Judgment and Political Action," *Dialogue* 2, no. 84 (1989) 2-7.

5. *Ibid.* 7.

This message is especially relevant to religious educators in the Philippines who for years have been sorely tempted by an ideologically conceived "thrust for justice and liberation." The "total liberation" clamor of "Marxist" Christians is still with us even after the February '86 revolution. Down-to-earth sociological studies such as Berger's can do much to keep our value and moral stance "honest."

This example from Peter Berger is simply one illustration of the major contributions which the social sciences are continually offering to our understanding of human values and morality. But our opening question remains: "what is the role of Catholic Faith in Filipino values and moral life? We shall try to respond concretely to that question by first studying what significant changes would be worked in the government's Revised Value Education program by introducing Catholic doctrine and morality, and secondly, by analyzing the Report on "A Moral Recovery Program" from a specifically Christian Faith point of view.

#### "VALUE EDUCATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION"

This is the title of a masteral thesis recently defended in the Ateneo de Manila's Formation Institute for Religion Educators (FIRE).<sup>6</sup> The thesis proposes an alignment between the government's "systematic and experiential approach proper to the communication of values" and the content of Christian religious education. Value education is perceived in terms of the gradual process of internalizing Christian values in Filipino youth. "Filipino values can be purified, permeated and strengthened by Gospel values; and Gospel values, in turn, are concretized and actualized in Filipino values and patterns of action."<sup>7</sup>

This ideal, of course, is not new; what is new is the detailed exposition of HOW value education can be integrated with religious education in Catholic secondary schools. What is particularly noteworthy here is how both value education and religious education profit immensely from their mutual inter-relationship. Value edu-

6. Sr. Aida Josefa A. Bautista, S.P.C., "Value Education in Religious Education" (MA thesis, Ateneo de Manila, 1988). The thesis is being published by Rex Book Store, Manila.

7. Cf. *Maturing in Christian Faith*, The National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines [NCDP] (Manila: St. Paul Publications, 1985) no. 428, p. 277.

cation grounds religious education in basic Filipino culture, thus offering a significant help towards "closing the gap between Christian doctrine and the ordinary, daily life of Filipinos."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the government's value education is immensely enriched by the Christian religious dimension, specifically by the contribution of moral theology.

#### THE GOVERNMENT REVISED VALUE FRAMEWORK

The thesis inter-relates the government's Revised Value Education Program and Catholic religious education in a manner that preserves the integrity of each perfectly. The DECS revised value framework perceives man first as "Person as Self," divided into four areas: physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. Each area has a corresponding Core Value: Health (harmony with Nature), Knowledge/Truth, Love, and Spirituality (Faith). Secondly, man is viewed as "Person in community," divided into the three areas of social, economic, and political. Their corresponding Core Values are: Social Responsibility, Economic Self-sufficiency, and Nationalism and Patriotism. Each of these divisions and Core Values are developed at some length with subdivisions and multiple individual values, all with the purpose of bringing out the primary value of Human Dignity.

The thesis then simply deepens these basic Filipino values by introducing Christian Moral Life in terms of a "Call-Response Structure," developed according to five biblical themes: Vocation, Responsibility, Covenant, Discipleship, and Conversion.<sup>9</sup> Human dignity and Harmony with Nature are grounded in God's call in Creation; Knowledge/Truth are deepened by Jesus, The Truth; Love is fulfilled in the Community of Disciples, the Church; Spirituality (Faith) is our response to Jesus' Call to Covenant in Baptism, and to the Holy Spirit's life of Grace here and Glory hereafter.

The Core Values of the "Person in Community" are likewise deepened: Social Responsibility is developed through the social teachings of the Church regarding family morality, building up

8. Cf. *ibid.* no. 165, p. 99 et passim.

9. Cf. Richard M. Gula, *What Are They Saying About Moral Norms?* (New York: Paulist, 1981), and "Shifts in Catholic Moral Theology: A Primer for the Perplexed Personist," *Living Light* 18, no. 4 (1981) 297, by the same author.

Basic Christian Communities (BCC), social consciousness and the thrust for justice; Economic Self-sufficiency is grounded in a theology of work; and Nationalism and Patriotism are viewed in terms of the universal mission of the lay apostolate.

Such a brief summary cannot adequately convey the richness of the thesis, but it should suffice to indicate an initial response to our question: what is the role of Catholic Faith in Filipino values and moral life? Not only is the specific content of the government's Revised Value Education Program substantially enlarged and developed by introducing specific truths, values, and attitudes of Christian Faith, but its whole philosophy (nature, goals and objectives) are all radically re-established and grounded on a Christian theological foundation. Even a cursory reading of such a study would prompt the reader to wonder how anyone could possibly consider value education of Filipino youth from a behavioral and social science point of view alone, independent and separated from any religious faith commitment.

#### CHRISTIAN FAITH AND "MORAL RECOVERY"

Our second approach toward discerning the place of Catholic faith in Filipino value education and moral life is through a summary analysis of the recent Report submitted to the Senate on "A Moral Recovery Program." Our analysis will touch briefly on: 1) the authors of the report and their announced methodology; 2) the explicit place of Religion/Faith/Spiritual Values, etc. in the Report; 3) its description of the "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" of Filipino Character; and 4) the proposed Goals and Strategies for Change.

#### TASK FORCE AND ITS METHODOLOGY

Appendix D on the final page of the Report (p. 42) lists the ten members of the Task Force of the Moral Recovery Program Study.<sup>10</sup> All could reasonably be classed under the disciplines

10. Three members are from the Psychology Dept. of the Ateneo de Manila University, one from its Communications Dept.; one each from the University of the Philippines' Third World Studies Center, College of Medicine, Center for Integrated and Development Studies, Political Science Dept., and Asian Center; and one from the Dept. of Health.

known as the behavioral and social sciences; there is no theologian (much less Moral theologian), no Scripture scholar, no expert in comparative religions or in moral philosophy. One would suspect, therefore, that "Moral Recovery" within the Report is taken uniquely from a behavioral and social science perspective.

This suspicion is confirmed by the description of the methodology employed in the Report. The Foreword states that "strict methodology was utilized in the study" (p. i), and the following page lists its main sources as literature on the Filipino personality, and interviews and consultations with researchers and practitioners in the behavioral and social sciences, education and social welfare, together with journalists, social analysts and community organizers (p. ii). It seems strange that moral theology and philosophy were not considered appropriate disciplines for a study in this area of *moral recovery*.

Even more novel is the assumption that behavioral and social scientists are the appropriate "experts" in explaining, discerning, judging, inspiring, teaching, and evaluating *moral* life. This represents a rather startling innovation. For from the former admittedly questionable claim of social science as "value free" (that is, morally neutral), it seems we have come to the equally startling and questionable opposite position that the social and behavioral sciences provide the full, comprehensive explanation of all human values and morality.

The position of this article is that Catholic moral theology and philosophy have an essential role to play in value education and moral recovery. This is especially true of Filipinos who, from all the accounts of the social scientists themselves, are deeply "religious" by temperament and culture. It seems difficult to imagine how any Moral Recovery Program in the Philippines can ignore the inner religious dimension of Filipino moral life.

#### THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE REPORT

Faith and religiosity are mentioned in a number of pages throughout the Report, but it is interesting to note their specific place and meaning. In the "main strengths of the Filipino character" listed on p. iii, "Faith and Religiosity" are in sixth place out of seven; "Religion" is placed sixth among ten "major root causes." "Spiritual Values" are put in last place among the goals for change in the Filipino character, and among the seven key strategies for

change there is no place at all for faith or religion." Religious institutions" do appear, but again in the next to last place (sixth out of seven) within the first general principle of "multi-layered and multi-sectoral strategies." The conclusion would seem to be inescapable: religious faith is not an important factor in Filipino Moral Recovery, according to this Report.

More significant perhaps is the way in which religion/religiosity and faith are treated – the MEANING these terms convey in the Report. Briefly, both are reduced to their behavioral, social effects as perceived by social and behavioral science methodology. There is no hint in the whole Report of any interior act of Faith, of love of God and of Christ, of any spiritual motivation or strengthening by the Holy Spirit to love others, serve the community, etc. The Church as such (i.e. as the People of God) is never mentioned. Religious organizations, like CFM, Cursillo, "Born Again," etc. are mentioned (p. 28), but simply in terms of social work for the poor – nothing of inner religious faith or commitment.

Now without the substantial contribution of moral theology and philosophy, this reductionism of faith and religion to outward behavioral effects is unavoidable. This is perhaps the most serious defect of the Report.

#### SIGNIFICANT INADEQUACY

This inadequacy is most evident in the Report's assertion that "our faith in God and our religiosity" are sources of strength and courage, but "also lead to an external orientation that keeps us passive and dependent on forces outside ourselves" (p. 12). The same basic criticism is repeated on p. 18, which uses the phrase "attitudes of resignation and preoccupation with the after life."

Now this is what could be expected from a faith-less behaviorist critique; but it must be said in all truth and charity that it is not an honest, accurate evaluation of the role of Catholic Faith in Filipino values and moral life. It is describing faith/religiosity by its *abuse* – an action which could very easily be turned back against the behaviorist himself to "disqualify" all behavioral and social science work because of certain prevalent abuses.

Presuming the Report is not prejudiced against "faith and religiosity," the clarification should be made that *authentic* faith does NOT lead to external orientation. It is interpreted as such

only by those who, lacking any religious faith themselves, reject any "spirit and transcendence" in the human person. NOR does Christian faith "keep us passive and dependent on forces outside ourselves." On the contrary, God is more interior to us than we are to ourselves. His Holy Spirit is the interior source of our greatest creativity, not of "resignation." Such passive dependence and resignation are grounded on a much deeper level of human nature (the "darkness in the heart of man") than the "behavioral" studies are attempting to measure.

Obviously, the Report only wants to assert the discernible sociological fact that religious faith is often cited as the cause of passivity and resignation. But this ignores the equally obvious fact that religious faith is also the source of the greatest activity and sacrifice. It cannot therefore be the nature of Faith to make us passive and resigned. What is clear, then, is that the Report judges in terms of what its behavioral methodology picks up — not the inner essence of authentic Christian Faith. In this case, using only such behavioral social science methodology results in a *radically distorted* image of the reality and action of religious faith in Filipino values and moral life.

#### FAITH AND FILIPINO CHARACTER

In this section, we only wish to sketch in brief fashion (by way of typical example) how much the Report would have gained IF specific Christian faith content had been included.

#### STRENGTHS OF THE FILIPINO CHARACTER

These would have gained immeasurably if related to pertinent Christian truths and values. For example:

1) *Pakikipagkapwa-tao* for the Filipino is surely radically influenced by the Christian truths of "created in the image and likeness of God," of the Christmas "Emmanuel" (God-with-us), of Christ's moral command to love one another, etc. Moreover, Christian prayer and worship have developed the natural Filipino sense of trust (*pagitiwala*) and of gratitude (*utang na loob*).

2) *Filipino Family Orientation* (p. 3) has been strengthened for centuries by devotion to Sto. Niño, Mary the Mother of God, the Holy Family, etc. Joy and humor have been deepened and given



new expression in Christmas celebrations, Fiestas, Holy Week community devotions, etc. while marriages, baptisms and funerals are family celebrations grounded in Faith and religiosity.

3) *Filipino Flexibility* (p. 4) could be deepened in like manner, while an adequate Theology of Work (such as proposed by John Paul II) would have been highly relevant to the virtues of Hard-work and Industry (p. 5).

4) *Faith and Religiosity* (p. 5) are referred to "a supernatural God" who is "alternately threatened and thanked . . ." Prayer is said to be an important part of our lives — but it is prayer viewed by a behavioral scientist. There is no love, no commitment, no interior spiritual yearning, and most of all, no grace. (One is tempted to judge: there is no maturity — it seems quite childish.)

So *bahala na* is defended as a "reservoir of psychic energy, an important psychological prop" — which indicates both the *good intentions* of the behavioral scientists toward religion, and their *unwitting reductionism* of true Christian HOPE in Christ our Savior and in our heavenly Father's divine Providence to a natural psychological energy.

#### WEAKNESSES OF THE FILIPINO CHARACTER

The weaknesses could also have been deepened very much by bringing in specific Christian content. For example:

1) *Extreme Personalism* (p. 6) could have been rooted in the Christian doctrine of original sin, and how an effective catechesis in Christian community building/sharing constitutes one of the best remedies at hand.

2) *Extreme Family Centeredness* (p. 7) can be effectively moderated by actively fostering the building up of BECs (Basic Ecclesial Communities), and stressing the *mission* ideal of every baptized disciple of Jesus Christ.

3) *Lack of Discipline* (p. 8) and *ningas cogon* are checked by Christ's own teaching on the necessity of planning (Lk 14:28-35) and of perseverance, and on not turning back once one's hand is put to the plow (Lk 9:62), etc.

4) *Passivity and Lack of Initiative* (p. 8) form a sharp contrast with Christ's own stress on *doing* vs. mere words (Mt 7:21-23), admonitions repeated in the famous sections of the Letter of St. James on faith and good works (cf. Jas 2:14-17).

These examples should suffice to indicate how Christian truth and morality would substantially deepen and develop the present report's treatment of both Strengths and Weaknesses of the Filipino Character.

### GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

This section will necessarily be very brief, limiting itself to citing some obvious examples which call for a religious faith input.

Conversion, the traditional term for change in moral renewal, appears only twice in the Report (pp. 22, 32), and in neither case is it related in any explicit way to religious faith. On p. 32 conversion is linked with "public repentance" of Government Leadership and a "national reflection week-end" for all Government officials and employees. Thus the Report seems to recognize the spiritual yearnings of so many Filipinos, but apparently judges social science behaviorists to be the best qualified experts in such "spiritual" activities. Again, there seems to be an implicit reduction of Filipinos' spiritual and moral levels to the psychological and extrinsically manifested behavioral.

In the 6th General Principle for Change (Goals related to People's Lives) economic activities are given as the primary examples (p. 23). Matters "close to our hearts" are related to family and community, but not to religious faith at all.

What strikes the reader in this section of the report is the almost complete lack of any basic MOTIVATION. Instead there are long lists of shoulds/musts (p. 21), and of different groups and forces — ideology, language, education, media/advertising, government (pp. 23-33). But the Report fails to address the personal and social realities of sin, grace, faith, hope, love, sacrifice, and prayer — which many Filipinos would consider the most important part of "moral recovery."

This impression is confirmed by taking note of the vocabulary being used. Some familiar social science jargon appears: power-holders (p. 21), critical mass and Change Initiators, structural change (p. 22), ideology (p. 23), media/advertising (p. 25), reinforcement systems (p. 30), and NGO's (p. 31). The result is an overly academic presentation, rather far removed from concrete

reality, and very far from motivating any serious, persevering change or conversion of heart in real-live Filipinos.

## CONCLUSION

What, then, can be said by way of conclusion from this study? Perhaps the beginning of a foundation has been laid for the following assertions.

1) *Catholic moral theology*, philosophy, and contemporary religious education, constitute necessary, irreplaceable sources, together with the behavioral/social sciences, for any adequate "Value Education" and "Moral Recovery" in the Philippines today.

2) the behavioral and social scientists involved in moral education and renewal must be educated to the fact that the Catholic Faith is concerned with the reality of human persons in society as much as with the Triune God. The Beatitudes, 7 out of the 10 Commandments, the Sacraments of vocation, of healing and reconciliation, the Lord's Prayer, the social teaching of the post-Vatican II Church, the truths of Creation, of our final destiny, of an Incarnate Redeeming God present to us in the Holy Spirit — these are realities that directly concern today's Filipino, yet go beyond behavioral/social science methodology.

3) both value education and Moral Recovery deal with freedom, law, sin, grace, conscience, spirituality, destiny. Religion teachers have to be reminded, it seems, that Christian Faith has a substantial, irreplaceable role to play in such human realities. They must be shown that while acknowledging the valuable contributions of the behavioral/social sciences, nevertheless these do not present *all* of reality, but only those dimensions which can be picked up by their own proper methodology. Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, Levinson, etc. are not going to replace the New Testament.

4) Religious faith in the Philippines is not only a *primary motivational force*. It also grounds, deepens, explains, critiques, opens up, integrates — Filipino values and moral life. (This should be recognized by Filipino Christian social scientists themselves). Moreover, such influence is not a "private" option of the individual Christian, but rather a direct result of the nature of Christian Faith, publicly proclaimed by the Catholic Church, Catholic Universities, etc. The Catholic Faith has much to say to *all* persons regarding true

human values and moral life, and far deeper resources to actively foster both than any combination of just behavioral/social sciences.