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FATHER ANDREW BOYLAN AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE REDEMPTORISTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The foundation made in the Philippines in 1906 was the first of the Redemptorists in Asia¹. It was the beginning of an important expansion of the Congregation in recent years; but it has remained to some extent singular in that the Philippines are so different from the other nations of the Far East. They are Christian and predominantly Catholic. In the early years of this century the Islands were experiencing a period of revolution that was religious as well as political. The long Spanish administration had ended, to be replaced by that of the United States; and at the same time the ecclesiastical regime of Spain seemed to have given place to a similar one in which Americans held all the authority. There was, naturally, much resentment in the Filipinos and their clergy that was hard for any European to understand.

The Irishmen who made the foundation came to the Philippines with little knowledge of what to expect. During the voyage one of the pioneers, Father John Creagh, wrote to the Consultor, Father Magnier, in terms that most likely represented the attitude of all. « We thank the Mother of Perpetual Succour for giving us the privilege of bringing her picture into Asia, for I believe we are the first Redemptorists to work in Asia »². It was in the same exalted realm of idealism and unreality

¹ Michael Baily C.S.S.R., *Small Net in a Big Sea, The Redemptorists in the Philippines 1905-1929*, Cebu City, Philippines. There is an account of the first few months in an unpublished manuscript in the hand of Father John Magnier C.S.S.R., Consultor General, *Foundation in the Philippines*. It is undated and was probably composed after 1909. It is in the General Archives of the Redemptorists in Rome, cited in this article A.G.R. Father Magnier was born in 1842, was professed as a Redemptorist in 1867 and was ordained priest in 1873. He was Consultor General from 1894 to 1909. Cf. (M. Magnier) *A Sketch of the Lives of Rev. Father John Magnier C.S.S.R. and of Rev. Father John Mary Magnier C.S.S.R.*, Dublin, 1918.

² John Magnier, *op. cit.*, 37. John Creagh was born in 1870, professed in 1888 and ordained in 1895. Cf. William Packer, *Necrology of the Australasian Vice-province and of the Australasian Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, in manuscript, 1952. Father Creagh was a man of more than ordinary ability, as he showed as Pro-vicar Apostolic of the Kimberleys in the north west of Australia from 1916 to 1923 and as Director of the Holy Family Confraternity in Limerick in earlier

that the venture had been decided and men appointed; but it was by no means a matter of coming to the broad mission fields of Asia, but the Philippines with their own history and their own quite special problems and their actual state of unrest.

The foundation made in Opon certainly had its tribulations. The hurt, bewilderment and frustration of the first year or so have been vividly described by Father Michael Baily. It is of some value to take a closer look at the difficulties of the first few months when they were most acute. The trials of the Redemptorists in that unhappy time shed some light on the Filipino Church in that period of transition.

The Church in the Philippines at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

The decade from 1896 was a period of turmoil for the Philippines³. Commencing with the first rising against Spanish rule, there followed for the Islands after the defeat of Spain by America a guerilla resistance to the new invaders and finally a sullen and resentful submission to the conquerors. Inevitably, it was a period of intense nationalism, when Filipino sensitivities were especially acute. American rule, however, though it might appear to a later view excessively paternalistic, was certainly much more sympathetic to Filipino nationalism than Spain had been. The inauguration of the first Filipino Assembly in 1907 with some measure of self government brought also a perceptible tranquillity.

Obviously, the years between 1896 and 1907 were the time of greatest uncertainty and unrest. It was the time when nationalist feelings were at their peak. And it was precisely at that time that the Irish Redemptorists came to Opon in the diocese of Cebu. The happy improvement in their relations with the people corresponds with the observable pacification of nationalist sentiment that came after 1907.

There was little danger of the Fathers' being attacked, though at first they experienced some alarms, since the people had good reason to fear American reprisals for any molestation suffered by Europeans. Memories were still fresh of the ruthless occupation which had made the large neighbouring island of Samar « a howling wilderness »⁴.

years. He was the first casualty of the Philippines foundation, succumbing early to discouragement and illness.

³ The varying fortunes of the Church during the period of rapid political change are well treated in the carefully documented work of John N. Schumacher S.J., *Church and State: the Philippine Experience*, Manila, 1976.

⁴ John N. Schumacher S.J., *op. cit.*, 37.

They could not be expected, however, to like the newcomers. The Irishmen, arriving in their exalted state of idealism, quickly met with reality in the hostile reception that greeted them.

The Church was affected by the prevailing nationalism, even to extent of the regrettably durable Aglipayan schism⁵. Until the defeat of the Spaniards ecclesiastical affairs had been controlled by the *patronato real*; and in the latter half of the century the Spanish rule and had become increasingly discriminating against the native born Filipino clergy, appointing to Church offices Spanish candidates, almost invariably religious. One of the revolutionary demagogues, Marcelo de la Pilar, coined the extremely emotive word *frailocracia* to describe the regime⁶.

The Filipino diocesan clergy had grown very close to their people during the long and bitter struggle against Spain. Their nationalism had been put to the test in the resistance to the Americans, and they met the challenge with a heroism that their people would be slow to forget. There are on American records cases of imprisonment, torture and execution of priests for supporting the guerilla rebels. Governor Taft had reported that « the native priests are those who have held out longest in favour of the insurgents and against the Americans »⁷. It should be emphasised that, apart from the minority Aglipayan group, the Filipino clergy did not allow their nationalist sympathies to interfere with their pastoral concern for their people. After a brief and most unfortunate misunderstanding at the beginning they welcomed the Redemptorists to work with them.

Some reorganisation of the Filipino Church had become necessary with the defeat of Spain. Up to the treaty of Paris in 1899 ecclesiastical affairs had been rigidly controlled by the *Patronato Real de las Indias*, an anachronism, surely, in the nineteenth century, but one which towards the end a harassed Spanish government had made increasingly severe.

Church matters, too, occasioned some concern to the new power. American authorities were anxious on a number of heads. The continuing hostility of the Filipino clergy was one immediate worry, and another was the extensive property owned by the Spanish Friars.

⁵ There is a thorough study of the rebel national Church established by Gregorio Aglipay in Pedro S. de Achutegui S.J. and Miguel A. Bernad S.J., *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, 3 vols., Quezon City, 1971.

⁶ John N. Schumacher S.J., *op. cit.*, 15.

⁷ John N. Schumacher S.J., *op. cit.*, 36-38.

President Theodore Roosevelt discussed his problems with Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore and Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul; and with their cooperation arranged a mission to the Holy See headed by William Howard Taft, first civil governor of the Philippines⁸. Though Roman authorities could not satisfy all the requests, they showed themselves on the whole sympathetic to American interests.

The Filipino clergy, at any rate, were not satisfied with the Extraordinary Apostolic Delegate who arrived in 1900 to gather information. Archbishop Placide Chapelle of New Orleans had represented Church affairs at the Paris negotiations between Spain and the United States, apparently to the satisfaction of the Holy See⁹. It was mainly according to his recommendations that the new regime was devised.

Towards the end of 1902 the Apostolic Constitution *Quae mari sinico* was brought to the Philippines by the Extraordinary Apostolic Delegate Giovanni Battista Guidi¹⁰. Regulations had become necessary « because with the cessation of Spanish rule the *patronatus* of the Spanish Kings has also ceased. In this way it has come about that the Church has gained a position of greater freedom »¹¹. The provisions were no more than what was required to bring things into line with more general Church practice. Their immediate implementation occasioned some not unfounded suspicion of political wire-pulling.

All the Spanish bishops resigned and were all replaced by Americans with the solitary exception of a Filipino nominated to the see of Caceres¹². It was noticed, for example, that Thomas Augustine Hendrick, named Bishop of Cebu, was the brother of a prominent political supporter of President Roosevelt and had at first been proposed for the archbishopric of Manila¹³. Bishop Hendrick, to do him justice, was openly critical of government policy on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, the new bishops must have found it hard to make themselves acceptable in their charges in a strange land. And it was to Cebu, the diocese of the same Bishop Hendrick, that the Irish Redemptorists came in 1906.

⁸ *loc. cit.*

⁹ *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Leonis XIII Acta*, vol. XXII, Rome, 1903, p. 192-207. The Constitution is dated 17th. September 1902. Archbishop Guidi is named in the Constitution.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 193.

¹² *La Gerarchia Cattolica*, Rome, 1904 gives 9th November 1903 as the date of the American bishops' succeeding to the sees in the Philippines.

¹³ John N. Schumacher S.J., *op. cit.*, 40.

Under the new ecclesiastical regime an Apostolic Delegate was appointed to the Philippines. The man chosen was the Benedictine Ambrose Agius who was a native of Gibraltar, a British subject therefore, and so presumably neutral. In 1903 he spent some time in the house of Sant'Alfonso, Rome, making a retreat in preparation for his episcopal consecration¹⁴. He used the opportunity to ask Father Raus, the Superior General, and Fathers John Magnier and Joseph Schwarz, the two English-speaking consultors, to send men to the Philippines. And while he was in Rome he spoke also with the newly elected Pope Pius X and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val¹⁵. The latter was to show a keen interest in the early fortunes of the foundation.

The new Delegate's discussions were naturally verbal, and no record seems to have been kept of them. However, it is hard to imagine that he could have failed to urge one of the few pastoral recommendations offered by the Constitution *Quae mari sinico*.

«To the other means by which the Church as teacher provides that faith and good morals and all that makes for the salvation of souls should suffer no harm must be added one of the very greatest utility, the spiritual exercises commonly known as missions. It is altogether desirable, therefore, that in each Province at least one house be founded as a dwelling for about eight religious whose only duty will be to visit occasionally the towns and villages and promote the improvement of the people by missionary exhortations »¹⁶.

It is deserving of note that in the course of subsequent misunderstandings about the nature of the Redemptorist ministry in the Philippines no reference was made by any party to dispute to the clear recommendation of the Apostolic Constitution. This must be said, too, of the later and more protracted dealings about the first foundation in Manila. This is one quite important instance of the surprising lack of knowledge of the Philippines on the part of Redemptorists and others which was possibly the principal cause of the difficulties encountered in the foundation.

¹⁴ John Magnier C.S.S.R., *op. cit.*, 1. *La Gerarchia cattolica*, Rome, 1905 gives 4th September 1904 as the date of the nomination of Ambrose Agius as Apostolic Delegate. If Father Magnier has not mistaken the date, the Archbishop made his retreat a very long time in anticipation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Father Schwarz was born in 1849, professed in 1868 and ordained in 1873. He was Consultor General from 1894 to 1909. He died in 1927. His necrology appeared in *Analecta*, 6 (1927), 186-190.

¹⁶ *Leonis XIII Acta*, vol. XXII. Rome, 1903, p. 203. Father Bailly draws attention to the same provision, *op. cit.*, 29-30.

The Irish Province

Archbishop Agius achieved no immediate results with the Roman authorities, but his request was not forgotten, so that Father Raus was delighted when the Irish Province became interested in the Philippines. The houses in Ireland and Australia had been separated from England only in 1898. The first provincial was Father Andrew Boylan¹⁷. Immediately before coming to the Congregation he had been bursar of Maynooth College, where one of his close friends was Doctor Walter McDonald; and that well-known critic's abrasive pen wrote what seems to have been intended as praise of Boylan that he was « good humoured, honest and weak »¹⁸. He really deserved a better comment than that, as he showed himself a ready and quite able supporter of McDonald's efforts to improve Maynooth's academic standards. His correspondence shows him a warm, friendly character, slow to find fault and always inclined to take the most optimistic view.

At the very time Archbishop Agius was looking for help for the Philippines a missionary venture in another part of the world was being offered to the Irish province. The Belgian Fathers had recently acquired responsibility for an English language region in the West Indies which was soon proving an embarrassment¹⁹. During 1903 Father Boylan was summoned to Rome, where he met the Belgian provincial, Father Strybol²⁰, and discussed with him the possibility of sending two men to help with the work in English. On his return to Ireland he was irritated to learn that Father Strybol had spread a report that the matter had been settled²¹. The news aroused a storm of protest in Ireland; but Father Boylan continued to gather information, declaring that while he agreed with much of what was being said about premature expansion of the young province, the work in the West Indies would be adopted if it should prove

¹⁷ Father Boylan was born in 1842 and ordained for the diocese of Kilmore in 1867. He was professed as a Redemptorist in 1888. He became the first provincial of the new Irish province, holding office from 1898 to 1907. He became Bishop of Kilmore, his native diocese two days after his office ceased and he died three years later in 1910. Cf. *Spicilegium Historicum* 9 (1961), 9-10; 75.

¹⁸ Walter McDonald, *Reminiscences of a Maynooth Professor*, ed. Denis Gwynne, Cork, 1967, p. 99.

¹⁹ Cf. A.G.R., *Liber Consultationum* under the date 14 IV 1902.

²⁰ Father Joseph Strybol was born in 1859, professed in 1880 and ordained in 1884.

²¹ A.G.R., Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 17 XI 1903.

« more necessary for the salvation of souls »²². In this sort of thinking the Irish provincial showed himself obstinate, in spite of what everybody else might think, and it was the same dogged adherence to the principle that led him to turn his attention to the Philippines.

He began to consider the Philippines about this very time. A letter to Father Magnier only a month after he had expressed his mind about the West Indies suggested that his choice was now between the West Indies and the Philippines²³. The news was most welcome in Rome, where Father Raus readily seized on the chance to satisfy the request of the Apostolic Delegate. He instructed his consultor to « tell Father Boylan that I desire very much that he make a foundation in the Philippines, and in case he can do so, I release him from all further considerations about Antigua. Missions are more needed in the Philippines than in the West Indies »²⁴.

What occasioned the change of direction had been talks with two of his old friends in the Irish hierarchy, Archbishop Fennelly of Cashel and Bishop Clancy of Elphin²⁵. They had been impressed by the pleas of Bishop Hendrick, newly appointed to Cebu and visiting Ireland. He spent a few days in Sligo with Bishop Clancy, who became his principal advocate, speaking « long and earnestly » with Father Boylan about the opportunities offering to the Redemptorists in the Philippines²⁶. It has to be said, of course, that at this early date even the new Bishop of Cebu could have had not much more than the haziest knowledge of his diocese or of the very special and delicate problems of the Filipino people.

Talk about the West Indies and the Philippines provoked excited discussion both in Ireland and in Australia. Much opposition was expressed, mainly that the young province, scarcely five years in existence, was already over-extended with having responsibility for Australia²⁷. Welcome support for the provincial was not wanting, and he must have been especially delighted with two letters he received from men in Australia, Fathers Patrick Leo²⁸ and James

²² *Ibid.*

²³ A.G.R., Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 24 XII 1903.

²⁴ A.G.R., Prov. Hib., Magnier to Boylan, 29 XII 1903.

²⁵ John Magnier, *op. cit.*, 1-2. Father Magnier speaks of the Most Rev. Dr. Finley of Cashel. *La Gerarchia cattolica*, Rome, 1904 gives Thomas Fennelly as Archbishop of Cashel and John Clancy as Bishop of Elphin.

²⁶ A.G.R., Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 3 I 1904.

²⁷ John Magnier, *op. cit.*, 3.

²⁸ Father Patrick Leo was born in 1866, professed in 1885 and ordained in

Hegarty²⁹, who wrote offering themselves for the Philippines. Both, in fact, were in the event accepted. Father Hegarty's big heart deserves more than a passing acknowledgement. He had been a foundation member when the Redemptorists settled in Scotland and again in Australia. He lost no time in offering himself once more to be a pioneer for the Congregation. His letter is dated 8th February 1904. « Whenever a sacrifice is demanded of us, I should be the first to make it, as I don't think there is anyone who owes so much to our dear mother, the Congregation »³⁰. « Boanerges », as his many friends called him, was an old man of sixty-five when he had his wish and was sent to Opon in 1907; and after only one year ill health forced him to retire to Ireland.

The Decision

Early in 1904 Father Boylan let it be known that the Irish province would make a foundation in the Philippines, should the Father General so desire³¹. The provincial, in fact, had made up his mind very early and set about his own preparations. In January he informed the consultor general of his studies of the Philippines: articles in *The Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, *The Irish Rosary* and *The American Ecclesiastical Review* together with Sir John Bowring's *A Visit to the Philippines in 1858*³². Even Father Boylan, whose optimism was already apparent, must have found Sir John Bowring's observations less than relevant after the lapse of half a century, because he went on to speak about things he needed to know about the Islands. And among them were the name of Bishop Hendrick's diocese and the language that was spoken there³³.

1891. He was named first superior of the new foundation after having been Rector of Ballarat in Australia. For his later career see Michael Baily, *op. cit.*, 14-15.

²⁹ Father James Hegarty was born in 1842, professed in 1864 and ordained in 1868. Cf. Samuel J. Boland, *Edmund Vaughan C.S.S.R. and the Beginnings of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Australia* in *Spic. Hist.* 25 (1977), 250-271; Packer, *op. cit.*; T. Shearman C.S.S.R., *The Redemptorists in Australia*, in manuscript, 1907.

³⁰ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Hegarty to Boylan, 8 II 1904.

³¹ John Magnier, *op. cit.*, 3.

³² A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 5 I 1904. *The Messenger* and the *Rosary* were simple devotional publications. There were articles in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, 26 (1901) on the missions of Archbishop Chappelle and 27 (1902) on the problem of the Friars, which were at least topical, if not very informative.

³³ *Ibid.*

Far from being influenced by those who argued that the province was already too far extended, he determined, on the advice of Father Thomas O'Farrell³⁴, Visitor in Australia, to make a further foundation in New Zealand, « as the country has a great future before it »³⁵.

His resolution regarding the Philippines was very much strengthened by communications he received late in the year from the Apostolic Delegate. Replying to an invitation to come to Ireland and discuss the foundation, the Delegate wrote in October: « I considered the affair closed with your good General and Father Magnier when I last saw them in Rome. The Holy Father was delighted to hear of your Fathers' going out there to carry out his programme of restoring all things in Christ »³⁶. He had evidently given the Pope to understand that matters were practically settled, as a few days later he wrote: « Your Curia knows very well how anxious the Holy Father and Cardinal Merry del Val are for you to settle out there »³⁷.

At the end of the year the provincial was in Rome on his way to Australia for a canonical visitation³⁸. Father Magnier was disappointed at not being able to introduce him to Cardinal Merry del Val, but a courteous letter from the Secretary of State assured him of continued interest in the venture. « I am only too delighted to learn that you are arranging a foundation there, where your presence will be of the greatest advantage »³⁹.

Father Boylan spent the whole of the year 1905 in Australia. It was while he was there that he made his first contact with Bishop Hendrick. He had learned that there was a Limerick man, James Geary, living in Cebu and he asked him to make certain enquiries of the bishop. The reply to this very indirect approach reached him in Ballarat⁴⁰. The bishop's letter to Geary explained the things that

³⁴ Thomas O'Farrell was born in 1845, ordained for the diocese of Ardagh in 1869 and professed as a Redemptorist in 1880. Information is available in Samuel J. Boland, *op. cit.*; William Packer, *op. cit.*; T. Shearman, *op. cit.*

³⁵ A.G.R., Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 26 III 1904.

³⁶ Agius to Boylan, 23 X 1904. There is a copy of this letter in the Chronicles of the Opon House in the Archives of the Viceprovince of Cebu, cited in this article « Opon Chronicles ».

³⁷ Agius to Boylan, 29 X 1904. Copy in Opon Chronicles.

³⁸ John Magnier, *op. cit.*, 4.

³⁹ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Merry del Val to Magnier, 19 XII 1904, copy. A note says the autograph is in Ireland.

⁴⁰ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. James Geary to Boylan. The letter is undated, but with it was enclosed another from the Bishop bearing the date 20 IV 1905.

Father Boylan needed to know. In the diocese of about 2.000.000 there were about sixty vacant parishes; one thousand priests could be placed immediately; the climate was healthy and agreeable; and the native language, Visayan, could be learned in a few months⁴¹.

This letter from Cebu was forwarded to Rome with the note that it was being treated as « a very definite offer »; and Father Boylan indicated the way he had replied to the bishop⁴². This amounted to an urgent recommendation that Bishop Hendrick apply directly to Rome, where his request would be most favourably received. The provincial had been careful to make it clear that if the Redemptorists came to Cebu they would have to live in community and be sufficiently free of parish duties to enable them to give missions, « that being the primary end of our institute ».

Something quite significant that emerges from this correspondence is that after the lapse of nearly two years there was little precise information about conditions in the Philippines, let alone in Cebu. There was considerable discontent in Ireland which tended to express itself in terms that were so unreal that it would be most unfair to take them seriously. Perhaps it was really the vagueness of the whole affair that was the trouble, as one seems to gather from a letter of Father Thomas Walsh⁴³ in which in addition to other complaints he asked: « Except for yourself [...] who wants the Philippines? »⁴⁴. It must be admitted that in his enthusiasm, or perhaps it should be called zeal, the provincial approached the foundation in an exalted and extremely idealistic mood with little thought for the realities, sometimes harsh, of the case. That was a complaint, by no means unjustified, that the first superior of the new foundation was to make⁴⁵.

Bishop Hendrick replied to Father Boylan's letter from Manila, where he had discussed the foundation with Archbishop Agius, the Apostolic Delegate⁴⁶. He recommended that the provincial come to Cebu himself to see what was offering and talk about the matter before any formal application was made to Roman authorities. Repeating what he had already said to Mr. Geary about the need of help,

⁴¹ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Hendrick to Geary, 20 IV 1904.

⁴² A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 5 VI 1905.

⁴³ Thomas Walsh was born in 1864, professed in 1883 and ordained in 1890. Cf. Packer, *op. cit.* Father Walsh was appointed viceprovincial in Australia in 1924 and became the first provincial there when the province was erected in 1927.

⁴⁴ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 14 VIII 1905.

⁴⁵ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Leo to Magnier, 10 VIII 1906.

⁴⁶ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Hendrick to Boylan, 15 VIII 1905.

he added assurances that conditions were improving. « We have every reason to believe that the worst days in the Philippines are in the past and that conditions will steadily improve ». He was correct in that assessment, of course; but even though the troubled times of the rebellion had ended, there was still much resentment as would soon be revealed.

Father Boylan, sending on the bishop's letter to Rome, added that he had arranged to leave for the Philippines towards the end of the year, accompanied by Father O'Farrell⁴⁷. He assured the consultor that as soon as they arrived the two of them would conscientiously make the necessary investigations, the first of which was whether « there are hundreds of thousands of souls deprived of instruction and sacraments for want of priests ». He was undoubtedly already convinced that he would find exactly that, as he had believed ever since he had first heard of the Philippines.

The two travellers left Sydney early in December, farewelled by Cardinal Moran with the most cordial expressions of interest in their venture⁴⁸. The two had much in common. Father O'Farrell was very much just such another man as his provincial, not only in that he, too, had been a diocesan priest in Ireland, but he was as optimistic and as filled with buoyant good spirits. In Manila, where they arrived on Christmas Eve, they were accommodated with the Archbishop⁴⁹. They eventually reached Cebu on New Year's Day, realising they were now most assuredly in a strange land when outside the bishop's residence they met a matron smoking a cigar, while the infant clutching her hand enjoyed a cigarette⁵⁰.

Their reception, however, was far from cordial. The bishop was not at home and had left no word of their expected arrival, with the result that they were not admitted. Late at night as it was, they were sent to the seminary, where the Vincentians gave them hospitality⁵¹. A week later Father Boylan had to report that the bishop had not yet found time to discuss the new foundation. The most he

⁴⁷ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 18 IX 1905.

⁴⁸ Archives of the Australian Province of the Redemptorists, Diary of Father O'Farrell. The diary, without a title and written hastily in lead pencil, is unmistakably Father O'Farrell's work. It is a day to day and light-hearted account of the journey.

⁴⁹ A.G.R., Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 26 XII 1905.

⁵⁰ O'Farrell's Diary.

⁵¹ Opon Chronicles.

could say was that Bishop Hendrick had promised him that he would not be asked to take permanent charge of a district⁵². It appears, however, that the provincial was becoming a little uneasy at the bishop's evasiveness. It is hard to find an excuse for the cool reception and the long delay; and ready to think well of others as he was, even Father Boylan found it hard to explain.

The bishop took his two guests with him on a visitation tour of a week or so, at the conclusion of which Father Boylan wrote to Rome with the news: « I now send the bishop's formal application to found a house of our Order in his diocese »⁵³. The journey seems to have been to the island of Leyte, since two of the documents forwarded with the provincial's letter bear the address of Palo on that island. It seems that the formal offer was made during the tour, so that the two visitors had not yet seen the church and *convento* of *Nuestra Senora de la Regla* in Opon, which was on the island of Mactan⁵⁴.

Among the papers forwarded to Rome was a brief statement in Latin giving reasons for and against the foundation⁵⁵. It is dated 17th January from Palo, Leyte, and signed by both Father Boylan and Father O'Farrell. Their arguments *contra* have a lighthearted ring about them characteristic of both men. With it was a letter dated 15th January written by Father O'Farrell for the bishop and addressed to Father Schwarz. Bishop Hendrick clearly was trying to enlist the American consultor's support, addressing him as his « old and esteemed friend »⁵⁶. To this brief note, which the bishop was too busy to write with his own hand, Father O'Farrell added a word of his own in praise of the Filipino people.

The final document in the package was the bishop's formal application of which he had spoken in the letter to Father Schwarz, whom he urged to give it his support⁵⁷. The application, clearly

⁵² A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 81 1906.

⁵³ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 22 I 1906.

⁵⁴ Ibid. The name Opon is often spelt « Opong » both in Father Boylan's correspondence and in the Opon Chronicles. The spelling is unimportant now, as the name has been changed to Lapulapu City in honour of the national hero who killed Magellan.

⁵⁵ This report on the proposed foundation is given below as Document 1. The original is in A.G.R. Prov. Hib.

⁵⁶ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Hendrick to Schwarz, 15 I 1906.

⁵⁷ The bishop's application addressed in English to the Superior General is given below as document 2. The original is in A.G.R. Prov. Hib. It is undated, but Father Magnier has attached the envelope showing that it was posted in Manila on 27th January.

prepared according to the suggestion of Father Boylan, declared that a community would not have permanent charge of a parish, « but owing to present circumstances it will be necessary for them to take charge for a time of a district around their monastery and church ». One can scarcely fail to see that what was formally offered was expressed in extremely general terms, not even the name of Opon being mentioned. The reply of Father Raus, dated 14th March, was even more concise, simply saying he accepted the foundation on the bishop's terms and had instructed Father Boylan accordingly⁵⁸.

It is impossible, looking at things from a distance, to resist the strong impression of a certain unreality in the final decision. It had been a long time since Archbishop Agius had spoken with Father Raus and his consultors and since Bishop Hendrick's friends had pleaded his cause with the Irish provincial. Since then Father Boylan had been quite evidently ruled by his own zeal to the neglect of prudence. And one has to say as well that the bishop was far from frank. The « district around their monastery and church » in the event turned out to be the whole of Mactan with the adjacent islands. The fact is that the agreement was reached without any definite indication of where the foundation was to be and what pastoral duties it entailed. And it must be remembered when trying to explain the troubles that followed that the Superior General and his consultors made their decision with a zeal that was every bit as edifying, as exalted and as naive as was the Irish provincial's.

Left by himself after Father O'Farrell's departure on his return journey to Australia, Father Boylan was at last able to see with his own eyes and give an account of what was offering in Opon⁵⁹. The church was a large, beautiful structure in the solid style the Spanish Augustinians had made so familiar in the Philippines. It was situated close to the narrow strait that separated Mactan from the larger island of Cebu. The *convento* was large, having housed a community of Augustinian Friars in the days of Spanish rule, and it stood only thirty yards from the water's edge. The rooms were so spacious that they would need to be divided by partitions to accomodate the community of seven that was contemplated. For this reason the provincial insisted that it was necessary that he remain to prepare the

⁵⁸ Father Raus's letter accepting the foundation is given below as document 3. Copy in A.G.R. Prov. Hib.

⁵⁹ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 23 I 1906.

house for the new arrivals. As he waited the long weeks for word from Rome, he found hospitality in the bishop's house.

The Troubles of Opon

A few days after his report on Opon Father Boylan wrote again, this time evidently with some misgivings⁶⁰. The bishop, it seems, had no objections to his remaining on hand, but he could see no reasons for making any preparations. « He gave me to understand that we should sleep in dormitories ». There was already a parish priest in Opon and he should not be disturbed.

When he received by cablegramme the word he had been eagerly expecting, the provincial's optimism quickly revived, as is evident in the jubilant reply he sent off at once⁶¹. Once more he was full of plans and enthusiasm. « Now that the bishop has secured the foundation, he is most eager for the time to come when we shall be able to give missions ». He was really speaking about himself, of course, too ready to believe that everybody shared his own ideals. He went on to urge that the pioneers be in Opon by July, as then they should be able to begin work on the missions by the following January.

Father Magnier lost no time in informing Cardinal Merry del Val, from whom he received assurance of the Holy Father's satisfaction at the news⁶². A very prompt message came from Manila, from Archbishop Agius, the Apostolic Delegate⁶³. He would like, he said, to see a Redemptorist house in every diocese of the Philippines.

Father Boylan rather typically took up residence in the *convento* of *Nuestra Senora de la Regla* as soon as he could, finding it a good omen to his Irish heart that it should be on 17th March, the feast of St. Patrick; and his first letter from his new home was written in Latin to Father Raus⁶⁴. His spirits were obviously high,

⁶⁰ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 27 I 1906.

⁶¹ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 13 III 1906. The date seems to be wrong, not unusual in Father Boylan's correspondence. The Superior General's letter accepting the foundation bears the date of 14th March.

⁶² The letter of Cardinal Merry del Val is given below as document 4. The original is in A.G.R. Prov. Hib.

⁶³ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Agius to Boylan, 22 III 1906.

⁶⁴ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Raus, 21 III 1906.

as appears from the note he appended for Father Magnier. Opon was no place for one as plump as he was, since it was too close to the place where the inhabitants had killed and eaten Magellan. It could have been only his own imagination that was responsible for that fiction of cannibalism. In a further letter to Father Magnier⁶⁵ he spoke of his position in Opon. The parish priest, Father Vicente Roa, was a fine priest of good family, and he was proving most hospitable.

The foundation community was quickly chosen with the consent of the consultors in distant Ireland. The first names proposed by the provincial were Fathers Patrick Leo and John Creagh, the former one of the first to volunteer and the latter glowing at his success with the Confraternity in Limerick. To them were joined Fathers Matthew O'Callaghan⁶⁶, William O'Sullivan⁶⁷ and Thomas Cassin⁶⁸. With two Brothers they gathered in Belfast and came in a Spanish ship by way of Genoa to Manila, where they were joined by Father Leo who had come from Australia and travelled with them on to Cebu, which they reached on 30th June⁶⁹.

The arrival of the community at Opon brought the first realisation that all was not well⁷⁰. The provincial had missed the travellers in Cebu; and they were escorted to their new home by their Limerick friend, James Geary. Father Roa met them coldly, asking simply if they had a letter from the bishop; and finding they had not, very reluctantly allowed them to go to Father Boylan's room. There the provincial joined them; and that room with a smaller one nearby was to be the home of all eight of them for the next few days. The following day was Sunday, and the parish priest attended to the people; and it was not until after a wedding on the Wednesday, 4th July, that he was able to go to Cebu to find out what was to be

⁶⁵ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 13 IV 1906.

⁶⁶ Father Matthew O'Callaghan was born in 1873, professed in 1893 and ordained in 1898. He became the first vice-provincial in the Philippines in 1924, dying in Manila in 1927.

⁶⁷ Father William O'Sullivan was born in 1875, professed in 1894 and ordained in 1901. He later worked in Australia. Cf. Packer, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸ Father Thomas Cassin was born in 1877, professed in 1899 and ordained in 1904. Of the pioneer band he gave the longest service to the Philippines.

⁶⁹ A diary of the journey written by Father John Creagh with his characteristic literary flourishes is in the Archives of the Australian Province of the Redemptorists.

⁷⁰ Opon Chronicles have a complete and vivid account of the early troubles of the pioneers.

done. He returned with word received through the Vicar General that he had been transferred to another parish and that Opon was now definitely entrusted to the Redemptorists.

In describing these unhappy events Father Boylan wrote with unaccustomed vehemence, revealing how sorely his patience had been tried⁷¹. « The bishop has treated us with very great unfairness and with positive injustice ». He went on to relate how Bishop Hendrick repeatedly refused either to inform the parish priest of Opon or allow himself to make preparation he considered necessary. Even as late as 25th June, when the arrival of the community was close at hand he had resisted the provincial's last appeal. To make things worse, Father Roa told him that he had been assured by the bishop that he would not be removed from Opon without being first consulted. And the bishop's secretary, when asked, said that it was only too true. The bishop, wrote Father Boylan, was too old for such a difficult diocese, was reputed to be unfavourable to religious, and gave reasons to suspect that he regretted having given the Redemptorists to understand that they should have charge of the important parish and church of *Nuestra Senora de la Regla*.

The following day, 5th July, the departing parish priest was helped on his way by a host of well-wishers, who stripped the *convento* of everything that could be moved, leaving every room bare, even the kitchen, as the chronista glumly noted. Father Roa took his leave courteously in the evening and left the newcomers to a most uncomfortable night. And then during the next few days their troubles increased as they discovered that the people would not sell them food, so that they just had to suffer hunger until they could get some help from sympathisers in Cebu⁷².

The Sunday was described by the chronicler as « the saddest day of all, because of the eight thousand souls only three people attended the public Mass ». It was made painfully clear that the boycott of the Fathers extended even to the church. During the weeks that followed that continued to be the pattern of existence in Opon. The chronicles often had to record that there was no bread; but these occasions grew less frequent as time passed, and attendance at the Sunday Masses gradually increased.

The worry of the first few weeks told on everyone in spite of

⁷¹ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 23 VII 1906.

⁷² Opon Chronicles.

the provincial's efforts to put on a cheerful front and fill them all, as he said, « with holy hope »⁷³. Towards the end of July, however, he wrote in some exasperation an account of all his troubles to the Delegate, putting the blame for everything on the bishop⁷⁴. There is no doubt that Bishop Hendrick was very much at fault indeed, but it was also clear from his conduct and his vacillation that he had not yet come to understand the problems of the people and especially how recent were the scars of their struggle for independence.

Father Boylan's spirits revived quickly. Very soon he was making a request concerning which he had probably made up his mind when coming to the Philippines. « It is that I may be allowed to spend the remaining years of my life in the Philippines. I hope and believe before my God that I make this request for purely supernatural motives. I would like to do something for Jesus before I die, and there is not in the Catholic Church another spot where I could do as much for the good God »⁷⁵. It would be impossible to doubt the fervour and sincerity of his plea. And his resolution, so firm from the beginning, was in all likelihood the source of that excessive haste and enthusiasm of his with which we may perhaps find fault. In this same letter, however, he mentioned a report that had reached him to the effect that he was a candidate favoured by some for the bishopric of Kilmore, which at the time he did not take seriously.

Relations with the people gradually improved as more and more came to the church. In the more friendly atmosphere the provincial recovered all of his former enthusiasm. He happily reported brighter prospects, adding a word for Father Schwarz. « Their chief objection to us was that we were *Americans* »⁷⁶. Just a little more dogged endurance was needed before it was possible to report an unmistakeable change for the better.

« There is a band in this parish, and it is one of the best bands in the Islands. Its members were very hostile to us, but to our great delight and surprise they came to the *convento* on the evening of 9th September and played *God Save Ireland* in glorious style. They played many other tunes and have repeated the visit »⁷⁷.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Extracts from this letter to Archbishop Agius are given below as document 5. The copy is from the Opon Chronicles.

⁷⁵ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 8 VIII 1906.

⁷⁶ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 25 VIII 1906.

⁷⁷ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 6 X 1906.

It was clear at last that the newcomers were no longer suspect as Americans. The event was greeted with relief and delight by the community who invited the bandsmen to join them in celebrating the reconciliation. A glass or two of beer assisted the atmosphere, and the band happily entertained the Fathers until late in the night⁷⁸.

Regrettably, just at this juncture when the situation was improving in Opon, there was yet another unfortunate difficulty with the bishop. Without warning he removed from the neighbouring parish a priest, Father Gregorio Reynes, who had helped the Fathers from the beginning with their study of Visayan⁷⁹. In his place he announced that he was sending to Opon a priest who had been removed from his parish for scandalous conduct. Both the provincial and the rector protested vigorously on account of the inevitable misunderstanding with the Filipino people, who would be bound to see the Redemptorists acting as gaolers to a Filipino priest. The chronicles reporting the unhappy incident, stated that « the bishop on the whole seemed to show himself indifferent to our success or failure here »⁸⁰.

The chronicles of the Opon house often speak of the provincial's energy and unfailing high spirits, but they also comment that he was not able to share his enthusiasm with everybody. That was sadly true. The frustration, the disappointments and the fears of the first few months had their effect. In November Father Boylan had to report that Father Leo and Father Creagh had become dejected to such an extent as to cause concern⁸¹. In Father Creagh's case the depression so undermined his health that in the following year, on the doctor's advice, he was transferred to Australia. Father Leo was to remain at his post and serve two terms as superior. The provincial was able to point out how inconvenient it had been in such a small community to have had two superiors. From his own letters it is clear that Father Leo chafed at the inhibitions he suffered from the provincial's continued presence; but the real trouble was that he had soon lost confidence in the foundation.

The same could not be said of all. The chronicles show a

⁷⁸ Opon Chronicles.

⁷⁹ Father Reynes had helped the Redemptorists learn the Visayan language. He was attached to the parish of Mandaue and with the parish priest of the same parish, Father Emiliano Mercado, warmly supported the new foundation. Both men were frequent and welcome visitors in Opon.

⁸⁰ Opon Chronicles.

⁸¹ A.G.. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 17 XI 1906.

spirit that was both humorous and confident, in spite of so many distressing incidents faithfully recorded. No doubt they reflect the character of the man who wrote them up during those early months. Father Tom Cassin, the youngest of the community, had much of his provincial's optimism, a measure large enough to sustain his hopes when others spoke of failure and to hold him in the Philippines until old age cashiered him. But the others, too, deserve credit for their endurance until prospects became brighter. On leaving Opon Father Boylan was able to tell Father O'Sullivan to « go and fill your rector with holy hope »⁸².

Father Boylan's long sojourn in Opon was coming to an end. He had arranged to leave the Philippines about the beginning of December. One of his last acts was to compose a long letter to Father Magnier, which serves as a report on the foundation⁸³. It is a good summary of the troubles encountered in Opon with some sound comments on the conduct of the bishop.

By the time he took his leave on 5th December the future of the foundation was really assured, in spite of apprehensions on the part of Father Leo, which he continued to voice as long as he remained in office in the Philippines. The confidence expressed by Bishop Hendrick that the Philippines had seen their worst times⁸⁴ would soon be justified by events. The inauguration of the Philippine Assembly in 1907 marked the end of the worst troubles, and the old hostilities and suspicions were definitely on the decline. The community at Opon had already experienced that in improved relations with their people. Even the leaders of the opposition had accepted the Fathers' hospitality together with a glass of beer on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows in September⁸⁵. Their troubles in the future would prove to be principally their attempts to combine their very extensive parish duties with an expanding programme of missions. And this difficulty was solved with quite outstanding success, as Father Baily has ably shown⁸⁶. The provincial, leaving the Philippines reluctantly after nearly a year, certainly had not the least fear for his foundation.

⁸² Opon Chronicles.

⁸³ This letter, dated 24 XI 1906 is given below as document 6. The original is in A.G.R. Prov. Hib. After his return to Ireland Father Boylan sent a formal report in Latin to Father Raus, dated 8 I 1907. It reproduces for the most part what he had already written to Father Magnier.

⁸⁴ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Hendrick to Boylan, 15 VIII 1905.

⁸⁵ Opon Chronicles.

⁸⁶ Michael Baily C.S.S.R., *op. cit.*, 59-72.

Some Reflections

The story of the Redemptorists' introduction into the Philippines, presented as it has been in detail, reveals one thing very definitely. It was characterised by extraordinary confusion, bordering on chaos. It has been worth while to dwell at length on the event, reflecting as it does the condition of the Church in the Philippines at the turn of the century. Very great changes had occurred in the space of a few years. The clergy were drastically reduced in numbers; they and their people had been disappointed and humiliated in their nationalist aspirations; their Church was divided by schism; and they had to accept ecclesiastical superiors who were foreigners. The fact that the Church survived the troubles reflects the greatest credit on the strength of Filipino Catholicity. The small disturbances and eventual calm experienced in Opon were repeated in all probability in many places throughout the Islands.

It looks very much as though Bishop Hendrick was every bit as unsure of himself in his diocese as the Redemptorists showed themselves when their simplicity suffered such a rude shock in Opon. When the bishop was in Ireland speaking with Father Boylan's friends, he could scarcely have had any knowledge of his diocese, newly appointed as he was. In all his dealings over the Opon foundation he showed so many inconsistencies as to make one realise that he was not comfortable in his relations with his Filipino clergy. Father Boylan suggested as much in his report. He had his suspicions confirmed when the Apostolic Delegate told him when he was passing through Manila on his way back to Ireland that there had been great indignation in Cebu over the bishop's giving to strangers the parish of Opon, one of the most desirable in the whole diocese⁸⁷. One has to say that the bishop realised too late how it looked to his clergy to have deprived them of the fine church and dwelling so beautifully situated.

There is no doubt that the bishop made mistakes and was at fault on more than one point. There is some justification for the provincial's reflection that « the bishop seems to have been appointed like the State bishops in France, not for any episcopal fitness, but for political reasons, because he belonged to the party now in power viz. the Republicans »⁸⁸. It is true that Bishop Hendrick had links

⁸⁷ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Raus, 8 I 1907.

⁸⁸ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 24 XI 1906.

with President Roosevelt⁸⁹. It is not unfair, therefore, to ask if that was the only or the principal reason for his appointment, and if so, whether it might not have been very much the same with others of the Americans appointed to see in the Philippines.

Father Boylan was sympathetic to the people's feelings. He was able to draw an eminently just comparison between their resentment at the removal of their Filipino parish priest and the anger one would expect if something similar happened in Ireland. And to make things worse, Father Roa had been especially loved by his people because of his kindness to them in their recent troubles⁹⁰.

Though he gave due credit to his predecessor in Opon, the provincial was too hasty and hardly just in his comments on the Filipino clergy. His occasional references in his letters need to be corrected from what was recorded in the Opon chronicles. From the very beginning the community was helped and supported by their neighbours in the parish of Mandaue, Fathers Emiliano Mercado and Gregorio Reynes. The chronicles also record that in later years Father Vicente Roa always showed himself friendly and hospitable.

The foundation survived its troubled beginnings, and the presence of the Redemptorists in the Philippines in the event has been amply justified. For that credit must go first of all to Andrew Boylan.

It is easy to point out the mistakes he made in his dealings with the bishop at the start; and Father Leo did that with some indignation⁹¹. His faults were so obvious. He was impetuous, even to the point of being quite improvident. It must be remembered, however, that the extraordinary vagueness of the agreement was as much due to Father O'Farrell, the Australian superior, who was his companion; and it was apparently not questioned by Father Raus and his consultors. There is no doubt that if things had been handled better in the beginning all the hurt, misunderstanding and frustration of those first tentative months would have been happily avoided.

He was a man it was easy to like. With the new community in its troubles he showed himself kind and as considerate of his men as it was possible to be. The Opon chronicles invariably speak of him in most affectionate terms. His correspondence shows him as a man slow to criticise others. If anything, he was rather too ready to think well of people. In choosing the men for the foundation the

⁸⁹ John N. Schumacher S.J., *op. cit.*, 40.

⁹⁰ A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 24 XI 1906.

⁹¹ Cf. Michael Baily C.S.S.R., *op. cit.*, 21-24.

only ones on whom he insisted were Fathers Leo and Creagh; and though both did commendable work in other fields, they did not adapt themselves to life in the Philippines. But it is a fault, surely, easy to excuse when one is too ready to praise and less willing to blame.

There was one quality above all others that the Opon venture revealed in Father Boylan. He was a man who could be entirely possessed by a good purpose. Right from the start he was moved by the plight of the Philippines and was determined to come to their assistance. If he was impetuous and improvident, if he bungled as his critics said he did, it was because he was impatient to be at the task he saw as so good and so urgent. His aim was always clear in his own mind; and that was why he was so unfailingly cheerful, optimistic when things were at their very worst. He was so entirely captured by his compassion for the Filipino people in their need that in the end he made his earnest plea to be let give himself. His firm conviction is the real basis on which has risen the Redemptorist work in the Philippines. « There is not in the Catholic Church a spot where I could do so much for the good God »⁹².

DOCUMENTS

1

J.M.J.A.

De Domo C.S.S.R. in Insulis Philippinis fundanda. Anne domus huiuscemodi fundari debet in Diocesi Cebuana P.I.?

In gratiam huius foundationis urgenda videntur argumenta sequentia:

1°. Penuria seu paucitas extrema sacerdotum relate ad magnum numerum fidelium. Sacerdotes omnino impares sunt fideles curare per sacramenta, catecheses, conciones, visitationes etc. In tota Diocesi Cebuana non habetur unus sacerdos pro 11.000 fidelium. Inde palam fit plures animas in magno salutis periculo versari. In quibusdam quas visitavimus regionibus unus sacerdos sibi commissas habet 20.000 animarum!

2°. Necessitas maxima Missionum per omnes paroecias huius Diocesis.

3°. Fructus spiritualis maximus percipiendus domi et in Missionibus.

⁹² A.G.R. Prov. Hib. Boylan to Magnier, 8 VIII 1906.

4°. Sanctitas Sua Pius Xmus dixit Delegato Apostolico se magnopere gaudere quando illi annuntiatum fuerit Patres Redemptoristas in has Insulas probabiliter profecturos esse et cooperaturos ad omnia in Christo restauranda.

5°. Ipse Delegatus Apostolicus Ill.mus et Rev.mus Dominus Ambrosius Agius O.S.B. hanc fundationem videre magnopere desiderat et de facto rem fere conclusam habet.

6°. Si acceptetur huiusmodi fundatio Congregatio nostra dilecta partem aliquam (parvam quidem) habebit in custodiendo pro sancta Matre Ecclesia populum hunc Philippinum fidelem et docilem, quem heretici, schismatici et homines perditionis evellere conantur e sinu eius.

Contra urgeri videntur:

1°. Aer Europeanis insalubrius est.

2°. Calores grandes.

3°. Terraemotus.

4°. Tempestates violentae, nempe « typhoons », « simoons ».

5°. Ignis, grando et spiritus procellarum.

6°. Incertitudo quaedam de mediis victum procurandi.

Palo, Ins. Leyte, P.I.

Die 17a Jan. 1906

Andreas Boylan C.S.S.R., Sup. Prov.
Thomas O'Farrell C.S.S.R.

2

The Most Reverend Bishop of Cebu, P.I.

To the Most Reverend Matthias Raus, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Rome.

Most Rev. Father General,

It will give me great pleasure to have a house of your Order established in this Diocese. Father Boylan and Father O'Farrell have come here at my invitation to inspect the conditions on which their confreres might work in these Islands — the rights of the Bishop as well as the rights of Regulars being respected.

The Redemptorists living in this Diocese will have the same faculties to exercise their ministry according to the Rules and Constitutions of their Order which they have in Ireland and Australia. I will not insist on their taking permanent charge of a Parish, but, owing to present circumstances it will be necessary for them to take charge for a time of the district around their Monastery and Church. For this only some of the Fathers would be required, while others could be employed on Missions and Retreats in other parishes at the invitation of the Bishops and local clergy. I am aware that one of the primary ends of your Order is to give Missions and Retreats, and the Fathers will probably be asked

to give Missions to the people and Retreats to Priests, to Seminarians and to Nuns in other parts of the Islands.

I will give to the Fathers a Church and Convento of which they cannot be deprived except for some grave canonical reason. And in their Church they can have Masses, Processions, Benedictions, Sermons, Instructions and Confraternities. In a word, they can do all that will tend to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls as they are accustomed to do elsewhere.

Father Boylan says he is prepared to send a community of five Fathers and two lay brothers if your Paternity agrees to my proposal.

I remain
Your humble servant in Xt,
Thomas Augustine Hendrick
Bishop of Cebu.

3

die 14 Martii 1906

Ill.mo et Rev.mo D.no Thomae Hendrick,
Episcopo Cebuano.

Ill.me et Rev.me Domine,

Accepi per Consultorem meum Rev. P. Schwarz epistolam tuam, datam superiori mense Januario, qua nos invitas ut in tua diocesi foundationem instituamus, promittens te omnia pro viribus facturum ut hoc tuum consilium re compleatur.

Misertus et ego tot animarum, quae in istis regionibus spirituali ope tantopere destituuntur, votis tuis obsecundare studebo. Quam propositam a te foundationem, sub conditionibus in tua epistola expressis, acceptam habeo: quam acceptationem etiam Pl. Rev. P. Boylan significavi, eum rogans ut interim in tua diocesi Cebuana remaneat eaque disponat quae necessaria fuerint antequam destinati Patres adveniant.

Sane provinciae nostrae Hibernicae recens constitutae copia Missionariorum non suppetit, saltem in praesenti. Verum intuitu necessitatis qua tua diocesis laborat, id faciam quod fieri poterit ut tuis votis respondeam. Gratias etiam tibi ago pro ope quam Patri Boylan feres ad contrahendum aes alienum (£500) quo primis expensis provideatur.

Interea summam tibi reverentiam profitens, permaneo,

Ill.me et Rev.me Domine,

hum.us tuus in Christo servus,
M. Raus,
Sup. Gen. et Rect. Maj.

In fidem copiae
J. Magnier C.S.S.R., Cons. Gen.
Romae ad S. Alphonsi die 15 Martii 1906.

Rev.mo Padre,

Mi torno sommamente grato di significare alla P.V. l'alta soddisfazione provata dal Santo Padre nell'apprendere che alcuni Religiosi della Sua Congregazione stanno per recarsi dall'Irlanda alle Isole Filippine per fondare una casa nella diocesi di Cebu.

Communichi pure ai buoni Missionari che il Santo Padre li benedice con tutta l'effusione del cuore, come di cuore benedice la P.V. e l'intera Congregazione. E colgo l'incontro per confermarLe i sensi della mia sincera stima, e sono

Di V.P.

Aff.mo nel Signore
R. Card. Merry del Val.

Roma 31 Marzo 1906

Rev. Padre G. Magnier C.SS.R.
Consultore Generale
Roma.

In a letter to the Delegate Apostolic of 26th July 1906 Fr. Provincial wrote⁹³:

« About 16th January 1906 the Bishop offered us this place (Opon) if we thought it would suit us. He sent his Vicar General with us to see the place and it did suit us, and we told him so when he returned from his confirmation tour. I wrote to my superiors in Rome telling them of the offer and recommending its acceptance. On the 13th March the Bishop got a telegramme from Rome saying that Opon was accepted and that I should remain to prepare the house for my confreres ».

(Father Boylan came down to Opon on March 17th to prepare the house but the priest, Father Vicente Roa, went to the Bishop and the latter told him that the matter was not yet settled. So things remained in that unsettled state until shortly before the arrival of the Fathers, when Father Boylan made another effort to get the place handed over to him. He writes in the letter quoted):

« When my confreres were near the end of their journey and when I despaired of his giving up the convento and allowing us to make due

⁹³ The only copy of this letter available is that given in the Opon Chronicles, from which source it has been quoted here with some interjection of the chronicler.

preparations I called on him (the Bishop) on the 12th June and begged him to give us the place some few days before they would arrive here so that I might make the essential preparations for them. In that interview of 12th June he promised that Sunday 24th June would be Father Roa's last day here, that the house would be given to us on Monday 25th and that a young priest would be sent to us to hear confessions. Now these promises were not honourably kept, that is they were not kept at all...

« When 25th June arrived and the promises were not fulfilled, I wrote a letter to the Bishop trying to make him see the state of affairs and urging him to fulfill his part of the contract as we had fulfilled ours at such great personal sacrifice and at the sacrifice of time and money. What happened? Our Fathers arrived here on 30th June and found the native priest and his twelve muchachos in strong and solid possession of the convento. We were allowed the use of two rooms. Six of us had to sleep in one and two in another. Into these rooms there was blowing a most offensive and dangerous effluvia from two earth closets opening into them according to the manner of the people in these parts. After a few days Father V. Roa got an order to go to another parish, and then our troubles were intensified. In a few hours he removed out of the house every simple article of furniture, beds, bedding, tables, chairs, cutlery, glass, all refectory utensils, all cooking utensils, and his muchachos tore down the masonry in the kitchen that served for cooking purposes. The house was as clear of every article of furniture as a pane of glass in a window is. We had to live on food cooked in Cebu and sent over to us by boat. We had to sleep on the floor for three or four nights until we managed to get beds, mats, nets etc.... ».

6

Opon, P.I.
24/11/06

Dear Father Magnier,

In one of your letters you say the state of things here is inexplicable to persons at a distance. That state of things here was unexpected by us, but thank God matters are very much improved and continue to improve. The condition of things in the beginning was due to four concurrent things, viz. the Bishop, the native clergy, the native people and the devil.

To begin with the Bishop, he offered this place to Father O'Farrell and myself and the offer was accepted by our superiors in Rome. I told the Bishop I would ask leave to remain here and prepare the house for the community. On 13th March he got a cable from Rome saying that his offer was accepted and that I might remain to make the necessary preparations. But, though I told him the object of my remaining, he persisted in keeping me from making the slightest change or preparation of

any kind, for he strictly and repeatedly forbade me to tell our predecessor that we were coming to this convento, and of course I could make no change in this house without the resident priest's seeing and knowing it. When I despaired of making *due* preparation for the community I called on the Bishop about three weeks before the Fathers came and urged him to give us the place that I might at least make the *essential* preparations. He then made three distinct promises, all of which he broke. He promised that the native priest (who was here) would leave on 24th June. He promised to send (on 25th June) a young native priest who would help in parochial work and teach us Visayan. It was then and there arranged that a priest would come and speak to the people on our behalf and explain to them the object of our mission to the Islands. Not one of these promises was fulfilled, nor any explanation given. Had these promises been honourably kept I believe there would have been absolutely no trouble. Our predecessor frequently told me that he was quite prepared to speak for us to the people and hand them over well disposed to us and even to give us a *limosina*, but the Bishop, up to the time of our coming, led him to believe that he would not be removed from Opon.

Now why did the Bishop not give us the place at Easter last and send our predecessor to his brother's parish which had been four months without a priest? I could have done as much for the parish as was done before, especially if the Bishop would send me the young priest who was disengaged all the time and who could easily have come to help any day after Easter. Why did the Bishop delay to give the place to us? We believe that owing to influence brought to bear on him by the native clergy, he changed his mind and intended not give the place to us at all but to send us elsewhere. We believe this because (a) even after his offer was made and accepted he told his secretary, Father Rawlinson O.S.B., that nothing was decided about Opon, (b) he told the same to our predecessor, Father Vicente Roa, who called on him about 19th March to make inquiries, (c) on or about Easter Sunday last he said in the presence of Mgr. Gorordo⁹⁴, his own Notario Mayor, to our predecessor: « If I finally make up my mind to give Opon to the Redemptorists I will consult you ». This was five weeks after he had received the cable from Rome saying that his offer of Opon had been accepted⁹⁵. If I can believe Father Roa, the bishop never consulted him on the matter. The bishop seems to have been appointed like the State bishops in France, not for any episcopal fitness, but for political reasons, because he belonged to the party now in power, viz. Republican, though he should naturally belong to the Democratic party.

On 13th August he promised to send Mgr. Gorordo, a popular native priest, to come and preach for us on Sunday, 26th August. The bishop broke this promise also. The preacher did not come, though he

⁹⁴ Juan Gorordo became bishop of Cebu in 1910, when Bishop Hendrick resigned.

⁹⁵ It is to be emphasised that Opon was not mentioned in the bishop's offer in January nor in the acceptance by Father Raus in March.

lives in the palace and both bishop and preacher were at home in the palace that Sunday within three miles of us. The people were angry and disappointed and went away with the belief that the bishop and priests felt very little interest in the success of our work.

Next, with regard to the native clergy, they never (with one notable exception) came near us in our troubles to offer us sympathy, advice or help of any kind⁹⁶. The people would have been far less hostile if they had seen the native priests come and visit us and help us and speak to themselves some kind, explanatory words on our behalf. But nothing of the kind was done by the native priests. They have a great aversion to the coming of American or European priests. Archbishop Harty⁹⁷ told me in confidence that nine out of every ten native priests greatly abhor the introduction of foreign missionaries into these Islands.

Now with regard to the people of this parish, their action is quite understandable. They were hostile to us, because they saw us come here and take possession of this parish while their own priest was turned out, not only without warning, but unexpectedly, because he had been relying on the bishop's promise not to give us Opon without consulting him. The bishop did not consult him but kept him here until three days *after* the Fathers arrived and then he was turned out most abruptly, and as far as the people could judge, he was driven out by us. They disliked us for having any part in turning out of their parish the very first parish priest of their own race that had been over them. He was popular because a few years ago there was a great scarcity in the parish and he was very active in getting food for the starving.

The people disliked us because we were American. (Please tell this to Father Schwarz). Imagine what a revolution there would be in Ireland if a popular priest was changed in this way for a lot of foreign monks or *Friars*. Here, I think, was the greatest cause of the bitter feeling. Some active enemies spread the report that we were *Frailes* whom they hold in utter abhorrence. A *Fraile* was killed in this parish by one of his concubines in a fit of jealousy. She was tried, found guilty and died here in Cebu in jail not so long ago after twenty years' imprisonment. No wonder they would have small welcome for the *Frailes*.

I have now tried to account for the action of the bishop, the clergy and the people. I leave it to yourself to think it over and account for the action of the *evil one*. This is the easiest part of the task.

ANDREW BOYLAN C.S.S.R.

⁹⁶ The « One notable exception » must be either Father Emiliano Mercado or Father Gregorio Reynes. In fact, both are given credit for generous support by the Opon Chronicles.

⁹⁷ Archbishop of Manila.