

PETER GORDON GOWING

1930-1983

At the second conference of Inter-Religio held in Hong Kong in September of this year, Peter Gowing was a constant topic, and not only because of his unexpected death. Peter had made an indelible impression on the delegates to the first meeting of Inter-Religio held in Manila some time ago, and they were looking forward to seeing him again. Peter was always a "topic" himself and a sure guarantee that any meeting he attended would be lively and fruitful. I am grateful for the chance to pen these few notes about his career as he was not only a colleague but also a good friend.

A native of Massachusetts, he graduated from the University of Maine (B.A. and M.A. degrees) and later earned his Th.D. from Boston University and his Ph.D. (Social Science) from Syracuse University. He was an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ and he served as a pastor in Manice for nine years. In 1955 he was appointed chaplain to the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and was assigned on detached duty to the flagship of the Commander, Middle East Force.

In 1960 he went as a missionary of the United Church Board for World Ministries to the faculty of Silliman University, Dumaguete City, Philippines. He remained there for eleven years, serving in quick succession as Professor of Church History and Christian Doctrine, professor of World Religions and History, and founder and first Director of the Silliman Southeast Asian Studies Program. In 1971 he went to Singapore as Regional Professor for the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology.

In November of 1974 he was selected as the Director of the newly established Dansalan Research Center in Marawi City, Philippines. The Center is located among the Maranao Muslims of the Lake Lanao region of the island of Mindanao and focuses on problems of Muslim-Christian relations in the Philippines, engaging its small staff in multi-disciplinary and social science, development-oriented research. Its goal is to contribute to the easing of tensions between Muslims and Christians, and to promote justice and peace for all. This is done by offering courses on Islam for Christians and also courses on Muslim Filipino

culture and history, as well as through research and the organization of formal and informal dialogues. From its very humble beginnings, Peter Gowing succeeded in shaping the Dansalan Center into a unique institution where all these activities could take place and in earning it high regard throughout all of Southeast Asia. The Center also houses the Masie Van Vactor Collection of Materials on Filipino Muslims, the only one of its kind in the world.

Outside Marawi City, Peter was known primarily by his lectures and his writings. He was the author of hundreds of essays and articles on Southeast Asia, Muslim Filipinos, Islam, Asian Church History, and Ecumenical Affairs. He also wrote several books: *Mosque and Moro*, *Islands under the Cross*, *Mandate in Moroland*, *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon*; and co-authored others: *Islam and Muslims*, *Acculturation in the Philippines: Essays on Changing Society*, *The Muslim Filipinos: Their History, Society, and Contemporary Problems*. In addition to all of this, he was editor of the *Dansalan Quarterly* published by the Dansalan Research Center, and was interim pastor for the Marawi City Congregation of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

There was yet another side to Peter Gowing that became obvious to all who knew him. He was a man of deep faith, a man of God. His passion always was a searching for the Truth. It did not matter to him where that search would lead, but what he found he then fearlessly published—often at some risk to himself. Playing safe was not the way he chose to live. Some called him foolhardy, but in reality he was a person of great moral and physical courage. In the course of speaking out he may have gained himself many enemies, but I never heard him speak ill of any of them.

Peter Gordon Gowing was a "man for all seasons" — a gatherer of people of different faiths, not only Muslim and Christian but also Catholic and Protestant. This was dramatized powerfully at his funeral service where Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics stood side by side to mourn the untimely passing of a man whom they respected and loved.

May he rest in peace.

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(formerly Dansalan Research Center)