

TAYTAY METHODIST COMMUNITY CHURCH, INC., PLAINTIFF AND APPELLEE, VS. ELADIO M. REYES, AND PHILIPPINES ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH, DEFENDANTS AND APPELLANTS.

G. R. No. L-15731. April 27, 1963

Ponente: BARRERA, J.

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BARRERA, J.:

The issue involved in this appeal is the ownership and administration of certain properties consisting of the church, parsonage, the land on which these stand and personal properties held in the municipality of Taytay, province of Rizal by the local branch of the Methodist Church known as the Taytay Congregation of the Methodist Church. In this Congregation, there are two rival groups, one which is loyal to the Philippines Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, headed by defendant-appellant Eladio M. Reyes (hereafter referred to as the Reyes Group), and the other, the herein plaintiff-appellee Taytay Methodist Community Church, Inc. led by its Pastor David M. Candelaria (hereafter to be called the Candelaria group), both claiming the properties in question.

The case was submitted for decision of the Court of First Instance of Rizal (Civil Case No. 4166) upon a partial stipulation of facts and additional evidence adduced by the parties. In due time, the trial court rendered judgment holding that the properties in question are properties of the Taytay Congregation of the Methodist Church. However, since the 2 contending groups both claimed exclusive representation of the Congregation, the trial court adjudged the Reyes group, representing the defendants-appellants entitled to the privilege of fully owning all the properties in litigation to the exclusion of the Candelaria Taytay Methodist Community Church, Inc. vs. Reyes, et al. group by reimbursing the latter, representing the plaintiff-appellee, the sum of P44,140.00 which is 1/2 of the value of the said properties, within a period of 120 days after the decision became final, with a right thereafter to their exclusive use, enjoyment and possession. The plaintiff-appellee was ordered, up on the payment to it of the said sum, to vacate and deliver the said properties to the defendants-appellants. In the alternative, if the defendants-appellants failed to reimburse the said amount, then the plaintiff-appellee, upon reimbursing to the defendants-appellants a like amount within the same period would become the sole owner of all the properties with right to their exclusive use, possession and enjoyment. If both parties should fail to meet the foregoing conditions, then the said properties would be sold to the highest bidder at public action and the amount derived therefrom divided equitably between the parties. Not satisfied with this decision because they claim that the plaintiff represented by the Candelaria group has no right whatsoever to the properties in question and, therefore, it is not entitled to any reimbursement at all, the defendants took the present appeal directly to this Court stating in their notice of appeal that the properties involved are valued at more than P85,000.00 or exceeding P50,000.00 the jurisdictional amount of appeal in civil cases to the Supreme Court prior to the amendment of the Judiciary Act increasing said jurisdictional amount to P200,000.00.

In the appeal, the appellants have assigned the following errors as allegedly committed by the trial court:

- The lower court erred in not holding that all the properties in question belong exclusively to the defendant Philippines Annual Conference of the Methodist Church; and
- The lower court erred in refusing to issue an injunction against the plaintiff.

In arriving at the conclusion now assailed in the first assignment as erroneous, the trial court considered not only the facts stipulated but mainly the testimonies of witnesses on points not covered by the stipulation (see decision, pp. 116-122 of the Record on Appeal). Therefore, since the appeal raises both questions of law and fact that are in dispute, the case comes within the appellate jurisdiction of the Court of Appeals, pursuant to the Judiciary Act as amended.

Wherefore, let this present appeal be remanded to the Court of Appeals for decision in accordance with law. So ordered.

Bengzon, C. J., Padilla, Bautista Angelo, Labrador, Reyes, J. B. L., Paredes, Dizon, Regala and Makalintal, JJ., concur.

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