

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIVE CLERGY IN THE PHILIPPINES

HORACIO DE LA COSTA, S.J.

Woodstock College

IT IS clear both from the repeated and emphatic declarations of the Holy See and from the nature itself of missionary activity that one of the most important tasks of the missionary, if not the principal one, is the formation of native priests who can eventually receive from his hands the administration and propagation of the Catholic Church in their own country.

"First of all," says Pius XI in his encyclical letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, "let Us recall to your attention how important it is that you build up a native clergy. If you do not work with all your might to accomplish this, We maintain that your apostolate will not only be crippled, but it will prove to be an obstacle and an impediment for the establishment and organization of the Church in those countries."¹ Seven years previously, Benedict XV had couched the same idea in no less vigorous terms: "The main care of those who rule the missions should be to raise and train a clergy from amidst the nations among which they dwell, for on this are founded the best hopes for the Church of the future."²

Benedict XV and Pius XI were not, of course, enjoining anything new; they were merely repeating what the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had insisted on almost from the beginning of its existence,³ and what the Code of Canon Law imposes as a grave obligation on vicars apostolic.⁴

The specific purpose of missionary activity is the permanent establishment, in its entirety, of the visible Church in those lands and among those relatively isolated groups where it is not yet firmly

¹ AAS, XVIII (1926), 73. The translation used for this and subsequent quotations from *Rerum Ecclesiae* and *Maximum Illud* is that of the America Press edition of these encyclicals, New York, 1944.

² Encyclical letter *Maximum Illud*, 30 November, 1919, AAS, XI (1919), 444-5.

³ Cf. *Collectanea S. C. de Propaganda Fide* (Rome, 1907), I, nn. 62, 150, 1002.

⁴ *CIC*, 305.

established.⁵ The Son of God became Man in order to save all men by uniting them to Himself through membership in His Church. This imposes an obligation on the Church to render herself visible to all; that is, so present and accessible that men of good will everywhere may, if they wish, participate in her life by receiving her doctrine and partaking of her sacraments. And since the need that men have of the Church is a permanent need, her presence in every nation and community must likewise be permanent: she must take root. Finally, men have need of all that the Church can give them; hence she must be established everywhere in her entirety, endowed with all the means necessary for the carrying out of her divine mission, which is to bring about the eternal and temporal welfare of the individual and of society.

It is easy to see how essential the formation of a native clergy is to the achievement of this missionary goal; for the Church can neither be rendered sufficiently accessible, nor permanently established, nor established in her entirety in any given nation without recruiting her clergy from among the members of that nation. All other things being equal, the native priest exerts a greater influence on his countrymen, and is better able to present Christ and His message in a fashion suited to their genius and character. "Linked to his compatriots as he is by the bonds of origin, character, feelings and inclinations, the indigenous priest possesses extraordinary facilities for introducing the faith to their minds, and is endowed with power of persuasion far superior to those of any other man."⁶

Moreover, the Church is only then securely founded when she is assured of a clergy sufficiently numerous to administer and develop her various works, and she has no such assurance as long as her personnel in any given territory is dependent for its recruitment on foreign lands. Right order demands that the Church in each nation attend first to her own needs before providing for the needs of her missions; and political conditions, as Pius XI points out, will not always permit her free access to those missions.

⁵ Cf. E. L. Murphy, S.J., *The Purpose of Missions* (Missionary Academia Studies, I, 2; New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1943), p. 8; P. Charles, S.J., *Les dossiers de l'action missionnaire* (Louvain: Aucam, 1938), I, 24; Tragella, "Introduction à la missionologie," in *Revue de l'Union Missionnaire du Clergé*, Janvier, 1934, Supplément.

⁶ Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, AAS, XI (1919), 445.

Suppose that on account of a war or on account of other political events, one government supplants another in the territory of the missions, and that it demands or orders expulsion of foreign missionaries of a certain nationality; suppose likewise (although this is not likely to happen), that the inhabitants who have attained a higher degree of civilization, and as a result a correspondingly civil maturity, should wish to render themselves independent, drive from the territory both the governor and the soldiers and the missionaries of a foreign nation under whose rule they are, and that they cannot do this save by recourse to violence, what great harm would accrue to the Church in those regions, We ask, unless the native clergy, which has been spread as a network throughout the territory, could provide completely for the population converted to Christ?⁷

Finally, the Church in her entirety is the Church completely organized. Until the full hierarchy of bishops, priests and laity has been articulated or at least sketched in outline, the Church cannot strictly be said to have been brought into existence in any country, as Father Charles well points out:

The native clergy, therefore, is not the coping stone of the missionary edifice; it is the foundation stone. The truth is, that as long as it does not yet exist, the mission itself does not exist either. To have a clergy of their own is not a reward held out to those peoples who render themselves worthy of it; it is the necessary instrument to render them worthy of God. No one dreams of giving a stonemason a trowel because he has done a good construction job, or of placing wheels on a carriage because it has successfully negotiated a journey. . . . The Church is nowhere planted, it is nowhere established in any permanent fashion, as long as the continuance of the priestly function is not stably assured by the inhabitants themselves of the region.⁸

We may consider it as certain, then, that one of the indispensable objectives of missionary work, intrinsic to its very nature and inseparable from it, is the formation of a native clergy; and that until that formation is accomplished, a territory cannot be said to have ceased to be a mission. Only where "an indigenous clergy, adequate in numbers and training, and worthy of its vocation" has been brought into existence, can the missionary's work be considered brought to a happy close; only there may the Church be said to be established.⁹

In the light of these considerations, it is somewhat disconcerting to

⁷ *Rerum Ecclesiae*, AAS, XVIII (1926), 75.

⁸ *Missiologie* (Paris: Desclée, 1939), I, 111-12.

⁹ Cf. Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, AAS, XI (1919), 445.

observe that after more than three hundred years of missionary endeavor, this objective has not yet been fully accomplished in the Philippines. Although it has recently become a politically independent nation, it remains, to a large extent, mission territory.

Claimed for Spain by Magellan in 1521, the Philippine Islands began to be effectively colonized in 1565, when Miguel López de Legaspi founded the settlement of Cebu. Manila's first bishop, Fray Domingo de Salazar of the Order of Preachers, arrived in 1581; and in 1598, Manila became an archbishopric with the creation of three suffragan dioceses: Cebu, Nueva Cáceres and Nueva Segovia.¹⁰ By 1605, thanks to the missionary zeal of Spanish Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits, the majority of the population had been baptized.¹¹ Since that date, the Filipinos have been overwhelmingly Catholic in numbers, and they remain so today.

At the same time, there are at present not nearly enough priests to take care of this Catholic population. Partial statistics compiled soon after the late war place the number of priests, both secular and religious, at 1,580, which means an average of one priest for every 9,000 Catholics.¹² Nor are they all native Filipinos. Approximately 500 of them are foreign missionaries: Spaniards, Americans, Englishmen, Canadians, Australians, Irishmen, Germans, Belgians, Italians, Dutchmen. Three of the fifteen dioceses and three prefectures apostolic are manned almost entirely by these missionaries. They staff the seminaries, and, together with the various missionary sisterhoods, administer practically all the Catholic schools and works of charity. Naturally their establishments are, with few exceptions, financially supported from abroad.

If we contrast these figures with those of the China Mission—2,026 Chinese priests in 1939, or one to every 1,500 Catholics¹³—it will

¹⁰ Cf. *El archipiélago filipino* (Washington: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1900), I, 376-9. This is a collection of data on the Philippines compiled by Jesuit missionaries and published by the United States Government.

¹¹ Cf. E. G. Bourne's historical introduction to E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson's *The Philippine Islands* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1902-1909), I, 33-7. This is a collection of Philippine source material translated into English.

¹² These figures are computed from data given in the *Almanaque de Nuestra Señora del Rosario* (Manila: Imprenta de Santo Tomás, 1946), pp. 200-274, published by the Dominican Fathers of the University of Santo Tomás.

¹³ Cf. J. P. Ryan, M.M., *The Church in China* (Missionary Academia Studies, I, 5; New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1944), p. 26.

appear that the development of the native clergy in the Philippines has been abnormally slow, and calls for an explanation. The purpose of this paper is, by means of a brief historical survey, to determine what causes have contributed to retard the formation of a Filipino clergy.

ORIGIN OF THE SITUATION

The Philippine Islands were evangelized as a Spanish colony under the regime of the *Patronato*. The *Patronato* was an arrangement based on the Bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* of Julius II, by which the Roman Pontiff granted to Ferdinand and his successors on the throne of Spain the exclusive right: (1) to erect or to permit the erection of all churches in the Spanish colonies; and (2) to present suitable candidates for colonial bishoprics, abbacies, canonries and other ecclesiastical benefices. This concession was made in view of the Spanish sovereign having undertaken to promote the evangelization of his pagan subjects, and to provide for the material needs of the Church in his dominions.¹⁴

The Spanish kings took their patronage of the Church in the Indies very seriously. In 1594, for instance, we find Philip II writing to his governor in the Philippines:

Because I have learned that better results will be obtained by assigning each [religious] order a district by itself, I command you, together with the Bishop, to divide the provinces among the religious in such manner that where Augustinians go there shall be no Franciscans, nor religious of the Society [of Jesus] where there are Dominicans. Thus you will proceed, taking note that the province allotted to the Society must have the same manner of instruction as the others; for this same obligation rests upon them as upon the others, and it does not at all differ from them.¹⁵

The colonial administrators, in their turn, looked upon the authority of the Spanish Crown as competent to dispose of ecclesiastical personnel. Governor Luís Pérez Dasmariñas, writing to the King, seems to consider this a perfectly natural assumption.

¹⁴ For the text of *Universalis Ecclesiae*, cf. F. J. Hernández, S.J., *Colección de bulas, breves y otros documentos relativos a la Iglesia de América y Filipinas* (Brussels: Vromant, 1879), I, 25 ff. For a brief summary, cf. J. Ylla, O.P., "Constitutio *Quae mari sinico*," in *Boletín eclesiástico* (Manila), XVI (1938), 381-2.

¹⁵ Philip II to Dasmariñas, Aranjuez, April 27, 1594; in Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, IX, 120.

For many years this colony has desired and hoped for the coming of priests of the Society of Jesus, for the benefits of their presence and for the good of souls in these Islands, in whose conversion and advancement the Society has the dexterity known to Your Majesty. . . . I request that it may please Your Majesty to command Father General [of the Society] to order the provinces of Europe to gather perhaps forty priests whom Your Majesty may send to the help of these Islands.¹⁶

Thus, in virtue of the *Patronato*, the Spanish King wielded a preponderant and decisive influence on the administration of the Church in his dominions. His right of presentation, in practice, meant that every missionary bishop and priest was appointed or approved by the Crown and depended on the Crown for his support; the priest was, in other words, a salaried government official. As such, the Crown assigned to him the sphere of his activities, and decided any conflicts that arose between him and the civil government of the colony, or between him and other ecclesiastical officials.

This arrangement resulted in many and obvious advantages. It relieved the missionaries of all financial anxiety by placing the material resources of the government at their disposal. It distributed and coordinated their activity, thus avoiding in many cases duplication of effort and conflicts of jurisdiction. It gave stability to their work, whose continuity and ordered development was assured by an imperial power at least equally as zealous for the spread of the true faith as it was for the extension of its sovereignty. The comment of the sixteenth-century colonial historian Herrera has, therefore, a broad basis in fact:

The concession which the Holy and Apostolic See of Rome made to the Crown of Castile and Leon of the ecclesiastical patronage of that New World was a measure greatly beneficial, whereby God Our Lord, who alone sees and makes provision for what the future has in store, brought about a work worthy of His great goodness; for experience has shown that if this New World had been governed in any other fashion, it would never have been administered with that balanced harmony and consonance which now exists between religion, justice and good government, and the [resulting] obedience and tranquillity [of the colonies].¹⁷

¹⁶ Dasmariñas to Philip II, June 20, 1595; in Colín-Pastells, *Labor evangelica* (Barcelona: Henrich, 1900-1902), II, 9, n. 1.

¹⁷ *Descripción de las Indias occidentales*, décad. 1, cap. 28; cited by Ylla, *art. cit.*, pp. 381-2.

On the other hand, the actual working out of this close cooperation between the Church and the Spanish Crown circumscribed and retarded the normal development of a native secular clergy in a way that could scarcely have been foreseen. We saw above how Philip II, with a view to the equitable distribution of labor, partitioned the mission field in the Philippines among the various religious orders. He had previously decreed, by royal *cédulas* of 1557 and 1561, that the *doctrinas* or mission parishes which were assigned to the regular clergy could not be transferred by the bishops to the secular clergy. Secular priests were to be given parishes in territory which had not previously been assigned to any religious order. This was all very well in theory, but since, as far as the Philippines was concerned, the entire mission had already been divided among the religious orders, what territory was left for the secular clergy? The secular priest was practically reduced by royal legislation to being an assistant of the religious parish priest.¹⁸

Everyone knew, of course, that parish work was the proper sphere of the secular clergy; that the religious missionaries had charge of the *doctrinas* which they had founded only for the purpose of building them up into regular parishes; and that when this had been accomplished, these pioneers were to give way to the secular clergy and push on to the frontier. Such had always been the policy of the Church; but the regime of the *Patronato* placed great difficulties in the way of carrying it out.

Any transfer of parishes, as we have seen, required the consent of the Crown; and the Crown, or at least the Crown administrators, were extremely reluctant to permit such a transfer. Since the Spanish religious were, in the great majority of *doctrinas*, the only colonial officials who were willing to take up permanent residence with the natives, it was thought necessary to the good government of the colony to keep them there. And as a matter of fact, the mere presence of these zealous missionaries and thoroughly loyal subjects in regions far from the capital dispensed with the expense and effort, which might otherwise have been necessary, of maintaining large armed forces for the purpose of policing the colony. Hence Governor Sarrió was merely

¹⁸ Cf. A. Brou, S.J., "Notes sur les origines du clergé philippin," *Revue d'histoire missionnaire*, IV (1927), 541-2.

giving expression to a long-standing policy when he wrote to the King in 1787 that

a second consideration which has decided me not to remove the religious from the *doctrinas* is that, even if the *indios* and Chinese *mestizos*¹⁹ possessed all the necessary qualifications [for administering them], it would never conduce to the advantage of the State and the royal service of Your Majesty to hand over to them all the parishes. The experience of more than two centuries has shown that in all the wars, rebellions, and uprisings that have broken out, the religious parish priests were the ones who contributed most to the pacification of the malcontents.²⁰

The actual functioning of the *Patronato*, then, led to royal legislation and to a colonial policy which left little scope for the secular clergy, and gave no encouragement either to native candidates to aspire for the priesthood, or the missionaries to train them. Nor was ecclesiastical legislation and policy in the Spanish colonies of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries any more favorable. The first missionaries to the New World, it is true, and even some of the first civil officials, were thoroughly in favor of the immediate formation of a native clergy. Thus Father Constantino Bayle, S.J., is able to cite a certain Rodrigo de Albornoz as writing to the King from Mexico in 1525:

In order that the sons of the *caciques*²¹ and lords be instructed in the Faith, Your Majesty must needs command that a college be founded wherein they may be taught reading and grammar and philosophy and other arts, to the end that they may be ordained priests; for he who shall become such among them will be of greater profit in attracting others to the Faith than fifty Christians [i.e., Europeans].²²

This and similar petitions induced the King to found the famous college of Santiago Tlatelolco, which was entrusted to the Franciscans and solemnly inaugurated in 1536. It was limited to the sons of the native aristocracy, and was expected to serve the double purpose of forming a cultured élite among the laity and providing a certain number of native priests.²³

¹⁹ *Indios* were native Filipinos; Chinese *mestizos* were persons of mixed Chinese and Filipino blood.

²⁰ Pedro Sarrió to the King, Manila, December 22, 1787; cited by Sinibaldo de Mas, *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842* (Madrid, 1843), III, 33. Only a limited number of this third volume of Mas' work was printed for the exclusive use of the royal ministers. There is a copy in the Peabody Institute, Baltimore.

²¹ The *caciques* constituted the native nobility.

²² "España y el clero indígena de América," *Razón y Fé*, XCIV (1931), 216.

However, the high hopes conceived in the beginning with regard to the enterprise did not seem to have been realized, for we find the Dominican Provincial of Mexico vigorously representing in 1544 that

the Indians ought not to be permitted to study [arts and theology], because no good will come of it; in the first place, because they will never turn out to be regular preachers, since to preach effectively it is necessary that the preacher have some ascendancy over the people, and these natives have no ascendancy whatever over their own. Secondly, because one cannot be sure of them, and the preaching of the Gospel cannot be entrusted to them, for they are but new in the Faith and it has not yet taken firm root in them. Thus they are liable to give expression to erroneous doctrines, as we know from experience some have actually done. Thirdly, because they have not the capacity to understand firmly and aright what pertains to the Faith, and the reasons thereof, nor is their language such as to be able to express them with propriety. . . . And from this it follows that they ought not to be ordained to the priesthood, for their being priests will give them no better standing than they have now.²⁴

Not many years later, Bishop Zumárraga was writing to the King that "it seemed to the religious themselves that the revenues would be better employed in the hospital than in the College of Santiago, which we know not whether it will continue in existence much longer, as the best grammarians among the native students *tendunt ad nuptias potius quam ad continentiam.*"²⁵

The failure of this first experiment and of others like it seems to have led to a very strong reaction against the native clergy, and under the influence of this reaction the councils and synods of the New World in the latter half of the sixteenth century passed rather drastic measures forbidding or severely limiting the ordination of natives and even their religious profession. The first Council of Mexico (1555) declared that sacred orders were not to be conferred on Indians, *mestizos* and mulattoes, who were classed with the descendants of Moors and persons who had been sentenced by the Inquisition as lacking the good repute which befitted the sacerdotal character.²⁶ The third Council of Mexico (1585) repeated the prohibition, while softening it somewhat:

²³ Cf. R. Ricard, *Études et documents pour l'histoire missionnaire de l'Espagne et de Portugal* (Louvain: Aucam, 1931), pp. 155-7.

²⁴ Letter to the Visitor of New Spain; cf. Bayle, *art. cit.*, pp. 221-2.

²⁵ Cf. Bayle, *art. cit.*, p. 223.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 522.

That respect and reverence may be shown to the order of clerics, the sacred canons decree that those who suffer from natural or other defects which, though not culpable, detract from the dignity of the clerical state, should not be ordained, lest the recipients of holy orders suffer contempt and their ministry be held in derision. Wherefore this Synod forbids . . . that Mexicans who are descended in the first degree from Indians, or from Moors, or from parents of whom one is a Negro, be admitted to holy orders without great care being exercised in their selection [*sine magno delectu*].²⁷

The second Council of Lima (1591), however, decided with laconic severity that "Indians are not to receive any of the orders of the Church."²⁸ Thus Father Bayle concludes that "after the generous intentions of the beginning had suffered shipwreck on the reefs of experience, the ordinary legislation [of the Church in New Spain] was unfavorable to the native clergy, whose ignorance and natural instability inspired no confidence, and whose mean origin obscured the dignity [of the priesthood]."²⁹ This ecclesiastical policy was naturally extended to the Phillipine mission, which was officially attached to the Church of Spanish America. An interesting indication of this may be noted in the rules and regulations drawn up by Governor Corcuera for the Seminary of San Felipe de Austria, which he founded in Manila in 1641. Rule 3 provides that "the collegiates must be of pure race and have no mixture of Moorish or Jewish blood, to the fourth degree, and shall have no Negro or Bengal blood, or that of any similar nation, in their veins, or a fourth part of Filipino blood."³⁰

The wisdom of this procedure has been questioned. It certainly forms a contrast with the policy of the Holy See in the missions directly dependent on Propaganda, and even with the practice of missionaries within the sphere of the Portuguese *Padroado*, so similar in many respects to its Spanish counterpart.

In 1518, a Brief of Leo X authorized the ordination of East Indians and Negroes "considered capable of serving God in their respective countries." A year before St. Francis Xavier's arrival in Goa, a native seminary had been established and several Malabar priests had been ordained. India, in fact, had its houses of formation for the native

²⁷ *Concilium Mexicanum*, 1585, lib. 1, tit. 4: "De vita, fama et moribus ordinandorum," n. 3; in Mansi, *Conciliorum . . . amplissima collectio*, XXXIV, cols. 1034-5.

²⁸ Cf. Brou, *art. cit.*, p. 544.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 524.

³⁰ Cf. Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XLV, 175.

clergy twenty years before the Council of Trent made such establishments obligatory in every diocese of the Catholic world.³¹

As early as 1626, Propaganda had enjoined on the Bishop of Japan "to confer holy orders, the priesthood included, on such Japanese as he shall consider suitable and necessary." Again in 1659, Alexander VII advised Propaganda to instruct the vicars apostolic being sent to Tonkin, China, and Cochinchina that "the principal reason for sending bishops to those regions was that they might employ every means in their power to train native youths so as to fit them for the priesthood, and thus be able to ordain them and distribute them throughout those vast countries, where they may diligently promote the cause of Christianity under their [the bishops'] direction"; and hence they should always have this end in view, namely, "to draw as many as possible of the most promising native youths to the clerical state, to educate them, and in due time to ordain them." Succeeding Popes were no less clear and emphatic in their insistence on this point.³²

The famous Visitor of the Jesuit missions in the East, Father Alexander Valignano, went even further, and in a celebrated *consultum* caused the following resolution to be adopted:

It is necessary that there should be a bishop in Japan. But let him not be sent from Europe, a stranger both to the language and the customs. It is abnormal for a Church to be without a bishop; and yet here a foreign bishop will not do. Consequently natives must be ordained either in Macao or in India. Let them be put to the test: we shall see whether one of them will be worthy of the episcopate. As far as the Japanese are concerned, there are grounds for hoping that if they are well trained in learning and piety in the seminaries, they can become as capable as Europeans of becoming religious, priests, and bishops.³³

Thus the persecuted Japanese Church could boast of several martyr priests and religious at a time when there was probably not yet a single native priest in the Philippines.

We must take care, however, not to ascribe this deficiency in the Philippine mission entirely to the royal *cédulas* of Philip II or the decrees of the Spanish-American councils. A third contributing cause

³¹ Cf. A. Brou, S.J., "L'encyclique sur les missions," *Études*, CLXII (1920), 593.

³² Cf. the *Instructio* of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda of November 23, 1845, in the *Collectanea* (ed. 1907), n. 1002.

³³ Cf. Brou, "L'encyclique sur les missions," pp. 593-4.

must be taken into account, namely, the difference in the cultural level of the two mission territories. As Father Charles points out, the establishment of the visible Church which is the specific aim of missionary activity demands a certain degree of civilization below which it is impossible.³⁴ It would be difficult, for instance, to encounter suitable material for the priesthood among a people just beginning to organize into stable political communities. Now the Filipinos during the early years of Spanish colonization were just such a people; whereas India, China, and Japan already had very high and ancient cultures of their own. Thus the failure of the Tlatelolco experiment was probably due, at least in part, to the fact that it was a little too premature; and the prohibitions of the Councils of Mexico and Lima, though perhaps too sweeping, were fundamentally a sound precaution.

To sum up: three main causes combined to retard the formation of a native clergy in the Philippines. The first was the primitive condition of society, which had first to be raised to that level of cultural maturity required before it could provide suitable aspirants to the Catholic priesthood. This preliminary work of civilization was mainly if not solely the achievement of the first Spanish missionaries, and we need neither add nor detract from an American historian's assessment of it:

In the light . . . of impartial history raised above race prejudice and religious prepossessions, after a comparison with the early years of the Spanish conquest of America or with the first generation or two of the English settlements, the conversion and civilization of the Philippines in the forty years following Legaspi's arrival must be pronounced an achievement without parallel in history.³⁵

The second cause was the framework of the ecclesiastical establishment constructed by the *Patronato* in the colony: a framework which provided no suitable room for a native clergy even when the mission was ready for it. And the third was the conciliar and synodal legislation of Spanish America, extended without modification to the Philippines: legislation which, while it effectively prevented the ordination of unworthy candidates, did so by excluding even the worthy from the priesthood.

The first of these causes was by nature transitory. There came a time when, thanks to the creative energy of the Church even on the

³⁴ *Les dossiers de l'action missionnaire*, I, 31.

³⁵ E. G. Bourne, *op. cit.*, I, 37.

natural and temporal level, there was no longer any valid objection to admitting native Filipinos to holy orders. The other two causes, however, had that inelastic tenacity with which human institutions cling to existence long after they have outlived their usefulness; and so we must not be surprised to find the idea of a native clergy opposed even by those who should have been most zealous in promoting it.

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

In a report submitted to Innocent XI around 1680, the Secretary of Propaganda, Monsignor Urbano Cerri, remarked about conditions in the Philippine mission that

notwithstanding the great number of Monks in these Islands, and the progress of the Catholic Faith, there are some faults; particularly the neglect of many conversions, which might be attempted without great Labour; and want of Charity towards the Sick, who are obliged to get themselves carried to Church, to receive the Viaticum, and the Extreme Unction. Besides, no Care is taken to make the Natives study; and Holy Orders are never conferred on them, though they have the necessary qualifications to be Ordained.³⁶

Cerri's observation is borne out by a very interesting letter written by Archbishop Pardo of Manila to the King at this same time. It was a strongly worded protest against a royal decree issued in 1677 which sought to encourage the formation of a native clergy in the Philippines. The following is Blair and Robertson's summary of Archbishop Pardo's letter:

The archbishop stated the little inclination that the Indians have for theological and moral studies, and that there was the additional difficulty of their evil customs, their vices, and their preconceived ideas—which made it necessary to treat them as children, even when they were fifty or sixty years old. He considered even the sons of Spaniards, born in the Islands, unsuitable for priests, since they were reared by Indian or slave women, because of their defective training and education in youth. Finally, on account of the sloth produced by the climate, and of effeminacy and levity of disposition, it was evident that if they were ordained priests and made ministers to the Indians when they were not sufficiently qualified therefor, through

³⁶ The quotation is taken from an English translation published in London in 1715, entitled, *An account of the state of the Roman Catholic religion throughout the world, written for the use of Pope Innocent XI by Monsignor Cerri, secretary of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide*, pp. 113–14. There is a copy in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, XLV, 182–3.

the necessity there was for them, they did not again open a book, and with their vicious habits set a very bad example to their parishioners. That which should be done was to send from España those religious who were most zealous for the conversion of souls.³⁷

It seems obvious that Archbishop Pardo's argument could be valid only if native candidates to the priesthood had been tried and found wanting; and yet he objects to any fair trial being made at all of them. The defects which he alleges—"their evil customs, their vices, their preconceived ideas," "the sloth produced by the climate," "effeminacy and levity of disposition"—are not ineradicable; on the contrary, is it not precisely by seriously undertaking the task of forming priests according to the mind of the Church that these defects are most effectively eradicated?

At any rate, it appears both from Cerri's report and Archbishop Pardo's letter that the formation of the native clergy in the Philippines was not seriously undertaken before 1680. Father Brou states, without citing his sources, that there were already native priests to the number of sixty in the year 1655;³⁸ but the qualification "native" in the writers of the period is to be received with caution, since it could mean creoles, that is, Spaniards or other Europeans born in the colony. The first ecclesiastical seminary in the Philippines, the Colegio de San José, founded by the Jesuits in 1601, was limited, at least in the beginning, to Spanish students,³⁹ and we have already seen how the charter of Corcuera's short-lived Colegio de San Felipe de Austria forbade the admission of applicants who were one-fourth Filipino.⁴⁰

Any remaining doubts are removed by an enquiry made by the King in 1697 as to whether there existed in the Philippines any seminary for the native clergy. Governor Cruzat y Góngora replied in a letter dated June 13, 1700, that there was not and never had been any such institution in Manila, adding that he did not consider such a foundation necessary.⁴¹

Upon receiving this reply, the King consulted his Council and certain bishops as to what he should do about it, and in April, 1702, arrived at

³⁸ "Notes sur les origines du clergé philippin," p. 546.

³⁹ Cf. W. C. Repetti, S.J., *History of the Society of Jesus in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Good Shepherd Press, 1938), II, 168-9.

⁴⁰ *Supra*, p. 228.

⁴¹ Cf. T. H. Pardo de Tavera, *Una memoria de Anda y Salazar* (Manila, 1899), pp. 48-9.

the decision that "since it has been ordained by the sacred canons and by pontifical bulls that there should be a seminary for young men attached to all cathedral churches, that they may assist at the divine service and at the same time be trained in the sciences," there should be founded in the city of Manila a seminary for eight seminarians.⁴²

This royal decree, however, like previous ones to the same effect, was simply pigeonholed by the local administrators.⁴³ The first man to take any effective steps towards the establishment of a seminary for natives in the Philippines seems to have been the Abbé Sidotti, who came to Manila in 1702 in the entourage of the famous Cardinal de Tournon. Apparently with the approval of Archbishop Camacho, he succeeded in collecting enough contributions from the residents of Manila to begin the construction of a seminary building between the governor's residence and the city wall, to one side of the postern gate.⁴⁴ It was to be large enough to house seventy-two seminarians, who were, according to Sidotti's ambitious project, to be recruited not only from the Philippines but from the various missions of the Far East. It was, in fact, to be a regional seminary for the whole Orient.⁴⁵

Unfortunately the King, upon hearing of the good abbé's activities, took them as officious interference on the part of a foreigner in the administration of his royal patronage—interference, moreover, which would result in the admission into the colony of all sorts of other foreigners: an obvious threat, to his way of thinking, to the peace and good government of the Philippines.⁴⁶

He therefore lost no time in commanding his governor to tear down whatever the Abbé Sidotti had succeeded in constructing on the proposed site of the seminary and to erect in its stead what had been ordained in the *cédula* of 1702, namely, a seminary for *eight* seminarians, no more, and those seminarians to be recruited *only* from the colony.⁴⁷

This order was effective in putting a stop to the Abbé Sidotti's proj-

⁴² *Loc. cit.*

⁴³ So Pardo de Tavera. San Antonio (*Crónicas*, I, in Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XXVIII, 117-18) reports that they proceeded as far as appropriating the money for starting the work.

⁴⁴ Pardo de Tavera, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁴⁵ Cf. Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XLV, 192 ff.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, XXVIII, 120-21.

⁴⁷ Pardo de Tavera, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50; Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XXVIII, 121.

ect, but as for the King's alternative, nothing more is heard of it until 1720. A royal letter of this year asks the governor whether it would not be a good idea if the site and foundations of the proposed seminary be used instead for "the erection of a building for the Royal Exchequer, the Royal Treasury, and an armory with lodgings for the infantry."⁴⁸ Thus the seminary for native priests did not advance beyond the paper stage until 1772, when Archbishop Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina transformed the University of San Ignacio, after the expulsion of the Jesuits, into the diocesan seminary of San Carlos.

FIRST SEMINARIES FOR NATIVES

Earlier in the eighteenth century, however, various educational institutions which had originally been founded exclusively for Spaniards had begun to educate native Filipinos for the priesthood. The Jesuit historian Murillo Velarde, writing in 1762, remarks drily that "there are in the Philippines, as in other parts of the world, many who are stupid and ignorant; but there are not wanting some who have wit and ability, sufficient for the study of Grammar, Philosophy and Theology, in which they have made some progress, though not much."⁴⁹

If "some progress" had already been made in 1752, the first step must have been taken some years earlier; and this is doubtless what the Augustinian, Fray Gaspar de San Agustín, tried to prevent when he wrote in 1725:

It does not seem good that I should refrain from touching on a matter which is most worthy of consideration, and that is, that if God because of our sins and theirs should desire to chastise the flourishing Christian communities of these Islands by placing them in the hands of natives ordained to the priesthood (*which seems likely to happen very soon*), if (I say) God does not provide a remedy for this, what abominations will result from it!⁵⁰

San Agustín's warning seems to have had little effect, for in 1750 native priests had charge of 142 parishes and missions out of a total of 569.⁵¹ These first-fruits of the Filipino clergy seem to have been equal to the exacting demands of their vocation. The Spanish Jesuit Del-

⁴⁸ Pardo de Tavera, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁹ *Geographia historica* (Madrid: Ramirez, 1752), VIII, 37.

⁵⁰ Cf. Mas, *Informe*, III, 33. Italics ours.

⁵¹ Cf. Brou, "Notes sur les origines du clergé philippin," pp. 546-7.

gado could even say of some of them that "although they are *indios*, they can serve as an example to shame Europeans."⁵² He cites two instances: Eugenio de Santa Cruz, a native of Pampanga, who became Judge Provisor of the Diocese of Cebu and Qualificator of the Holy Office; and Bartolome Saguinsin, a native of Antipolo and parish priest of a *partido* of Quiapo—"omitting mention, only because brevity compels me to do so, of many others, living and dead, who are worthy of having their names mentioned in this history."⁵³

The passage occurs in that part of his history where Delgado undertakes to refute the animadversions made by Fray Gaspar de San Agustín a quarter of a century earlier regarding the Filipino character in general, and in particular its unfitness for the clerical state. Since San Agustín's letter became a kind of *locus communis* from which later controversialists quarried their arguments, and since Delgado's reply, being that of one who was himself a Spaniard, may be expected to be free from racial bias, it will not be amiss to give the substance of both.

San Agustín argued that the ordination of Filipinos to the priesthood would in no way change their character, to the detailed description of whose numerous and grave defects he devotes the major portion of his letter. Rather, he insists:

Rather, their pride will be aggravated with their elevation to so sublime a state; their avarice with the increased opportunity of preying on others; their sloth with their no longer having to work for a living; and their vanity with the adulation that they must needs seek, desiring to be served by those whom in another state of life they would have had to respect and obey; in such wise, that the malediction of *Isaias*, 24, shall overtake this nation: 'It shall be as with the people, so with the priest.' For the *indio* who seeks holy orders does so not because he has a call to a more perfect state of life, but because of the great and almost infinite advantages which accrue to him along with the new state of life which he chooses. How much better it is to be a Reverend Father than to be a yeoman or a sexton! What a difference between paying tribute and being paid a stipend! Between being drafted to cut timber⁵⁴ and being waited on hand and foot! Between rowing a galley and riding in one! All of which does not apply to the Spaniard, who by becoming a cleric deprives himself of the opportunity of becoming a mayor, a captain

⁵² *Historia general sacro-profana, política y natural de las Islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas* (Manila; Atayde, 1892), p. 293. The date is that of the printed edition; the manuscript was completed in 1754.

⁵³ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ Forced labor supplied lumber for the shipyards.

or a general, together with many other comforts of his native land, where his estate has more to offer than the whole nation of *indios*. Imagine the airs with which such a one will extend his hand to be kissed! What an incubus upon the people shall his father be, and his mother, his sisters, his female cousins, when they shall have become great ladies overnight, while their betters are still pounding rice for their supper! For if the *indio* is insolent and insufferable with little or no excuse, what will he be when elevated to so high a station? . . . What reverence will the *indios* themselves have for such a priest, when they see that he is of their color and race? Especially when they realize that they are the equals or betters, perhaps, of one who managed to get himself ordained, when his proper station in life should have been that of a convict or a slave?⁵⁵

Delgado's refutation of these strictures is as devastating as it is urbane. To the charge that the native candidates for the priesthood will have no standing in the community, being congenital slaves or potential jailbirds, he replies:

Those [natives] who are being educated in any of the four colleges in Manila which are devoted to the formation of the clergy are all sons of the better class, looked up to by the *indios* themselves, and are not *timaua* or of the *olipon* class, as the Visayas—or *maharlíca* or *alipin*, as the Tagalogs—call the slaves and freedmen. These boys are being educated by the Reverend Fathers of Saint Dominic or of the Society [of Jesus]; they instruct them in virtue and letters, and if any of the bad habits of the *indio* cling to them, these are corrected and removed by the teaching and conversation of the Fathers. Moreover, their Lordships the Bishops, when they promote any of them to holy orders, do not go about the matter blindfolded, ordaining any one who is set before them, but with great care and prudence gather information regarding their purity of blood and *de moribus et vita*, examining them and putting them to the test before they are made pastors of souls; and to say otherwise is injurious to these illustrious prelates, to whom we owe so much respect and reverence.⁵⁶

This is not to say, of course, that native priests have without exception lived up to expectations. To demand as much from the priesthood of any nation is to show complete ignorance of human nature.

It is possible, no doubt, that some have not justified the high regard which has been shown them in entrusting to them the dispensation of the divine mysteries; but it is bad logic to argue that because one or many are bad, therefore all are likewise bad. And it is to be noted that if any cleric or parish priest among them is bad or gives scandal, their prelates, who are holy and zealous, correct and chastise them

⁵⁵ Cf. Mas, *Informe*, III, 33-4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

and even remove them from their posts and deprive them of their ministry; and often, as I myself have seen, they summon them and cause them to say Mass and perform their spiritual duties under their eye, until they are certain of their reformation and amendment. Thus they do not permit that 'it shall be as with the people, so with the priest.' Moreover, it is a gratuitous assertion to say that the *indio* seeks holy orders, not because he has a vocation to a more perfect state of life, but because of the great and almost infinite advantages which accrue to him along with the priesthood—the advantages, that is, of being a parish priest over being a yeoman, or a sexton, or a galley slave, or a jailbird. For it is common knowledge that there are also many in Spain who seek the ecclesiastical state for the sake of a livelihood; and others enter religion for the same reason. Nor may we conclude that therefore such persons did not have a true vocation; for if the Church *non judicat de occultis*, such judgment being reserved to God who *scrutat renes et corda*, much less is it permitted to any private writer to pass judgment on this matter.⁵⁷

Delgado clinches his argument by examining the supposition on which San Agustín's whole thesis is based, namely, that there are certain sections of the human race—among which the Filipinos are to be counted—which are by nature unfit for the priestly state.

Finally, I shall answer the example brought forward by the reverend author of this hyperbolic letter to prove that it is impossible for the *indios* to divest themselves of their racial traits, even though they be consecrated bishops, etc. I say, then, that this was precisely the practice of the holy apostles, namely, to ordain priests and bishops from among the natives of those regions where they preached, whether they be Indians or Negroes. And it is a historical fact that when Saint Francis Xavier arrived in India, he found many Comorin clerics, who are negroes, already preaching the Gospel in those newly founded Christian communities. And so likewise there were in Japan many Japanese priests belonging to religious orders, and in China there are today, as we read in the printed accounts of the venerable martyrs of Saint Dominic and the Society of Jesus.⁵⁸

We have thus sufficient warrant for saying that in spite of the official attitude unfavorable to the formation of a native clergy, in spite of the obstacles placed in its way by the clumsy machinery of the *Patronato*, in spite of the often bitter prejudice against the *indio*—which, though perhaps unjustifiable, was in many cases quite understandable—there were not lacking, in the first half of the eighteenth century, writers to champion what the Church has always held regarding the necessity of a native priesthood, and educators to carry it into effect. Delgado's

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

reply to San Agustín reveals that by 1754, at least four educational establishments in Manila were training native candidates for the priesthood; that some of these natives had already been ordained and put in charge of parishes; that a few had even distinguished themselves and been appointed to positions of trust; in a word, that man-made barriers, and even the conscious opposition of the Church's own instruments, were powerless to withstand, in this as in so many other cases, the secret springs of the Church's vitality.

The fact that these barriers had been surmounted, however, does not mean that they were removed. They remained; and they continued to interfere in every imaginable fashion with the normal development of the clergy that had so far won the bare right to exist.

REGULAR AND SECULAR CLERGY

We have seen how the regime of the *Patronato* tended to keep the parishes in the hands of the regular clergy.⁵⁹ This meant, of course, that the bishop could exercise only a limited jurisdiction over the majority of his parish priests, who were also religious and hence subject to their religious superiors.

This overlapping of authority occasioned numerous clashes between the bishops and the religious orders, and it is easy to see how the secular clergy would be drawn, willy-nilly, into the quarrel. An obvious solution to every conflict was for the bishop to take away their parishes from recalcitrant religious and hand them over to secular priests who would be completely under his authority; and the temptation was to do this even if the secular priest had no other qualification for the post save that of being amenable.

An incompetent parish priest was scarcely an improvement over a rebellious one; but incompetent or not, such tactics on the part of the bishop obviously did not make for harmonious relations between the regular and the secular clergy. Rather, the religious in charge of parishes came to look upon the secular clergy as a standing threat to their security; the more so, since within the peculiar framework maintained by the *Patronato*, the only way in which the secular clergy

⁵⁹ They had 427 of the 569 parishes in 1750, distributed as follows: Augustinians, 115; Recollects, 105; Jesuits, 93; Franciscans, 63; Dominicans, 51. Cf. C. B. Elliott, *The Philippines to the End of the Military Regime* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), p. 219, note.

could obtain any parishes at all was at the expense of the regular clergy. This antagonism was underscored by the fact that while the religious orders admitted practically no natives into their ranks, the secular clergy in the Philippines was composed almost entirely of them. Thus, racial prejudice confused and embittered the rivalry between seculars and regulars from the very beginning, and serves to account for such startling outbursts as the memorial of Fray Gaspar de San Agustín.

Another factor must be taken into consideration, and this is that until the foundation of the first diocesan seminary in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the training of native priests was exclusively in the hands of religious. It is to their credit, as we pointed out, that the religious undertook this task at all, in spite of the prevailing attitude against it; although, of course, it was to their advantage to have native assistants in their parishes. And the temptation was precisely to give these seminarians just enough education to enable them to be assistants to parish priests, and no more; to water down that "intensive, severe and solid training"⁶⁰ which is demanded by the Church for all her priests, and which alone could have fitted them for positions of responsibility.

The recurrent charges made by the religious of the time against the Filipino secular clergy—that it was composed of men who were ignorant, incompetent, unstable, unworthy of the high dignity of the priesthood—may have been to some extent merited; but if they were merited, could not a large part of the blame for it be justly laid at the door of the religious themselves, who failed to give them the formation necessary to render them worthy? Thus there seems to be a kernel of truth in Governor Simón de Anda's somewhat exaggerated statement that

it is to the interest of the religious orders that there should not be formed and should never be any secular clergy, for so, there being no one to take their places, they may continue in their possession of the curacies, and the King in his long-standing and thoroughly troublesome burden of sending out missionaries at his own expense, who when they arrive here are so many more enemies to his interests. In accordance with this policy and with remarkable harmony, the two universitie_s

⁶⁰ The phrase is that of the late General of the Society of Jesus, Father Ledochowski. For a classic statement of the standards set by the Church for the training of the native clergy, cf. his letter to the Jesuit Superior of the Mission of Kiang-nan, China, August 15, 1919, in *Acta Romana S. I.*, III (1919), 122-44.

have made it an invariable rule to impart a merely cursory training, in order to spoil in this way even the small number of assistant priests.⁶¹

There was at least a very strong temptation, as we have said, to take this course of action; and human nature being what it is, it is very likely that the temptation was not always successfully resisted. For there can be no doubt that many Filipino priests of this period, unlike those of a generation earlier, were as a matter of fact not up to standard. The reason most commonly given for this was the innate incapacity of the national character; but aside from the fact that this had been disproved time and again by such examples as those adduced by Delgado,⁶² such an argument cannot be valid unless a fair trial is made of that character's capabilities; which certainly was not the case if a stunted education did not give it a chance for full development.

Moreover, the charge of incompetence came with very bad grace from those who were willing enough to make extensive use of these incompetents, as Archbishop Sancho pointed out:

Is it not common knowledge to all of us here [in the Philippines] that the actual spiritual ministry falls entirely on the shoulders of the secular coadjutor, the Father Minister [i.e., the religious parish priest] reserving to himself merely the task of collecting, at ease in his rectory, the parish stipends? How can they deny this, when it is so well known? If the secular priests are so incompetent, how can they [the religious] permit and entrust to them the spiritual administration of their parishes? If they are not incompetent, how can they dare to cast discredit on the secular clergy with the strange, not to say unjust accusation of being inept and incapable? . . . To such excesses are the religious led by the black jealousy with which they look upon the secular clergy; for they are afraid that by its ability and upright conduct it is bound to prove, and has already begun to do so, that although the religious render good service, service of a very high order, they are nevertheless not as necessary as they assume.⁶³

The argument has point; but of course, as with all the controversial writings of this troubled period, we must always make allowances for heated exaggeration in the writings of the pugnacious Archbishop Sancho. The cold residue of fact seems to be this: that the system of the *Patronato* had so muddled ecclesiastical affairs in the Philippines as to create an endemic conflict between the religious in charge of

⁶¹ Pardo de Tavera, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁶² *Supra*, p. 237.

⁶³ Sancho to Carlos III, Manila, October 1, 1768; cf. Pardo de Tavera, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.

parishes and their bishops: a conflict which made very difficult the normal development of the native clergy.

Moreover, not content with having thus created the elements of this conflict, the royal patron and his colonial officials were forever exerting direct pressure on one or the other side of the quarrel, thus adding a tangle of political intrigue to an ecclesiastical problem already confused by every shade of professional and racial bias.

Archbishop Sancho's administration is a case in point. We have already seen how the Spanish government was as a general rule against the religious parish priests being replaced by the native clergy. An exception to this general rule were Carlos III and his ministers, who found the most determined opponents of their "enlightened" policies among the religious orders. They succeeded in suppressing the Society of Jesus in all the Spanish dominions, and as a part of a plan to cripple the others, a court prelate, Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina, was sent as archbishop to Manila in 1767.

No sooner had Archbishop Sancho reached Manila than he proceeded at once to enforce episcopal visitation on the religious parish priests. We need not delay on this vexed question of episcopal visitation, beyond noting that the religious orders looked upon the way Archbishop Sancho proposed to conduct it as an attack upon their respective institutes to which they could not in conscience yield. This was precisely the excuse the Archbishop was looking for to warrant his transferring* as many parishes as he could from the regular to the secular clergy.

To the scandal and sincere regret of all good and loyal Spaniards, the Archbishop of Manila now began to hand over to the native clergy almost all the missions and parishes, wresting them under various pretexts and on different occasions from the religious who had conquered and organized them at the price of their blood and sweat.⁶⁴

Thus in 1773 the Augustinians were expelled from their parishes in the province of Pampanga and native priests installed in their places. In addition to the vacancies thus created, the Archbishop also had to provide for the parishes abandoned by the suppressed Society of

⁶⁴ J. Ferrando, O.P., and J. Fonseca, O.P., *Historia de los PP. Dominicos en las Islas Filipinas y en sus misiones del Japón, China, Tung-kin y Formosa* (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1870), V, 35-6.

Jesus. He was therefore compelled to ordain priests hurriedly, in quantity, and with little regard for the thoroughness of their training. However, this did not seem to have given him any scruples, for we find him writing complacently to the King:

At the cost of intensive labor I have succeeded in the space of a year in setting up this seminary,⁶⁵ which has supplied a sufficient number of suitable ministers for the towns which had been administered by the Jesuit Fathers; and to put it in a nutshell, I have removed its reproach from the insignificant clergy that has existed hitherto, which was a national disgrace.⁶⁶

There were others who did not see eye to eye with the Archbishop as to the merits of his achievement. The quip became current in Manila that "there were no oarsmen to be found for the coasting vessels, because the Archbishop had ordained them all."⁶⁷

And sure enough, it was not long before his hasty ordinations began to bear bitter fruit for Archbishop Sancho. In a pastoral letter dated October 25, 1771, he gives violent expression to his disappointment, and a lurid summary of the shocking reports that had caused it.

How can We refrain from weeping and lamenting, when the news comes to Us that the parish priest of such and such a town is not a father of souls, but a galley boatswain who punishes with the lash—O accursed and most execrable crime!—even the very maidens! The example of a good life, the exact fulfilment of one's duties, serious and repeated admonitions, prayer and preaching: these are the arms of our profession. Neither Jesus Christ nor our patron, Saint Peter, bequeathed to us the scourge or the whip.⁶⁸

Then in a dramatic passage the heartbroken Archbishop pictures couriers arriving at his palace from every part of his diocese, bringing sombre news of the misdemeanors of his clergy.

⁶⁵ What he actually did was to change the Jesuit Colegio de San José into a diocesan seminary, contrary to the terms of the endowment. Upon being taken to task by the King for this, he restored San José and took over instead the former University of San Ignacio. Cf. J. Martínez de Zúñiga, O.S.A., *Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas*, ed. W. E. Retana (Madrid: Minuesa, 1893), I, 232-235; Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XLV, 123-4, 128-130.

⁶⁶ Cf. Ferrando-Fonseca, *op. cit.*, V, 36.

⁶⁷ M. Buzeta, O.S.A., and F. Bravo, O.S.A., *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid, 1851), II, 279.

⁶⁸ The text of this *Carta pastoral* is given in full by Ferrando-Fonseca, *op. cit.*, V, 36.

Here comes a messenger with another letter which pierces Our heart with the certain information that in such and such a town Father So-and-so multiplies visits to suspicious houses at suspicious hours; that the town and its parishioners are greatly shocked; that on the night of such-and-such a day certain persons followed said Father and stoned him. Good God! Is this a father of souls, or a ravening wolf who spills their life-blood and devours them? . . . Other messengers and letters come pouring in.

'My Lord: Father So-and-so of such and such a town is a wine-bibber, and on such a day rendered himself incapable of administering the sacraments. He has become a byword, an object of derision and contempt for old and young alike.'

'This other parish priest does not observe the established scale of stole fees; he is a tyrant, a robber; he does not practice the works of mercy, nor give Christian burial to the dead of those who are unable to offer a stipend.'

'That one has eaten up and spirited away . . . the income of the Church.'

'And that one does not teach the catechism in the Spanish language.'

'My Lord: such and such a town is in a state of revolt, disturbance and confusion, because the parish priest or vicar who was assigned to it has brought with him all his relatives: aunts, male cousins, female cousins, who, puffed up with the high station of their kinsman, wish to order everything according to their fancy, and treat all the parishioners with high-handed contempt.'

'My Lord: the rectory of such and such a town is wide open to all sorts of people at all sorts of hours, and on such and such a day, to the scandal of the God-fearing and discreet, it was the scene of a *fandango* and other provocative dances in which both sexes took part.'

'My Lord: this priest temporarily in charge of a parish has eaten up the fees and what silver plate the church contained, and has paid no attention to the eighths and other ecclesiastical taxes . . .'

'My Lord: the majority of the parish priests and coadjutors look with horror and distaste at attendance on the moral conferences, and very few open a book or bother to buy one.'

'My Lord: in this town and that other, the parish priests do not practice or care about almsgiving; they are very strict in exacting stipends and fees, but they want all the money for themselves, or distribute it among their relatives; the churches are bare, and they turn a deaf ear when they are asked for an alms.'⁶⁹

Allowing for the good Archbishop's habitual vigor of speech, more noted for its vividness than for its exactitude, the picture of the native clergy that emerges from his pastoral is still not a very edifying one. We can easily understand the bitterness with which religious observers of the time saw the prosperous parishes which their predecessors had

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

built up "at the price of their blood and sweat" run to seed under the mismanagement of this hastily created clergy.

It was painful to see brought to ruin [one of them wrote] all the labors of our ancient Fathers; and what was for me especially mortifying was to find that the libraries which they had left behind in some of the rectories had been entirely destroyed, having been exposed to leaks in the roof or eaten by moths through their new owners never handling or reading them.⁷⁰

Now, indeed, Fray Gaspar de San Agustín's dire prophecy is fulfilled, and with a vengeance. Had he not—and so many others before and after him—foretold that nothing but evil would come of trying to make priests out of this hopelessly ignorant, indolent, unreliable race? Surely the event has given proof positive of their thesis that the *indio* is congenitally incapable of the clerical state?

It may be permitted to conjecture, however, that if these essentially just and prudent men were given to stand where we stand now, outside the orbit of factional strife and with their perspectives corrected by time and subsequent experience, they would admit that such a thesis is an oversimplification of what was really a more complicated reality. Enough of the evidence has been presented to suggest that the native clergy were as much victims as the religious were of a particular form of union between the ecclesiastical and the civil order which injured rather than helped the work of the Church. They were, in fact, the ones more heavily victimized. For the religious orders suffered little beyond the loss of a few parishes; whereas the native clergy as a whole sustained an injury to its reputation which has crippled its growth until very recent times.

Be that as it may, Archbishop Sancho's disastrous experiment historically resulted in the general acceptance, on the part of both civil and ecclesiastical officials, of San Agustín's thesis. Filipinos, being by nature incapable of the full responsibilities of the priesthood, were to be employed only in strictly subordinate positions in the Church, and to be trained as such. This was the prevailing attitude towards them until almost the last years of the nineteenth century: an attitude, at its best, of pitying tolerance, at its worst, of unconcealed contempt. It recurs regularly in the writings of the period.

⁷⁰ Martínez de Zúñiga, O.S.A., *Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas*, I, 479.

Tomás de Comyn, writing in 1810, reported that by that time the number of native priests and seminarians exceeded that of the regular clergy. In spite of this, he suggests that natives should be prevented from becoming parish priests.

At present there are no more than three hundred [religious], including old men, jubilarians and lay brothers; whereas the number of *indio* clerics in effective possession of curacies, temporary parish priests, assistant parish priests and seminarians exceed a thousand. And since the latter, unworthy as a general rule of the priesthood, are prejudicial rather than of real usefulness to the State, it would not be an injustice to deprive them, as a general policy, of the dignity of parish priests, enabling them merely to be substitutes in necessary cases, and aggregating them to the curacies in the role of coadjutors. In this way, in the measure that the towns are provided with suitable ministers, the said clerics will be given their respective places, and will acquire knowledge and decorum at the side of the religious, and with time may come to earn a certain amount of standing and good repute among their countrymen.⁷¹

Seventy years later, the publicist Francisco Cañamaque comes up with the suggestion that the limited talents of Filipinos could be more usefully employed in the development of industry and commerce than in the study of theology and Latin:

Seven hundred and forty-eight *indio* priests . . . not only indicate a deviation in the choice of a profession as mistaken as it is censurable, but to my way of thinking, given the religious fanaticism of the Filipino people, constitute political dynamite which is bound sooner or later to explode. No one gains by this policy of ordaining Filipino priests; neither themselves, because in exchange for the habit they relinquish to foreigners the practice of the national crafts, industries and commerce; nor the friars, because they find in every secular priest a jealous rival; nor the Philippines, because it is not gifted with talents in such abundance as to be able with impunity to exercise them in theology and Latin; nor the mother country, which has suffered enough since the beginning of the century from the thanks that it ordinarily receives from the native clergy of the colonies. The governors and bishops ought to give weighty consideration to this matter, and direct the inclinations of the natives along more useful lines, until conditions in the Islands shall permit the employment along other lines of a part of its resources without fatal injury to the general interests of the country.⁷²

⁷¹ *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*, ed. F. del Pán (Manila: Oceanía Española, 1878), pp. 159-60.

⁷² *Las Islas Filipinas: de todo un poco* (Madrid: Fernando Fé, 1880), pp. 63-5.

The same author elsewhere makes clear why he considers Filipino priests such a waste of time and energy:

The *indio* priest is a real caricature. . . . He is a caricature of the priest, a caricature of the *indio*, a caricature of the Spaniard, a caricature of the *mestizo*, a caricature of everybody. He is a patchwork of many things, and is nothing. I put it badly; he is something, after all; more than something . . . he is an enemy of Spain.⁷³

And in that last phrase, the rather haphazard scalpel of Cañamaque's wit blunders upon the true political reason for discouraging a native clergy in the Philippines—fear. Behind the repeated assertions that the Filipino was incapable of assimilating any but the most rudimentary education lurked the fear that if he should be given more than that, he might conceivably use it to conduct his own affairs, and eventually discover that he no longer stood in need of a mother country. There were indications of this in the way the few Filipino priests who managed to rise by sheer talent or strength of will above the mediocrity to which they were condemned were immediately surrounded by large numbers of their admiring countrymen, ready to follow their lead with a disconcerting devotion. Patricio de la Escosura, another Spanish observer, notes the symptom:

Here [in the Philippines] every time that a native priest distinguishes himself by his learning or his activity, every time that he is seen to be successful in his profession, every time that he shines in one way or another, the same moral phenomenon is infallibly produced: public opinion marks him out as a rebel, and the malcontents seek him out and surround him, while those who are loyal [to Spain] withdraw more or less openly from his company. . . . It seems to me indisputable that as long as there are native lawyers and priests of some standing in any town or province of the archipelago, there shall rebellion and other troubles break out.⁷⁴

In other words, the "public opinion" to which Escosura refers had the Filipino priest neatly pinned between the horns of a dilemma. If he was incompetent, his incompetence proved that he could not be anything else; if he was competent, his competence proved that he was a rebel. In either case, the practical conclusion was the same: little effort need be expended on his formation, any zeal in this regard being either useless or dangerous. And how inadequate, as a matter of fact,

⁷³ Cf. W. E. Retana, *Frailes y clérigos* (Madrid: Fernando Fé, 1890), p. 100.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

this formation was, may be gathered from a memorial of the *Ayuntamiento*, or city council, of Manila to the King in 1804:

In the three provincial capitals which are adorned with episcopal sees, there are no seminaries in which a young man can be trained with firmness and prudence, since what are called seminaries consist practically of the mere material edifice. There are barely taught in them, by one or two *indio* clerics, who speak Spanish only with difficulty, a very bad Latin and a little of Lárrega.⁷⁵

A very bad Latin and a little of Lárrega—perhaps this is the answer to the question posed by one of the regular clergy's most enthusiastic apologists:

How many Indian theologians, canonists, philosophers, moralists [have graduated from] the conciliar seminaries? Not even one by exception, which usually is found in any general rule. . . . This lack is not due to the professors, for they were always picked men What does this signify, if not that the deficiency is in the race, and not in the professors or the books?⁷⁶

We are inclined to think that what it really signified was "a very bad Latin and a little of Lárrega."

As was to be expected, the result of this short-sighted policy was the exact opposite of what it aimed at. The average Filipino priest received just enough education to resent the suspicion and contempt with which he was treated, but not enough to perceive the real causes for such treatment, or how to rise above it. Consequently he either relapsed into apathy, and became in fact what he was told he could not help being; or he sought to escape the vicious circle in which he was caught by political agitation and intrigue alien to his profession. In either case, the work of the Church in the Philippines suffered well-nigh irreparable damage; but so did the stability of the Spanish regime. For it is always bad statesmanship, in the long run, to put political expediency before the demands of the spiritual order; and that is exactly the measure of the failure of the *Patronato* in its declining years.

⁷⁵ Ayuntamiento de Manila to the King, July 12, 1804, in Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino* (Madrid: Minuesa, 1895-1905), I, fasc. 8, pp. 24-5. Francisco Lárrega, O.P., was the author of a Spanish *Promptuarium theologiae moralis*, written in dialogue form, the first edition of which was published at Pamplona in 1710. Cf. H. Hurter, S.J., *Nomenclator litterarius* (Innsbruck: Academia Wagneriana, 1874-1876), II, 880.

⁷⁶ E. Zamora, *Las corporaciones religiosas*, in Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XLVI, 348-9.

The education of the native clergy improved appreciably with the arrival of the Vincentians in 1862 and their taking charge of the diocesan seminaries; but not to an extent sufficient to enable it to cope with the emergency resulting from the Revolution of '96 and the transfer of sovereignty from Spain to the United States. The nature and gravity of that emergency was well described by the present Archbishop of Manila, the Most Rev. Michael J. O'Doherty:

A careful analysis of after events will lead one to the conclusion that if the Spanish friars made a mistake in their policy of governing the Filipinos, it was solely in this that they failed to realize that the day might come when Spanish sovereignty in the Islands would cease. Hence they made no plans for an emergency such as happened in 1898. They neglected the Catholic principle that no church can rest upon a substantial basis unless it is manned by a native clergy. True, native priests had been ordained in the Philippines, but they were seldom, if ever, allowed to become pastors. To illustrate, the status of affairs in the Archdiocese of Manila may be cited. Of the 350 parishes under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop, only twelve were actually in his control, so far as appointment of pastors were concerned. Other pastors, although nominally appointed by the Archbishop, were really the choice of the Spanish friars.

Such being the case, it is by no means strange that the Filipino priests were wholly unprepared to cope with the situation when full responsibility for the government of parishes fell unexpectedly upon their shoulders. Perpetual curates they had intended to be and nothing more. A certain native priest of Bulacan voiced his sentiments to the bishop some years after the new regime had gone into effect, exclaiming: 'Your Lordship, we were never trained for this!' And his words were but too true.⁷⁷

Along with the tremendous responsibility, however, there came at last to the Filipino clergy the freedom to develop normally along the lines marked out by the Church. This is not the place to make any invidious comparisons between the Spanish and the American regimes. Like all human institutions, both had their advantages and their disadvantages; and the Filipino people would be obtuse indeed if it ever ceased to be grateful to both countries, to the one for her gift of the faith, to the other for her gift of freedom.

There is this to be said, however, for the American period, that while the separation between Church and State which it introduced was sometimes taken to mean the estrangement of the State from the

⁷⁷ "The Religious Situation in the Philippines," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, LXXIV (1926), 131-2.

Church, it did remove from the Church the political trammels of the *Patronato*, and enabled her to form a Filipino clergy in conformity with her divine constitution.

CONCLUSION

It is a bit premature to estimate the results of half a century of this freedom; nor is it necessary, since the scope of this paper has been merely to suggest a historical solution to the problem of the slow emergence of a native priesthood in the Philippines. Nothing remains, therefore, but to summarize the conclusions of our study.

Even after the Filipino people had reached that level of cultural maturity required for the formation of a native clergy, two main causes retarded its beginnings and interfered with its development.

The first was the ecclesiastical legislation of New Spain, where the failure of a premature attempt to develop a native clergy resulted in a reaction unfavorable to the very idea of a native clergy. The letter of this legislation was, indeed, subsequently interpreted in a very lenient sense by canonists, and thus rendered to a great extent inoperative. But its spirit endured in a widespread if largely subconscious prejudice against a native clergy, which came to be looked upon not as a necessary means to the accomplishment of the missionary objective, but as a rare privilege to be conceded to native peoples only if they proved themselves worthy, according to more or less arbitrary standards of worth.

The second was the system called the *Patronato*, whereby the Spanish sovereign, in his capacity as royal patron of the Church in the Indies, defrayed the expenses of the colonial churches, and in exchange acquired the exclusive right of presentation to all important ecclesiastical posts in the colonies, together with very wide powers regarding the disposition of personnel and the division of ecclesiastical territory.

In such an arrangement, it was almost inevitable that considerations of political expediency should stir up controversies and influence decisions injurious to the Church's work, and in particular to the normal development of the native clergy. To summarize only the instances given in the body of the article:

1) The division of ecclesiastical territory in the Philippines among the missionary religious orders decreed by Philip II left no scope for a

secular clergy, and antecedently condemned it to the essentially false position of a subordinate instrument.

2) This arbitrary limitation of its scope necessarily lowered the standards of its formation. For, on the one hand, the native priest with such a future before him had no incentive to prepare himself for the full responsibilities of the priesthood; on the other hand, the advantage to his religious teachers of training him merely for a subordinate position was a strong and ever present temptation.

3) The attempt of Carlos III and his ministers to cripple the religious orders resulted in the sudden imposition of full responsibility on a poorly trained, half-educated native clergy, with the disastrous results that were to be expected.

4) This political maneuver also resulted in creating, or at least deepening, an antagonism between the Spanish regular clergy and the native secular clergy which rapidly degenerated into a national and racial enmity.

5) Half-hearted attempts on the part of the home government to secularize parishes in the Philippines were stubbornly and successfully opposed by colonial officials, who suspected the native clergy of cherishing little love for the mother country; and in view of the treatment which they received, the suspicion was very often well founded.

Briefly, then, the system of the *Patronato* asked for a second-rate native clergy, and got it; but it did not thereby accomplish the political objective which it had in mind. Rather, it injured by such shortsighted statesmanship precisely those two great institutions which it aimed to serve and which in other ways it served so magnificently: the Catholic Church and the Spanish Crown.