

## HISTORICAL SECTION

### Notes on

## THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES\*

1521-1898

(continued)

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### Chapter Six

#### THE SECULAR CLERGY IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE DIOCESAN SEMINARIES

##### A. The Secular Clergy in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries.

The first Spanish secular priest to set foot on Philippine soil was, as everyone knows, Father Pedro Valderrama, one of the chaplains to Magellan's expedition.<sup>1</sup> Later, in 1566, while the conquest was going on, another Spanish secular priest, Father Juan de Vivero arrived at Cebu aboard the *San Jerónimo*.<sup>2</sup> After him others came. Finally in 1581, the Most Reverend Domingo Salazar, first bishop of Manila, brought along with him a contingent of 24 clerics on whom he intended to confer the benefices of the Cathedral and entrust with the care of several parishes.

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\* An essay towards a history of the Church in the Philippines during the Spanish period 1521-1898, translated by Jose Arcilla, S.J., faculty member of Ateneo University, Department of History.

<sup>1</sup> Medina, Juan de, O.S.A., *Historia de los sucesos de la Oración de N. Gran P. S. Agustín de estas Islas Filipinas*, Manila: Tipo-litografía de Chofre y Comp., 1893: "...in the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan (1521) the clergy came (only one, because the other, a French by nationality and of whom the history speaks, was abandoned by Magellan in the coasts of Brazil)," p. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Fonseca, *Op. Cit.*, I, 170

In the beginning, obviously, there could only be foreign priests in the Philippines, both regular and secular. But Salazar, almost from the start formed the idea of raising under the guidance of the foreign clergy a native priesthood. These would be *creoles*, born in the islands of Spanish parentage, *mestizos*, normally Spanish-Filipino and Chinese-Filipino; and *Filipinos* of the indigenous malay race.

Salazar's idea, then, was to entrust for the meantime the benefices and positions of dignity and responsibility in the Philippine Church to the clergy from Spain and Mexico. Later, when the natives gave sufficient proof of their virtue and capabilities, he would open to them the path to the priesthood and charge them with responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

To effect this worthy plan, both the bishop and the governor-general, Gonzalo Ronquillo, the ecclesiastical chapter and the Jesuits, petitioned the king in 1583 for the foundation of a college to serve as a seminary, where the sons of Spaniards as well as the *mestizos* and natives (these last the sons of the old Philippine aristocracy) who felt the call to the priesthood and the apostolate could receive the proper training. Philip II approved the project in 1585. But nothing was done, probably because of the lack of means to realize the archbishop's desires. Years later, in 1595, the Jesuits wanted to carry out the idea of the now defunct prelate; but again there were no funds.<sup>4</sup>

This was the last attempt in that period to form a distinctly Filipino clergy. Perhaps the South American experience which had not succeeded in forming a respectable native clergy had prejudiced the minds of those who initially had taken a great interest in the creation of a native or indigenous clergy in the Philippines. What is certain is a report sent to King Philip III by Governor Pedro de Acuña, dated 15 July 1604. "It seems to me," he reported to Philip III, "that although this *work is very good and holy*, it would be *preferable* that said college be *founded for poor Spaniards*, sons of residents or those who came to settle, in order that they may study and learn virtue and letters so as to be more fit later on to govern and administer the colony and be *parish priests and mis-*

<sup>3</sup> *Boletín eclesiástico*, 1964, 291.

<sup>4</sup> Manaligod, Ambrosio, S.V.D., *The Catholicity of the Priesthood*. A thesis, University of Santo Tomás, Manila, 1944-45, 105 ff.

sionaries. This would be a greater benefit than any which can be derived from a college of natives, since the sum of what these will learn is reading and writing and nothing more, for they can neither be priests nor officials, and after they shall have learned something they will return to their homes and take care of their farms and earn their living."<sup>5</sup>

In the years that intervened between 1604, the date of the document cited above, and 1705 when the first seminary for native Filipinos was opened, an entire century passed during which there is no known native-born raised to the priesthood. In the seventeenth century, only the creoles and perhaps one or another Spanish mestizo, and certainly some Chinese mestizos,<sup>6</sup> received the priestly dignity. The only centers of teaching which prepared candidates for the priesthood, during that century were the University of Santo Tomás, the Colleges of San Juan de Letrán and of San José. These centers, administered under the appellation of seminary-college proved a fertile training ground for many excellent priests some of which by their erudition and their virtue merited the highest of the ecclesiastical dignities. But they were priests definitely Spanish by birth or by descent.<sup>7</sup>

The movement to train a Filipino clergy was not undertaken again until 1677. It seems that a report by the French bishop, Monsignor François Pallu, founder of the Paris Foreign Mission Society, who had visited Manila and returned to Europe, occasioned the intervention of Charles II of Spain and of the Holy See. But it is certain that in 1880 Monsignor Urbano Cerri, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, memorialized Pope Innocent XI, indicating certain deficiencies in the Church in the Philippines. Among these was the fact that natives were not raised to sacred orders, although they fulfilled the prerequisite conditions to receive them.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Collin-Pastells, *Labor evangélica*, II (Barcelona, 1900), 251, n.

<sup>6</sup> APSR, MSS, sección *Sangleyes*, tomo I, documento 26, "Quienes son los sangleyes?" Exposición en 1659 del P. Jacinto Gali y del P. Alberto Collares, ambos O.P., sobre el modo de ser y portarse de los chinos en Filipinas.

<sup>7</sup> Carta del arzobispo Diego Camacho al Rey, en 11 de Octubre de 1705. MS in the archives of UST, Sección de Becerras, tomo 59, folio 312.

<sup>8</sup> De la Costa, Horacio, S.J., "Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines," *apud* Anderson, G., *Studies in Philippine Church History*, Cornell University Press, 1969, p. 78.

Three years before this date, the archbishop of Manila, His Grace Felipe Pardo, O.P., received a royal cedula dated on August 2, 1677, ordering him to provide the natives with a program of studies aimed at the priesthood; he was to ordain at the proper time those who showed an aptitude for the priesthood and had been properly prepared; and, finally, the colleges run by the Dominicans and the Jesuits were to open their doors to them until a seminary could be established. At the same time, the Provincial of the Dominicans received another cedula dispatched the same date for the same purpose. And likely the Jesuit Provincial received one of the same tenor. But, so far as we know, the archbishop took no decisive steps in the matter until 1689. In fact, on 12 March of the same year, he offered in a letter to the Dominican Provincial a legacy of 13,000 pesos, signifying his desire that Letran College be a school exclusively for indigenous and mestizo students so that some day these could merit the priesthood after sufficient training. There is no doubt that the archbishop thought at that time that the natives were not ready for the priesthood; but he nursed a strong hope that, properly formed, they could ascend the steps of the altar someday.<sup>9</sup>

### B. The Seminaries of San Clemente and San Felipe

Interested in pushing forward the plan for the formation of a native clergy, King Charles II ordered the governor of the Philippines through a cedula in 1697 to inform him if there was a seminary-college in the archdiocese of Manila and to indicate, if there was none, how much it would cost to subsidize it. The governor's reply, dated 13 July 1700, included the opinion that there was no need for the time being to open a seminary-college. A royal cedula dated 28 April 1702 signed by Philip V provided for the foundation in Manila of a seminary for eight native seminarians. But not even this royal mandate was implemented. And although Archbishop Diego Camacho certainly took the initial steps to open a seminary, his efforts were stymied by legal blocks.

This was the situation when Abbé Sidotti arrived in Manila in 1704. He came in the entourage of the future Cardinal Charles

<sup>9</sup> *Philippiniana Sacra*, I:3 (September-December 1966), 501-09.

Thomas Maillard de Tournon, legate *a latere* of His Holiness, Pope Clement XI to the mission countries in the Far East. On the initiative of this worthy ecclesiastic and with the approval of Governor Domingo Zabálburu and Archbishop Camacho, a seminary known as San Clemente was inaugurated in 1705. Its doors were immediately opened to 72 students, of which 8 were native-born Filipinos. Unfortunately, the king, appraised of this foundation set up without the royal will, quashed it and the seminary remained aborted. At the same, however, the king ordered that the royal cedula of 1702 be followed. The result of this manifestation of the king's mind was the opening in 1712 of the seminary of San Felipe. Thus the groundwork for a native clergy in the Philippines was prepared. Nonetheless, between 1702 and 1706, Archbishop Camacho had already ordained a Filipino priest. For their part, the University of Santo Tomás, the Colleges of San José and San Juan de Letran began to admit within their halls Filipino candidates to the priesthood.<sup>10</sup> But the native clergy that graduated from the seminary, the university and the colleges must have been few and of mediocre ability, if we must accept the later judgment, apparently exaggerated, of the famous Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina, "... the few clerics there are, who are a shame to men, I have raised from contempt..."<sup>11</sup>

### C. The Seminary of San Carlos (Archdiocese of Manila)

Archbishop Basilio Sancho arrived in Manila in 1767, a man of great talents but impetuous and a bit violent. One of the many plans he had and carried out with the tenacity that marked him—he was not Aragonese for nothing—was the establishment of a conciliar seminary for the archdiocese of Manila. Actually, making use of the residential buildings, left vacant in Manila by the Jesuits expelled in 1768 from the Philippines, he won from the government the concession to use them for a seminary. And so, beginning with the year 1773, this new seminary named San Carlos in honor of the king, Charles III,

<sup>10</sup> Concepción, Juan de la, *Historia general de Filipinas*, VIII (Sampaloc, Manila, 1790) pp. 315-29; Cfr. Blair and Robertson, XXVIII. 117-22, 190-91.

<sup>11</sup> Fonseca, *Op. cit.*, 36.

began to function. Its administration was in the charge of the Miter, and its internal policies were in the hands of a cleric who acted as Rector, while the seminarians followed courses at the University of Santo Tomás.

This state of things continued until 1862 when His Grace, Archbishop Gregorio Melitón Martínez of Manila (1862-75) entrusted the administration of the archdiocesan seminary to the Vincentian Fathers (*Paúles*) who had just arrived in the Philippines on 2 August of the same year. Housed in the ancient residence of the Jesuits, the Vincentians witnessed the magnificent church topple down to the earth during the well-known earthquakes of 1863. The residence itself suffered the same fate during the seismic tremors of 1880. For this reason they had to move to the barrio of San Marcelino, whence, in 1883, they moved to a new edifice raised by the archbishop in a garden adjacent to the archiepiscopal palace to house the seminary. Much later, in 1896, Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda constructed a huge edifice which was to serve as the future residence of the seminarians and the canons of the cathedral. But, due to the political incidents of 1898, it was used only as a seminary until the next year. Besides, wanting to give new life to the Faculties of Theology and Law at the University of Santo Tomás, Archbishop Nozaleda believed it better to restore things to their former condition when the Vincentians arrived, i.e., that the seminarians reside in the seminary building while pursuing courses at the University. But developments occurred differently, due to the events of 1898.<sup>12</sup>

#### D. The Seminary at Cebu

At the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines in 1768, the bishop of Cebu, Most Reverend Mateo Joaquín Rubio de Arévalo, petitioned the king for the buildings and lands of the ancient College of San Ildefonso which had belonged to the Society of Jesus, to use them for the conciliar seminary of the diocese. His Majesty granted the bishop's request and the city government subsequently made the legal bequest of the properties on 23 August 1783. The seminary, ad-

<sup>12</sup> Un sacerdote de la Congregación de la Misión, *Los Padres Paúles y las Hijas de la Caridad en Filipinas*, Manila, 1912, pp. 39-41.

ministered by a Director or Rector from the secular clergy, was for a long time a seminary and a college for secondary education. In 1867, at the request of the Most Reverend Romualdo Jimeno (1847-72), the Vincentians arrived in Cebu to take charge of the seminary. For the next years, these Fathers, without neglecting the spiritual and scientific formation of the seminarians, tried to renovate the ancient edifices which were already in a ruinous condition and erect new roofs for the growing number of students.<sup>13</sup>

### E. The Seminary of Nueva Cáceres

The seminary of Nueva Cáceres was founded on 7 March 1783 by Archbishop Antonio Gallego del Orbigo of Manila and apostolic administrator of the diocese of Nueva Cáceres. He constructed a building solid enough but rather simple, which lasted until the earthquake of 1863. The seminary administration was given to a Rector, who was ordinarily the Provisor of the diocese, a Franciscan, who was both Vice-Rector and professor, and two other professors of the seminary. The seminarians fluctuated between fifty and eighty, of whom only a fourth part reached the priesthood. Bishop Francisco Gainza of Nueva Cáceres rebuilt the old building a short time after the earthquake and confided the direction of the seminary to the Vincentians, who took possession on 7 May 1865. Among the rectors of the seminary in this second half of its history, Father Antonio Santonja stands out in a special way. He raised the institution to an eminent degree of success in all aspects. To him and to his successors are due the enlargement of the building and the admission of a great number of students, such that, when upheavals shook the country in 1898, the diocese could face the dearth of secular priests made more acute by the departure of the Franciscans with better success than in the rest of the islands.<sup>14</sup>

### F. The Seminary of Vigan

The seminary of Vigan was founded in 1821 by the Most Reverend Francisco Alban. Closed in 1848 for lack of students, it was

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 53 ff.

<sup>14</sup> APSR, MSS, Sección *Historia eclesiástica de Filipinas* (NC), tomo 6, documento 21.

again opened in 1852. In 1872, at the petition of Bishop Juan Aragonés of Nueva Segovia, the Vincentian fathers took charge of this seminary, but only until 1875. In 1882, the Recollects came to administer it, and they converted it into a seminary-college, opening its halls to secular students. Finally, from the year 1895 until the revolution, it was in the charge of the Augustinians. Temporarily closed, the same fathers took charge of it again until the arrival of the Most Reverend Dennis Dougherty, the first American bishop of the diocese.<sup>15</sup>

### G. The Seminary of Jaro

Mr. Mariano Cuenco founded the seminary of Jaro in 1868, and entrusted it to the care of the Vincentians in the following year. In 1871, they started the construction of a magnificent building, which was ready the following year to provide shelter to the seminarians, thanks to the unstinting efforts of the bishop and of Fr. Aniceto Gonzalez, Rector of the institution.<sup>16</sup>

### H. A Glance in Retrospect

If we look over the period which stretches from Bishop Salazar, the first promoter of the formation of a native Filipino clergy to the year 1898, we will easily notice that it was a slow and laborious task. Some writers have censured the authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, for their apparent failure in the formation of a native clergy, especially Bishop Pardo. Others, on the contrary, have seen only the defects and shortcomings of the clergy which had been formed during the period. We believe that, although there were failings on both parts, the authorities did what they conscientiously understood had to be done in those circumstances.

The main accusations levelled against the Filipino clergy were: little interest in the maintenance and repair of ecclesiastical buildings and sacred objects; over-attachment to the relatives; violations of their priestly

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-74; Marin, P. Valentin, O.P., *Ensayo de una Sintesis del los trabajos realizados por las Corporaciones Religiosas en Filipinas*, Tomo II (Manila, 1901), p. 193.

<sup>16</sup> *Los Padres Paúles etc.*, pp. 63-64.



celibacy; weakness in fulfilling their ministerial obligations; and a marked inclination towards money. But, in defence of the Filipino clergy, we ought to affirm that these defects, partly excusable when viewed against the situation of the country and the idiosyncracies of the race, are explained in the light of a very important fact — the deficient training which those priests received in seminaries badly equipped materially and almost always suffering from a lack of competent faculty and personnel. These detractors of the clergy would do well to read with attention these words taken from an *Exposición* presented by the Ayuntamiento of Manila in 1804 to his Majesty: "The weakness and loss of spirit which for some time now has been noted in these islands, does not leave them that strength of character in keeping with the priestly calling and the high ministry of the cure of souls, unless a solid education sustained by doctrine and zeal in the conciliar seminaries breathe into their hearts the noble ideals needed to maintain them in their dignified calling. In the three capitals of provinces graced with episcopal sees, there are seminaries where a young priest may develop himself in discipline and wisdom, but they merely consist in their fabric or material building with the name of Seminary. In them very bad Latin and a little of morals by Larraga are hardly ever taught by one or two native clerics."<sup>17</sup>

Bishop Pedro Payo, in a *Relatio Status Ecclesiae Metropolitanae Manilae* sent to the Holy See in 1883, summed up the moral condition of both the Filipino and the Spanish secular clergy in the archdiocese of Manila in the following words, which we believe agree with the impartial judgment of various observers: "There are certainly some among the native priests who are outstanding for their high moral conduct; but others, of course, forgetting their dignity, are a scandal to the faithful. Even the Europeans who receive prebendaries in the Cathedral church do not show that ideal of character which inspires the rest of the clergy and the people. Unchastity is spreading far and wide."<sup>18</sup>

(continued)

<sup>17</sup> Pons y Torres, Salvador, *Defensa del Clero Filipino* (Manila: Establecimiento tipográfico "La Democracia," 1900), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> APSR, *Sección Historia eclesiástica de Filipinas*, 1883, folio 6.