

**Notes on**

**THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH  
IN THE PHILIPPINES\*  
1521 - 1898  
(continued)**

• **Pablo Fernandez, OP**

**Chapter Twelve**

**THE ROYAL PATRONAGE**

Among the different kinds of patronage in reference to the provision of ecclesiastical benefices, four are pertinent to us to know, namely: the universal ecclesiastical patronage, the universal royal patronage, the Spanish royal patronage and the Spanish royal patronage in the Indies.

1. **The Universal Ecclesiastical Patronage.** This is the sum of all the privileges, with the corresponding obligations, which are granted by the Church to some Catholics who found churches, chapels or benefices, or to their successors.<sup>1</sup> This patronage is based, first, "on the gratitude of the Church to her benefactors, a gratitude which has inspired her to reward their

\* 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> *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada europeo-americana*, Barcelona, Hijos de J. Espasa, Editores, Tomo 42, p. 890.

generosity, and, second, on her praiseworthy desire to awaken the piety of the faithful that they might establish foundations for temples or benefices to be able to attend better to the liturgy and the care of souls."<sup>2</sup> In this sense, patronage began in the fifth century, when the Church granted the right of presentation to clerics and laymen who had built a church or founded a benefice. In accordance with this right, the founder or "patron," enjoyed the privilege of presenting to the church authorities a cleric to be rector of a church or to enjoy a benefice. On the other hand, this privilege, granted almost always to the laity, resulted in so many inconveniences and on so many occasions restricted the free movement of the Church, that she had to curtail or suppress the practice, especially in these last years.

2. **The Universal Royal Patronage.** This is the privilege granted by the Holy See to monarchs and heads of state to present or propose an apt candidate for a vacant ecclesiastical benefice, major or minor, within the country.<sup>3</sup> If we apply this definition to the privilege which the Holy See, by tacit consent or written declaration, granted to the Spanish kings of presenting clerics for the ecclesiastical benefices of Spain, we have the *Spanish royal patronage*.

3. According to some authors, this started during the period of the Visigoths and, more specifically, in the reign of Recared (+ 589). A convert from Arianism, this king began the practice of convoking national councils, not, as far as we know, against the will of Rome. Canon six of the twelfth council of Toledo celebrated in 1681 granted to the bishop of this city the faculty to consecrate those whom the king might raise to such dignity. This practice, however, was not universal, for, in some places, the old procedure continued of electing the bishops by the clergy and the people or, in the more modern system, by the ecclesiastical chapter.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pag. 901.

<sup>4</sup> Gomez Zamora, P. Matias, O.P. *Régio Patronato español é indiano*, M: 'rid, Imprenta del Asilo de Huérfanos del S.C. de Jesus, 1897. p. 176 ff.

During the years of the Reconquest (718-1492), the kings followed the custom, not disapproved by the Holy See, of nominating prelates, rectors, prebendaries for the dioceses, churches or benefices which they restored or founded in the territories recovered from Moslem control.

The Catholic kings and some of their successors, wishing that the churches and benefices in the nation should stay only in the hands of qualified Spaniards if possible, obtained from the Holy See very ample powers in the presentation of bishops and the provision of benefices.<sup>5</sup> These powers were granted, first, in 1486 by the bull of Innocent VIII, and later in 1523, the bull of Adrian VI and, finally, in 1753, the Concordat between Benedict XIV and Ferdinand VI.

4. With the discovery and conquest of America in the sixteenth century, a new kind of patronage appeared along the lines of the Spanish royal patronage, *the royal patronage of the Indies*. This included, not only the right of presentation and provision, but also some control and administration of Church goods and the right to collect ecclesiastical tithes and the fruits of the vacant churches. To this right, however, corresponded the rather heavy obligation of sending missionaries at the expense of the royal treasury, of erecting and furnishing cathedrals, churches and chapters, of maintaining the liturgy, etc., as we shall see further on.

The Spanish royal patronage in the Indies, which is what directly concerns us, rests on the following documents: 1. The bull *Inter caetera* (Among Other Things) of Alexander VI (4 May 1493), granting to the Crown of Spain dominion over the Indies, with the obligation of spreading the Catholic Faith there. 2. The bull of 16 November 1501, granting the right to the tithes and first-fruits of the Indies, but with the obligation of founding and furnishing churches, maintaining their prelates or rectors, and providing for the needs of the liturgy, all out of royal funds.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289-291.

The third document on which the royal patronage of the Indies is based is the bull *Universalis ecclesiae* (Of the Universal Church) of Pope Julius II (28 July 1508). This granted to the Castilian crown universal patronage over the churches already founded or still to be founded in the Indies.<sup>7</sup>

5. This patronage, first granted for the Americas, was extended to the Philippines with the arrival of Legazpi in 1565. From then on, the Governor General of the islands would be the Vice-Regal Patron, or Vice-Gerent of the king in all matters pertaining to the royal patronage which the monarch could not attend to either by himself or through the royal council of the Indies. In the time of the Austrian Hapsburgs, the royal patronage of the Indies was, as a general rule, kept within its proper competence; but, with the accession of the Bourbons in 1700, one notices a greater interference by the king in church affairs, interference which reached its widest extent under Charles III (1759-1788). With the facility of communications in the nineteenth century, there is a marked tendency also for the metropolitan government to settle by itself matters pertaining to the *patronato* which in other times had been left to the responsibility of the Vice-Regal Patron.

Let us, then, see some of the rights and obligations of the royal patronage in the Philippines through three hundred long years. We shall follow a list of entities or persons, as the question demands, for greater clarity.

6. **Bishops.** In tracing the history of the diocese in a previous chapter, already indicated that the king had the privilege of presenting to the Holy See candidates for vacant sees on whom the pope bestowed canonical institution. We have also said that the bishops could assume government of their dioceses even before receiving the papal bulls. And before they were given the letters of presentation, the bishops had to swear fidelity to the laws of the royal patronage.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 292-304.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 385-393; *Recopilación de Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, Libro 1, Título VI, III Título VII, Ley 1.

7. **Councils.** If a prelate wanted to convene a provincial council, he needed the king's permission. During the sessions, the Vice-Regal Patron had to be present as the king's representative. Finally, it was absolutely necessary to send the acts of the council to the Royal Council of the Indies for approval before printing or promulgation.<sup>9</sup>

8. **Auxiliaries to the Ordinary.** According to a royal decree of 8 June 1834, the bishop was obliged to submit an account of the nomination of the Vicar General to the civil government. According to a law of the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias*, the bishops could not keep religious priests as Provisors.<sup>10</sup> In 1847 this law was suspended, but it was revived in 1896. A royal order of 4 December 1861 arranged that when the diocesan Ordinary named a Provisor, he should notify the Vice-Patron who, after consultation with the Council of Administration, would tentatively approve it, until His Majesty sent the usual confirmatory royal cedula as a matter of form.<sup>11</sup>

9. **The Cathedral Clergy, Capitular Vicars.** The king likewise presented the candidates for the honors, canonries, prebends and half-prebends of all the cathedrals in the Indies, while the prelate of the Cathedral Church which owned the benefice, conferred the title and canonical institution to the nominee. But, because of the great distance that separated the islands from the Metropolis, the king authorized the Governor General of the Philippines to do the presentation of the aforementioned prebends *ad interim*.<sup>12</sup> In 1608, the king arranged that in every suffragan see of the Philippines, two clerics be appointed as assistants to the bishop in his episcopal duties, as long as a chapter could not be provided for them.<sup>13</sup> A royal cedula dated 13 July 1799 instructed

<sup>9</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título VIII, Leyes 1 y 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Libro 1 Título VIII, Ley 20.

<sup>11</sup> Gomez Zamora, *op. cit.*, pp. 405-410.

<sup>12</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título VI, Ley 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título VI, Ley 18.

Religious heads and superiors and prelates that, where there were no ecclesiastical chapters, as was the case in the three suffragan dioceses of the Philippines, the administration of a vacant church and the nomination of a Provisor or Capitular Vicar fell to the metropolitan or, in his absence, to the more immediate suffragan.<sup>14</sup>

10. **The Regular Clergy.** There are innumerable proofs and evidences of the interference of the royal patronage with the life of the religious orders in the Philippines. It was the king who approved the establishment of religious provinces and houses,<sup>15</sup> the departure of religious missionaries for the Philippines, the license to return to the Peninsula, the assignment of provinces or mission territories to each religious order, and the erection of parishes administered by religious ministers. Moreover, due to the difficulty of communications before the nineteenth century, the king usually delegated some of these privileges to the Vice-Patron, as for example, allowing missionaries to go to Japan or to China from Manila.<sup>16</sup>

Some governors general tried to oblige the religious orders to submit to them the acts of their provincial chapters; but the latter either found an excuse to avoid the issue or did so with great repugnance.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we find the monarchs of Spain granting permission to the religious orders in the Philippines to open in the peninsula the colleges of Valladolid, Alfaro, Monteagudo, Ocaña, and approving the statutes by which these colleges would be governed, as well as the program of studies for the young clerics.<sup>17</sup>

Corresponding to these privileges of royal patronage, the crown had the obligation to shoulder the expenses of the journeys of the religious missionaries. The voyage from Spain to the Philippines usually amounted to P1,000. When this sum proved insufficient, due to un-

<sup>14</sup> Gomez Zamora, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>15</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título III, Ley 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Libro 1, Título XIV, Ley 31.

<sup>17</sup> Rodriguez San Pedro, Joaquin, *Legislación Ultramarina*, Madrid, Imprenta de Manuel Minuesa, 1866, pp. 862, 865, 869, 889.

foreseen circumstances, the higher cost of living or the devaluation of currency, the religious order or the king himself at the request of the order, made up the deficit.

This was the situation until 1849, when by royal order dated 13 July of that year, Her Majesty Queen Isabel II arranged for the government to pay the entire sum of the journey of the Franciscans and add P125 for the equipment; two thirds of the journey of the Dominicans and Recollects; none for the Augustinians. The arrangement was based on the economic stability of these orders in the Philippines.<sup>18</sup>

By a later royal order of 17 December 1854, it was decided, in view of the needs of the royal treasury, to stop the privilege of free passage for the Recollects and Dominicans, but not that of the Franciscans.<sup>19</sup> From this date until 2 February 1891, when the government agreed once again to pay the expenses of the trips of the religious missionaries for the Philippines, they had to come at their own cost, with the exception of the Franciscans and Jesuits whose journey the government undertook to underwrite.

From the sixteenth century on the government followed the tradition of distributing to each of the five convents in Manila the sum of P400 and 400 *fanegas* of rice for the support of four ministers of the sacraments for the natives any hour of the day or night they might call for them.<sup>20</sup> The king also supplied a set of sacred vestments, a chalice and paten, and a church bell on the erection of mission churches. Besides, he supplied mass wine for consecration, flour for hosts, oil for the sanctuary lamp.<sup>21</sup> And, from the end of the eighteenth century

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 878.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 885.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. *Informe del Procurador General, Fr. Domingo de la Escalera... en 9 de Junio de 1700*, Ms., APSR, Sección "Provincial," 1700. "And in as much as the King orders that to each of the five religious in Manila P400 and 400 *fanegas* of rice be given (which is the wheat of this land), so that each order might provide 4 ministers of the sacraments." (Peguero, P. Juan, O.P., *Compendio historial de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas*, Ms., AUST, No. VII).

<sup>21</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título III, Ley 7.

to the beginning of the nineteenth, he regularly gave ₱100 for the missionaries of China and Tonking. In many particular instances, either on his own initiative or on the petition of the Procurators, he also gave other alms, like medicines, cloth for the religious habit, etc.<sup>22</sup> On this matter, the royal patronage was generally generous, especially during the reign of Philip V, despite the chronic shortage of royal funds.

Quite correctly the Dominican missionary to Tonking, Father José Valerio, could write in the eighteenth century: "Rightly or wrongly, we missionaries all eat of the silver of Spain."<sup>23</sup>

Besides the alms which the king habitually gave to all the religious orders in common, he used to give particular help now and then, especially to the Franciscans who, because they owned no lands, were usually in more need.<sup>24</sup> He also proved to be very liberal with the Jesuits when they came back to the Philippines; for, although they were allowed to return only on condition that they would not reclaim their old properties, the crown, on the other hand, paid for their journey back and forth, and to each priest in the Mindanao missions he granted a yearly stipend of ₱1200 and ₱400 to each lay brother.<sup>25</sup>

The king also supported the religious in the active missions, with an annual stipend of money and rice at amounts that varied considerably with the years. He maintained also, from 1737 on, twelve scholarships in San Juan de Letrán and Santo Tomás colleges. Costing ₱1200 yearly, this fund was intended for the formation of six Chinese and Annamite missionary priests destined to work in their respective countries.

<sup>22</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título III, Ley 14; "The habits we wear out are of a coarse cloth imported from Mexico, for there is no linen here; for this the king has ordered the grant of a subsidy of ₱1200 every year." (Peguero, *Op. cit.*, No. VIII).

<sup>23</sup> *Carta del P. José Valerio, O.P. al P. Salvador Contreras, O.P.* 20 de Enero de 1736, MS, APSR, Tomo 36, fol. 279.

<sup>24</sup> Rodríguez San Pedro, *Op. cit.*, pp. 861, 887.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 893; Martínez Vigil, P. Ramon, O.P., *Memorial al Ministro de Ultramar*, 1880, Ms, APSR, Sección de "Comunicaciones oficiales, Tomo 610, folio 192 ff.



11. **Patronage and the Alienation of Church Property.** The *Partidas* and the Laws of the Indies forbade the alienation of church property in Spain in order to protect the patrimony of the Church. For a different purpose, that is, with the intention of despoiling the Church of her property, the royal orders of 1821 and 1834 repeated the prohibition in favor of the peninsular government. The second royal order, promulgated in the Philippines in 1849, forbade the religious orders in the islands from alienating their goods without license from the crown. But in 1890, another order rescinded the preceding legislation and gave the orders in the Philippines the faculty to dispose of their goods.<sup>26</sup>

12. **Tithes and First-Fruits.** Tithes and first-fruits, which in other times were a very important source for the support of the liturgy and the maintenance of the clergy, were not obligatory for the natives of the Philippines. Instead, the practice was to set aside part of the low tribute collected by the government from the Filipinos. Tribute consisted usually of something more than a peso. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, three *reales* were set aside from the tribute collected, to form a fund known as the *Sanctorum* for the purposes mentioned. By the end of the nineteenth century, 18% of the entire tribute, normally amounting to a little over a peso, was usually applied to the *Sanctorum*.<sup>27</sup>

13. **Church Monthlies** (*Mesadas eclesiásticas*). In the numerous and still unpublished manuscripts on the Church in the Philippines during the nineteenth century, there is frequent mention of "church monthlies," or *miesadas eclesiásticas*. These monthlies or mesadas (from *mes* = month) began this way. At the request of Philip IV, the Supreme Pontiff, Urban VIII, granted to the kings of Spain, in a brief of 1625, the privilege of claiming the equivalent of a month's revenue, i.e., a *mesada*, whenever provision was made for some vacant dignity, canonry, prebendary or half-prebendary, offices and benefices of the church, curacies and missions (*doctrinas*).

<sup>26</sup> Gomez Zamora, *Op. cit.*, pp. 639-642.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 662-663.

The amount was determined by computing the total revenue for the last five years of the benefice in question, out of which the quota for one month was deducted. The nominee, on presentation, promised to surrender this month's sum to the royal treasury. Both the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* in the older times,<sup>28</sup> and the Royal Order of 5 September 1844 in the more recent years, regulated the system of paying the *mesada*. Nevertheless, there was much difficulty in the Philippines, judging from the varied complaints of the government about the matter.<sup>29</sup> And so the Crown completely abrogated the practice in the Philippines in the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Recopilación*, Libro 1, Título XVII, Leyes 1, 5.

<sup>29</sup> San Pedro, *Op. cit.*, Tomo VII, pp. 738 and 744; Tomo VIII, p. 328; Cfr. *Boletín del Arzobispado de Manila*, 1878, pp. 371-373, No. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Gomez Zamora, *op. cit.*, pp. 667-668.



₱1.50 a copy

Available at the Smo.  
Rosario Parish, U.S.T.,  
Manila.

*Let it be!*

## A DOMINICAN TERTIARY AFTER VATICAN II

Is a response to the modern challenge as to whether the Third Order of St. Dominic (or of any one else from the pre-Vatican era, for that matter) should be abolished as outdated and obsolete. Although this booklet of some 80 pages is directed understandably to a particular group concerned, the principles which Fr. Guillermo Tejon uses to defend the validity of the Third Order today will be of general interest to all. For the principles he uses are the very ones laid down by Vatican II.