Chapter 3

A Problem to be Faced

The Royal Order of Queen Isabel II, dated October 19, 1852, provided for the coming of the Vincentians to the Philippines, "so that they should take charge of the teaching and administration of the Conciliar Seminaries." It emphatically declared that this was "absolutely indispensable to improve the education given in the Conciliar Seminaries which, for lack of professors and resources, cannot duly fulfill the end for which the Holy Council of Trent established them." (stress, ours)

Indeed, there were some serious deficiencies in the formation of the secular native clergy in the colony. As a matter of fact, it was obvious that up to the mid-nineteenth century, the number and even often the quality of the Filipino native clergy was below the level it should have reached in a three-century old Christian country.

A very recent book on Philippine Church History says:

The Spanish missionary enterprise had one major defect, which was to stunt, and even undo, a good deal of the development that had been achieved. This was its disastrous failure to develop an adequate native clergy. Today it seems so obvious that any missionary enterprise which does not develop a native clergy is gravely deficient, that it is hard to imagine how missionaries otherwise so deserving of admiration could have failed so seriously.¹

Another writer on the Philippine Missions remarked:

What happened?
Any answer is very complicated, and cannot be adequately sketched in a few paragraphs. Still more, the whole history is difficult to relate.

It must be observed from the start that the question of the
native clergy in the Philippines is only one small aspect of the whole native clergy question in all Spanish colonies. Somehow it seems that wherever Spain colonized, despite her other achievements, she had little success with native vocations. To this day most of South and Central America suffers from a shortage of priests. The fault probably lies in the Spanish temperament or system.  

Still another erudite researcher, following the scholarly investigations of one of our best modern historians, observes:

This sorry situation was an unforeseen by-product of what was in itself an excellent work: the Christianization of the Philippines by the Spanish religious orders. Because on the one hand the religious were already caring for the parishes and on the other hand a numerous and competent Filipinos clergy might have challenged their tenure and disturbed the tranquility of Spanish rule, there was no serious effort to provide native secular priests, nor hence to provide seminaries to prepare them.

There is no doubt about the strange phenomenon of the slow and deficient formation of the native clergy in the Philippines before the arrival of the Vincentians in 1862. This was precisely one of the main reasons for their coming. They were sent by the Spanish Crown to put an end to that disastrous situation that had been unduly protracted for such a long time. But the very fact that the Vincentians were sent by virtue of the Royal Patronage of Spain is an indication — among many others that will be mentioned later — that the Spanish Government was interested in remedying the problem. Hence, to attribute the problem to the Spanish temperament or to the Spanish colonial system, as if these were systematically opposed to the formation of a native clergy, seems to be an easy but unwarranted oversimplification.

More unfair is the supposition advanced about a widespread opposition or lack of interest and concern among those zealous, and dedicated religious Spanish missionaries, for the promotion and formation of a worthy Filipino native clergy. Individual, isolated instances may be found of selfish attitudes and misunderstood zeal among those virtuous missionaries; but it is hard to believe that such was the general case.

Most recent historical studies and scholarly research seem to point out with clear evidence that the explanation to this problem which the Vincentians had to confront upon their arrival in the Philippines, was more complex than the above oversimplifications.
The problem of the slow and deficient formation of the Filipino native clergy, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, was the product of various historical factors and intervening circumstances, proper to those past centuries, so different in many aspects from our present-day conditions. Spanish temperament and colonial prejudices against the native race had little, if anything at all, to do with this problem. To attribute such past deficiencies to the Spanish colonial regime, or to the temperament and prejudices against the native race, would be tantamount to blaming Spain or the Spanish people for not having given us, in the past, motor cars, radio, television or air mail; and the missionaries of those days, for not having celebrated the Mass in the vernacular dialects as today... The old Latin adage said: “Differentiate the times, and you will reconcile the claims” (Distingue tempora, et concordabis jura)

Undoubtedly, there were historical factors that contributed to the slow and deficient formation of the native clergy in the Philippines before the arrival of the Vincentians in 1862. These historical factors were: (1) the mission ideas about the formation of a native clergy at the time of Spanish colonialism; (2) the occasional adverse side effects of the Royal Patronage in the Philippines; (3) the paternalism of the Spanish colonial system; (4) the far-flung extension of the Spanish missionary enterprise in the colonies; and (5) the indirect influence of certain Spanish policies adopted for a time in Spanish America.

HISTORICAL FACTORS THAT CAUSED A SLOW AND DEFICIENT FORMATION OF THE NATIVE CLERGY IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES OF SPANISH REGIME

Let us study in detail each one of the factors.

I. Early Mission Ideas about the Formation of a Native Clergy

This factor is just an aspect of the long process of progressive and homogenous evolution in Church pastoral discipline. The work of evangelization in our present days is undertaken in the light of principles that were not so well defined in past ages. During the era of geographical discoveries, the science of missionology was not yet developed and the doctrine on the urgency of promoting an indigenous clergy was not yet fully clarified nor presented as a priority to be pursued in foreign missions. Before the 16th century, the words “mission” or “missionaries” did not appear in Church documents; and there was no specific mention of an “indigenous” clergy until the 17th century. Even the Council of Trent, in its decree on
Vincentians During The Spanish Regime

Seminaries, speaks only of a “local” clergy. In the same vein are written most of the documents of the Popes and of Propaganda Fide, relative to missions, in the 17th and 18th centuries. The word “indigenous” — when it is used — appears as just a synonym of “inhabitants of the place” (incolae, in Latin), that is any “native” (born and permanently residing in the place), belonging to a particular place, regardless of blood ancestry or racial origin.⁶

Before the era of geographical discoveries, the natives of any place were generally the indigenous inhabitants only; but when the Europeans discovered new lands, we find among the natives, not only the indigenous race, but also the mestizos and the creoles. As the famous founder of International Law, Francisco de Vitoria, O.P. declared, way back in the 16th century, anyone “who is born in a country, may be called and is truly a citizen of that country,” either by jus sanguinis (right of blood or parentage) or by jus soli (right of birth within the country).⁷ And that is why, whenever the Church speaks of a native clergy, there is no reason to restrict its meaning to full-blooded natives, or to an indigenous clergy. As historian, Fr. H. de la Costa observes “the qualification ‘native’ in the writers of the period (17th century) could mean Creoles, that is, Spaniards or other Europeans born in the colony.”⁸ Even today, serious historians and scholars all over the world understand the word ‘native’ to include also “mestizos” and “creoles.”⁹

Hence, it does not seem accurate to affirm “that the native Filipinos were ordained (priests) a few years after 1720.”¹⁰ In a Royal Cedula dated October 19, 1623, the King asked the Archbishop of Manila about the opportunity of conferring some benefices, e.g., parishes, to the natives (of the secular clergy) who studied in the Seminary College of Santo Domingo (i.e., College of Santo Tomas) and the Society of Jesus (i.e., College of San Jose).¹¹ Another Royal Cedula to Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, dated October 2, 1638, ordered that “new parishes should be given to the secular native priests of the city of Manila.”¹² Evidently, from these documents by the first quarter of the 17th century, that is, a few years after 1620 (and not “a few years after 1720”) the first Filipino natives (most of them probably, “creoles” or “mestizos”) had been ordained priests. “Father Brou (“Notes sur les origines du clerge philippin” ‘Revue d’histoire missionaire’, IV, 1927, p. 546) states, without citing his sources, that there were already native priests numbering sixty by the year 1655.”¹³

From the College of San Juan de Letran, during a period of only nineteen years (from 1632 to 1651) twenty-six Filipino natives
were ordained priest (twelve of the secular clergy, eight Augustinians, two Dominicans, two Franciscans, one Recollect and one Jesuit), probably all of them mestizos or creoles. Other famous Filipino priests also came from the cloistered Seminaries of the Religious Orders in the 17th century, such as Fr. Pedro de San Jose (+ 1651) and Fr. Ignacio de Mercado (+ 1698). These were in reality true Filipino natives, though probably mestizos or creoles. Not to be forgotten are the names of four Filipino native Bishops during the same 17th century; Juan Velez, Bishop of Cebu (1653) Francisco Pizarro de Orellana, Bishop of Nueva Segovia (27 May 1680), and two other candidates presented for the same Bishopric of Nueva Segovia, Lucas Arquero (1676) and Rodrigo de la Cueva Giron (1674). There was also the illustrious Manuel Jose de Endaya, a Manila mestizo (born on October 4, 1674) who became Bishop of Oviedo and Archbishop of Mexico. In the following century and a half, there were eight more Filipino native Bishops: Domingo de Valencia, of Nueva Caceres (1715), Gerónimo de Herrera, of Nueva Segovia (1724), Felipe de Molina, of Naga (1724) Protasio Cabezas, of Cebu (1740), Isidro de Arevalo, of Naga (1740), Miguel Lino de Ezpeleta, of Cebu (1757), Ignacio de Salamanca, of Cebu (1792), and Francisco Miro, of Nueva Segovia (1858). By 1655 there were fifty-nine secular priests in the Diocese of Manila alone, and by 1699 the number of these secular priests had increased to eighty, of whom the majority were, in all probability, Filipino native priests.

Thus, the formation of the Filipino native clergy was not entirely neglected, as it has been claimed during the 17th century; although unfortunately the urgent need for promoting the indigenous native priestly vocations was overlooked. It was at the beginning of the 18th century, before 1707 (not, as it is claimed, after 1720) when certainly, some few full-blooded indigenous Filipino natives were ordained priests. This was perhaps about one century too late; since after the first 25 to 50 years of evangelization, the first indigenous native vocations should have been flourishing if these had been duly cultivated. Admittedly, there was some neglect and lack of foresight on the part of the missionaries with regard to the pressing priority of fostering indigenous priestly vocations.

However during those days, the Church doctrine on the importance and urgency of developing not only a native, but an indigenous native clergy, was not as clearly defined as it is now in the 20th century. The mind of the Church on this matter was not openly and unambiguously expressed until the beginning of this
century, when Pope Leo XIII on September 17, 1902, in his Constitution QUAE MARI SINICO addressed precisely to the Philippines, then under the American regime, declared:

"Church experience has shown evidently that an indigenous clergy is most useful everywhere; and so the Bishops should diligently strive to increase the number of indigenous priests; in such a way, however, that beforehand these may be formed in all piety and discipline, and found worthy for the ecclesiastical offices; so that those whom experience may show to be more excellent in conduct and achievements, may be gradually promoted to higher posts in the hierarchy."

Some years later, Benedict XV on November 30, 1919, in his Apostolic Letter MAXIMUM ILLUD on the Propagation of the Faith throughout the world, spoke once more of the indigenous clergy in unmistakeable terms, without equating it any more — as in previous Church documents — with a mere local “native” clergy:

"The main concern 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 of the Church of the future. Linked to his compatriots, as he is by the bonds of origin, character, feelings, and inclinations, the indigenous priest possesses exceptional opportunities for introducing the faith to their minds, and is endowed with powers of persuasion far superior to those of any other man. It thus frequently happens that he has access where a foreign priest could not set foot."

Later on, the RERUM ECCLESIAE of Pius XI (February 26, 1926), and the EVANGELII PRAECONES of Pius XII (June 2, 1951) reiterated the same doctrine, now already well defined by the Church Magisterium. Today, we take for granted the “Catholic principle that no Church can rest upon a substantial basis, unless it is manned by a native (i.e. indigenous) clergy.” But this idea was not so obvious in the past centuries when mestizos and creoles were called true natives (“naturales del pais”, or “Filipinos”), and not European foreigners, or peninsular Spaniards.
Since it was easier, more viable and expeditious to promote priestly vocations from among the mestizos or creoles, rather than from among the indigenous race (whose cultural and social level was generally inferior), the missionaries and Church authorities fell into the temptation of choosing the easiest way, without realizing that such a policy was a mistake, since the mind of the Church had always been to recruit a native clergy, above all, from the indigenous ranks of the people that is evangelized.22

In those centuries, the missionary ideal was to preach the Gospel, baptize people, teach Catechism, form Christian families, establish Catholic Schools, educate the youth, spread the faith farther and wider, administer the sacraments, convert sinners, etc. They did not forget to foster native priestly and religious vocations among the youth of the region. But they were not able to see in the Spanish overseas possessions (which were considered, not as a Crown colony, but as part of the Spanish empire) the urgency and imperative need for the establishment of an indigenous local Church and hierarchy, as we do today in the light of an updated missionology. “Differentiate the times, and you will reconcile the claims” (distingue tempora, et concordabis jura).

II. The Occasional Adverse Side Effects of the Royal Patronage in the Philippines

At the dawn of the age of geographical discoveries, the Popes were kept busy with the achievements of the Renaissance and the conflicts with pseudo-reformists. The Catholic kings of Spain and Portugal were only too willing to help the Popes fulfill the apostolic trust of preaching the Gospel on the new and vast fields they conquered in the West and East Indies. A solution was found in the institution of the “Vicariato Real” or Royal Patronage. This Royal Patronage assigned to the Kings certain functions which ought normally to be the exclusive competence of the ecclesiastical authority or of the Holy See.

The system was ideal and legitimate in itself. But like any other human institution, it was not immune to abuses. As a matter of fact, under the absolutist Kings of the Bourbon dynasty, the Royal Patronage led at times to harmful effects on the Church in the colonies. However an impartial over-all view of the accomplishments of the Royal Patronage would show the great and lasting effects it had, which proved immensely beneficial to the Church, as well as to the social and civil welfare of the people. This was the
verdict of Pope Leo XIII at the end of the Spanish era in the Philippines. In his Constitution QUAE MARI SINICO in 1902, the Pope said:

"By the harmonious efforts of our Predecessors and of the Kings of Spain, slavery was abolished, the inhabitants were educated in humanities, letters and fine arts; magnificent churches were built and provided for; and the number of dioceses increased, so that the nation and the Church of the Philippines rightly excelled above others in the splendor of social order, and in the dignity and zeal of their religious piety. Thus, therefore, through the protection of the Spanish Kings and through the Patronage granted them by the Roman Pontiffs, the Catholic interests were managed in a right and orderly way."

Nevertheless, serious historians in our days point to the Spanish Royal Patronage as the reason for slow and deficient formation of our Filipino native clergy. This is a serious charge that deserves a careful and impartial study. The reasons supporting the above contention are the following:

a) With the Royal Patronage, the missions lost their supernatural character and became "hispanized", so that religious customs and practices from Spain were superimposed on the natives. The missionaries became European agents, political instruments at the service of their own colonial regimes, foreign propagandists of the foreign interests of their own nations. They became "too intent upon extending the earthly glory and power of their earthly country; a missionary patriotism which would indeed be "a plague most deadly to their apostolate, which in the preacher of the Gospel would kill every activity for the love of souls, and would undermine his authority among the public" (Benedict XV, MAXIMUM ILLUD, November 30, 1919). Such "hispanization" of the Catholic religion was bound to counteract any move for a prompt and proper training of an indigenous clergy. If some training was given, this was seriously hindered by the "European" organization given to the Church in the Philippine missions, where physical, ethnological, cultural, moral and religious conditions were so different from those of the centuries-old christianities in Catholic Europe.
b) If ever the idea of forming an indigenous clergy was admitted, under the Royal Patronage it was always with the aim of giving to the Spanish clergy some auxiliary priests who were to be just their coadjutors. The State policy was unreservedly that of keeping a Spanish national Church in the colony, for the purpose of exercising more directly its civil authority on ecclesiastical affairs. Hence, not only the indigenous race but even the natives of Spanish ancestry, were excluded, as a rule (not strictly observed for creoles or mestizos), from higher civil and ecclesiastical offices, and preference was given to Spaniards born and educated in the Peninsula.

c) The Philippine mission field was divided among the various Religious Orders, by virtue of a Decree of Philip II, dated April 27, 1594, which left no ecclesiastical territory for the secular clergy. The latter became thus condemned to remain forever in the subordinate position of assistant coadjutors of the Spanish missionary pastors. Thus, the natives found no incentive to prepare themselves for posts of responsibility; and their religious teachers were obviously tempted to keep low standards in the clerical formation of their supposed-to-be future subordinate coadjutors.

d) King Charles III and his ministers attempted to cripple the Religious Orders; but this policy resulted, under Archbishop Santa Justa y Rufina, in hasty and risky ordinations of poorly trained and half-educated native clergy who soon proved to be unworthy of their sublime calling. Naturally, this sad result had an adverse effect on the public esteem of the natives’ aptitude, giving the impression that Filipinos were incapable of becoming parish rectors. As a consequence, antagonism between the Spanish regular clergy and the Filipino secular clergy degenerated into a sad national or racial enmity amidst the very ranks of the ministers of the Gospel. Half-hearted attempts of the Government, to secularize parishes — transferring them from the regular to the secular clergy — were successfully opposed by colonial officials because of fear that the native priests might become rebel leaders against the metropolis as happened in the American colonies.

Are these allegations against the Royal Patronage valid? Let us examine them one by one.
a) First, it seems unjust and unfair to say in general that those Spanish missionaries who left their fatherland enkindled by apostolic zeal, easily became European agents, political instruments of the colonizers, and propagandists of national interests. Some indeed might have fallen victims of such chauvinistic "missionary patriotism." In the Philippines, however, we find strong indications that the mission works did not lose much of their supernatural character. We notice in those missionaries of old, a wonderful spirit of adaptation to the native culture. They learned the native dialects, wrote grammars and vocabularies of the indigenous language. They preserved and fostered improving or christianizing them when necessary — native customs, music, dances, arts and folklore. There was notable degree of "europeanization" or "hispanization", but it was not imposed by violent means nor by a rigidly strict colonial system, but rather through education and assimilation, integrating it with the native culture in a precious blend of the "occidental" with the "oriental", which became in the course of time our own specific, truly original and national Filipino civilization, enriched but not adulterated.

The frequent clashes between the missionaries and the civil authorities, are a strong proof that the Church mission work in the Philippines did not lose its supranational character. In many cases the missionaries tried to defend the rights of the indigenous natives against the abuses of foreign colonizers; in other cases, they refused to submit to unfair encroachments or interference of the State into their rights as ministers of the Gospel sent by the Pope. They claimed always to be, first and above all, subject to the Roman Pontiff, and not precisely to the King of Spain, although the latter enjoyed the privileges of a Royal Patronage.

It is true indeed, that the admission of foreigners into the new lands under Spanish regime, was forbidden by a general law of the Spanish colonies. But this law was very mildly interpreted and applied to foreign missionaries. Thus we can see, from the 16th to the 19th centuries, a good number of foreign missionaries working side by side with the Spaniards in Spanish America and in the Philippines.23

The European organization given to the Church in the far missions of an entirely different world, was admittedly a mistake that eventually became a serious hindrance to the quick formation of an indigenous clergy. But that mistake was due to the lack of preparation of the missionaries to meet a situation entirely new to them. The Church had not yet developed doctrine and methods of missionary adaptation. It was one of those mistakes which, in
the words of the poet, were 'crimes of the times, and not of Spain'."  

b) The accusation that, under the Royal Patronage, the Filipino clergy was formed just to be coadjutors of the Spanish missionaries, because that seemed to be the situation until the end of the Spanish regime, cannot however be substantiated by any direct historical evidence. On the contrary, there are many proofs indicating that the pursued aims were the contrary.

The first Bishop of the Philippines, a Spanish friar, Domingo de Salazar, O.P., upon his arrival in Manila in 1581, declared his intention of establishing a Conciliar Diocesan Seminary for Filipino natives, so that "in the future — he said — as soon as we and our successors may see and verify the Christianity and capability of the indigenous natives, the ecclesiastical benefices (i.e., offices endowed with revenues, such as parish rectories) may be conferred, and should be conferred to these indigenous natives, as we hereby decree with apostolic authority."  

Such was then the official mind of the Spanish Church in the Philippines — as in other Spanish colonies of America — with regard to the indigenous native clergy in the colony. Five years later, in 1586, King Philip II urged all Spanish Bishops to fulfill the dispositions of the Council of Trent about the formation of a local clergy in Seminaries. In 1592, he ordered that "the Archbishops and Bishops of our Indies should found, support and sustain the Seminary schools decreed by the Council of Trent." Thus, we see that the highest authorities of the Spanish Church and State unanimously agreed in the policy of forming a native, indigenous clergy in the colonies.

Were these simply nice empty words and vain intentions?

In Mexico, in 1536, the Seminary College of Santa Cruz in Santiago Tlatelolco was founded for the Indios through the efforts of the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza, and Archbishop Fray Juan de Zumarraga, O.F.M., as well as other Franciscan Spanish missionaries. In the Philippines, the College Seminary for natives, planned by Bishop Salazar in 1581, was actually designed and proposed by the Jesuits in 1583, endorsed at once and demanded by Governor Diego Ronquillo and the Cathedral Chapter of Manila, as well as by Governors Santiago de Vera (1587), Gomez Perez Dasmariñas (1596) and Francisco Tello de Guzman (1599), just as it was recommended and urged by King Philip II in 1586. The plan was tried out for some three years, from 1596 to 1599, but did not prosper "because of lack of funds" to subsidize it. But the fact is that, as early as 1596-1599, a "seminario de indios," as the
Spanish Jesuits called a pre-seminary, elementary boarding school for Filipino indigenous natives, was actually tried, and initially put in operation in Manila, at the College of San Ignacio (in the Mission House of the Jesuits), as it was tried and put in operation some years before, in 1595, in Dulag, Leyte, by the Spanish Jesuits, Fr. Alonso de Humanes and Fr. Juan del Campo; and in 1596-1598, in Tinagon, Samar, by Fr. Francisco de Otazo, S.J.; and later, from 1598 to 1609, at the Seminary College of San Ildefonso, in the Jesuit residence, in Cebu. This last one had to be closed at the beginning of the 17th century, because of lack of students. These historical facts show that in the Philippines, under the Spanish regime, and under the Royal Patronage, even during the first half century of evangelization — perhaps too early! — the Spanish missionaries were but too eager and impatient to work for the formation of an indigenous native clergy. If their attempts failed, it was certainly not for the lack of interest and concern, but for “lack of funds” or for “lack of students.” Obviously, these are “crimes of the times, not of Spain!”

Unfortunately, due to the particular circumstances of those past centuries, only half-hearted efforts were exerted in the Colleges of San Jose (founded in 1601), Santo Tomas (1611), San Juan de Letran (1620), San Felipe de Austria (1640), College for Orientals (1738) under the Jesuits and Dominicans; and later, under the secular clergy in the Diocesan Seminaries of San Clemente (1707), San Felipe (1713) or San Carlos (1768) in Manila; San Carlos, in Cebu (1759), Nuestra Señora de Rosario, in Nueva Caceres (1793), and La Immaculada Concepción, in Nueva Segovia (1802, 1812). And thus it happened that the native Filipino clergy remained in a subordinate position for a longer time and to a greater extent than it was intended to.

The assumption that the policy of the State and of the Church, under the Spanish Royal Patronage was to keep the inferior or subservient status of the indigenous clergy, is contradicted by the fact that most of the Spanish Bishops (with few exceptions) seconded by almost all the Spanish Kings, earnestly tried again and again to “secularize” the parishes, transferring them from the Spanish religious missionaries, to the Filipino secular clergy. How then could such frequent moves ever recurring from time to time, be still reconciled with a Church and State policy supposedly opposed to them? Particular and occasional remarks or personal opinions from some individual religious or even from some Governor or Bishop, cannot represent a general policy of the Church and the State.
Most Rev. DOMINGO DE SALAZAR, O.P. (1581-1594) First BISHOP OF THE PHILIPPINES, proposed by Philip II to be the first Archbishop of Manila. On December 21, 1581 in his Bull of erection of Diocese of Manila, declared that "as soon as the indigenous natives may show and prove their capacity for ecclesiastical benefits, these should be given to them rather than to the Spanish clergy;" and for this purpose, he manifested his intention to establish a Conciliar Diocesan Seminary for Filipino natives.
King PHILIP II of Spain, 1527-1598, (reigned 1556-98). The Philippines derived its name from his. In 1583 he disposed that “the rectory of parishes should belong to clerics (secular clergy) who are to be helped by the religious as their coadjutors.” And in 1592 he ordered all Archbishops and Bishops of the Indies to found and support the Seminaries “decreed by the Council of Trent” for the formation of a local (native) clergy.

(Titian’s painting in the National Museum of Naples, dated about 1550)
c) King Philip II reigned in Spain from 1556 to 1598 and left his glorious name stamped in the name of our country for whose evangelization he was ready to lose the entire wealth of his kingdom. And yet it is said that he discriminated against the Filipino clergy through some of his Royal Decrees, apparently innocuous and well intentioned.

On April 27, 1594, King Philip II, by virtue of his Royal Patronage prerogatives, issued from Aranjuez the following order directed to Governor General Gomez Perez Dasmariñas:

"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 a manner that where Augustinians go there shall be no Franciscans, nor religious of the Society of Jesus where there are Dominicans." 28

Previously, by the Royal Cedulas of 1557 and 1561, the same King had decreed that mission parishes assigned to the regular clergy "could not be transferred by the Bishops to the secular clergy. Secular priests were to be given parishes in territories which had not previously been assigned to any Religious Order."

Some learned historians, however, argue this way. This was all very well in theory; but in the Philippines, the entire mission had already been divided among the Religious Orders. Hence, the secular priests were practically reduced, by royal fiat, to being mere assistants of the religious parish priests. 29

The whole contention may be summed up on the following grounds: (1) that the Royal Patron apportioned the entire mission field of the Philippines to the various religious Orders working then at its evangelization, (2) that the secular clergy was thus utterly disregarded and left without any chance of becoming parish rectors, (3) consequently, the Filipino native priests were condemned to remain perpetual curates or coadjutors of the foreign regular parish priests.

Are these contentions valid?
(1) The Royal Decree of 1594 did not actually refer to the entire mission field of the Philippines, which by that time (1594) had not yet been completely covered by the evangelical laborers. In those early years of evangelization, the harvest was so great, and the laborers so few that it was impossible to suppose that the mind of the Spanish King was to reserve the entire mission field of the vast
archipelago exclusively for the four religious Orders working then, to the exclusion of the secular clergy and of other religious. The Recollects who came in 1606, still found plenty of work among the pagans of Zambales, Mindanao, Palawan, Calamianes, Romblon, Masbate, Tablas, Sibuyan, Ticao and Burias.30

In fact, the 1594 Decree does not speak of the entire mission, but rather of the few “districts” or “provinces” where the four religious Orders were actually working at the time; and the King’s intention was simply that “more emulation will ensue among them without their embarrassing one another, or their work overlapping, as might happen if they were assigned to districts regardless of order...; “because I have learned, he said, that better results will be obtained by assigning each Order a district by itself.” In short, the King’s aim was to encourage and provide for a more effective evangelization, not to preclude the work of other available ministers who might possibly come later to the fields that were already, “white for the harvest.”

The King entrusted the task of assigning districts for the Religious Orders to his Governor-General “together with the Bishop” who would know particular conditions obtaining in the districts as well as available personnel, from the regular as well as from the secular clergy.31 If the secular priests were not mentioned in the Royal Cedula, it was, firstly, because in 1594 their number was very insignificant and so they were unable to take charge of any particular region, or provinces of the islands. They were not mentioned also, because in the mind of Philip II, expressed eleven years before, in the Royal Cedula of 1583, it was taken for granted that the secular priests should be “by right” the Rectors of any parish, anywhere in the whole mission, to be preferred over to the religious missionaries who were to be only their coadjutors in the ministry of preaching and hearing confessions. The Royal Cedula of 1583 emphatically declared this:

“The rectory of parish churches belongs to the clerics (secular) who should be helped by the religious as their coadjutors in the task of preaching and hearing confessions. ... but since it is appropriate to bring this matter back to its original form and, as far as possible, the common and accepted usage of the Church be reestablished... wherever there may be found competent and sufficient clerics (-secular-) you should grant them rectories of the parishes, “doctrinas” (mission post), and benefices, in preference to the friars.”32
This Royal policy, intended for all the Spanish Indies, was obtained at the repeated instance of the Bishops of Spain's dominions, who from the mid-16th century strove to replace the regular clergy with secular priests, in parish rectories and ecclesiastical benefices, which under the regulars could not often be subject to pastoral visitation.

It is obvious, therefore, that the secular clergy, though not mentioned in the Cedula of 1594, was by no means excluded from the administration of parish rectories and ecclesiastical benefices. In 1602, eight years after districts had been assigned to particular Religious Orders, a Jesuit document stated that "the islands were partitioned by royal command among the religious Orders and secular clergy"; that, by that time, there were "parishes and towns of the diocesan clergy", i.e., administered by secular priests. Although these (-parishes-) were then, still "few and small", missionaries or ministers of the Gospel could be sent to "other districts which lie in still unconquered territory". And some nine years before the 1594 Royal Cedula, "all the likely towns, and the whole Tagalog region were already in the hands of the friars and the diocesan clergy. North and South of the Tagalog provinces, there was no lack of places crying for priests..." How could we imagine that the Cedula might have intended to remove the diocesan clergy from parishes they were already administering, or that might be crying for them, because of lack of available personnel?

And as to the claim that the Royal Cedulas of 1557 and 1561 forbade the Bishops to transfer mission parishes from the regular to the secular clergy, it should be noted that the Bishops were forbidden to make such transfers by themselves alone, independently from the Royal Patron. But they could make the transfers, as actually they often did, with the approval of the Royal Patron. And, since not rarely the State authorities were at odds with the religious, they, not only did willingly approve, but even encouraged and persuaded any move to secularize the parishes.

(2) About the contention that the secular clergy, by royal legislation, was left without any chance to become parish rectors, the following facts may be examined.

When the first Bishop of the Philippines, Fray Domingo de Salazar, O.P., came to Manila, he was accompanied by some secular priests from Mexico. "The Bishop gave them the care of the Cathedral. As they grew in number, owing to the foundation of the Seminary-Colleges some Augustinian parishes were given them, through the petition of the Prelates." A Royal Cedula to
Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, dated October 2, 1638, ordered that "new parishes should be given to the secular native priests of the city of Manila." A document dated in Manila, July 25, 1621 shows that "the secular priests had parishes in all the dioceses (Manila, Cebu, Nueva Caceres), except Nueva Segovia. In Manila, they had, in addition to the Cathedral, 12 other benefices ministering to 20,000 souls. In Cebu, they served in the Cathedral, in the Villa de Arevalo, and in 12 other benefices in the islands of Caraga with a total of 15,000 souls. In Nueva Caceres, they administered two towns adjacent to the Cathedral which was also under them, plus five other benefices scattered all over the region; they were in charge of 8,400 souls." Hence, it is evident that the 1594 Decree apportioning various districts or provinces of the Philippines to the religious Orders, was not meant, nor was it understood, to withhold from the secular clergy the chance to become parish rectors.

If anyone would still argue that those secular priests in charge of parishes were Spaniards, or of Spanish lineage, it should be observed that the Royal Cedula of 1638 speaks expressly of "secular native priests." And in another previous Royal Cedula of October 19, 1623, the King asked the Archbishop of Manila about the opportunity of conferring some benefices to the natives (of the secular clergy) who studied in the (Seminary) College of Santo Domingo (i.e., Santo Tomas) and of the Society of Jesus (i.e., San Jose).

From these documents, it may be deduced that the first Filipino native priests were ordained during the first quarter of the 17th century, at most, a few years after 1620 (and not, as it is said referring to indigenous natives, "a few years after 1720"). The Spanish Church and the Spanish State, some fifty years after the beginning of the evangelization, were happy to see some Filipino natives already raised to the sublime dignity of the Catholic Priesthood and were eager to confer upon them, as soon as possible, the ecclesiastical benefices and dignities. Probably, most of these were creoles or mestizos; but we cannot discard the possibility that someone at least could have been an indigenous native. Anyhow, those Filipino priests ordained in the 17th century were true natives of the land.

"Father Brou ("Notes sur les origenes du clerge philippin", p. 546, Revue d'histoire missionaire, IV, 1927, p. 546) states, without citing his sources, that there were already native priests numbering sixty in the year 1655."
The final contention, that the Filipino native priests were condemned to remain perpetual curates or coadjutors of the Spanish religious parish priests cannot be maintained after the two premises on which it is based have been proved false. It is simply not true, therefore, that the natives found no incentive to prepare themselves for posts of responsibility, since they could see the repeated efforts of the Government to transfer the rectories of the parishes from the regulars to the secular priests.

(3) Less true, and even slanderous, is the charge that the religious had tried to keep low standards in the clerical formation of their supposed future subordinate coadjutors.

The gratuitousness of such a contention can be seen at once if we remember that, as a rule, and even by royal legislation, the religious Friars were not entrusted with the direction of the Diocesan Seminaries in the Philippines, which generally were run and directed by secular priests. Only in exceptional cases, and for short periods, only when sufficiently prepared and available secular priests could not be found to take over the administration of the Seminaries, were religious friars allowed to teach in the Seminaries. The ordinary policy from the beginning was to entrust the Seminaries to diocesan secular priests, generally Filipino natives, not to Spaniards. By Royal Order of King Carlos III dated August 14, 1768, "the (Seminary) teachers are to be chosen from among the parish rectors known for their piety and learning." Thus the native seminarians constantly had a powerful incentive to prepare themselves for the full responsibilities of their vocation, learning from their own tutors, not only the ecclesiastical sciences, but also examples of priestly virtue. The possibility of becoming parish rectors some day just as their own professors was a source of constant inspiration to them.

In the Provincial Council of Manila, in 1771, the above Royal Order was reiterated. Hence, the Philippine Seminaries were not directed, as a rule, by the Friars, "unless in cases of extreme necessity, for some time only, and with possibility of removal from the office, at will of the Bishops." Consequently, if there were deficiencies, if the ecclesiastical training, discipline or teaching was poor, the regulars could in no way be blamed for it, since they were not the directors of the Seminaries.

The Spanish Vincentian Fathers who took charge of the Seminaries since 1862 only, were not, strictly speaking, Friars nor even regulars. They belonged to the secular clergy. They had no parish mission, as the religious Friars, and thus could not be
suspected of any intention to keep low standards for their future coadjutors. They were precisely sent by the Spanish Government "to raise the standards of education in the Conciliar Seminaries." 43

In the Colleges of the Friars or regulars, like San Juan de Letran, San Jose, Santo Tomas where the academic standards were excellent and solid Catholic education was imparted to the laity, priestly vocations were fostered, which produced excellent and illustrious figures among the native secular and regular clergy. Graduates from the Seminary College of San Jose alone, under the Jesuits, were Manuel Jose de Endaya, Bishop of Oviedo, Spain and later Archbishop of Mexico; three Bishops of Nueva Caceres (Jose Cabral, Felipe de Molina y Figueroa, and Domingo de Valencia), three other Bishops of Nueva Segovia (Rodrigo de la Cueva Giron, Francisco Pizarro de Orellana, and Jeronimo de Herrera), one Bishop of Cebu (Protasio de Cabezas), three Provincials of the Society of Jesus, seventy-nine religious, forty secular priests, and above all, three glorious Martyrs of the Catholic faith. 44

From the Dominican College of San Juan de Letran came many illustrious priests, such as the national heroes, Fathers Burgos, Gomez and Zamora, and above all, the glorious Martyrs of the faith, Blessed Vincent Liem de la Paz, Venerable Domingo Tuco, and Venerable Bautista Fung. From Santo Tomas came most of the great figures of the secular clergy in the Philippines. 45 At the end of the 17th century a historian wrote:

Since the foundation (1611), many Masters and Doctors have graduated... great number of Graduates who take charge of the parishes and prebends of the Metropolitan Church, and others for the religious Orders, so that the students of Santo Tomas, whether secular priests or religious can be found all over the islands. I have known four (Cathedral) Deans, three Bishops and many Canons who graduated from this College and University. 46

And in an official Report to the Government of Madrid, in 1864, Dr. Arrieta affirmed:

The University of Santo Tomas has, for more than two centuries, amply attended to all the necessities of religion and of justice, supplying the Church with native
clergy, coadjutors, parish priests, Canons, and Bishops; for the State, it educated Judges and Lawyers. 47

If any defect was to be found in the clerical training given by the Dominicans or Jesuits in their Seminary Colleges of Manila, it was in the mixed training of aspirants to the priesthood with lay students aiming at other secular careers. The Church has been quite definitely opposed to such type of clerical training, which was a popular practice before the Council of Trent, and even for a long time after it. The Church has insisted on an ecclesiastical training exclusively intended for the candidates to the priesthood, segregated from other lay students. Unfortunately, due to the poverty of the colony and to the urgent need of educating the youth of the nation, a true “Conciliar Seminary”, that is, an authentic “seedbed” of priestly vocations, could not be established until a century and a half had elapsed. After another century and a half, even the Conciliar Seminaries could not be run properly, “for lack of professors and resources”, as the Royal Cedula of Queen Isabel II, on October 19, 1852, candidly revealed.

All these explain why the Filipino native clergy developed slowly and deficiently, until the coming of the Vincentians in 1862. And, since the training of the Filipino native clergy was defective, the secular native priests were not generally able to take over the parishes from the regular clergy. It was not, therefore, the ineptitude of the natives, nor any discriminatory policy adopted by the Spanish Church or State, nor the Royal Patronage that can be reasonably blamed for.

d) The last allegation advanced against the Royal Patronage is the only one that might be admitted: that of a harmful occasional side effect of the Royal Patronage.

Under the absolutist Bourbon Kings, the danger of unwise and unlawful use of power interfering Church affairs was great. King Charles III and his ministers, for instance, attempted to cripple the Religious Orders; and that policy resulted, under an imprudent Archbishop, in hasty and risky ordinations of poorly trained native priests, who soon proved to be unworthy of their calling. Public esteem for the Filipino clergy was badly affected. A destructive antagonism between the regular and secular clergy soon degenerated into a sad national enmity among the ministers of the Gospel. Attempts of the Government to secularize the parishes of the religious were countered by colonial officials who feared the native priests as possible rebel leaders, as in fact had already
happened in the American colonies. All these lamentable events could perhaps be traced, to some extent, to the abusive interferences of the State in Church internal affairs, and ultimately to an adverse influence of the Royal Patronage.

Admittedly the Royal Patronage although in itself a beneficial and legitimate system, established and encouraged by the Church, was not exempt from occasional abuses. But, obviously, such abuses cannot be reasonably attributed to the system, but to the persons or to the circumstances that provoked them. They may be considered at most as regrettable side effects of an otherwise rightful system.

III. The paternalism of the Spanish colonial system

From the beginnings of the colonial regime in the Philippines, as it happened also in America, Spain considered the indigenous natives as “minors” in need of tutelage and protection. All the Laws of the Indies breathed such spirit, which was seen to be immensely beneficial to the natives, as long as their social status and cultural level did not reach the perfection of the European colonizers. But, differently from other colonial systems, Spain strove always to raise the social and cultural level of the natives, by bringing to the masses the Gospel of Christ, and to the youth of the nation the blessings of education and public instruction in schools and Universities.

Hence, the “paternalistic” or tutelary system of treating the natives as “minors” should not have been protracted for a longer time than was necessary or suitable. Unfortunately, Spain committed this error through inertia; she did not realize (as no other colonial powers did in those days) that colonization should not be kept as a permanent system. For Spain, the lands she occupied abroad were not to be colonies subjugated, but kingdoms of her empire “where the sun never sets”; provinces or regions as those existing in the Iberian Peninsula; and hence, they should remain as such, indefinitely. This “paternalistic” colonial policy, so praiseworthy at the beginning, but certainly mistaken at the end, brought about, with the passing of centuries, serious conflicts and problems, among others, those related to the proper formation of a native clergy.

In the Philippines, as in other Spanish colonies of America, there were different ethnological groups living together. But unlike other colonies where race discrimination was officially accepted and practiced, here, the colonizers and the natives, two entirely heterogenous cultures and civilizations, met together, and fused
with each other so closely as to become one people and one empire. 49

This noble and humanitarian colonial system, born from the Christian principle of the equality of all races before God, and worthy indeed to figure in our modern charters of human rights, carried however along with its own nature, an almost unavoidable and inherent defect. Spain expected the natives of the newly discovered lands to rise up to the cultural, social, moral, and religious standards of life acquired by the Europeans in the course of long centuries of Christianity. The natives were not considered fit to occupy posts of leadership in the Church or State, before they had assimilated a foreign culture, language, civilization and customs relevant to the colonizers, and totally strange to the indigenous races. Otherwise, they were not considered worthy for lofty vocations as those of the Catholic priesthood or the religious life.

This indeed was a mistake. To assimilate a foreign culture and reach a foreign level of civilization had not been demanded in the Christianization of the pagan nations of Europe, and was not either demanded strictly in the evangelization of other mission lands outside the colonies of Spain. But the very nature of the Spanish colonial system in the Philippines where colonizers and natives lived so closely together as to form, in a certain way, one nation, the colony being taken but as an extension of the Spanish empire, rendered this condition as an almost imperative demand.

Furthermore, one of the obligations of the Royal Patronage was to send to the colonies a sufficient number of missionaries to take care of the new Christians. 50 Most of these missionaries were members of Religious Orders who had received a quite perfect and solid ecclesiastical training in their Houses of formation in Europe; while the natives, due to the defective clerical training offered to them here, could hardly compare advantageously with those religious. The abundant and constant supply of missionaries coming from Spain also contributed to their failure to realize the urgent need of a native clergy.

No wonder then, that in this remote colony of the Far East, for almost two centuries after the Council of Trent, no Conciliar Seminary was established (as the Tridentine decree 18, section 23 of Reform demanded). Even after these seminaries were established, from 1702 to 1862, their condition was precarious and unfavorable to the proper formation of a worthy and sufficient secular clergy. Even in Europe and in other regions of Christendom, during the 16th and 17th centuries, one could hardly find places where Conciliar Seminaries were flourishing. The same
precarious conditions, and even worse than in the Philippines, were prevailing in most Seminaries of Europe, by the 18th and 19th century.

All these historical factors, added to the difficulties created, in some way, by the very paternalism of the Spanish colonial system, explain the strange phenomenon of a slow and deficient formation of the Filipino native clergy.

IV. The Far-flung Extension of the Spanish Missionary Enterprise in the Colonies

During the era of geographical discoveries, the world was divided practically in two parts that were entrusted by Pope Alexander VI (in his Bull *Inter Caetera* of May 3-4, 1493), to Spain and to Portugal for colonization (“if the natives would willingly choose to submit themselves”: “*si se subjicere velle contingueret*”)\(^{51}\) and for evangelization.

Although the Catholic Kings of both countries were filled with the same genuine zeal for souls, the evangelical labor undertaken under the Spanish *Patronato* and the Portuguese *Padroado* present certain important differences that deserve to be considered in relation to the formation of a native clergy. The following is worth noting:

The Portuguese occupied coastal points, which they fortified, without paying much attention to the interior of the country. The Spaniards, on the other hand, went farther into the interior, where they established themselves and formed settlements. From there they fanned out and penetrated deeper and deeper into the interior. The Spaniards colonized the interior extensively with their own nationals, whereas the Portuguese did little of that. Spain was a large and populous country with an abundance of priests for any mission needs that developed during the 16th century. But how could Portugal with a population of less than 2,000,000 ever hope to do justice to the obligation undertaken of evangelizing the natives of the countries she occupied, as well as those of countries she expected to occupy later? How could she hope to send enough missionaries to India, China, Japan, and all of Eastern Asia?\(^{52}\)

Portuguese missionaries could realize at once the urgent need of forming a native clergy, if they were to fulfill the obligation
undertaken by their metropolis by virtue of the Padroado. They
could not limit their evangelization to the Portuguese coastal
settlements; but they were few and could not count on abundant
and continuous supply of missionaries. And so, by the very cir-
cumstances of their evangelical labors, they were forced to look
around for ministers of the Gospel who might continue their
mission when they were gone, or could spread the Good News in
more remote regions which they could not reach. This explains
the eagerness and zeal they showed in forming as soon as possible
an indigenous native clergy (the non-indigenous natives, creoles
or mestizos, were not so abundant in Portuguese colonies as in the
Spanish dominions). Their situation was quite similar to that of the
foreign apostles who pioneered in the evangelization of England,
Germany, Spain, France, and other Christian nations of Europe.

On the other hand, the condition of the Spanish colonies was
entirely different. The newly subjugated lands were considered as
an extension of the Spanish Empire; the native population was
supposed to enjoy the same and even greater rights than the
Spanish settlers themselves. The natives were to be supplied with a
continuous inflow of pastors from the metropolis to attend to their
spiritual needs. And these pastors were to be, at the same time,
apostolic laborers in charge of evangelizing far and wide, deeper
into the interior of the country. Thus, their missionary effort was
directed more towards preaching, baptizing, and making good
Christians, than towards looking for native priestly vocations, the
urgent need of which was not easily seen and realized under those
circumstances.

The missionaries in the Spanish colonies worked tirelessly and
heroically for the salvation of souls, for the propagation of the faith
and for the extension of the Church, rather than for planting the
Church on the solid basis of an indigenous native hierarchy. They
concentrated their attention on what Pope Pius XII called "the
object of missionary activity, that is to bring the light of the Gospel
to new races and to form new Christians," so that, to a certain
extent, they did not pay due attention, or lost sight of "the ultimate
goal of missionary endeavour, which is to establish the Church on
sound foundations among non-Christian peoples, and place it
under its own native hierarchy." That was their mistake. They
forgot the Gospel's saying: "these things you ought to have done,
while not leaving the others undone." (Mt. 23:24)

But the doctrine of the ultimate goal of missions, which is
planting the Church in foreign lands by the establishment of a
native clergy, was not so clearly defined yet in the past as it is today,
after the encyclicals MAXIMUM ILLUD (1919), RERUM EC-
CLESIAE (1926) and EVANGELII PRAECONES (1951). Even the Patron of missionaries, St. Francis Xavier, although he did not overlook the paramount importance of forming a native clergy, did not personally spend much time in forming native priests. His burning zeal prompted him to advance farther and farther into the remotest regions bringing the light of the Gospel to those who were in the darkness of paganism. Speaking of him, Pius XII said:

Cautious planning... would never have had the effect of that great flame of love which devoured him in a few years, and which shines for ever on the shores of the Far East.54

And like him, in this respect, were other giant figures in the mission annals of those days, as St. Louis Bertrand, St. Francis Solano, St. Toribio de Mogrovejo, St. Peter Claver, and countless other heroic missionaries of the past.

Vatican II, in AD GENTES, n. 6, declares that “the proper end of missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church”; and “missions” are those “peculiar initiatives by which the heralds of the Gospel sent out by the Church, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples who do not yet believe in Christ... The principal means of this planting of the Church is the preaching of the Gospel.” Hence, according to Vatican II, the evangelization and the planting of the Church are not two alternative ends that should be contrasted or counterposed, but rather they must be seen as interdependent, the first as a proximate end that should become the principal means to attain the second, or ultimate goal.

Therefore, although the Spanish missionaries in the Philippines, as in Spanish America, did not pay due attention to the formation of an indigenous native clergy, the worst conclusion that can be drawn about their work is that they did not “finish” it. But they did “fulfill”, and wonderfully at that, the first duty of all missionaries. By their very preaching of the Gospel, they also achieved the principal means of planting the Church later on.

Considering the immense magnitude of their far-flung mission enterprise, which involved not only the evangelization of an ever growing harvest of souls, but also the task of bringing to those natives the blessings of European culture and civilization, it is easy to understand why those missionaries did not pay so much attention to the formation of an indigenous clergy for the planting of the Church as soon as possible. The work entrusted to them was enormous; something was necessarily left undone. Unfortunately
among so many pressing needs of the mission, they forgot that priority should have been given to the formation of an indigenous clergy.

But for this mistake it is groundless to cast aspersions on the Spanish temperament or system, as if they were tainted with racial prejudices or discrimination. Somebody has quite pointedly remarked:

It will hardly do for us who live in the English speaking part of North America to criticize the policy of our Spanish and Portuguese neighbors in regard to a native clergy among the Indians. We have treated the American aborigines more shabbily in this and in other respects than the Spaniards and Portuguese ever did. 55

V. The Indirect Influence of Certain Missionary Policies Adopted in Spanish America.

The Spanish missionaries in the Philippines came most often from Mexico, where they got acquainted with ideas, programs, and policies prevailing then in Spanish America. Hence, it is easily presumed that they brought along to our country many of those ideas and policies. Truly, in the religiousness of our people, in our Christian way of life, customs, Church traditions, etc., many points of similarity with those of the Spanish colonies in America are noticeable. But this was because our conditions and theirs, under the Royal Patronage and the Laws of Indies, were very much alike. It could not be attributed to blind imitation. As a matter of fact, those same missionaries, when they transferred from the Philippines or America to other missions beyond the Spanish Royal Patronage, as Japan, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Tungkin, etc., knew how to adapt themselves and use different methods from those popular in the countries under the Royal Patronage.

It is often alleged that since in Spanish America the indigenous natives were precluded by the Church and the State from admission to the Holy Orders, the Spanish missionaries also adopted the same policy here. And this was the reason it is further alleged, for the retarded ordination of Filipino natives to the priesthood, not to mention the too slow and deficient development of an indigenous Filipino clergy.

Is there truth in this allegation? First of all, is it true that in Spanish America, through racial prejudice and discrimination, the indigenous natives were precluded from becoming priests?

As early as 1512, i.e., just twenty years after the discovery of the New World, a College was established in Sevilla, Spain, under the Dominican Fathers, for the education of the children of noble Indians. The following years, 1513, the Franciscans opened in the island of Santo Domingo, by express order of the King, an elementary school for the children of noble indigenous natives. A year before the arrival of the Franciscans in Mexico (1523), a pioneer Franciscan lay Brother, Fray Pedro de Gante, founded another such school in Tetxoco. And in the very city of Mexico, Fr. Martino de Valencia established another. In his report of June 12, 1531, the same Fr. Martino, Superior of the mission in Mexico, said that in each of their twenty convents, the Franciscans had schools where some 500 young Indian boys in each of them were educated. The students of St. Francis' College in Mexico reached 1,000.

What the Franciscans did, the Dominicans and the Augustinians soon undertook as their unanimous policy: attached to all their convents, a school like the so called "seminario de indios", of the Jesuits in the Philippines, was opened. In South America, in the second half of the 16th century, schools of this kind were found everywhere. The success of this educational endeavor led most missionaries to found Colleges of higher studies to prepare the indigenous natives for posts of leadership, and even for the priesthood. On December 15, 1525, the State Auditor (Treasurer), Rodrigo de Albornoz, wrote to Emperor Carlos V:

In order that the sons of the caciques (noble Indians) and lords (Indian chieftains) be instructed in the faith, Your Majesty must needs command that a College be founded wherein they may be taught Grammar (Latinity), 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 simple Christians (i.e. Europeans).

Another letter, probably from a religious missionary, asked the King,

to establish in Tenuxitlan a General Study (i.e., a University of General Studies, "studia generalia") for the teaching of Grammar (Latinity), of Arts (Humanities),
and of Theology, where the (indigenous) natives of this land may be trained, and whereto all the sons of the (Indian) nobles and heads of this land should come.

Ten years after these suggestions, on January 6, 1536, the first Seminary College of America, the Seminary College of Santa Cruz, was founded in Santiago Tlatelolco, a suburb of the city of Mexico, for the American indigenous native boys, to prepare them, as soon as possible, for the Priesthood. The promoters of this project were the Franciscan Friars, first missionaries of Mexico, headed by the saintly Fray Juan de Zumarraga, O.F.M., first Bishop of Mexico, “Defender and Protector of the Indians.” This seminary college was encouraged and helped by the Viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza, backed by the Audiencia, specially by its President, Sebastian Ramirez de Fuenleal, Bishop of Santo Domingo, and generously supported by the Crown which provided the necessary revenues for its foundation and maintenance. The highest ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Spain undertook with all enthusiasm the foundation of a Seminary for the full-blooded natives of America, more than a quarter of a century before the Council of Trent’s decree on the erection of clerical Seminaries. This refutes the myth that the Spanish Church and State, through racial prejudice, were opposed to the ordination of indigenous natives to the Priesthood.

Soon the example of the Franciscans was followed by the Augustinians who founded another similar College in Mexico in 1537. The first results of these experiments were quite encouraging. In a Royal Cedula of November 30, 1537, the King of Spain declared that,

he was well pleased to hear that, upon an examination of the intelligence of those boys studying Grammar (Latinity), many were found with great ability, vivacity of mind and excellent memory.

But, for a priestly vocation, intelligence is not the only requirement, nor the most important at that. Sterling and lofty moral and supernatural virtues are required to dedicate oneself totally to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in the life of self-denial and sacrifice demanded to continue Christ’s mission on earth. And that was too much to ask or expect from those, otherwise good-natured and well-gifted boys, who were still neophytes, too young in their faith.
The experiment of training the natives for the priesthood just thirteen years after the beginning of the evangelization, was evidently too premature. It has been wisely observed that,

though it is not impossible for a true vocation to exist in a convert from paganism, especially if the culture as a whole is already Christian, in the ordinary course of things, a priestly vocation comes from a Christian family background and an environment where Christian values are generally accepted. . . The acceptance of the Gospel value of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God would be a part of that maturation in the Christian faith which one would, in all reasonableness, expect two or three generations to develop, at least as a generally accepted value. 56

No wonder, the Indian seminarians of Tlatelolco found the requirement of a celibate life demanded by the Church from her priests too hard. Just four years after its foundation, the Seminary of Tlatelolco disappointed its foremost promoter, Bishop Zumarraga, who on April 17, 1540, wrote:

We know not whether this College of Santiago (of Tlatelolco) will continue much longer, since the Indian students, and from these the best grammarians (students of Latinity) have a stronger tendency for marriage than for celibacy ("tendunt ad nuptias potius quam ad continetiam").

The experiment was pronounced a failure, in so far as the result expected was not attained. But the experiment served to prove eloquently that the Spanish Church and State, far from officially discriminating through racial preconceptions the indigenous natives, on the contrary strove much too prematurely to raise those natives to the greatest dignity on earth, that of the ministerial Priesthood.

Unfortunately, the negative result of this noble experiment paved the way for some disillusion and pessimism. Even its most eager promoters, were tempted to give it up entirely or at least for the time being. The College of Tlatelolco however was not totally abandoned. The Franciscans still continued in their hopeless endeavor, until the years of 1547-1548 when, finding already among the Indian students persons intellectually well prepared to teach as
professors, they resolved to entrust to the indigenous alumni the administration and direction of the College. Thus, the missionaries became free to devote themselves to the vanguard posts of their vast mission fields. After twenty years of decadence, due to lack of economic resources, the Franciscans decided once more to resume its direction in 1570; but soon after this reorganization, several epidemics decimated the population. In 1576, the College was left without students. This was practically the end of it.

The sad experience of the Tlatelolco experiment produced in some sectors a strong anti-indigenist reaction. As a consequence, the First Council of Mexico held in 1555 issued a decree forbidding the admission to Holy Orders of Indians, mestizos, mulattoes and descendants of muslims or of parents condemned by the inquisition. The reason behind this apparently harsh decree was not racial discrimination. The Bull VERITAS IPSA of Paul III in 1537 definitively declared that the Indians were capable of receiving all the Sacraments. The decree was issued simply on account of the impediment of lack of good reputation of the indigenous natives. Even in our days, ill fame constitutes a simple impediment for sacred ordination (previous Code, cc.987, nn. 1,4,6,7: and 2293, n.3; new Code, can. 1041). In the Mexican Council's decree, the indigenous natives are considered to be in the same level as the mulattoes and mestizos who in most cases were illegitimate children, and thus considered in general as persons of ill reputation, or held in disfavor among the colonizers. No wonder then that the Indians, even those with good qualities, but with poor family background, were seen to be lacking the necessary good esteem, specially after the Tlatelolco experience. The doors of the Priesthood were closed to them, not on account of their race, or radical incapacity, but for their supposed temporary unworthiness, because they were still new in the faith, and this has not yet taken firm root in them.

Thirty years later, in 1585, this provisional exclusion from the priesthood of the Indios, Mestizos, or descendants from Moorish or Negro parents, was cautiously but definitively and permanently removed by the intervention of the Holy See in the III Provincial Council of Mexico. The pertinent text approved by the Council Fathers did not yet intend to change the previous legislation excluding the natives from the Holy Orders. But when the text was sent to Rome for confirmation, the Holy See amended it, by adding the cautionary words "sine magno delectu" (without a very careful choice). Thus the III Council of Mexico in 1585 provided: "let them (Indians, Mestizos, descendants from Moors or
Negros) be not admitted to the (Holy) Orders without a very careful choice," which is equivalent to saying: "let them be admitted, but not without a very careful choice."

In South America, the II Council of Lima, Peru in 1567-1568, influenced by the current anti-indigenist reaction prevailing in Mexico, issued also a decree forbidding the admission of Indians (nothing was said about mestizos or creoles) to the clerical state. But, again, this prohibition was phrased in such a way as to let it be understood that there was no question here of discriminating against the Indians, as if they were naturally incapable or unworthy; but only because they were not yet fit at that early time to discharge the duties of the sacred ministry. That is why the provision was included in the II Council of Lima to prepare and train the Indians, through an elementary Christian education for acting as altar boys. Like the children of the ancient Cathedral schools forerunners of our Conciliar Seminaries.

Again, in South America, the prohibition against the admission of Indians to the priesthood lasted for a short time only. Fifteen years later, in 1583, in the III Council of Lima, under Archbishop St. Toribio de Mogrovejo, the legislation precluding the ordination of Indians was dropped. It was not mentioned any more, leaving to the discretion of the Bishops the question of admission of Indians to the Holy Orders. In addition, during that same III Council of Lima, the South American Bishops, headed by St. Toribio, asked the King of Spain to found a Seminary College (again, as formerly in Tlatelolco! . . .) for the "sons" of the "caciques" (chieftains) and noble Indians, so that "duly instructed. . . in the course of time, they may succeed to become. . . fit and capable for the studies and for the service of the Church, and even to become ministers of the Word of God in their nation"; and they suggested it as "one of the most effective means. . . for the good of the natives and for the propagation of the faith."

Indeed, the Seminary College proposed was immediately established in Lima for the Indian natives. But it was only short-lived, not because of neglect, but because of adverse circumstances.

These two III Provincial Councils, of Lima in 1583 and of Mexico in 1585, were of lasting fame and decisive influence on Spanish America and on the Philippines, where they kept vigor of standing law during more than two centuries. Rome approved the III Council of Lima in 1588, and that of Mexico in 1591. King Philip II sanctioned the Lima Council in 1591, and that of Mexico in 1621. Thus, the restrictive provisional legislation forbidding the
ordination of indigenous natives, lasted, only thirty years in Mexico (1555-1585), and fifteen years in Lima (1568-1583).

Hence, we can safely affirm that since 1585 there was no legal ecclesiastical prohibition against the ordination of indigenous natives, in all the Spanish colonies of America, and consequently in the Philippines. Our first Diocese of Manila, embracing the whole archipelago, was erected on February 6, 1579 as a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Mexico; and thus it remained until it was raised to the rank of Metropolitan Archdiocese of Manila, on August 14, 1595. Thus, the Philippines was canonically dependent on Mexico for sixteen years only (from 1579 to 1595). And, since the Mexican legislation precluding the admission of natives to Holy orders was definitively lifted in 1585, so we can truly say that such legislation was in effect in the Philippines, for six years only (1579-1585). Anyhow, those were simply the last six years of the first twenty years of our evangelization — too early a time for admitting native converts or neophytes to the Priesthood!

And yet, even during the 30 years in Mexico, and six years in the Philippines, when a legislation against the ordination of natives was in effect, some Spanish Bishops believed that the standing legislation on this particular point was not to be strictly interpreted. That is why some indigenous natives were ordained in those years such as Rev. Pablo Caltzonzin, son of the last Michoacan king, and first American indigenous native priest, about the year 1566-1572; and Rev. Pablo Ponce, parish priest of Tzonpahucan, and author of a famous book about the indigenous natives. Even before 1562, it seems there were others whose names have not come to us. In the Philippines, the first bishop, the Spanish Dominican, Fray Domingo de Salazar, on December 21, 1581 made a provision in his Bull of erection of the Manila Diocese, that “as soon as the indigenous natives may show and prove their capacity for ecclesiastical benefices, these should be given to them, rather than to the Spanish clergy.” Bishop Salazar was quoting literally the very words of a text used by the II Council of Lima, Peru, in 1567.

That is how the Spanish Church and State understood those apparently discriminatory laws against the ordination of Indians, so short-lived in America, and in effect here in the Philippines for six years only, and which nevertheless have been the stone of scandal for so many serious scholars who make a big fuss about them. As a great Jesuit missionologist of the 16th century remarked, those were simply “prudential laws” laws of provisional and temporal character, “for this period of time.”
Undeniably, due to the demand for a "very careful choice" in the admission of indigenous natives to the Priesthood, as insisted in the American Church legislation, the development of a native clergy in the Philippines was somewhat retarded, and remained too slow and deficient. Such demand may have exerted an adverse influence upon some particular Church authorities or certain religious individuals, as Archbishop Felipe Pardo in 1680, or Fray Gaspar de San Agustin in 1720, who were against the ordination of Filipino natives. But many others among Church and State authorities opposed those narrow views such as Archbishops of Manila, Diego Camacho, Francisco de la Cuesta, Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina, Gregorio Meliton Martinez, Pedro Payo; the Bishops of Cebu, Joaquin Rubio de Arevalo, Francisco Genoves and Romualdo Jimeno; those of Naga, Domingo Collantes, Francisco Gainza, and Arsenio Campo y Monasterio; those of Vigan, Agustin Pedro Blaquier, Francisco Alban, Rafael Masoliver, Francisco Miro, Juan Jose Aragones; and those of Jaro, Mariano Cuartero y Medina and Leandro Arrue Agudo; missionaries as the Jesuit Fr. Juan Delgado, and the Spanish Vincentian Fathers; besides Kings like Philip II, Philip V, and Isabel II; and Governors-General as Domingo Zabalburu, Simon de Anda; Statesmen such as the Fiscal of the Audiencia Diego de Viga. They and many others tried their best, even imprudently at times, to foster and promote the Filipino native clergy.

Undoubtedly, many factors hindered such initiatives in favor of the natives. The requirement that these indigenous candidates assimilate a European culture so alien to their own environment; the low social status of the natives who were considered by the Spanish laws of the Indies as "minors" in need of tutelage, all these were obviously handicaps that natives who hoped to assume posts of leadership over a mixed community of Spaniards and natives had to contend with.

Furthermore, the general environment, living standards, family background, educational means and facilities in which the native youth grew and was reared, were generally, by force of unavoidable circumstances, less apt and propitious in developing priestly or religious vocations, than the conditions in which Spaniards or natives of Spanish ancestry found themselves. The far-flung amplitude of the Spanish missionary enterprise offered to the Philippines an "extensive" evangelization, rather than an "intensive" one; hence, the indigenous natives could not be properly attended to, and the seeds of priestly or religious vocation among their youth was not properly and carefully cultivated, as it should have been to let those seeds grow and blossom in due time.
These conditions of our Philippine missions, so similar to those of Spanish America, can be said to be the indirect influence of certain missionary policies adopted in the Spanish dominions, that were responsible for the slow and deficient formation of an indigenous native clergy, more than the short-lived policies of some Provincial Councils of America.

INSISTENT EFFORTS OR ATTEMPTS DURING THE SPANISH REGIME TO FOSTER FILIPINO PRIESTLY VOCATIONS AND TO FORM AND PREPARE A NATIVE SECULAR CLERGY

As early as 1595, i.e., some twenty-five years only after beginning the evangelization, the Spanish Jesuit missionaries built the first “seminario de indios” (pre-seminary elementary boarding school for Filipino indigenous natives) in Dulag, Leyte. Then, in 1596-1598, another was built in Tinagon, Samar; in 1596-1599, at the College of San Ignacio, in Manila; and in 1598-1609, at the Seminary College of San Ildefonso, in Cebu. It seems that the Spanish missionaries in the Philippines were as eager to prepare a native clergy as in America! They refused to accept the defeat or failure of Tlatelolco, just fifty-five years before.

The first Filipino native priests (most probably, creoles or mestizos, and possibly also some indigenous natives) were ordained, at most, a few years after 1620, i.e., some fifty years only after the beginning of the evangelization, which is what normally could be expected in any mission country. By the year 1655, there were already some sixty native priests in the Philippines. Certainly, by the years 1695-1707, some full-blooded Filipinos were ordained priests by Archbishop Diego Camacho y Ávila. There is also documentary evidence that a few years after 1720, there were some full-blooded Filipino priests, of whom Fr. Juan Delgado wrote in 1754; “I am acquainted with some secular priests, who, though Indios, can serve as an example to shame Europeans because of their natural talents and priestly virtues.” In 1760, there were thirty-two Indio priests in the Archdiocese of Manila, thirteen Chinese mestizos, and six Spanish mestizos, out of a total of 111 secular priests.

But much earlier before, during the 17th century, the Colleges of the Spanish Jesuits and of the Dominicans, San Jose (founded 1601), Santo Tomas (1611), and San Juan de Letran (1632) were actually Seminaries at the same time, fostering ecclesiastical and religious native vocations. From Letran alone, in just nineteen years (1632-1651) twenty-six Filipino natives (creoles or
mestizos) had been ordained priests: twelve seculars, eight Augustinians, two Dominicans, two Franciscans, one Recollect and one Jesuit.

During the 17th century, the students of these Colleges of San Jose, Santo Tomas and Letran, were, practically all, Spaniards or natives of Spanish descent, although there was no systematic exclusion of indigenous natives. After the initial trials of the "seminarios de indios" by the end of the 16th century, the idea expressed by Governor Pedro de Acuña to King Philip III in his report of July 15, 1604 seems to have prevailed among the settlers, namely, that although the education of the indigenous natives for the priestly vocation was "a very good and holy work," still there was no use in trying it further "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."62

This way of thinking might have been the sad result of a colonial mentality one manifestation of which was the "paternalistic" attitude that considered indigenous natives as "minors" who are not yet ready for higher instruction or for posts for leadership. Such "paternalism," profitable and praiseworthy at the beginning, should not have been prolonged further than necessary. Again, this was Spain's mistake. Thus, this was one of the causes that contributed to the slow formation of an indigenous clergy. In fact in 1680, Monsignor Urbano Cerri, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda wrote a Memorial to Pope Innocent XI indicating certain deficiencies in the Church in the Philippines. "Among these was the fact that natives (sc. the indigenous) were not raised to sacred orders, although they fulfilled the prerequisite conditions to receive them."63 This statement seems to imply obviously that the indigenous natives by that time, had been given ecclesiastical training in the Colleges of the Dominicans or Jesuits; otherwise, how could he have known that they fulfilled the prerequisite conditions? Although practically all the students of Letran, Santo Tomas or San Jose, were of Spanish descent, there was no systematic exclusion of the indigenes from these institutions. And, although the general policy, according to Msgr. Cerri, was not to ordain indigenous natives, still it could have been possible that some of them might at least have been among the natives that were certainly ordained in the 17th century.

But before that report of Msgr. Cerri, Spain was already taking some steps to remedy the situation. It seems that a report by the
French Bishop, Monsignor Francois 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. Three years before Msgr. Cerri’s memorial of 1680 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 (indigenes) with a program of studies aimed at the priesthood; he was to ordain at the proper time those who showed suitability 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 on the same date for the same purpose. And likely the Jesuit Provincial received one of the same tenor.”

The answer of Archbishop Pardo to the royal cedula of 1677 was quite harsh and biased not only against the indigenous natives but also against the “sons of Spaniards, born in the islands” (creoles or mestizos). He said that the “Indios” “had little inclination for theological and moral studies,” and that their evil traits “made it necessary to treat them as children, even when they were fifty or sixty years old” (Notice the unwise and mistaken “paternalism”!) And he adds: “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 Indios (when they were not sufficiently qualified for this) through 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.” Here it is implied that, at the last quarter of the 17th century, there were some few instances, of ordination of indigenous natives, to support what the Archbishop noted as evident. Otherwise, his statement would have been entirely groundless.

Although Archbishop Pardo was against the ordination of indigenous natives at that time, he was still hoping that in the near future, after receiving proper education, indigenous natives would be worthy of the priestly vocation. That is why, on March 12, 1689, he offered 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 they could merit the priesthood after sufficient training.” This noble and apostolic desire indicates two things: 1) the Archbishop’s opposition to the ordination of natives did not arise from racial prejudice and 2) Letran College although exclusively for Spaniards did not systematically excluded indigenous natives.
Although things were going too slowly in the remote Philippine colony for the fulfillment of the King's desires and orders, the Crown was not sleeping. In 1697 King Carlos II inquired from the Governor of the Philippines whether there was already a Seminary in the Archdiocese of Manila, and if there was none, how much money would be necessary to subsidize it. The Governor answered on July 13, 1700 that there was no need for the said Seminary since the Colleges run by the religious in Manila already served the purpose. However, this answer did not satisfy the King's zeal to develop the indigenous clergy on the country. Thus the royal cedula of April 28, 1702 issued by King Philip V provided for the foundation of a Conciliar Seminary in Manila with eight scholarships for native seminarians.

However, the royal mandate could not be made to take effect at once. Archbishop Diego Camacho tried to take the initial steps, but legal blocks hindered his efforts for two years. Finally, through the zealous initiative of a certain Abbe John Baptist Sidotti who came to Manila in 1704, together with the future Cardinal Maillard de Tournon, legate a latere of Pope Clement XI to the missions of the Far East, a Conciliar Seminary was opened in Manila on December 8, 1707, with the approval of Archbishop Camacho and Governor Domingo Zabalburu. It was an ambitious project, indeed to establish not only a Diocesan Seminary, but a Regional Mission Seminary for the mission lands of the Orient. The Seminary was to admit 72 students, of whom eight were to be Filipino natives. It was to be called San Clemente, in honor of the reigning Pontiff.

All this was however, quite different from the King's orders. The King was displeased to see that a foreigner had intervened to change his dispositions; and so, he sternly ordered that his Royal Cedula of 1702 be followed to the letter. Thus the Seminary of San Clemente had to give way in 1712 to another, strictly Diocesan Seminary, which in 1715 was called San Felipe, in honor of the King.

In his earnest zeal to form as soon as possible an indigenous clergy, Archbishop Camacho proceeded to ordain, between 1702 and 1706, some full-blooded Filipino priests. Likewise, the University of Santo Tomas and the Colleges of San Jose and Letran, began to admit, as a matter of policy indigenous native students.67

In spite of all these, the results were quite disappointing. On July 20, 1718 Archbishop Francisco de la Cuesta wrote:

In the eleven years that I have been in possession of this See (of Manila), I have hardly ordained eleven men for
the clergy from the four colleges (sc. Santo Tomas, San Jose, Letran, and San Felipe).68

The explanation of this failure lies, most probably, in the fact that Santo Tomas, San Jose, and Letran were offering a type of mixed clerical training in which prospective aspirants to the priestly vocation were formed together with lay students aiming at secular careers. Church experience of centuries has shown that this type of mixed training is not conducive to fostering ecclesiastical vocations. The Conciliar Seminary of San Felipe, although exclusively clerical, was a pious lay foundation, under the Royal Patronage. It had no adequate financial resources and worse, no personnel fitted to run it. As a Diocesan Seminary it was to be administered, not by the religious friars, but by the secular clergy. But, where, among the secular clergy—which was just about to be formed—were the priests duly prepared for directing a Seminary?

This was the vicious circle that explains the languid condition of the Philippine Diocesan Seminaries of those centuries. The religious offered a solution to the situation by cooperating occasionally when there was an imperative demand for them. But that was not the normal policy, since the Diocesan Seminaries ought generally to be run by secular priests. Such policy actually became law by Royal Order of Carlos III in 1768, and by legislation of the Provincial Council of Manila in 1771.

The best solution to the problem was found by Queen Isabel II when in 1852 she decided to entrust the direction of Philippine Seminaries to the Vincentian Fathers. Canonically speaking, the Vincentian fathers were not “religious” in the strict sense, but “secular priests” living as religious in a community and under a Rule. Hence, they could properly assume the Direction of the Philippine Seminaries “which — as the Queen avowed — for lack of professors and resources could not fulfill the end for which the Council of Trent established them”. If this solution could have been adopted two centuries before 1862, the development of a Filipino native clergy might have been very different indeed.

In the Seminary of Manila the eight students with Government scholarships were to be Indios.69 However, Archbishop de la Cuesta reported to the King that, instead of indigenous natives, he chose eight “creoles” (sons of Spaniards born in the Philippines). Besides the eight students with scholarships, there were 16 others, called “porcionistas” (paying students), some of whom were pure Spaniards, others Chinese mestizos, and indigeneous natives. Out of the eight original students, only five were finally ordained; and of the succeeding classes, only one reached the Priesthood.70
The Faculty of Philosophy in the Seminary was instituted on May 13, 1712; and Theology, in 1714. In 1722 however, these were closed for lack of students (there were only one or two attending the classes). For all practical purposes therefore, the Seminary was not existing any more by 1739. And when the English occupied Manila in 1762, the few remaining students sought shelter in their own homes. After the evacuation of Manila in 1764 nothing was done to reorganize the extinct Seminary until May 24, 1768 when Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina reestablished it, and on June 8, 1770 placed it under the patronage of King Carlos III.

The new Seminary of San Carlos of Manila received, during its first decade (1768-1778) 140 seminarians of whom 77 were ordained with but a minimum of training. "Spanish wits in Manila joked about there being no more oarsmen for the boats on the Pasig because the Archbishop has ordained them all."71 Governors Jose Raon and Simon Anda seconded the Archbishop's moves to secularize the religious parishes immediately. However, the hasty and unwise ordinations of unworthy candidates soon proved disastrous to the cause of the Filipino clergy. Yet, one conclusion we can gather from this is that the authorities of the Church and State in the archipelago were not in the least opposed to the promotion of a secular native clergy. On the contrary on this occasion they showed an indiscreet and damaging zeal to promote a native clergy at all costs.

The secularization of parishes created a hostile atmosphere between the Filipino clergy and the religious missionaries who were favored by the Spanish Government.72 And yet, even in this period of animosity and antagonism between the two clergies, it was clear that there were Spaniards who did not hesitate to favor and promote the cause of the Filipino priests.

Worthy to be remembered for their zeal in promoting Filipino native vocations were: in Cebu, Bishops Francisco Genoves, Santos Gomez Marañon, and Romualdo Jimeno; in Naga, Bishops Juan Antonio de Orbigo, Domingo Collantes, and Francisco Gainza; in Vigan, Juan Ruiz de San Agustin, Agustin Pedro Blaquier, Francisco Alban, Rafael Masoliver, Francisco Miro, and Juan Aragones; and in Jaro, Bishop Mariano Cuartero y Medina. All of them lived during the last century of the Spanish regime.

Their tireless efforts, admittedly, came rather late, and were counteracted by the historical circumstances previously explained, particularly by the recurrent problems of lack of funds and lack of adequate personnel to run the Diocesan Seminaries. However by
A Problem to be Faced

the middle of the 18th century, the Filipino native priests in 1750 were administering 142 parishes; and by the middle of the 19th century, in 1845, they were administering 229 parishes. In 1762, out of 156 secular priests in the diocese of Manila, 87 were Filipinos.

"In the second quarter of the 18th century the Filipino priests had under their parochial care more souls than either the Dominicans, Franciscans or Recollects; and were next only to the Augustinians and Jesuits. One-sixth of the Filipino Catholics were then under the care of their native clergy. One fifth of the parishes were then administered by Filipinos who had 142 parishes, i.e., 27 more than the Augustinians who were the religious having most parishes in the Philippines. In 1750 the Filipino secular priests had more parishes than any single religious Order, and each Filipino priest was entrusted with an average of 2,800 souls, while each Spanish Friar was governing only an average of 1,900 souls. Eighteen years later, the expulsion of the Jesuits came, and the 93 parishes they had, were given over to the Filipino clergy. And in 1863 the Filipino priests were in charge of more Catholics than any one of the religious Orders working in the country."

The following statistics gathered from various authoritative sources positively show — in spite of some strange incongruities — that the number and quality of Filipino secular priests in the 19th century was not so insignificant as we might think. In the diocese of Manila alone there were in 1805, at least 200 Filipino secular priests, 26 of whom held academic degrees; in 1826 there were 294, of whom at least 14 held degrees; and in 1860 there were 285 Filipino priests. In 1876 there were in the whole Philippines 748 Filipino priests; in 1889 there were 777; in 1890 there were 825. However in 1898, official statistics strangely count only 675 Filipino priests.

But even taking this low figure as a point of reference, we find that in 1898, for a population of about 7 million, there were some 675 Filipino priests, i.e., one priest for every 10,000 souls; while in 1950 for a population of about 20 million, there were 1,250 Filipino priests only, i.e., about one priest for every 16,000 souls. From the end of the Spanish regime up to the mid-20th century, the Philippine population became almost three times bigger, while the number of Filipino priests had scarcely doubled. Proportionally, there were more Filipino priests during the Spanish regime than in our own days.

These numbers are taken from reliable sources indicate that, although the development of the Filipino native clergy was rather slow and deficient, there have been many unfavorable exaggerations
on the situation of past centuries. Despite all the shortcomings and defects of those times, the formation and development of the native clergy was not entirely neglected by the Spanish Crown nor by the Spanish Church in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{75}

The true solution to those deficiencies was found by Queen Isabel II in 1852. The Vincentian missionaries came to our land in 1862 “to improve the education given in the Conciliar Seminaries which, for lack of professors and resources, could not duly fulfill the end for which the Holy Council of Trent established them.”

This royal disposition was achieved in the last 36 years of the Spanish regime. Still, some object that even during this period, the Seminary training was quite substandard; “there was little or nothing done to give superior academic training to the secular clergy; though the minimum level for all priests was undoubtedly raised, the top level dropped considerably” as compared with the “Pelaez-Burgos generation of university educated priests” (1850-1872).\textsuperscript{76} Is this correct? The level of the secular clergy is not to be measured by half-a-dozen prominent figures of specially gifted priests with the highest academic degrees. Diocesan Seminaries are not precisely intended to form doctors in theology or canon law, but rather worthy and zealous pastors of souls. And, it is obvious that these were found more easily during the last 30 years of the Spanish regime than before. If the Seminaries under the Vincentians offered a poor program of studies, it might be asked where in the world, even in Spain, France or Italy, were better programs offered? One can easily compare the religious and disciplinary training offered in our Philippine Seminaries, with that of other Seminaries in Catholic Europe or America. Fermin del Campo, C.M. who took the trouble to research on this aspect, found nothing our Philippine Seminaries had to envy Seminaries abroad. On the contrary, the local seminaries could “advantageously compare with any of them.”\textsuperscript{77}