

# **A Healing Narrative to Achieve Christian Unity: The Case of the Catholic Church and the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente***

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a story of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI) employing the ecumenical perspective. IFI's existence was basically shaped by the birth of the Philippines as a nation. Moreover, this paper seeks to uphold a spirit of openness to come up with a reconciling narrative between the IFI and the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines (RCCP) by highlighting their shared history and sentiments. The discussion of the eventual separation of the IFI from the Catholic Church highlights the grounds that the former firmly maintained and the reasons for holding on to them. One of the reasons was the desire to be more responsive to the changes that the Philippines was experiencing during that time; included in this response was the need to assume new roles as expected of a mature Church in the Philippines. The reforms that RCCP carried after the 1896 Revolution was an affirmation to a certain extent of the claims of the IFI, although it might have been a case of a 'little too late.' However, it could also be a case of 'more had yet to be done,' which required a lot of patience for both the RCCP and the IFI. If these were considered, schism might have been prevented. By highlighting this standpoint, this paper uses Receptive Ecumenical Learning.<sup>1</sup> This paper aims to demonstrate that

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<sup>1</sup> Receptive Ecumenical Learning is a strategy to foster Christian Unity by asking first "What my church could learn from another church so I may be enriched and, in the process, move closer to achieving my plenitude as a church."

there is a way to heal the pain of division by framing the narrative from the point of view of the need for church reform.

**Keywords:** Aglipay Isabelo, Christianization, Roman Catholic Church, Church Reform, Friars, Filipino Clergy, Patronato, Philippine Revolution

## The Christianization of the Philippines

The birth of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI) could be understood and appreciated through the frame of the Christianization of the Philippines. The IFI, which almost became a church, had fundamental beliefs and practices different from those practiced by the Catholic Church. Although there was an eventual return of IFI to many Catholic beliefs and practices, it still remained separated from the Catholic Church. The story of the evangelization of the Philippines, though connected with those of the Americas, was unique in many ways. To speak of the Philippines as a nation that was Christianized has anachronistic connotations. The conglomeration of the different islands with its different ethnic groups, virtually living autonomously in each major island, into a single political unit, was a result of its conquest by Spain. However, what happened was not merely motivated by politics or economics, or the desire of Spain to expand its power. The conquest of the Philippines itself was driven, justified, and sustained by the desire to proclaim the Gospel and convert its natives to Christianity. As religion, i.e. Catholicism, was the crux in the formation of the Philippines, so it would also be the core issue that would ignite and fuel the Philippine Revolution of 1896. It was also in the spirit of the said period, that paved the way for the birth of an independent Philippine church.

### *The Aim Of The Evangelization Of The Philippines*

What could be said as the first successful encounter by Spain with the natives of the Philippines, with respect to evangelization, was the brief sojourn of Fernando Magallanes and his men on the island of *Cebu* in April 1521. His encounter with a chieftain of the said island, *Rajah Humabon*, led to the conversion of the said tribal leader and his subjects. Magallanes, after baptizing *Humabon*, gave him a Christian name, Don Carlos, after Charles V, the King of Spain at that time. The story of the encounter had a particular feature, which speaks well of the Spanish spirit of those times. Although accompanied by a secular priest, Pedro de

Valderrama, it was Magallanes who had been preaching and had been working for the conversion of the natives the whole time.<sup>2</sup> His initial success, however, was short-lived. Magallanes was killed in a battle with another tribe, headed by a certain *Lapu-Lapu*, in another island called *Mactan*, just adjacent to *Cebu*. His death, some would interpret, was a result of his miscalculation and carelessness, because of his enthusiasm, even to the point of over-confidence, to place under the Catholic Faith and the Spanish Crown as many natives in the soonest time possible.<sup>3</sup> This event, later on, as Filipinos would search for a national identity, would be interpreted as the first native resistance to colonial rule. On the other hand, from the point of view of faith and the Spanish consciousness at that time, Magallanes may also be seen as someone who was more than a conquistador, he was also a missionary.<sup>4</sup>

It was this kind of spirit that Magallanes embodied, that was also animating the Spaniards who came to the Philippines, for the majority of the period of its colonization, religious, lay and clerics, alike. Spain was imbued with a strong passion to Christianize and to civilize peoples. The former could be said to be the weightier reason, and even the justification and guiding principle for the latter. Those who fought for Philippine independence towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were aware of this fact. They used it as an argument against Spain itself. So much so that they found it incomprehensible that Spain, under what was called the *Treaty of Paris*, would hand-over the Philippines to the United States, which was not Catholic, albeit, more disagreeably, a Protestant nation. This was why the head Philippine revolutionary government at that time, Emilio Aguinaldo, wanted to convince the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Domingo Nozaleda, that the coming of the Americans to the Philippines was a grave threat. He argues that it would be better for the Catholic Church in the Philippines to support the independence of the nation, otherwise it would also risk the loss of Catholicism.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See also Antonio Pigafetta, "Primo viaggio intorno al mondo," trans. James Alexander Robinson, in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, ed., *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, vol. 33, 1519-1522 (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur Clark Company, 1906), 143-147. Henceforth BRPI.

<sup>3</sup> "Magellan, the navigator and merchant, threw himself fervently into his new role as an apostle of the gospel until he reached spiritual intoxication which undermined his sound judgment of things mundane. The unwise ultimatum to *Lapu-Lapu* to abandon paganism, the battle of *Mactan*, and a heroic but unnecessary death followed each other in rapid sequence." John Leddy Phelan, "Pre-baptismal Instruction and Administration of Baptism in the Philippines during the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald Anderson (USA: Cornell University Press, 1968), 23.

<sup>4</sup> The idea, 'Magellan as Missionary,' was borrowed from John Leddy Phelan, "Pre-baptismal Instruction," 23.

<sup>5</sup> "Cuando el Papa Alejandro VI dio en 4 de mayo de 1493 autorización a los Reyes Católicos de España para que extendiesen el Evangelio Cristiano a las Indias Orientales, no los autorizó para que, evangelizados los pueblos descubiertos, los sometiesen y vendiesen como mercancías a las naciones infieles. Me permito llamar infiel a la Nación-Norte-Americana, porque la Constitución de la misma

The study for example, made by a Dominican, Jesus Gayo Aragón, which, was supported later on by other historical findings, clarified the theological and juridical ideas that imbued Spain in the sixteenth-century.<sup>6</sup> He emphasized that, even at its initial stage, the religious, i.e. the friars, who came to the Philippines, have fought tenaciously to uphold justice and human rights in the newly discovered islands.<sup>7</sup> These missionaries were largely shaped by the development in theology as a result of the struggle to uphold the Christian conscience in the Spanish conquest of the Americas.<sup>8</sup> It was a struggle that may be described as a continuous nagging by the friars in the Philippines at their fellow Spaniards, reminding them of who they were and the very reason why they were present in the newly conquered islands. They were Catholics and Spanish, and being both, they had received a special mandate, both from the Pope and the King, of “uniting mankind under ‘one faith, one pastor, one flock.’”<sup>9</sup> It is said that, “In the sixteenth century, one never knew when the conquistador ended and the missionary began.”<sup>10</sup> It was also for this reason that the will of the Catholic Kings of Spain had to be firmly upheld, as it was an absolute monarchy, but not despotic, as some modern thinkers have stereotyped the Spanish rule in those days.<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say that the conquest of the Philippines by Spain was without any defect, degree of abuse, or even coming from purely spiritual motives. Even in those days, it was not easy to reconcile the search for earthly glory with the desire to Christianize. Yet, for the Spanish empire, it was something that they spared no effort to work out.<sup>12</sup> There had always been, as the fact of life is, discrepancies between what had been done in the actual, and what has been set in the ideal. Since, it also happened, not infrequently, that despite the noble intentions on the part of

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no ha declarado como religión oficial la católica en la forma que lo hace la Constitución española.” RRP, “Draft of Aguinaldo’s Reply to Nozaleda 1899,” vol. 3, 65.

<sup>6</sup> Jesús Gayo Aragón, “Ideas Juridico-Teologicas de los Religiosos de Filipinas en el Siglo XVI sobre la Conquista de las Islas,” *Discurso Leído en la Solemne Apertura del Curso Academico 1950-1951* (Manila: Universidad de Santo Tomas, 1960). The work of Jesus Gayo Aragón is considered as the most complete brief study in this respect. John N. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 1979), 412.

<sup>7</sup> Aragón, “Ideas Juridico-Teologicas,” 4.

<sup>8</sup> This pertains in particular to Bartolome de las Casas and the School of Salamanca whose prominent theologians were Diego de Vitoria and Domingo de Soto.

<sup>9</sup> John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses* (USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Lucio Gutiérrez, “The Christianization of the Philippines: Myth and Reality,” *Philippiniana Sacra* vol. 11, no. 32 (May – August 1976): 216-217.

<sup>11</sup> Aragón, “Ideas Juridico-Teologicas,” 4.

<sup>12</sup> Horacio de la Costa “Indeed, we may say that the most characteristic and original institutions of the Spanish empire resulted from the effort to reconcile the often conflicting claims of God, gold and glory.” *Asia and the Philippines* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967), 14.

the Spanish Kings, motives also got mixed up, either by reason of survival or plain pursuit of earthly glory, both on the part of the conquistadores and the religious.<sup>13</sup>

Behind these actions, Spain was applying a mechanism, the '*Patronato Real*.' It was through this system of Royal Patronage that Spain managed the affairs in the Philippines. Under the *Patronato*, the Spanish crown possessed certain privileges given by the Holy See in exchange for the services it rendered to spread and sustain the Catholic Faith in the newly founded territories. Among the privileges that had a direct bearing, for better or for worse, in ecclesiastical governance under the *Patronato* system, was the right of the Spanish Crown to present persons who they think were worthy to take positions in the Church under its territories, i.e. Bishops, Parish Priests, Abbots, Missionaries, etc.<sup>14</sup> The *Patronato*, though, should be treated as more than a pragmatic strategy or compromise between the Church and the Spanish crown. It was not as simple as it may seem. It had a long history and had been able to establish its theological and legal foundations.<sup>15</sup> It also had its precedents in Church practice and, therefore, was not a strange arrangement in those days, but could even be viewed as a development or advancement in strategy to bring Christ to the nations.<sup>16</sup> The Church, moreover, saw that there was no other government (monarchy or state), besides Spain, that was as loyal and as capable to be its collaborator in the work of evangelization, whose logistical support she needed.<sup>17</sup> Besides, it had been an accepted norm, that the Pope could act as arbitrator in settling issues among states. This was how and why the Philippines was conquered and kept by Spain. The Spanish Monarchs had understood that they were doing their duty as faithful sons and daughters of the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup> This had always been

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<sup>13</sup> "En Filipinas, como en América, existieron los dos bandos opuestos: lo que no pensaban más que en aumentar sus riquezas y los señadores en extender por todas las regiones de Oriente el Evangelio de Jesucristo. Esto no quiere decir que todos los conquistadores ardiesen en la codicia del oro, ni que todos religiosos defendiesen con igual tesón los mismos derechos de los indígenas. Unos y otros obraban en conformidad a sus convicciones teóricas." Aragón, 7.

<sup>14</sup> W. Eugene Shiels, *King and Church: The Rise and Fall of Patronato Real* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1961), 61.

<sup>15</sup> See also Shiels, *King and Church*, 1-45. Here the author also presents how it was rooted from the reflection of Thomas Aquinas in his Summa.

<sup>16</sup> This is typical of the bull of Granada, *Orthodoxe fidei propagationem*, 13 December 1486, issued by Innocent VIII to Ferdinand and Isabela. The Bull later on given by Alexander VI, *Inter caetera divinae*, May 3 and 4, 1493, was not just in view of reconquered lands but already an issue concerning the newly discovered lands and therefore meant a development of the concept of *Patronato*. See also Shiels, *King and Church*, 61-71.

<sup>17</sup> Shiels, *King and Church*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> "Wherefore as becoming Catholic kings and princes . . . we exhort you very earnestly in the Lord and insist strictly both through your reception of holy baptism, whereby you are bound to our apostolic commands and in the bowels of the mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that inasmuch as with upright zeal for the true faith you design to equip and dispatch this expedition, you purpose also as is your duty to lead the peoples dwelling in those islands and countries to embrace the Christian religion, . . ." BRPI, "Papal Bull Inter Caetera, 4 May 1493," trans. Thomas Cooke Middleton, vol. 1, 1493-1529, 108.

the presupposition, and for almost three centuries it had worked, like a very reliable and efficient hybrid engine, that made the aim of the Church to evangelize and Spain to build and strengthen its empire, successful.<sup>19</sup>

It would be very difficult to imagine how the evangelization of the Philippines could have been done without the *Patronato*. Despite the risks it carried, particularly due to conflicts of interests, it was deemed, as perhaps the best possible system, and that it fitted well in terms of ecclesiastical and monarchical aims in those days. However, having relied fundamentally on the Christian conscience of the Monarchy, it started to decline when the leadership in Spain, starting at the second-half of the 18th century, did not assume itself anymore as loyal Catholics, but worse, pitted itself against the Holy See.<sup>20</sup> What were viewed as realistic and workable tensions became hardline antagonisms. The glory of the Crown became the sole end. In the case of the Philippines, as will be mentioned later, the Church would practically be used as an instrument of the Crown to keep the Filipinos loyal to Spain. It was in this instance that one could say that compromises arose, intended or not, between the Church and the State in the Philippines. It was for this reason, that one of the aims of the revolution was the removal of the Philippines from the clutches of the *Patronato*. For the revolutionaries or nationalists, it was not a mere replacement or overthrow of Spanish government of the Islands. The greater weight of the cause for independence, and apparently the only solution it saw, was the expulsion of the Spanish friars from the Philippines. That is why Gregorio Aglipay and the IFI strengthened their cause through polemics against the friars. Since, it was the friars who had the greatest influence on the inhabitants of the Archipelago. Yet, the first, most determined, and enduring antagonist of the friars were not Filipino statesmen nor bureaucrats. They were their fellow men of the cloth, the Filipino secular clergy.

### *The Spanish Struggle to Uphold Human Dignity*

Year 1565 marks the actual colonization of the Philippines by Spain. It was this year when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the *adelantado*, and his men arrived in the Philippines and established the first Spanish settlement in the island of *Cebu*. It is said that, just after 50 years from his arrival, “[T]he main task of Christianization had already been accomplished.”<sup>21</sup> It is even said that, what happened in the Philippines at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, from the

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<sup>19</sup> “Its motion was quiet and orderly as that of the stars, and as unnoticed. Rare was the pen that was used against it.” Shiels, 9.

<sup>20</sup> See also Shiels, *King and Church*, 243-245.

<sup>21</sup> Gutiérrez, “The Christianization of the Philippines,” 203.

point of view of evangelization, was remarkable.<sup>22</sup> Several factors could be attributed to help explain the relative ease in the work of the evangelization of what was then a pagan Philippines. One was the less resistance, compared to other nations, by the indigenous people in the Philippines to accept the Faith.<sup>23</sup> The Filipinos were said to have “survived the shock of the conquest with far less psychological and material damage to themselves than did many races of the Americas.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, the other side of it is said to be truly deserving to be given recognition was how the evangelization of the Philippines was carried out as humanely as possible. A feat worth noting, most especially from the point of view of Christian history.<sup>25</sup>

A historic event that marks how Spain should carry out the evangelization of the Philippines, with respect to the ground-realities of the newly conquered territories, was the Synod of Manila that happened between the years 1581 and 1586.<sup>26</sup> It happened through the initiative of the first bishop of Manila, a Dominican, Domingo de Salazar, who arrived in Manila in September 1581. From the outset, the commitment of the Bishop to the poor was clear. He was formed according to minds of Bartolome de las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria. Prior to his appointment in Manila, he had already labored in the evangelization of Mexico and Florida for twenty-three years i.e., 1553 to 1576. He had a firsthand experience of the struggle for justice that the Spaniards faced in the Americas, as he himself was directly involved

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<sup>22</sup> John N. Schumacher, a Jesuit who had done extensive work and had made significant contributions in the study of history of the Church in the Philippines, concluded: “. . . I have taken the position that the evangelization undertaken by the Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not superficial: that, in fact, it was probably the most thorough and systematic evangelization of a whole people in the history of the Christian missions, at least before the nineteenth century,” John N. Schumacher, “Introduction,” in *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives (Loyola Papers no. 12)*, ed. Horacio de la Costa and John N. Schumacher (Manila: Loyola Publishing, 1980), 1.

<sup>23</sup> “The religious beliefs of the Malays were not held with any great tenacity and easily yielded to the efforts of the missionaries. The native taste for the spectacular was impressed and gratified by the picturesque and imposing ceremonials of the church. . . . Their political and social organization was deficient in cohesion. . . . This social disintegration greatly facilitated the conquest; and by tact and conciliation, effectively supported by arms, but with very little actual bloodshed . . .” BRPI, Edward Gaylord Bourne, “Historical Introduction,” vol. 1, 1493-1529, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Phelan, *Hispanization*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> “The tragedies and blunders of English colonization in America are often forgotten and only the tragedies and blunders of Spanish colonization are remembered. . . . The Spanish policy aimed to preserve and civilize the native races, not to establish a new home for Spaniards, and the colonial legislation provided elaborate safeguards for the protection of Indians. . . . The contrast between the effects of the Spanish conquest in West Indies, Mexico, and the Philippines reflects the development of humane policy of the government. The ravages of the first conquistadores, it should be remembered, took place before the crown had time to develop a colonial policy.” BRPI, vol. 1, 35-36.

<sup>26</sup> A Dominican historian cites this in parallel with (at the time he was writing his article) to the upcoming Second Plenary Council of the Philippines of 1991 saying that the Church has always been committed to man’s salvation and liberation. See Lucio Gutiérrez, “Synod of Manila: 1581-1586,” *Philippiniana Sacra* vol. 25, no. 74 (1990): 198.

and was tested through it.<sup>27</sup> Seeing how the maltreatment of the natives by his fellow Spaniards, i.e., the *encomenderos*, was happening in the Philippines, he summoned a synod just within a month after his arrival. It was not the first prophetic voice though. The Augustinians who first arrived with Legazpi, Martín de Rada, Andrés de Urdaneta and companions, were already vocal against the injustices that they were seeing being committed against the natives in the Philippines.<sup>28</sup> The intuition of Bishop Salazar for holding a synod was coming from the need and urgency to come up with a holistic approach for the Spanish enterprise in the Philippines to succeed. Since, on the side of the many *conquistadores* themselves, they saw it unfair to be sweepingly judged as abusive and simply seeking to enrich themselves, if one only knew how hostile was the situation they were facing in the Islands.<sup>29</sup> Their argument, in many ways were valid. The resources of the Islands were yet to be harnessed efficiently and the economy was yet to take off for there was no surplus of production.<sup>30</sup>

The core of the dispute in the Synod, from which all the other issues emanated, and to which the solution would be reached, was about the right of Spain to conquer the Philippines. With meticulousness, the Synod was able to formulate a solution to justify their presence in the Philippines. They arrived at the conviction that Spain has no right whatsoever to exploit the Islands, but it was only by virtue of their mission to preach the Gospel which also involved protecting all the Christians, including the natives who were already converted, that justified their presence in the Philippines.<sup>31</sup> With this, the obligations of the *encomendero* guided by the spirit of justice and evangelization were drawn out as well. The Synod was a milestone, as an author said, “It is most modern in its prophetic denunciation of injustice, even in the highest places, without yielding to threats from those who were denounced.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Salazar les informaría ampliamente, con el tesón que era capaz, acerca del problema capital en discusión: la justicia o la injusticia de la conquista de América. A su vez, Salazar volvería a beber de las fuentes puras de los discípulos de Vitoria y Soto. Le prestarían no sólo su saber sino aliento para seguir adelante en su lucha en pro de la justicia y de los débiles.” Lucio Gutiérrez, OP, “Domingo de Salazar, Primer Obispo de Filipinas,” *Philippiniana Sacra* vol. 12, no. 36 (September – December 1977): 553-554.

<sup>28</sup> Martín de Rada, their Provincial, in a report dated 21 June 1574, decried what he and his fellow friars saw as blatant injustice in the way the conquest of the Philippines was being done. This he refers in particular to the exaction of tributes from the natives. Moreover, the question on the right of Spain to claim the Islands was still demanding a clear answer. See also BRPI, “Opinion of Fray Martín de Rada on Tribute from the Indians,” vol. 3, 1569-1576, 253-259.

<sup>29</sup> This, for example, was what Guido de Lavezaris and other Spaniards, through another letter addressed to the King, was explaining. They defended themselves against the accusations by de Rada and the friars. See also *ibid.*, 260-271.

<sup>30</sup> Costa, *Asia and the Philippines*, 25-27; Phelan Leddy, *Hispanization*, 95-96.

<sup>31</sup> See also Gutiérrez, *The Synod*, 210-215.

<sup>32</sup> John N. Schumacher, *Growth and Decline: Essays in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2009), 20.



The Synod also legislated how the evangelization could most effectively be done. A noteworthy resolution was that, the message of the Gospel should be transmitted according to the native tongue of the tribes to whom it will be preached. It was a stark deviation from what Spain, during her Golden Age, had been accustomed to. It is said that it could also serve as a model for other synods. This pertains particularly to the spirit of openness in the discussions on the real issues confronting the Church in the Philippines together with the burning pastoral concerns, having been done with the participation of the laity.<sup>33</sup> Many Spaniards in the Islands did not find it easy to carry out with great care the provisions of the Synod. One had to be scrupulous enough just to abide by it, because it aimed to uphold very high Christian ideals. An author even commented that, “Doubtless many of the *encomenderos* simply laughed at the good bishop for being an incurable idealist [,] [b]ut there were others who took their responsibility seriously. . . .”<sup>34</sup> For Salazar and the other religious, though, it was a non-negotiable imperative. This instance already gives one a glimpse of how secular and church affairs during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines were working on a framework of organically or complementarily governing. An ideal quite unimaginable today.

Despite the merits of the Synod, some parties were still not satisfied.<sup>35</sup> It was seen to be wanting for more. Consciences were still perturbed, judging by what was happening in the Islands. Some had the opinion that Spain needed to settle once and for all its legitimacy to put the Philippines under its rule. This view was influenced, once again, by a developing Christian theology about the rights of people in the newly found lands. Hence, the issue had to be put to rest, by asking the consent of the inhabitants of the Islands, which shall later be referred to in the records as *Philippine Referendum of 1599*. It was an event, which, apparently not highlighted enough in the history of the Philippines. It was said to be the “first plebiscite in colonial history anywhere in the world and the only one held before the twentieth century.”<sup>36</sup> Due credit again has to be given to Domingo de Salazar and a fellow Dominican who collaborated with him, Miguel de Benavides. The two went back to Madrid to present before King Philip II the realities in the Philippines. They were convinced of the need to correct the injustices made by Spaniards against the natives

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<sup>33</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History* (Metro Manila: Bookmark, Inc., 1992), 23.

<sup>35</sup> The arrival of the Dominicans in 1587 had shaken up again the situation. Having been molded in upholding social justice, they saw that what was happening was not enough and put into question the right of Spain to conquer the Philippines. This also happened with the assumption of another Dominican, Miguel de Benavides, as Bishop of Manila. Fidel Villarroel, “The Church and the “Philippine Referendum” of 1599,” *Philippiniana Sacra* vol. 35, no. 103 (2000): 101.

<sup>36</sup> Villarroel, “The Church and the ‘Philippine Referendum,’” 90; See also Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City, Philippines: Garotech Publishing, 1990), 38.

and to clarify what would be a Christian strategy to put them under the sovereignty of His Majesty. The persistent efforts of the two Dominicans led to the issuance of a 'Royal *Cedula*,' ordering the Governor-General of the Philippines at that time, Francisco Tello, to repair the injustices done to the natives and to conduct a plebiscite by which the natives would be asked whether or not they would accept the Spanish rule.<sup>37</sup> Hence, in 1598, having returned to Manila, Benavides had the Royal *Cedula* executed through the Governor-General. The different provinces in the Philippines, one by one, were given freedom to choose, i.e., to accept or not the Spanish sovereignty. Though there still remained a number of lacunae on how the plebiscite was carried out, there exists a number of accounts on how the natives gave their consent to the rule of Spain. This event again reveals how the Christian conscience, with the persistence of the friars and the Spanish King, was the guiding principle in the transformation of the Philippines.<sup>38</sup> This brings what may perhaps be considered as a paradox and the importance to the history of the Christianization of the Philippines, and what led the natives to accept Spanish sovereignty. The natives saw that it was the Spanish friars themselves who would help and defend them against the abuse of both Spaniards and their native tyrannical rulers.<sup>39</sup> This kind of strife would be a regular burning issue in the Philippines under Spain from the beginning until the end of its rule.

### *Socio-Political Changes and their Consequent Challenges*

As regards civil governance, Spain employed a system called *encomienda*. It was this strategy that re-organized the life of the natives in the Philippines, who had been living as dispersed tribes at the time of the Spanish arrival. The work of the *encomendero*, besides providing all the logistical support to the missionaries (building of church and convent included), was to pacify the natives within his jurisdiction and gather them into a town. The understanding was, by organizing the natives in such a way, they would be able to receive religious instruction and

<sup>37</sup> See also Villarroel, "The Church and the 'Philippine Referendum,'" 105-106

<sup>38</sup> Villarroel, "The Church and the 'Philippine Referendum,'" 126-127.

<sup>39</sup> "El Obispo de la Nueva Segovia D. Padre Fr. Pedro de Soria, por orden de S.M., juntó aquellos indios y dióles á entender las utilidades de la Monarquía de España, y cuán acomodado les estaba el que tuviesen por Rey a D. Felipe, que era el Rey de los Españoles, y el que les ampararía en paz y justicia. Nada á esto respondían los principales; y así les volvió el Señor Obispo á decir, que si habían entendido la plática que les había hecho; que cuando habían de responder. Levantóse entonces un indio zafio y dijo: 'decimos que queremos por nuestro Rey y Señor al Rey de España, porque nos ha enviado Castillas que nos libren de la tiranía y sujeción de nuestros principales, y Padres también que nos ayuden contra los mismos Castillas y nos defiendan de ellos.'" Juan de Medina, *Historia de los Sucesos de la Orden de N. Gran P.S. Agustín de Estas Islas Filipinas, desde que se descubrieron y se poblaron por los españoles, con las noticias memorables, Escrita de su propia mano, año de 1630* (Manila: Chofre y Comp.), 134.

live a civilized life. Spain was simply working on a framework coming from Greco-Roman idea of *polis*. The process necessarily meant a confrontation of cultures. Worse, entangled with motives to accumulate wealth, as what many conquistadores desired, the system was abused. As mentioned earlier, it was the reason why the friars were persistently vocal and struggled to uphold human dignity. But, looking at the overall situation of the Philippines in those times, it was indeed very tough.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of political governance, just like what it did in the Americas, Spain made use of the existing indigenous political structure in the Philippines. It adopted the old order to the new order it introduced insofar as it would suit its agenda. For example, the upper class in the native Philippine society were also given a new position based on Spanish political system. This would later carry on a legacy in the Philippine society. What would also consist the Filipino upper class or what is called the *principalia* were inherited and elected positions in the Spanish government of the Philippines.<sup>41</sup> Many of the native clergy would also be coming from families of these local tribal leaders. While the Filipinos were able to adopt to the Spanish way of administration, it also had a tendency to breed paternalism, and “[i]ts legacy has [also] proved a major obstacle to the growth of sound democratic institutions in the modern Philippines.”<sup>42</sup> One reason was the understanding that the whole land was owned by Spain and everyone was indebted to the King as a result of his conquest. As a result, many of these indigenous local leaders, though entrusted with a piece of land by concession from Spain, have weakened their hold on their former subjects and therefore had lost workers for their land.<sup>43</sup> Many ended up selling their land with no property like their subjects, despite keeping their political position.<sup>44</sup> The aftermath was long-lasting. It had become the pretext that contributed to a division between an upper class rich and a lower-class poor, or the masses, in Philippine society.<sup>45</sup> Thus, one could say that the poverty of many Filipinos today is still a result of its lingering effects.

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<sup>40</sup> “The exactions of the conquerors caused the natives considerable hardship in the beginning. This was not entirely owing to the Spanish cupidity but in part also to the fact that the subsistence economy of the Filipinos produced little in the way of a taxable surplus. It took a few years for them to learn how to produce the surplus” (Costa, *Asia and the Philippines*, 18).

<sup>41</sup> Phelan, *Hispanization*, 125-126.

<sup>42</sup> Phelan, *Hispanization*, 127.

<sup>43</sup> Jose S. Arcilla, *Introduction to Philippine History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press), 29.

<sup>44</sup> Arcilla, *Introduction to Philippine History*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> “Thus, right from the start, the small landowning elite was separated from the more populous but poor Filipinos. Philippine society was divided between the few rich and the numerous poor” (Arcilla, *Introduction to Philippine History*, 29).

*Witness of the Friars and Other Means Of Evangelization*

What had consistently been the light in the Spanish possession of the Philippines were the religious or the friars. They would also be referred to as ‘regulars,’ in contrast to the ‘seculars’ or diocesan priests. To say that the Filipinos simply accepted the Faith without a modicum of understanding, as some modern views would presuppose, has very weak grounds. Neither could it be said that they were simply coerced (by sword) to accept the Faith. The evangelization was carried out systematically and, as previously discussed, as humanely as possible. Philippines was subdivided into five mission fields among the five religious orders, Augustinians, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, and Recollects. The division was based on geo-ethnic lines. This was done in order for the missionaries to concentrate on a more homogenous mission field, considering the need to communicate the Gospel via the local language of the natives. Numerous accounts from missionaries tell how the evangelization took place. A good number tell stories of how their labors and sacrifices led to the conversion of the natives. These accounts have helped sustain the hope and gave strong encouragement to the Spanish missionary enterprise. One of the things that softened the resistance of the natives and led them to accept the Gospel, despite their belief in idols, and even the abuses of the *encomenderos*, were the lives of the friars.

A Franciscan, for instance, recorded how their fellow missionaries earned the trust of the natives upon witnessing their sincerity and selflessness.<sup>46</sup> Another example would be what happened to the Dominicans in *Pangasinan*, a region in the northern part of the Philippines. As soon as they arrived in 1587, they immediately set forth to do apostolic work in the said region. The place had gained reputation for the hostility of the natives against the friars, and the Dominicans, indeed, found the natives to be too stubborn to accept Christianity. Besides the fact that upon their arrival at the said region, there were a number of shrines dedicated to a certain idol, who the natives believed was using women as intermediaries.<sup>47</sup> It was said that the friars, with their zeal, minded not the maltreatment they suffered in the hands

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<sup>46</sup> “Y aunque su entendimiento era grosero, reparaban mucho en la vida áspera que hacían los frailes, y en la abstinencia que guardaban, y en que siendo misericordiosos para con ellos, eran rigurosos para sí. Y sobre todo notaban mucho que no querían sus haciendas ni su oro, y admirándose mucho de que hubiese hombres que menospreciasen el oro y las riquezas temporales, muchas veces lo trataban entre sí, juzgándolos por esto por grandes santos.” P. Marcelo de Ribadeneira, *Historia de las Islas del Archipiélago Filipino y Reinos de la Gran China, Tartaria, Cochinchina, Malaca, Siam, Cambodge y Japón* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1947), 48.

<sup>47</sup> “Tenían unos templos miserables, dedicados á un ídolo llamado *Ana-Gaoley*, el cual daba sus respuestas por medio de unas mujeres llamadas *Managanit*, que eran las que hacían el oficio de sus sacerdotisas. Juan Ferrando y Joaquin Fonseca, *Historia de los PP. Dominicos en las Islas Filipinas y sus misiones del Japón, China, Tungkin y Formosa* (Madrid: M Rivadeneyra, 1870), I, 258.

of the natives. Thus, providentially, the natives, upon witnessing how the friars for three years were living in penance and bearing so much hardships, started to accept Christianity.<sup>48</sup>

The victory of the Church in the Philippines could also be seen on how the Filipino pagan rituals were themselves transformed and adapted to conform with Catholic rituals. Today, it could be seen in the strong adherence of the Filipinos to popular devotions, which, in another way, some would call folk Catholicism. A writer once claimed that, “[T]he Church triumphed in the Philippines: by assimilating and preserving . . . whatever in the old cults it could Christianize. . . ,”<sup>49</sup> speaks of the great cultural transformation that Christianity brought. In addition to icons and rituals, because of the mandate to transmit the Faith through the native languages of the Philippines, a number of Christian literatures in the various dialects were already present in the early seventeenth century. The Dominicans for instance in 1593 was able to print a bilingual catechism i.e. Spanish and *Tagalog* (the language of the ethnic group of Southern *Luzon*). In 1610 and 1621 the Catechism of Bellarmine was published in the two indigenous languages, *Visayan* (language in Central Philippines) and the *Ilocano* (language in northern Philippines). These materials and the like<sup>50</sup> were primarily used by missionaries as they gave oral instructions to the natives. The work to evangelize was continuous and the effort to lead the Filipinos to a mature Christianity was in the works so much so that lay Filipinos also started collaborating with the missionaries.<sup>51</sup>

Another major change that the Church brought to the Philippines was in terms of education. Part of the Spanish system and missionary work was to put up schools. It is said that in 1565 the Augustinians already put a school in *Cebu*. The schools that the missionaries established were primarily for educating the natives in the Catholic Faith. Part of this was teaching the natives how to read and write, either in Spanish or in their native language. Primary education was not really intended to be put up, and for many decades until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was really no public education system to speak of. There was a “slow and painful progress”<sup>52</sup> in

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<sup>48</sup> “Los Milagros, dice, con que se han convertido estas gentes, han sido la vida de los ministros. . . . Después de tres años, en los cuales sólo bautizaron algunos niños (que las niñas no las querían dar), comenzaron á creer á los religiosos, y fue el principio el Señor tomó para ello, que como vieron los indios el modo de vivir de los frailes, los ayunos y penitencias que hacían, su paciencia en los trabajos, y que no solamente no les hacían mal alguno, antes acudían a sus necesidades, comenzaron á ablandarse y creer li que les decían.” *Ibid.*, 261-262, referring to the writings of Diego Aduarte, OP lib. I, cap. XXI.

<sup>49</sup> Nick Joaquin, *Culture and History* (Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 1998), 119-120.

<sup>50</sup> See also Pablo Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines: 1521-1898* (Manila: National Bookstore, Inc., 1979), 140; Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 30-33.

<sup>51</sup> See also Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 38-43.

<sup>52</sup> Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 55.

this respect. The University of Santo Tomas established by the Dominicans through the initiative of Miguel de Benavides was the most significant institute of higher learning. It would come as a shock later on, tantamount to a false accusation, that the friars have kept the people uneducated so they could not become mature or would not have the capacity to be united. Catechism and basic instruction were just the program for more than two hundred years, as it was also the case with Europe and the rest of the world. It shall be from the institutions established by the religious orders, as will be noted later in this chapter, where many Filipinos in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would be educated, and consequently, learn to assert their rights and nurture their desire for independence.

It is said that that there was no heresy during the Spanish period in the Philippines, but the concern was the return of hard-to-eradicate superstitious practices that some natives kept practicing.<sup>53</sup> The greatest challenge, though, religiously, and politically speaking, were security threats both from outside and within the Archipelago. Spanish and Filipinos together had to face for almost fifty years, i.e., 1600-1648, the Dutch threat of invasion. Within the archipelago, for almost the entire duration of the colonial period, piratical raids by *Moros*, had always threatened many coastal communities. This happened not only in the southern island of *Mindanao* but in many islands and coastal towns in the *Visayas* and even *Luzon*. There were also pockets of uprising from time to time. They arose from various motives.<sup>54</sup> Some came from the grievance by natives against harsh measures imposed on them by Spanish authorities such as tribute demanded by *encomenderos*. Some also arose due to religious reasons. These rebellions though were localized in nature. The Filipinos were yet to arrive at a consciousness as a common people in their struggle for independence. It must be noted too that, in the Philippines, only a handful of Spanish soldiers were present. Majority of the soldiers who had been fighting were natives. In many of the towns, the only Spanish presence were the friars. Notable was the work of the friars in pacifying local grievances. They were the ones who either stopped revolts from erupting or facilitated the restoration of peace and order, especially by being arbiters in peaceful agreements.<sup>55</sup> In the end, it

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<sup>53</sup> Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 141.

<sup>54</sup> “These revolts are caused partly by Spanish oppression, but even more by the influence of certain chiefs who desire to restore the old worship of idols, and who appears to the superstitious, credulous and fickle nature of their followers. They are in each case sooner or later quelled by the Spaniards, thanks to their bravery and possession of firearms; and severe punishments are inflicted on the ringleaders, thus restraining further attempts to throw off the Spanish yoke.” BRPI, vol. 38, 1674-1683, 11-12.

<sup>55</sup> “In several of these insurrections, great dangers are averted by the influence that the missionaries have acquired over the natives, and they sometimes are able even to prevent rebellions; they often risk their lives in thus going among the insurgents.” BRPI, vol. 38, 12; Phelan, *Hispanization*, 149.

had always been said that the friars should be considered the true conquerors of the Islands.<sup>56</sup>

Ironically, the Filipino fight for independence would primarily be vented against the friars and their expulsion from the Philippines. The backstory was much more complex. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, drastic changes were happening in Europe, especially in Spain. These included Bourbon Regalism and anti-clericalism. A repercussion of this would be the maladministration of the Philippines as a colony. Consequently, many Filipinos lost their confidence in Spain and doubt its sincerity to keep the colony well taken care of. Many Filipinos, especially those who were educated in Manila and in Spain, were influenced by Liberal ideologies, including the members of the Free Masonry. They spearheaded the anti-Spanish and pro-independence propaganda. Things became worse for the Catholic Church in the Philippines because of the constraints caused by the *Patronato*. It was not serving the demands of the Church at this time. This also included a need for more ministers in the Philippines to shepherd the huge and increasing Catholic population, which, Spain fell short of providing. Even the Spanish government, despite having already assumed an anti-Church stance, under the pretext of the *Patronato* because of the strong influence the friars had on the natives, still supported the Spanish religious in the Islands; this was to keep the Filipinos loyal to Spain. Couple this with some major gaffes on some crucial issues regarding ecclesiastical affairs in the Philippines, primary of which was the development of the native clergy. The consequences of which, as many historians agreed, became a rallying point for many, including the natives, to support the fight for independence.

### **The Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Rise of Nationalism**

The Catholic Church in the Philippines had always been aware of her separation from the government. However, she cannot but interfere in the political affairs in the Islands or be directly affected by it because of the *Patronato*. This became very evident with the rise of nationalism. The assertion of a national identity by Filipinos, initially, did not mean that the Islands would break away from Spain. They were more of a cry for reforms and a fight for equality of the rights of the inhabitants of

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<sup>56</sup> “De poco habrían el valor y constancia con que vencieron á estos naturales Legazpi y sus dignos compañeros, sino hubiera acudido á consolidar la empresa el celo apostólico de los misioneros. Estos fueron los verdaderos conquistadores; los que sin otras armas que sus virtudes, se atrajeron las voluntades hicieron amar el nombre español, y dieron al Rey, como por milagro, dos millones mas de vasallos sumisos y cristianos; estos fueron los legisladores de las hordas bárbaras que habitaban las islas de este inmenso archipiélago, realizando con su suave persuasiva los prodigios alegóricos de Anfon y Orfeo.” Tomas de Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810* (Madrid: Imprenta de Repulles, 1820), 148.

the Philippines (*insulares*) with those in Spain (*peninsulares*).<sup>57</sup> The first ones who expressed such a view were not politicians. They were priests, the Filipino secular clergy. They were first confronting a Church problem. Politicians and statesmen would enter the scenario much later. Intentions changed because of a number of unfortunate events that transpired in the Philippines. Thus, some resolved that a fight for independence through a revolution was the only solution.

The most important question for these fighters was, “What major change should happen and what victory should the Filipinos gain in order to tell themselves that they indeed have won?” In this case, the revolution that led to the cessation of the Spanish rule in the Philippines was not just a matter fueled by the desire of the revolutionaries to overthrow the Spanish government. The main issue was larger than it seems. At the same time, it may also be treated as lesser than it seems. It was both, because it was an issue that transcended the State itself. Those who fought for independence agreed that it was principally about the Spanish friars. The friars have become the “personification of Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines.”<sup>58</sup> Although many of the accusers were also anti-clerical and anti-Catholic, and many of their accusations were grossly exaggerated, they all agreed that the elimination of the friars was the crux of that battle. Winning this battle meant major changes in the Philippines. Worse, there was even an opinion that the friars were the culprit of the revolution and not those Spanish officers or civilians who wanted to empower themselves.<sup>59</sup> For the modern mind, it may be a politics simply being entangled with religion. However, for the Filipino revolutionaries, it was religion reigning over politics and everything.<sup>60</sup> The major battleground in this fight was the struggle for the rights of the secular clergy in the Philippines. It is also here that the formation of an independent Catholic Church or the IFI finds her roots.

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<sup>57</sup> Fidel Villaruel, *Dominicans and the Revolution (1896-1903)* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 1999), xxv.

<sup>58</sup> Term used by Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, *Shadows of Light: Philippine Church History Under Spain, a People's Perspective* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2016), 151.

<sup>59</sup> “El Gobierno debe saber que si no fuera por los Frailes no habría esta insurrección. Por los incesantes é innumerables abusos, crueldades, vejaciones y atropellos que venían cometiendo desde hace muchos años á esta parte, se vieron en la necesidad algunos filipinos de pensar en el levantamiento en armas, no contra el Gobierno, si no contra los Frailes, no en estos tiempos, si no después de dos o tres años, no con traición, si no con toda legalidad y nobleza, á semejanza de las naciones civilizadas, quiero decir, que, llegado ese tiempo marcado, formularían sus quejas ante el Gobierno, presentando al propio tiempo ciertas proposiciones, en la inteligencia de que si el Gobierno no accediera, declarararía la guerra.” RRP, “Open Letter to General Primo de Rivera urging him to put an end to the Philippine Revolt by Complying with the Insurgents’ demand to expel the friars 29 June 1897,” vol. 4, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Marcelo H. del Pilar, a foremost Filipino propagandist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has written several defamatory works against the friars. Among his famous works was entitled *la soberanía monacal en Filipinas, apuntes sobre la funesta preponderancia del fraile en las filipinas, así en lo político como en lo económico y religioso* (Barcelona: Imprenta de F. Fossas, 1888).



*The Native Clergy Issue: Its Antecedents*

The Philippines' freedom from the Spaniards was not an indication that the Revolutionaries had won. The proclamation of independence by the head of the revolutionary government, Emilio Aguinaldo, on 12 June 1898, did not come to fruition. The United States, with its new brand of colonialism took over the Philippines. The Americans still had to face a lot of uprisings from different regions in the Islands, particularly guerilla warfare. There were even accounts that several of them were receiving aids from Filipino secular priests. The United States still needed to grasp the real situation of the Filipinos to pacify the whole Archipelago so its government could pursue its agenda. In a report by the US colonial government, a testimony of Manuel Xerez y Burgos, a physician, and part of the revolutionary government, having been asked about the roots of the revolt of the Filipinos, had this to say:

The revolution of 1872 was not a Filipino revolt. It was entirely a military revolution. For seven or eight years the people had been asking the King of Spain and His Holiness the Pope to give them regularly ordained priests instead of friars; and as the friars hated the native priests, they denounced them. The friars have made it appear that this was a civil revolution, but it was a military revolution in this way - because the soldiers, the employees of the arsenal at Cavite and of the fleet, revolted because they wanted their pay raised. . . .

. . . The native priests were united to the Philippine people. . . .

. . . The people did not attack the Catholic religion; they only attacked the religious orders - the friars.<sup>61</sup>

The statement gives a brief look at the deep crack that gravely weakened the life of the Church in the Philippines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the great and swift progress of the Spanish and Catholic enterprise in the Philippines, it seemed that the development of a native clergy, had been one of its shortcomings. Although, as early as three months after the arrival of Domingo de Salazar in Manila, on December 1581, the Bishop already proposed the establishment of a school, wherein among those who would be educated shall be the future secular clergy of the Philippines.<sup>62</sup> This included the natives because he was anticipating that the time would come

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<sup>61</sup> *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President 1900*, vol. 2, *Testimony and Exhibits* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), 404.

<sup>62</sup> Jesus Ma. Cavanna, "The Filipino Clergy during the Spanish Regime," *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* vol. 38, no. 428 (May-June 1964): 290.

when they would be deemed ready to receive the Sacred Orders.<sup>63</sup> There had always been an intention on the part of Spain to admit natives to the priesthood. However, as influenced by their experience in Mexico, an over-cautious approach to the ordination of natives ensued.<sup>64</sup> From a reaction to a failed experiment, there came a hardening of bias against the promotion of the native clergy.<sup>65</sup> It had become, in the case of the Philippines, a lingering attitude for many, albeit not a strict policy. There was a development of the native clergy, but it had been more restrained than emancipated. The pervading reason was the view of the unpreparedness and even unsuitability of many Filipinos for the Sacred Orders. While for those who had become priests, there was a broad opinion that many were not as capable of becoming excellent pastors compared to the Spanish friars. This idea was aggravated by the *Patronato* system. As it turned out, the *Patronato* was not a fertile ground for nurturing a mature native secular clergy. Here, a conclusion of a study on the Philippine mission may help explain what happened. It says:

Perhaps the fairest explanation of the problem stems from a view of the whole ancient colonial system. No country then was training its colonies from ultimate independence. Since the Spanish Government, therefore, had absolutely no intention of training the Filipinos to take their own government, it was contrary to that whole current of thought to train them to take over their own Church.<sup>66</sup>

A research made by Luciano Santiago suggested that there may have been a native Filipino who became a priest as early as 1621.<sup>67</sup> What could be said with more certainty, though, was the first wave of native Filipinos being ordained priests started in 1698, with the assumption of Diego Camacho y Avila as Archbishop of Manila. It was part of his agenda to establish a Filipino secular clergy, and in this view, to build a seminary for native Filipinos. He was a believer in the capacity of the natives for the Sacred Orders.<sup>68</sup> He did this during a cacophony of pessimistic opinions

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<sup>63</sup> Cavanna, "The Filipino Clergy," 290-291.

<sup>64</sup> Costa explained an over-reaction that happened in the Church and the colonial government in Mexico because of the failure of the college of Tlatelolco to form native Mexicans to the priesthood. Horacio de la Costa, "The Development of Native Clergy in the Philippines" in Costa and Schumacher, 25-26.

<sup>65</sup> Horacio de la Costa, "The Development of Native Clergy in the Philippines" in Costa and Schumacher, 27.

<sup>66</sup> Francis X. Clark, *The Philippine Missions: A Study in the Apostolate in the Islands from King Philip of Spain to Pope Pius XII* (New York: The America Press, undated), 11.

<sup>67</sup> The name was Agustin Tabuyo and ordained by the Archbishop of Manila, Miguel García Serrano, OSA. Another *indio*, Miguel Jerónimo, may have been ordained four years later by Archbishop Poblete. See Luciano P.R. Santiago, *The Hidden Light: The First Filipino Priests* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987), 23-26.

<sup>68</sup> This is attributed to what he witnessed as the extraordinary talent of the *indios* both in Mexico and barely upon his arrival in Manila at the University of Santo Tomas. See Luciano Santiago, 32-33.

on the future of his plan. Among the most vocal was his predecessor, a Dominican, Archbishop Felipe Pardo. Pardo gave his reply (dated 6 June 1680) to a Royal Decree (dated 22 August 1677) issued by King Carlos II to pursue and promote the native vocations to the priesthood. He vehemently opposed the idea, for he did not believe that the *indios* were capable of such an undertaking. The tone of his words had a very strong air of superiority.<sup>69</sup> The decree of Carlos II had an interesting backstory to note. Francois Pallu, an emissary of *Propaganda Fide*, by accident, had a brief stay in the Philippines in 1672 and, therefore, was able to get a quick insider's view of the ecclesiastical situation in the Islands.<sup>70</sup> Forced to return to Europe, and having arrived in Madrid, he had some serious conversations with the president of the Council of Indies. The fruit of the discussion was a recommendation by the Council of Indies to Carlos II regarding the need to promote in the Philippines native vocations to the priesthood. The issuance of the order by the King did imply that something was missing with respect to the ecclesiastical life in the Philippines. In the end, nothing was done for the religious in the Philippines were also against the said idea. Letters were sent to Madrid, in effect, explaining the various reasons for their position.<sup>71</sup>

The push for the formation of a native clergy did not waver but was even pursued, despite the prevalence of contrary opinions, coming mostly from the friars. Through a Royal *Cedula* of Philip V, in 1702, a seminary for natives was ordered to be built. With the presence of a supportive Archbishop Camacho, there was a greater reason to hope that it would be carried out. The project gained more traction when, in 1704, two visitors, Cardinal Charles Thomas Maillard de Tournon and Juan Bautista Sidotti, by happenstance came to Manila.<sup>72</sup> Having set their sights on a stronger missionary push to the Orient, expressed their enthusiasm to establish a seminary in the Philippines. Efforts became concerted as a result. The vision was even amplified because they had in their mind admitting other Asians as well. This led to the establishment of the first seminary in Manila called San Clemente. Unfortunately, a downscaling of the project ensued, leading to closure of San Clemente and the opening of a new seminary in 1712, San Felipe.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "The archbishop stated the little inclination that the Indians have for theological and moral studies, and that there was the additional difficulty of their evil customs, their vices, their preconceived ideas – which made it necessary to treat them as children. He considered even the sons of Spaniards, born in the islands, unsuitable for priests, since they were reared by Indian slave women, because of their defective training and education in youth." BRPI, "Summary of a Letter by Archbishop Pardo (dated June 6, 1680), in answer to a letter from the king and a royal decree of August 22, 1677," vol. 45, 1736, 182.

<sup>70</sup> See Costa, *The Development*, 32-33.

<sup>71</sup> See Costa, *The Development*, 35-37.

<sup>72</sup> Tournon was sent by Clement XI to help resolve the Chinese rites issue between the Dominicans and the Jesuits. Sidotti was intending to do mission in Japan but had to stay in Manila because of a storm.

<sup>73</sup> Felipe was not pleased with the apparent overreaching of Sidotti in the affairs in Manila. It was a typical example of how breaching of boundaries between the Patronato and Propaganda fide happened.

Despite the persistent strong voices against the promotion of Filipino clergy, it continued to grow, yet slowly. The delicate situation turned bad during the term of Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina as Archbishop of Manila (1767-1787). Exceedingly aggressive to place the parishes into the hands of the secular clergy, he made imprudent decisions.<sup>74</sup> He ordained many Filipino secular clergy but with inadequate formation. This resulted to a terrible pastoral headache when they took over a number of parishes. It, therefore, reinforced the argument against the Filipino secular clergy and their capacity. The Archbishop, though, in a way felt justified at the beginning. There was a vacancy in many parishes as result of the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish domains, which took effect in the Philippines in 1767. Furthermore, the Bourbon Kings supported him who favored more the secular clergy over the religious.<sup>75</sup> He was only working in the line of the agenda of the said rulers of Spain in those days. Furthermore, despite the refusal of many friars, the Archbishop, and even the Governors-General during his term (Raón and Simón de Anda y Salazar), used as a legal basis the condition of the *Patronato*, to force the friars to leave their parishes.<sup>76</sup> Seeing the fiasco, though, Archbishop Basilio himself relented his decision.<sup>77</sup>

The actions of Basilio Sancho had another antecedent as well. His motivation was strengthened by another critical problem that had been recurring in the Church in the Philippines. It was the issue on ‘Episcopal Visitation.’ It had been a concern of many bishops even in the early years of the colonization of the Islands. The question on the authority of the bishops to visit the parishes under their jurisdiction that were under the friars was already simmering. The refusal of the friars in the Philippines to be visited by the bishops did have its legal grounds. It could be traced from the Bull of Adrian VI, *Omnimoda*, given to Charles V in 1522, granting the Order of Friars Minors special privileges in its work of evangelization in the Indies.<sup>78</sup> The presupposition of the privilege was the adverse and critical conditions in the mission

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<sup>74</sup> Even before in 1757 as the secularization was gaining traction under the Bourbon Kings, Governor Pedro Manuel Arandia threatened the Augustinians of exile should they refuse to submit to the conditions of the Patronato. See BRPI, Sinibaldo de Mas “Character and Influence of the Friars,” vol. 28, 1637-1638, 227; See also Schumacher, *Readings*, 201-202.

<sup>75</sup> Horacio de la Costa, “Episcopal Jurisdiction in the Philippines During the Spanish Regime,” in Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 62.

<sup>76</sup> An order for further secularization in 1767 coming from Madrid, also came with a Bull from Pope Benedict XIV. Giving further justification for the Spanish government in the Philippines (See Sinibaldo de Mas “Character and Influence of the Friars,” 228).

<sup>77</sup> “¡Ah carísimos míos! ¡Que es vivísimo y muy penetrante el dolor que aflige nuestro espíritu, y terribleísima la desconfianza en que, contra todo lo que nos habíamos prometido, nos hace entrar la negligencia y ningún amor que vemos y advertimos en algunos de nuestros padres curas para con los pueblos y almas que se han puesto a su cargo!!! Si ya en los principios; si aún casi reciente el espiritual desposorio de muchos de nuestros curas con su esposa la Iglesia, con pretextos frívolos, impertinentes y de ninguna monta, se ausentan, la desamparan, y para que vuelvan á unirse á ella necesitan del acuerdo, del estímulo y del aguijon, . . .” Ferrando y Fonseca, 5: 52.

<sup>78</sup> See Shiels, *King and Church*, 212-213.

lands, and, that the friars needed more liberty to work more efficiently. Furthermore, the friars also argued that, subjecting them to diocesan visitation would lead to a relaxation of their observances, compromise religious life and in turn their ministry.<sup>79</sup>

The concession and privileges granted to the Crown, which, the Crown in turn granted to the friars were indeed seen as pastorally sound. However, because of the Council of Trent, the Church began to assert more the role of the Prelate and his right over all the ecclesiastical affairs under his jurisdiction. This, consequently, created a friction between the bishops and the religious. Philip II, through his decrees, searched for a compromise, but in the end, the policy remained ambiguous.<sup>80</sup> It was also this arrangement that Philip II made under the *Patronato*, thinking that his privilege could be stretched to such an extent, that led to a kind of “nationalizing the orders within his realm.”<sup>81</sup> The dangerous repercussions of this idea, eventually, came to be experienced in the Philippines. The hold of the friars on the natives and their services have nurtured their indispensability to the maintenance of the Islands, not just in the Faith, but even politically. While it may have brought a lot of advantages to the Church, it also carried a great risk. The situation became a pretext for clashes between ecclesiastical and political authorities, worse, to a clash between the friars and the Filipino secular clergy.

#### *The Native Clergy Issue: A Growing Nationalism*

The aggressive secularization of the parishes resulted to a reduction of the Spanish friars in the Philippines. Many were discouraged, while some who were willing did not have the noblest of intentions.<sup>82</sup> This worsened the ecclesiastical situation in the Philippines. Adding to this, the troubles in Spain as result of the Napoleonic wars (1808-1814) the number of friars were further reduced. Out of necessity, more parishes were given to the secular clergy, many of whom were natives. In 1810, it was said that there were only about 300 religious in the Philippines, mostly old and infirm, compared to about a thousand secular clergy.<sup>83</sup> In contrast to the overall picture of the Archipelago, they were not enough. The Philippines at that time needed more pastors urgently.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Sinibaldo de Mas “Character and Influence of the Friars,” 226.

<sup>80</sup> Costa, *Episcopal Jurisdiction*, 48-49.

<sup>81</sup> Shiels, *King and Church*, 200.

<sup>82</sup> Lucio Gutiérrez, *The Archdiocese of Manila, A Pilgrimage in Time*, vol. 1 1565-1999 (Manila: Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, 1999), 194-195.

<sup>83</sup> See also Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*, 162.

<sup>84</sup> “En conclusión, resultando de cuanto va espuesto ser necesarios al pie de quinientos religiosos para la administración de los pueblos, mas, los que hayan de desempeñar los oficios y dignidades de sus respectivas religiones y conventos en la capital, y á mayor abundamiento, un sobrante proporcionado, aplicable á la reducción progresiva de las tribus de infieles que habitan en las tierras altas, . . .” (Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*, 162).

A notable shift in ecclesiastical landscape in the Philippines, therefore, took place. Already weakened, it would be battered by another storm. Liberal, anti-religious and anti-clerical policy started to creep swiftly into the Spanish peninsula particularly from 1836 to 1837.<sup>85</sup> The religious were suppressed. Their houses and their properties were confiscated. Therefore, to avoid the hostilities in Spain, the number of friars in the Philippines increased. Yet, there was another more positive motivation for it. The Catholic Church in Europe was also undergoing a revival of her missionary impetus. She was imbued with a renewed spirit to venture into new opportunities to evangelize. Spain, on the other hand, despite its adversarial attitude towards the Church, because of the loyalty of the Filipinos to the friars, supported their presence in the Philippines. Its effect created a shock in the Archipelago. It meant a preference and or favoritism for the friars over the Filipino secular clergy, which at that time was already nurturing a culture with undercurrents of nationalism. This was noted by an Englishman who traveled to the Philippines from 1819 to 1822. He talked about how the Church in the Philippines was governed. Recognizing the great contribution and the tremendous sacrifices of the Spanish Regulars, he also noted what seemed to demand a radical change. He observed that the relationship between the Filipino secular clergy with the friars was about to reach a boiling point. He noted:

Yet to the guidance of beings like these is the unfortunate Indian in great measure abandoned, even in his last moments: for from the very proportion of these to the Spanish priests, and from the recluse lives of the latter, nearly nine-tenths of all the clerical duties are performed by the Indian *clerigos*, . . . A keen and deadly jealousy subsists between these and the Spanish ecclesiastics, or rather a hatred on the one side, and a contempt on the other. The Indian clergy accuse these last of a neglect of their ecclesiastical duties, of vast accumulation of property and lands and which they say, “belongs to us Indians.” The Spaniards in return treat them with silent contempt, continuing to enjoy the best benefices, and living at their ease in the convents.<sup>86</sup>

At the beginning of the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as backed by several decrees, parishes were being turned over again to the friars.<sup>87</sup> It was sort of reverse secularization or de-secularization. One justification laid was, it was done in

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<sup>85</sup> The decrees of *desamortización* and *exclaustración* were implemented under Juan Alvarez de Mendizábal. (Gutiérrez, *The Archdiocese of Manila*, 200).

<sup>86</sup> BRPI, “Remarks on the Philippine Islands and on their Capital Manila, 1819-1822,” vol. 51, 1801-1840, 117.

<sup>87</sup> See also John N. Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 3.

view of recognizing the sacrifices of the friars in building such a Christian community and its church. There also existed valid pastoral reasons. Either there was a lack of secular priests or the friars were seen to be more capable of handling certain difficult territories.<sup>88</sup> What was evident, though, was a gradual displacement of the secular clergy from the parishes they once held. Ultimately, a connection was made. The government itself was supportive of it and was really part of its agenda. The strategy lessened the influence of the seculars on the Filipino people to deflate nationalist tendencies. Such was difficult to understand, without arguing, even with the least of malice, as coming from discrimination.<sup>89</sup>

The situation was aggravated when the Jesuits were reinstated in the Philippines in 1859. The parishes in *Mindanao* that were handled by the Recollects were given to them. As compensation to the Recollects, some parishes near Manila, already being administered by the secular clergy, were entrusted to them in return. This reinforced the protest that was begun by the Filipino clergy a decade before, i.e., in 1849, whose prominent leaders were Fr. Pedro Pelaez and Fr. Mariano Gomez.<sup>90</sup> They wanted to make it known, to the Queen and to the public, even in Madrid (via newspaper publication) that the Filipino secular priests were loyal to Spain and were as competent as the Spanish friars, contrary to what some would opine. Fr. Pelaez was influential to the secular clergy in the sense that he became an epitome of a Filipino secular priest of high standard. He was secretary to the Archbishop of Manila and co-founder of a Catholic newspaper, *El Católico Filipino*. Among the students whom he inspired and became a priest was Fr. Jose Burgos. In 1864, while a student at the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Burgos wrote a 24-page pamphlet entitled, *Manifesto to the Noble Spanish People*, which the loyal Filipinos address in defense of their honor and loyalty that have been grievously offended by the newspaper *La Verdad* of Madrid.<sup>91</sup> In the pamphlet, Burgos defended the Filipino secular priest as not inferior to the Spanish Regulars. He also said that their loyalty to Spain was unremarkable, and Fr. Pelaez (who rested in peace then) was neither a troublemaker nor a rebel.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> See also Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 3-4.

<sup>89</sup> “The continued campaign to deprive the Filipino clergy, particularly those in Manila, of their parishes, made clear that it was no longer a mere cause of displacement due to incapacity. The campaign could not but point to political and racial prejudice” (Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 9).

<sup>90</sup> Pedro Pelaez was a creole. He was born in Laguna. He was ordained priest in 1833 and obtained his doctorate in theology at the University of Santo Tomas. He became a lecturer both in Philosophy and Theology. He was a clergy of high intellectual caliber and became among the most prominent secular priest in the Archdiocese of Manila. Fr. Mariano Gomez was a parish priest of *Bacoor* in *Cavite*. Cavite is province adjacent to Manila that was most affected by de-secularization as a result of a decree on 9 March 1849.

<sup>91</sup> See also Fidel Villarroel, *Jose Burgos: University Student* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 1971), 60-61. Though the pamphlet was anonymously labelled, it was widely believed that it was indeed by Jose Burgos. Villarroel also concurs to the popularly held opinion.

<sup>92</sup> Villarroel, *Jose Burgos*, 60.

The Manifesto intensified what had been brewing in the past years leading to a nationalist struggle. It created dangerous tensions in Manila, between Spanish authorities and Filipino nationalists. In this case, the watchful eyes of the Spanish authorities, especially Church authorities and the friars, was on the Filipino secular clergy.

The flashpoint of the struggle was the execution of three Filipino priests, Mariano Gomez, Jacinto Zamora, and Jose Burgos himself in 1872. They were accused as the agitators of a mutiny that happened in a military detachment in *Cavite* (a province adjacent to Manila, with a Spanish fortification along the bay of Manila) on 20 January of the said year. Some soldiers and workers in the artillery of the said place took over the Fort of San Felipe after killing their commander. It is said to have stemmed from the grievance of some workers due to a reduction of their salaries. It was immediately quashed a day after, but for the Spanish Government it was already a clear and powerful statement that their hold on the Islands was under serious threat. The said three priests, were among those who were arrested. Almost a month after the incident, on 17 February, after a trial, they were put to death by strangulation, in front of the public. The Governor-General, Rafael de Izquierdo, before the execution, prodded the Archbishop of Manila, Melitón Martínez, twice, to defrock the priests before the execution. The Archbishop, however, found no grounds for such a demand. The Archbishop even pleaded Izquierdo to spare the life of the priests because of the grave scandal that it would create. A few weeks after the execution, arrests continued, including ten priests who were sent to prison in Guam.

The death of the three priests, in the eyes of those who were rallying for reforms and even the public, was a blatant injustice. A study, for instance, made by a Philippine Church historian on the said case concluded that there was really not enough evidence to convict them, including the penalties given to the other ten priests.<sup>93</sup> What was clearly seen was the attitude of Governor-General Izquierdo towards Filipino priests. This also affirmed a long-held suspicion about the motives behind the de-secularization of the parishes. It was a strong indication that the Governor-General, as the overseer of the whole Spanish affairs in the Philippines, saw the Filipino secular clergy as the real threat to the Spanish sovereignty.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 25-29.

<sup>94</sup> His intent was clearly to eliminate them from positions of influence in the future, and to obtain the dominance of the friars in the Philippine church. In a confidential letter written to the superiors of the friar orders in March 1872, he castigated the friars for having allowed the Filipino clergy to win over much of the influence which had formerly been theirs, and insisted that they recover their position for the sake of Spain (Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 29).



### *The Struggle for Independence*

A letter by the head of the Revolutionary government, Emilio Aguinaldo, to Pope Leo XIII in 1899, regarding the friars that were imprisoned during the Philippine revolution, gave a reassuring tone that they were treated well. The Filipinos for him, despite their fight for independence, were not forgetting their Christian foundations.<sup>95</sup> The cry of the Filipinos for independence, with the concomitant plea to expel the friars did not always mean what it seemed. While there were several cases wherein the friars were maltreated and abused, and some even died, there was still an air of religiosity permeating among the Filipino revolutionaries, particularly the common people. This has been one of the knotty issues in the Filipino fight for independence. An anti-Church character never penetrated the revolution. Those who were supporting it and even fighting for it, still attended religious services. People were even offering masses for them and were asked to pray for independence.<sup>96</sup> Many were even conscientious against committing any unChristian act during the revolution.<sup>97</sup>

The revolution that started in 1896, being on a nationwide scale, was the first that Spain experienced in the Philippines. Many revolts faced by the Spaniards in the Islands were local in nature, but would later on, as a hindsight, be treated by nationalists as part of the Filipino fight against colonial powers. Yet, Filipino nationalism did not just grow by itself. It was also a trickling down of French liberal ideas which already seeped into the new Constitution of Spain (Cadiz 1812) advocating that all humans have equal rights. The first and greatest aftershock of this change happened in the Spanish Americas. By 1821, all Spanish territories, except Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines have declared independence from their mother country.

Yet, the understanding of the Filipino as a people had its evolution as well. Before proceeding further, one has to take note of the nuances of the term 'Filipino' as the inhabitants of the Philippines are commonly referred to. Those who called themselves Filipinos were originally the Spaniards who were born in the

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<sup>95</sup> “Los resentimientos que en este pueblo ha provocado su conducta son de tal índole, y tan profundas las raíces del odio que han motivado, que a nadie habría admirado que, al estallar la revolución se hubiera llevado a cabo su total exterminio. Pero esto no ha tenido lugar, Santísimo Padre, porque este pueblo filipino, siempre calumniado, tiene el convencimiento de la justicia de su causa y yo ha querido olvidar ni un momento sus sentimientos de humanidad” (RRP, “Draft of Aguinaldo’s Letter to Pope Leo XIII Concerning the Imprisoned Friars,” vol. 3, 68).

<sup>96</sup> See also Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 49-52.

<sup>97</sup> “The greater majority of the religious among the rebellious provinces were spared because the faithful themselves and the leaders of the revolution – as happened in Salinas and Cavite Viejo – notified them in time. This was something they did not do for other Spaniards.” Evaristo Arias, “Apuntes sobre la Insurrección Filipina,” trans. Luis Antonio Mañeru and Fidel Villaruel in Villaruel, *The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*, 184.

Philippines or the so-called *insulares* or *creoles*. The natives had always been referred to as *indios*. The application of Filipino referring to all those in the Philippines, as a single nationality, was conceived along with the struggle for independence. There was a development of the idea that took place. This was why a Spaniard in the Philippines in 1842 once commented that, “The Filipino Spaniards do not think of forming a body with the (Indian) natives, nor is it possible for them to desire it.”<sup>98</sup> Interestingly enough, the champions of the Filipino clergy, Pedro Pelaez, was a *creolo* and Jose Burgos also was mainly of Spanish descent.<sup>99</sup> However, they would identify themselves with all the secular clergy, i.e., the rest of the mestizos and natives. In fact, most of the clergy came to be identified with the *indios*, while other lay people who were educated were more of *creoles* or *mestizos*.<sup>100</sup>

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state of the Philippines as a colony was in disarray. It was said to be in a state of neglect, and it was not a colony where one could say that Spain had plans of seriously improving. A report in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century already relayed the sad state of the Philippines caused by the neglect of the Spanish Government. It was also noted that due to the presence of few *peninsulares* in the Archipelago, it was difficult to find suitable ones. As a result, many leadership roles were even assumed by incompetent ones.<sup>101</sup> This negligence would later on be expressed in a reflection by a Dominican, Evaristo Arias, on the causes of revolution that led to the cessation of the Spanish rule in the Philippines. He mentioned several reasons by order of gravity. First, he said the *peninsulares* who came to the Philippines in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not serve as good examples to the natives. They were irreligious and many of them were not supportive in enriching the faith of the people, worse, they even denigrated them in their practice of the Faith.<sup>102</sup> The second major reason, he said, were the scandals that happened and the ineptitude of the administrators of the Islands, and as a result, Spain lost its prestige and respect among the Filipinos.<sup>103</sup> Third, he said that the laws that were passed in Madrid were not fit in the context of the Islands. The Philippines should have been treated as a special case. The leaders who were sent, besides being too self-serving, also had little knowledge of the Filipino situation and culture, and simply implemented policies according to their whim, which did not work in the end.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>98</sup> BRPI, Sinibaldo de Mas, “On the condition of the Philippines in 1842,” vol. 52, 1841-1898, 36.

<sup>99</sup> See Villarroel, *Jose Burgos*, 1-2.

<sup>100</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 31-32.

<sup>101</sup> “. . . [S]ucedo no pocas veces que vengan á recaer estas en manos extrañamente impropias é indignas de obtenerlas. En efecto, es cosa bastante común ver a un peluquero ó locayo de un Gobernador, á un marinero y á un desertor trasformado de repente en alcalde mayor, subdelegado y capitan á guerra de una provincia populosa, sin otro consejero que se rudo entendimiento, ni mas guias que sus pasiones” (Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810*, 134).

<sup>102</sup> See Villarroel, *Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*, 186.

<sup>103</sup> See Villarroel, *Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*, 187.

<sup>104</sup> See Villarroel, *Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*, 188-189.

A significant force that catapulted the Philippine revolution and its independence were the so called *ilustrados*. These were the educated people who came from the middle class of the Philippine society. A Filipino middle class rose as a result of major economic changes that happened with the opening of the Philippines to international trade beginning 1834. The upsurge in economic mobility benefitted primarily those who were already in a position of advantage in the Archipelago, i.e., local leaders and entrepreneurs (Spanish, *mestizos*, and natives alike), and they eventually formed the local elite of a town called the *principales*. One of the marks of their levelled-up status was education.<sup>105</sup> Many of them and their children became educated in the universities in Manila and a number in Europe, mostly in Spain. They were the ones who were deeply influenced with liberal ideas. Many, eventually, supported Free Masonry. In addition to these *ilustrados*, the number of *peninsulares* bringing with them the same liberal ideas, drastically increased in the Archipelago, particularly in Manila.<sup>106</sup> They expanded their influence among the Filipinos.

The *ilustrados* campaigned for changes in the Philippines. First in their agenda was the equal representation of the Archipelago in the Spanish Cortes. Such a representation was already turned down in 1837. The reason was not a disregard for the Philippines, but the impracticality of it, e.g., great distance between the Philippines and Spain and the great disproportion between the Spanish speakers and natives who, at the same time, were divided into different languages.<sup>107</sup> These *ilustrados* who engaged in publishing numerous materials calling for reforms in the Philippines were also members of the 'Propaganda Movement.' Besides their cry for reforms in the Philippines, they became vehement nationalists. Their main target were the friars and their elimination from the Islands. It was here where persons like Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar gained prominence because of their writings. Their names would later on be cemented in the annals of Philippine history as heroes. Their writings in Spain influenced other Filipinos as well. Their rallying point in the campaign for independence, where all nationalists, lay and clerics found a common ground, was the martyrdom of three priests in 1872, Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora. Having earned the ire of the Spanish government, the Propaganda Movement was suppressed. Jose Rizal, the epitome of the movement and who has already achieved a cult status among many nationalists, was exiled to a small and very remote town in *Mindanao*, called *Dapitan*.

Something more sinister, however, branched out from their campaign, an armed revolution. Seeing the Propaganda waning, Andres Bonifacio, having drawn

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<sup>105</sup> Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 118.

<sup>106</sup> Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 118.

<sup>107</sup> See also Costa, *Readings*, 146.

inspiration from Rizal and the Propaganda, led an underground movement called the ‘*Katipunan*.’ It was characteristically Masonic. They organized themselves for a bloody revolution, and so it was. On 26 of August 1896 the Philippine Revolution erupted. It was the day that the revolutionaries tore their Spanish *cedulas* while gathered in an outskirts of Manila called *Balintawak*, as the event would be later referred to as ‘Cry of *Balintawak*.’ Henceforth, a downward spiral of the hold of Spain in the Philippines became unstoppable. A series of revolutions ensued, which ended with a separation of the Philippines from its motherland, which, from the point of view of the Filipinos today (retroactively viewed), was 12 June 1898. As the revolution was seen to have failed, the IFI, in many ways, would act as the one consolidating and sustaining these efforts and contributions of these would-be-called Filipino heroes.

### *The Catholic Church and the Philippine Revolution*

The anti-friar character of the revolution cannot but drag the Catholic Church into the fray. Those who fought for independence, blamed the friars as the cause of the revolution. For the friars, on the other hand, the loss of Philippines from Spain was the work of the *ilustrados*. It allegedly started with the Propaganda Movement and Free-Masonry, which poisoned the minds of many Filipinos. These two, as some friars would contend, also influenced the Filipino secular clergy. However, looking at the backstory, an antagonism between the rise of the secular clergy and their nationalism, and the friars as keepers of Spanish sovereignty, cannot just be explained by the influence of Liberalism or Free-Masonry. Such was the intricacy of the issue that a Jesuit, writing to his superior, described what was happening in the Philippines, as a ‘double war,’ political and religious.<sup>108</sup> He said that the political wanted to win over to their side those who are fighting the religious war, i.e., the native secular clergy.<sup>109</sup>

The complication that the Philippine independence bore could be seen as a result of a common ground that the secular clergy and the leaders of the revolution had. There was an opportunity for mutual sympathy. There was that same desire for change. The revolutionaries demanded for reforms in the government, particularly equal rights, which was translated to the fight for independence. The secular clergy were also fighting for their right. They were protesting against their status as second

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<sup>108</sup> “Adest nunc in Insulis Philippinis duplex bellum, alterum politicum religious alterum. . . . In bello religioso congregiuntur ex una parte, religiosi ordines, sacerdotes indigenae, boni catolici; ex altera parte protestantes atque sectarii massonici. Hic omnes petunt satis clare exilium Ordinum Religiosorum, etiam Societatis et Espiscoporum; provocant sacerdotes indigenas ad schisma faciendum Religio (sic) autem catholica altas radices habet populo” (RRP, “Francisco Fordada to the General of the Jesuits on the Double War in the Philippines, 20 September 1899,” vol. 4, 33-34).

<sup>109</sup> RRP, “Francisco Fordada to the General of the Jesuits,” 34.

class in the care of their flock. They believed that they were also as equally capable as the friars. The roots however of these two parties were different. The revolutionaries, fueled by anti-friar, anti-clerical, and anti-church sentiments, at the core, were Liberalists. For the secular clergy, it was coming from the laws of the Church, and the very nature of evangelization. However, it cannot be denied that many in the secular clergy were influenced by secular or political ideologies, as well. There was, on the other hand, a common obstacle to overcome, the hold of Spain. In the case of the Philippines, it was through the friars.

The friars, on the other hand, acted according to their religious convictions. They saw how Liberalism, already condemned by Pius IX, ruined the Church in their beloved Spain. For those who desired political independence, their tool was to discredit the friars. For the secular clergy, it was to have a more direct connection with Rome, i.e., with the Pope. Both believed, however, that as long as the friars would remain, or would be in command of all the affairs in the Philippines, nothing will ever move forward. They have seen it and foresaw it. The Filipino clergy saw it when parishes were taken away from them. They all saw it, with the shocking and scandalous execution of three secular priests, Burgos, Gomez, and Zamora, in 1872.<sup>110</sup>

For many Filipinos, it was a real cry for change, both in governance of the Islands and in the Church. Once again, the change in the Church did not mean an abandonment of the Catholic Faith. For many Filipinos, having been molded for almost three centuries under the *Patronato*, remote was the idea of the Church and the State to be separate. This was also true for many of those who fought for independence. In the middle of the three-year revolution, when the first constitution of the Philippines was being drafted, on 25 October to 29 November 1898 in *Malolos* (a town in the province of *Bulacan*, north of Manila) the most extensive debate was about the separation of the Church and the State. Many were still thinking that in the case of the Philippines, there should be no separation whatsoever. They also realized that it was Christianity that was keeping the Filipinos together and making them what they are as a people.<sup>111</sup> Many clerics also supported the revolution because of the anti-friar sentiment, reinforced by the prodding of the revolutionary government.

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<sup>110</sup> Another event that may be mentioned was the suppression of a religious movement called *Confradia de San Jose*, through a massacre of Apolinario de la Cruz, its leader, and his followers in Quezon Province in 1841. It became a very popular movement that was millennialist in nature but was also seen as having had subversive tendencies. The bloody incident sent chills to the surrounding areas, and in Manila put many under suspicion, including *creoles* and *mestizos* (See Gutiérrez, *The Archdiocese of Manila*, 276-279; Costa, *Readings*, 187-188).

<sup>111</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, "Anticlericalism during the Reform Movement and Philippine Revolution," in Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 168-169.

However, the thought of separating from the Catholic Church was far from their minds. They actually hoped that they would still be able to keep to the Church the upper hand she had been enjoying in the Philippines.<sup>112</sup> In these proceedings, Gregorio Aglipay, as shall be elaborated below, was anointed to lead the secular clergy in the Philippines. This included the task to organize a delegation for Rome, to ask the Pope to have Filipino priests be ordained as bishops.

In the end, the friars, on their part would point to the *Propaganda*, the *ilustrados* and the Masonry as the real culprits. This was what their joint statement concluded, as they decided to let go of their hold on the Philippines:

We have borne patiently and continual insults and vilifications for more than eighteen months of masons and filibusters, . . . who have attributed to us the blame for the insurrection, and heaped dishonor on our persons and ministries by the most unjustifiable attacks, cast in their majority in the mold of demagogism and free thought. With Christian meekness have we endured the return to the peninsula of a multitude of persons who have resided a greater or less period in the islands, who have shown so little honor to our habit and profession; . . .<sup>113</sup>

One issue that constantly stood out in the scuffle was the immense power of the friars. The friars understood that they were accountable to the Spanish Crown, in talking about the revolt of the Filipinos. This was the assumption weaving throughout their memorial about the revolution. It was coming from the same frame that they had been holding on for three centuries, i.e., for the Church and for the Crown. They were being good shepherds in keeping the Filipinos to the Catholic Faith, at the same time, they were also acting as loyal sons of Spain. Even if the Spain they were looking upon was already bearing the brunt of many anti-Church elements. The friars in the Philippines had always tried to stop the influx of Liberal ideas from Spain. They acted, as concerned shepherds, and never lacked the anxiety, that it would later on filter through the Archipelago. This had been, for example, the concern of the topic of conversations between Bishop Francisco Gaínza of Nueva Cáceres and the Nuncio Barili in Madrid around the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gaínza felt consoled that Liberal ideas were not taking root in the Philippines, but anxiety remained because of the *peninsulares* who were exporting the ideas to the Islands.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Majul, “Anticlericalism during the Reform Movement and Philippine Revolution,” 170.

<sup>113</sup> BRPI, “The Friar Memorial of 1898,” vol. 52, 1841-1898, 230.

<sup>114</sup> Antolin Uy, *State of Church in the Philippines 1850-1875: The Correspondence between the Bishops in the Philippines and the Nuncio in Madrid* (Tagaytay City, Philippines: Divine Word Seminary, 1984), 58.

Yet, to keep the Philippines, the stand of the Monarchy was to stop the secularization or even reverse it so the friars could exercise their influence. In Spain, the government, though apostate in nature and having prohibited the religious orders, maintained the *Colegios Misioneros de Ultramar* so they could still send missionaries to the Philippines not for the sake of the Gospel but for power.<sup>115</sup> Ironically, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Spaniards who came to the Philippines were anti-religious and hostile to them as well. This was also what gravely scandalized many natives and was also at the roots of the anti-friar sentiment.<sup>116</sup> Things became worse because the religious situation in the Philippines was also very pale. A lot of people were not well instructed and there was a disproportion between the population of the parishes with that of the priests both secular and regular. Such was also a result of the decadence that happened decades before. Yet, the friars had in mind the belief that “to help Spain they thought they were helping the interests of the Church.”<sup>117</sup> This was one thing perhaps that the friars, for all their virtues and contribution, were in dissonance with Philippine situation. As a result, they were not supportive of the independence of the Filipinos.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were five bishops in the Philippines and all of them were Spanish. They would fight for their right to stay in the Islands but in the end, with the assumption of a new colonial power, the Holy See would be able to have a more direct hand in the administration of the ecclesiastical affairs in the Philippines. The issue of nationalism would remain and would still be a burning issue among the secular clergy. Many clergy, though, would express their full support to their bishops and to the Pope. At the same time, they would express that reforms should also happen. Among them was for the friars to relinquish the role that they have been accustomed to assume in the Philippines. A group will splinter, led by other nationalist clergies, upon seeing how things were not turning out as they expected. This came from a dissatisfaction, as perceived, on the actions of Holy See. Some clergy and lay people would break away from the Roman Catholic Church, and form a church of their own, the IFI.

*The Catholic Church at the end of the Spanish Rule and the Arrival of the Americans*

The 1896 to 1898 Revolution led to the departure of many friars from the Philippines. Many parishes had been abandoned as a result. The Church in the Philippines needed a major overhaul. This time, she had to work on new grounds, under new conditions, based on new laws, as provided by the new rulers of the

<sup>115</sup> Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 200.

<sup>116</sup> Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 202.

<sup>117</sup> Gutiérrez, *Archdiocese of Manila*, 213.

Philippines, the United States of America. The victory of the American naval forces, led by Admiral George Dewey, against the Spanish fleet at the bay of Manila on 1 May 1898 marked this new beginning. The point from which the Catholic Church would deal with the new establishment would be the freedom of religion. This meant that union between the Church and the State was already out of the question. A major issue that the Church in the Philippines needed to address was to heal the rift between the Filipino secular clergy and the friars. In this matter, the Holy See decided to send the Archbishop of New Orleans, Placido L. Chappelle, as Apostolic Delegate. He arrived in Manila in January 1900. He would have little success because he was perceived to be more supportive of the Spanish bishops and the friars than the Filipino secular clergy.

Immediately, he was presented with eight recommendations (dated January 1900) for the reform of the Church in the Philippines prepared by fifty-six representatives of the secular clergy. It included the need to appoint Filipino bishops as coadjutors but with right of succession and the inappropriateness of giving back the parishes to the friars.<sup>118</sup> Another list of six recommendations was sent to him by a group of nationalist clergies from *Jaro, Iloilo* (dated 13 February 1900).<sup>119</sup> It had a similar spirit and tone regarding appointment of Filipinos to the episcopate and a 'no return' clause of the religious to the parishes. In view of the shortage of clergy to supply the parishes, it suggested that foreign secular clergy may be accepted. This was followed by an additional four suggestions (dated 21 February 1900) by the representatives again of the Filipino clergy in Manila.<sup>120</sup> It suggested that the Archbishop of Manila should also be made into a Cardinal. The rest pertained on how to divide the Archipelago into different ecclesiastical territories. By this

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<sup>118</sup> "1) Necesidad de obispos filipinos coadjutores con derecho de sucesión. 2) Inconvenientes que hay en que vuelvan a ocupar parroquias las cuatro órdenes regulares. 3) Personal que debe administrar las parroquias a falta de clérigos filipinos: los padres jesuitas, paules, demás congregaciones religiosas. 4) Nueva división parroquial en parroquias más pequeñas para facilitar las más perfecta administración. 5) Magistraturas eclesiásticas; deben ser desempeñadas por clérigos del país al igual que en las demás parte del mundo. 6) Reorganización de los seminarios: convendría se encomendasen a los padres jesuitas. 7) Necesidad de reorganizar algunas congregaciones religiosas filipinas. 8) Fondos, bienes eclesiásticos" (RRP, "Points for Church Reform Recommended by a Meeting of Fifty-six Priests Convoked by the Apostolic Delegate January 1900," vol. 4, 49).

<sup>119</sup> "1) La cura de almas de Filipinas debe proveerse con sacerdotes filipinos. 2) Las comunidades religiosas, que aún existían en tiempo de la dominación española, no deben volver a ejercer en el país la cura de almas. 3) Si el clero filipino por su número no es suficiente a llenar las necesidades de la religión, puede acudirse a la cooperación de sacerdotes seculares extranjeros, con carácter provisional, interim sean necesarios. 4) Deben crearse seminarios en las diócesis dirigidos por sacerdotes filipinos. 5) Deben hacerse obispos filipinos y proveer con ellos las diócesis en Filipinas. 6) Un centro superior de enseñanza para las carreras de licenciado y doctorado en Filosofía, Teología, y Derecho canónico" (RRP, "Memorial of the Jaro Clergy to Monsignor Chappelle," vol. 4, 233-239).

<sup>120</sup> "1) Que el Arzobispo de Manila esté investido de la dignidad de Cardenal. 2) Erección de arzobispados, uno en Bisayas y otro en Luzon. 3) Un obispado en cada región donde se habla idioma distinto. 4) Una parroquia por cada 4,000 almas" (RRP, "Additional Suggestions for Church Reform by the Committee of the Clergy 21 February 1900," vol. 4, 50-51).



time, the Filipino clergy have also found a more solid ground to their cause. Leo XIII had issued *Ad Extremas Orientis Oras* on 24 June 1893. It was an Encyclical that spoke of the need to promote the native clergy and even to train them with a view that some would be suitable to assume the Episcopate. Although it directly addressed the Church in India, it had a lot to say to the situation of the Philippines.

The friars had always taken a defensive stance and denounced to-the-teeth the accusations against them. A controversial part of the dialogue of the bishops with Msgr. Chapelle was the insistence by the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Bernardino Nozaleda, on the incapacity of the Filipino secular clergy to be authentic pastors or parish priests, and for them to become bishops was almost impossible. His position became more hardened because of the threat of the Protestants in the Islands, which, he believed the secular clergy would have no competence to confront.<sup>121</sup> This was also supported by other bishops, to the point that they were not even supportive of the development of the Filipino secular clergy. They even had been projecting their demise.<sup>122</sup> The dialogue indeed showed the grim reality of the Church in the Philippines. The antagonism between the regulars and seculars run wide and deep.<sup>123</sup> It could not simply be dismissed as an ordinary and passing problem.

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<sup>121</sup> “The defense of the Catholic truth demands outstanding men with great gifts of mind and heart. But everything in the Filipino clergy negates these gifts. The very narrowness of the soul of the Filipino priest, for which reason he is reduced to almost nothing in the estimation of any European, will give his enemies cause for mockery. The more the people are enlightened by the Americans the more frequently do they avoid religious disputations. There are many battles against the Protestants which await the Church; to win them, it is not so much a courageous soul, as solid learning and a complete and unerring knowledge of Apologetics that are needed.” (Quentin Garcia and Jose Arcilla, trans. “Acts of the Conference of the Bishops of the Philippines Held in Manila Under the Presidency of the Most Reverend Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Placide de la Chapelle - 1900,” *Philippiniana Sacra* vol. 9, no. 26 (1974), 317).

<sup>122</sup> . . . [The] bishop of Cebu said as follows: ‘It is good to discuss this matter but not without prudence. I am convinced that the Filipino clergy by themselves will disappear. My opinion is based on these reasons: 1. The priest’s life, all of it, should be dedicated to sacrifice and labor, especially at present; but now the Filipino clergy does not have the desire for self-denial and work. 2. The usual pious offerings to the church have decreased very much and the parochial incomes have been very low. When, therefore, this is realized by the Filipino clergy who depend greatly on the profit to be obtained from the parishes, very many will turn away from clerical life.’ The words of the Archbishop of Manila and the Bishop of Cebu are confirmed by the Bishops of Nueva Segovia and Jaro” (Garcia, “Acts of the Conference of the Bishops,” 317).

<sup>123</sup> “The Archbishop made the following points: 1) The Filipino clergy were the main cause of the prolonged captivity of the friars. ‘I speak from my several observations. Not all are guilty; but speaking generally, they are ill-affected towards the Friars.’ . . . 2) A very consoling thing and one redounding to the great honor of the Catholic people of the Philippines took place during the friars’ imprisonment. Many of the latter were sickly and they could not have endured the sufferings and privations of imprisonment if persons of both sexes, especially the women, fearless of any terrors, had not extended a generous hand to help them. On the contrary, the clergy shied away from the friars as from strangers; and very few among them did them a good turn. . . . 3) The clergy supported the *Katipunan*, a Masonic society, by all means they could. I know with certainty that some clergy were members of that evil group, that others supported its plans. 4) . . . Finally, it is the clergy who supported the openly Masonic paper called *La Patria*.” (Garcia, “Acts of the Conference of the Bishops,” 347)

Apostolic Delegate Chapelle returned to the United States after a year and a half of ironing out the Church problems in the Philippines. He was not able to come up with a concrete solution. He was deemed not to have been discerning enough to the delicacy of the situation. This included a lack of sensitivity to the nationalist sentiments of the Filipino clergy. What may have been lacking in the comments on the discussion was a degree of admission of a fault on the part of the Church and a questioning of why the rebellion had reached to such a point that even the Filipino clergy had become partisan against the friars. Something must have been amiss pastorally speaking. This could be gleaned again through the reflection of a Dominican, Evaristo Arias. Having highlighted what the Masons did, he said that some friars themselves have had their shortcomings as well, which, in his opinion, could be ranked as the fifth cause of the revolution.<sup>124</sup> A factor that have magnified the shortcomings of the friars was their role in the towns. They had become a double-edged sword. Some have used their influence against the local leaders or *principales* and those who were better educated.

The hostilities that happened have made the bishops and the Apostolic delegate overlook that there was a middle ground between nationalism among the clergy and faithfulness to the Holy See. This could best be expressed through the letter to Msgr. Chapelle (dated 27 January 1900) by Fr. Mariano Sevilla and Fr. Jose M. Chanco of the Archdiocese of Manila. They were well-respected clergies and leaders in the Archdiocese. Their stand best expressed those priests who are both nationalists and faithful to the Holy See. Their sincerity is difficult to doubt. They expressed their love for the religious orders and have even defended them, in private and in public. They undoubtedly were defenders of the Catholic Faith and her institutions in the Islands. However, the native clergy have also suffered a lot of discrimination and humiliation in the hands of the friars. They further argued that it belongs to any civilized nation to have a flourishing native clergy. Therefore, for the good of the Church in the Philippines, according to them, the friars should

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<sup>124</sup> “Algunos no han vivido como la corrección debida á su estado: han cuidado más de su persona que de su parroquia, mirando de mejor gana los ingresos del beneficio que los trabajos del cargo: otros han olvidado la manera pastoral y desconfianza de tratar al indígena y han procedido un forma despótica y dura, incluso con los principales y más ilustrados; algunos se han hecho cabecillas ó fautores de algunos de los bandos en que se prevenia andar divididos los pueblos, y va siempre la imparcialidad, el examen reflexivo la justicia han presidido á sus informes oficiales y particulares por más que en la inmensa mayoría de los casos aun excediéndose, siempre ha sido con el fin de beneficiar á sus feligreses. . . pues es un hecho cierto é indiscutible que el Clero Regular de Filipinas es ahora más virtudes, más culto, y más prudente que lo era hace medio siglo...” (Evaristo Arias, “Apuntes Sobre la insurrección de filipinas,” Tomo 98, Fol. 60-61, UST Archives).

not be restored. It was necessary, he said, should the Church in the Philippines be reformed.<sup>125</sup>

Pope Leo XIII will get things going for the Church in the Philippines and will give his marching orders through the Apostolic Constitution *Quae Mari Sinico*, issued on 17 September 1902. It was promulgated in the Philippines on 8 December 1902 with the arrival of a new Apostolic Delegate, Giovanni Battista Guidi. This signaled that a new era in the life of the Church in the Philippines has begun. In the said Apostolic Constitution, two poles that were being held in a balance could be perceived. First, was the continuance of the friars in the Philippines and the hold of Spain on the ecclesiastical life in the Archipelago. Second, the takeover of the American Government, which, included her right to say something on the exercise of religion in the Philippines. This included her right to put the Catholic Church under her law. This time, the Holy See had become more in touch with real situation in the Islands. She realized that she needed a more radical approach, a different frame of thinking to manage the ecclesiastical affairs in the Philippines. The United States, because of her own colonial ideology, Protestant at the core, would favor the reduction of the Spanish influence on the Filipinos.<sup>126</sup> With respect to her relationship with the Catholic Church, the US would prefer and support more, non-Spanish or better American ecclesiastical leadership.

The Apostolic Constitution promoted the Filipino secular clergy and its development. It also supported their promotion to higher offices, but cautioned them against partisanship.<sup>127</sup> It also reminded the Church in the Philippines to

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<sup>125</sup> “Profesamos verdadero amor a las corporaciones religiosas y a todas las instituciones de la Iglesia católica; las hemos defendido en público y en privado aun en medio de los sufrimientos y penalidades del destierro e que hemos sido condenados por manejos e intrigas de los frailes; . . . evidente muestra de esta nuestra disposición de ánimo la hemos dado y así la consignamos en el periódico ‘EL CATOLICO FILIPINO’ fundado y sostenido por el Clero del país en defensa de la Iglesia Católica y todas sus instituciones... Con lo expuesto, fácilmente se comprenderá cuán legítimas son la aspiración del Clero y la del pueblo filipino, de que se confieran las magistraturas y beneficios eclesiásticos al mismo Clero nativo, al igual de lo que sucede en todas las naciones cultas, no solo para ponerle a cubierto de las arbitrariedades de que venía siendo objeto por parte de los Magistrados eclesiásticos, por considerarse estos, de raza superior y sentir desafecto y fuerte antipatía hacia la que es calificada de inferior, sino también para arrancarle de la humillación y abatimiento en que le han querido sumir, . . . suplicamos humildemente a la Sede Apostólica que los frailes de las cuatro corporaciones en Filipinas por el bien de la Iglesia y tranquilidad pública, no sean habilitados ad curam animarum, ni para los cargos eclesiásticos; . . .” (RRP, “Memorial of the Filipino Clergy to the Apostolic Delegate on the Need for Reform, 29 January 1900,” vol. 4, 45-46).

<sup>126</sup> This pertains to the idea of “Manifest Destiny” whereby the Americans believe that God, working on his divine providence, have given the Americans a special mission in the world (See also Gerald Anderson, “Providence and Politics behind Protestant Missionary Beginnings in the Philippines,” in Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 279-300).

<sup>127</sup> QMS, 5.

have a program for the continuing formation of the secular clergy so they may become more effective evangelizers.<sup>128</sup> The Constitution also enjoined the bishops to establish seminaries and strengthen the formation of those who would become priests.<sup>129</sup> With regards to the regulars, the Pope enforced their obligation to abide by the norms of their life as religious and it would be up to the bishops to decide what parishes will be given to them.<sup>130</sup>

While it was a formal declaration that the ecclesiastical affairs in the Philippines be directly under the supervision of the Holy See and the cessation of the *Patronato Real*, it did not create a very warm reception among many Filipino clergy. For the nationalists who were loyal to the Holy See, they were more generous in interpreting the document and looked at its more positive insights. Although, they themselves had wished that the Pope should have made it clearer regarding concrete issues such as the appointment of Filipino priests as bishops.<sup>131</sup> The Association of Clerics of *Jaro* (A diocese in the *Visayas* region), on the other hand, lamented that the document was not strong enough to assert the rights of the Filipino clergy. This almost led to a complete schism that questioned not the teachings of the Church but more of its disciplinary hold on them.<sup>132</sup> The most radical reaction would be from the likes of Gregorio Aglipay and their sympathizers. They were frustrated. True to what they have expected, the Apostolic Constitution would not help their cause, hence, they decided to part ways from the Catholic Church.

### **The Beginnings of Iglesia Filipina Independiente or Aglipayan Movement**

As mentioned earlier, the first mover to promote the rights of the national clergy in the public sphere was Fr. Pedro Pelaez in the 1850s followed by his student Fr. Jose Burgos, who was among the three Filipino priests sentenced to death in 1872. Their plea and audaciousness to address a wrong in the ecclesiastical governance of the Philippines was well-founded. It was a genuine call for reforms. The Propaganda Movement, ferocious, virulent, generally Church-hater in its attack, arrived in the scenario, much later, in the 1880s. It was the time when the Filipinos who had been studying, and later staying in Spain, decided to address their desire for reforms in the Philippines in the Peninsula. For some of them, like Jose Rizal, for the Philippines to become an independent nation, was also favorable.

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<sup>128</sup> QMS, 5

<sup>129</sup> QMS, 6.

<sup>130</sup> QMS, 8, 9, 10.

<sup>131</sup> Daniel Franklin M. Pilario, "Introduction: Quae Mari Sinico and the Church in Disarray," in *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, ed. Daniel Franklin Pilario and Gerardo Vibar (Quezon City, Philippines: St. Vincent School of Theology, 1995), 9.

<sup>132</sup> Pilario, "Introduction: Quae Mari Sinico," 10; See also, RRP, "The Final Break in Jaro," vol 4, 249.

The nationalist priests and the ‘*Propagandistas*’ (members or supporters of the Propaganda Movement) would find a common cause, i.e., grievance against their masters, the Spanish authorities, he be a friar or a bureaucrat. Even if the *propagandistas* saw that they needed to address a political problem, as they saw what was also taking place in the Peninsula, they vented their grievance against the friars. It was not easy to separate the two, as much as it was not simple for the friars to separate their service to the Church and their loyalty to Spain. With this, one could say that the root-cause of the revolution was religion. As an effect of the religious nature of the revolution, a strongly nationalist and eventually separatist movement would arise, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*.

The group was associated with Gregorio Aglipay, a nationalist priest and a revolutionary. The movement would also be called ‘Aglipayans.’ Looking closer at the beginnings of this separated church, one would discover that it was not exactly founded by Aglipay. Other personalities and groups were involved. It was a church that drew its force from the nationalist sentiments among the Filipino clergy. It was reinforced by what it felt against the way Rome addressed the issues in the Philippines. Its foundation, 3 August 1902, was a time when the Americans have already pacified the whole Archipelago and the Holy See was fixing a disordered Catholic Church in the Philippines.<sup>133</sup> It was this separation that IFI members distinguished themselves, with a sarcastic tone, from the Catholic Church who are under the Pope and whom they call as Roman or *Romanistas*.<sup>134</sup>

### *The Emergence of Gregorio Aglipay*

The IFI holds that it was founded from below, by the people, by the laborers who wanted to have a church that was for them. As its official narrative claims:

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<sup>133</sup> “In this period of continuing unrest and resistance a movement which was ostensibly non-political was born. Membership came from all-over the country and served as one instrument expressing the strong sentiment and aspirations of the Filipino people to be free from foreign domination which was the rightful nationalist goal of that period. This was the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*.” Apolonio M. Ranche, “The Founding of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*,” in *Doctrine and Constitutional Rules and Important Documents of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente* compiled by Apolonio M Rache, 119. Aglipay Central Theological Seminary, Urdaneta, Pangasinan (Henceforth Ranche-ACTS).

<sup>134</sup> “Following this mass secession an appeal has been made to the Pope requesting greater privileges for the Filipino priests and seeking reforms in the Church in the Philippines. This appeal was denied. When there appeared no more hope of securing reform within the Church, a meeting was called upon by Dr. Isabelo de los Reyes on August 2, 1902 in Manila and a national church was organized. Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, vicar general of the Philippines under President Emilio Aguinaldo was spontaneously proclaimed supreme head of the new church” (Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., “Independent Church Passes Milestone. New Church is Offshoot of Desire for Reforms.” *Chronicle* – August 2, 1952, page 1, IFI Box, UST Archives).

In spite of the many contentious problems that would continue to beset the clergy, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* had, somehow, always surfaced to be on the side of the poor and the oppressed. The Church's stand of *Pro Deo et Patria* had made the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* a rallying symbol in the Filipinos' struggle against foreign domination. And until today, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* would be the only living Church in the world to be proclaimed by worker, the unionists of the *Union Obrera Democratica*. Up till the end of the American colonial occupation in the Philippines, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* had become a vessel that would carry on the people's nationalist ideals and aspirations through the liturgy, rituals, music, and worship.<sup>135</sup>

There is an ambivalence in saying that Fr. Gregorio Aglipay, a Catholic priest, was the founder of the Philippine Independent Church. The said union of workers, referred to in the text, was being led by another staunch nationalist and *propagandista*, Isabelo de los Reyes. The nomination, though, of Aglipay to be the supreme bishop or *Obispo Maximo* of the IFI was not mere accident. Even if Aglipay himself, by his statements and actions, manifested his trepidation on it. De los Reyes and many nationalists saw him as the person who was most fitting to assume leadership in a new Filipino national church. His visibility and actions in the revolution could not be denied. He was among the most prominent leaders in asserting the rights of the Filipino clergy. He was among, if not the most, political and nationalist among them.

Aglipay had his priestly formation under the Diocese of Nueva Segovia. It was an ecclesiastical territory that covered Northern and Central *Luzon*, during that time. The said diocese was supposedly his place of incardination, but when he was ordained in December 1889, he was incardinated in the Archdiocese of Manila.<sup>136</sup> After his ordination, within a span of six years, i.e., 1890-1896, he was already assigned to five different provinces under the Manila Archdiocese. These frequent transfers, as a newly ordained priest, gives a hint that there was an irregularity in his assignments. It is said that, even in this early period, he was already associated with subservient movements and personalities, like Isabelo de los Reyes, a fellow Ilocano and would

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<sup>135</sup>*Incarnating Our Heritage, Consolidating the Faithful, Strengthening our Response: The Iglesia Filipina Independiente's Touchstone on its Faith and Witness Mission* (Manila: Iglesia Filipina Independiente, 2002), 3.

<sup>136</sup>His dimissorial letter was issued by vicar general of Nueva Segovia but he was really ordained for Manila. He is said to have applied to be transferred to Manila and was able to hurdle some obstacles after gaining the support of two influential friars, Eugenio Lete, of the Manila Cathedral Chapter and Gregorio Echavarría, rector of the University of Santo Tomás (See RRP, vol. 1, 19-20).

be proclaimer of the IFI.<sup>137</sup> Nothing much, could be derived, at least directly, on the involvement of Aglipay in the revolution in his first six years as a priest. What the documents attest was that he served in the different parishes and obeyed the directives on him to be transferred without rancor. It was also highly probable that he knew the leaders of the Propaganda Movement and of the Philippine Revolution, e.g., Emilio Aguinaldo, Jose Rizal, and Apolinario Mabini, from his sojourn in Manila by reason of his studies, from 1876 to 1883.<sup>138</sup> His whereabouts during the revolution would attest that he was supporting or even acting as intermediary among the revolutionary forces in *Luzon*.<sup>139</sup> A finding by William Henry Scott has established that in March of 1897, while serving as a coadjutor priest in a parish in Victoria, *Tarlac* (a town in Central *Luzon*), he founded in the said town a local chapter of the Masonic movement, *Katipunán*, in March 1897.<sup>140</sup> This was two months after the town was attacked by revolutionary forces in January 1897. Aglipay is said to have aided the revolutionaries who attacked Victoria.<sup>141</sup> He is also said to have performed his duties as a priest while the hostilities were happening. He was administering the last rites and worked out the release of the town chief of police, Ignacio Villarta.<sup>142</sup> One could say that, even in his early years, Aglipay was already influenced by anti-establishment movements caused by the influx of liberal ideas in the Philippines, especially in the universities in Manila. He joined and supported the revolution the moment it erupted.

A note on the Philippine Revolution. The Philippine Revolution had three phases. The first phase started on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1896 and ended with a temporary truce, or what is called ‘Pact of *Biak-na-Bato*’ (referring to the name of the place in the Province of *Bulacan* in *Luzon*), on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1897. The treaty fell short of granting to the revolutionaries what was agreed upon. In effect, there was no peace to speak of. The second phase came when Emilio Aguinaldo, head of the revolutionary government, having been exiled in Hongkong, returned to Manila, and again declared war against Spain on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1898. He, however, arrived with the American fleet that already defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay on 1 May 1898 (said to be a mock battle). Aguinaldo declared independence of the Philippines from Spain on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1898. He is said to have had negotiations with the United States that the latter would grant/respect the independence of

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<sup>137</sup> There was already a growing suspicion about him [William Henry Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism* (Quezon City: Aglipay Resource Center, National Priest Organization, 1987), 16].

<sup>138</sup> See also Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, 9-11.

<sup>139</sup> See also RRP, vol. 1, 36-38.

<sup>140</sup> Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, 18.

<sup>141</sup> Simeon Mandac, *Life and Work of Obispo Maximo Gregorio L. Aglipay*, 5 and 8, in Frank Mosher Library, Saint Andrew Theological Seminary, Quezon City, Philippines (Henceforth the collocation will be referred to as SATS Library).

<sup>142</sup> Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, 20.

the Philippines. Having declared independence, and he as president, he would organize a new republic, formulate its constitutions, and appoint its government officials. While this was happening, the United States was also in the process of acquiring the whole Philippine Archipelago. Its forces were already in Manila. Some concerned groups of Filipinos in the *Visayas* and *Mindanao* have already declared their willingness to submit to the United States. Yet, the Revolutionaries were firm believers that the Philippines must not be under any foreign power. Hence, the third phase of the revolution erupted in February 1899. This time it was a war between the Filipinos and Americans. The end stage of this revolution was a guerilla warfare by remaining Filipino revolutionaries. Gregorio Aglipay was one of the guerilla leaders.

While Aglipay was actively involved in the revolution from the beginning, it was in the second phase of the revolution that he became prominent, and his contribution recognized. In August of 1898 he was appointed as military chaplain by Aguinaldo. This was on account of the attack that the revolutionaries, led by a certain General Tinio, would make in *Ilocos*, the home province of Aglipay and part of the ecclesiastical territory of Nueva Segovia. Aglipay, besides having been asked to provide for the spiritual needs of the revolutionaries, might have been judged as capable of assisting the troops, who were mostly from Southern *Luzon*, thus, belonging to a different ethnic group (*Tagalogs*). The Bishop of Nueva Segovia at that time, José Hevia Campomanes, was able to escape the hostilities. In his absence, Campomanes, on 15 November 1898, appointed Aglipay as vicar-general of the diocese, for its ecclesiastical administration to continue as regularly as possible.<sup>143</sup> In a way, the bishop and some friars were also grateful for Aglipay and his intervention. When the Philippines was drafting its provisional constitution, in the *Congress of Malolos, Bulacan*, in October of 1898, Aglipay was promoted by Aguinaldo as Military Vicar General.<sup>144</sup> This meant, as he also understood it, that all the Filipino secular priests were supposed to be under his command on account of the state of war in the Islands. The desire of the revolutionaries was to have the full support of the all the Filipino secular clergy. In this case, it meant that the Filipino clergy were already treading dangerous grounds between nationalism and their obedience to Church authority.

### *The Aim of Gregorio Aglipay*

It was against this background when the Philippines was in a state of war and the Spanish rule has ceased, was drafting its first constitution, was organizing its first republic, and an optimism that the revolution would be won, that one could interpret the decisions and actions of Aglipay. The President of the Republic and Aglipay were calculating that Rome would make concessions to them,

<sup>143</sup> See also RRP "Decree Appointing Aglipay Ecclesiastical Governor," vol. 3, 127-135.

<sup>144</sup> See also RRP "Aguinaldo Appoints Aglipay 'Military Vicar General,'" vol. 3, 93.



considering that the Spanish regime, which was also handling the Church affairs in the Philippines, had ended. They were thinking that they could use the situation to break a deal with the Holy See, where the latter would appoint Filipino priests to be bishops and let the Filipino secular clergy take over all the parishes left by the friars. They were fully aware of the distinction between Church and state authorities and respected the authority of the former. They were, envisioning that, when the hostilities end, ecclesiastical life in the Philippines would continue and be brought back to normal, except for the rule of the friars. Things did not turn out as expected. They miscalculated the aftermath of the revolution. First, the Americans, given their military superiority, would be the victors and later destroy all the hopes of having an independent and self-governing Philippines. Second, because of the first, apparently the United States would be the one brokering the negotiations with Rome, on behalf of the Filipino clergy and the friars. In this case, the nationalist clergy would be watchful as to whether United States would stand by them or not. At this point, the mind and plan of Aglipay and his supporters, could be gleaned through the so-called first three *Manifestos* he addressed to the clergy.

In his *First Manifesto*, dated 21 October 1898, Aglipay was anticipating the departure of the friars and the assumption of the Filipino clergy. However, for him, it was always important to be mindful of the Catholic faith, and it would be the duty of the Filipino priests that faith is kept and preserved during the present chaos.<sup>145</sup> There was a caveat to it. Aglipay said that there was a need to support the revolutionary government and break away from the Spanish ecclesiastical leadership, keeping in mind at the same time, the hope that an appeal to Rome would help regularize their abnormal ecclesiastical situation.<sup>146</sup> Aglipay, in this case, was already trying to propose a reorganization of the Church in the Philippines. He was also trying to see to it that they remain faithful to the Holy See, but, with a solid position that Rome should listen to their appeal, more so, a real grievance.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> "Sí es verdad que, por nuestro sagrado ministerio, somos los llamados á defender en estas Islas la pureza inmaculada la Religión católica, es de todo punto necesario que aprovechemos este instante oportuniísimo, para recabar del Romano Pontífice la mayor suma de facultades, á fin de que podamos luchar con ventaja contra la avalancha de la impiedad, que se vale siempre de los trastornos político-sociales, para inficionar las más puras costumbres con su inmundo aliento" (RRP, "Aglipay's First Manifesto, 21 October, 1898," vol. 3, 95).

<sup>146</sup> "De seguir reconociendo la Jefatura eclesiástica del Prelado español, El Gobierno Revolucionario por necesidades políticas nos retiraría su apoyo, sin el cual no podríamos consolidar nuestra influencia moral en el ánimo del pueblo, ni detener luego le corriente de perniciosas doctrinas (RRP, "Aglipay's First Manifesto, 21 October, 1898," vol. 3, 95).

<sup>147</sup> "En la primera reunión del Cabildo, se nombrará una Delegación especial, encargada de presentar á la Santa Sede en nombre del clero filipino su mas inquebrantable adhesión, y de recabarle y nombramiento y la colación canónica á favor de los sacerdotes que el mismo cabildo designe para las dignidades de Arzobispos y Obispos filipinos. Dicha Comisión recabará asimismo de la Santa Sede la confirmación de todos los actos de cura de almas y administración espiritual que los Capellanes, previamente autorizados por sus jefes, se hayan visto obligados á practicar para llenar las perentorias necesidades espirituales e los pueblos (RRP, "Aglipay's First Manifesto, 21 October, 1898," vol. 3, 96).

In his *Second Manifesto*, dated 22 October 1898, Aglipay further urged the clerics of the reasonability of their cause. For him, to support the revolution and their cause was the most prudent and even a divine duty, doing otherwise would mean neglect of it.<sup>148</sup> He further strengthened his cause by reminding his clerics again of the abuses by the friars.<sup>149</sup> For him, one must see that the clergy learn to adapt to a new situation.<sup>150</sup> Aglipay sensed that his position was dangerous and was tilting towards schism. That was why he used as an example the case of England, saying that, had the Pope been more lenient or flexible with Henry VIII, the schism would have been prevented.<sup>151</sup> Aglipay was convinced that such bending to circumstances was necessary at that time.

The *Third Manifesto* dated 28 October 1898, Aglipay discussed the separation between the powers of the Church and the State. He emphasized that the State cannot dictate to the Church what she should do, however, he believed that there should be concordance between the two.<sup>152</sup> He supported this by citing the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, emphasizing that the Church should never be subordinate to the State. On the other hand, he also believed that the Pope has the power to grant to the State certain powers as he sees it fit for the cause of the Church, as it was done in the case of the *Patronato*, while the priest should always be aware

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<sup>148</sup> “Entiendo, señores que en la situación que nos encontramos sólo debemos repudiar lo malo, lo que es contrario á la ley de Dios y a enseñanzas de Nuestro Divino Maestro y de su Vicario en la tierra. La revolución es un hecho de fuerza que se impone, y siendo justos sus motivos y el fin que persigue, como lo son indudablemente los de nuestra revolución, porque es y será siempre conforme á los eternos principios de derecho y la justicia é libertar a un pueblo oprimido de las arbitrariedades de un poder explotador y corrompido que se niega á toda conciliación, á toda concesión, y por ultimo al cumplimiento de pactos solemnemente concertados, . . .” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 99).

<sup>149</sup> “. . . [T]odos sabéis el tristísimo fin de idolatrados é inolvidables hermanos nuestros, víctimas de maquiavélicas venganzas maquinada por nuestros eternos enemigos, los frailes, solo por el delito de haber querido vindicar los derechos del clero filipino, escandalosamente hollados por ellos; y recordáis también, pues son muy recientes, todas las escenas sangrientas de la epopeya de nuestra revolución, en las que nuestros ex dominadores desempeñaron el odioso papel de verdugos sin entrañas, . . .” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 98).

<sup>150</sup> “El hombre prudente debe siempre obrar según las circunstancias procurando sacar el mejor partido posible de ellas, si no está en su mano evitarlas ó modificarlas . . .” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 99).

<sup>151</sup> RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 100.

<sup>152</sup> “La Iglesia es independiente del estado porque tiene un fin completamente distinto del de la sociedad civil; pero la Iglesia y el Estado deben vivir en buenas relaciones, puesto que tienen un mismo sujeto que es el hombre, cuya perfección espiritual es la que persigue aquella, mientras que el último cuida de la perfección moral, intelectual y material. . . . La Iglesia no debe subordinarse al Estado; porque León XIII en su Encíclica, ‘Immortale Dei’ de 1<sup>o</sup> de Nov. de 1885 dice: ‘Dios ha hecho comparticipes del gobierno del todo el linaje humano á dos potestades; la eclesiástica y la civil; . . .’” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 101).

of who they are, i.e., they are under the Church.<sup>153</sup> There could be several subtexts to this *Third Manifesto*. Aglipay was aware that he was a priest. Achútegui and Bernad believed that Aglipay was anticipating the possibility of separating the Church and State with the drafting of the first constitution.<sup>154</sup> As the reading goes, the priests are justified as long as they are aware that they are under ecclesiastical authority and do what they think is good for the Church, even seeking the consent of civil power first and that of the Pope later.<sup>155</sup> It would be this phrase, “*haciendo presentes después al Papa todo los favores recibidos del dicho poder, para que disponga la debida recompensa,*” that Aglipay seemed to be batting on, which affirmed that he was making some calculations in the event of the success of the revolution. He could be interpreted as trying to settle what may be issues of conscience that would arise, especially regarding authority. He was following the orders of Aguinaldo, who Aglipay knows, had never been hostile to the Church. What could be more ascertained is, Aglipay was aware of the dangerous path that he was treading and was not thinking of a separation from the Church. This could be seen later in a gathering of nationalist priests in a town in Luzon called *Paniqui*. In the said gathering they formulated a provisional constitution for the Church in the Philippines until such a time when the Holy See would have appointed Filipino bishops.

In his *Fourth Manifesto*, which, he issued after his excommunication by his Archbishop, Bernardino Nozaleda, he insisted on the abnormality of the situation in the Philippines and his actions were done out of his genuine concern for the Church.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> “Y es tan necesario este concurso del poder, que los Papas no han vacilado en recompensar á los Príncipes y Jefes de Estado que han demostrado mucho celo y amor por el bien y conservación de la Iglesia dándoles prerrogativas y alguna intervención en el régimen de la misma, como la prueba el derecho de Patronato concedido a la corona de España. . . . Pero el clero que sin consentimiento ni mandato de la S. Sede se subordine al poder civil, obra contra los sagrados cánones e incurre en irregularidad eclesiástica, . . .” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Second Manifesto, 2 October, 1898,” vol. 3, 102).

<sup>154</sup> RRP, vol. I, 58.

<sup>155</sup> “Por eso toda iniciativa en asuntos eclesiásticos no debe partir del Gobierno Filipino sino del Clero, el cual debe reco[b]rar e impetr[a]r del poder civil cuantas medidas juzgue convenientes para el bien de la Iglesia, haciendo presentes después al Papa todos los favores recibidos del dicho poder, para que disponga la debida recompensa.

Tal es la norma de conducta que deben seguir los Clérigos Filipinos para que no infrinja la doctrina de los Santos Padres y las prescripciones canónicas” (RRP, vol. 3, 102).

<sup>156</sup> “Por otra parte. ¿Qué he hecho yo, para merecer alguna pena canónica? Como filipino y sacerdote católico he trabajado porque la Revolución no esté mal avenida con la Iglesia católica; he trabajado porque la administración espiritual de los pueblos revolucionarios no esté completamente abandonada y se acuda al remedio de las necesidades de los fieles en la medida de nuestros escasos medios: he procurado en suma que el pueblo y el Clero estén de acuerdo y marchen unidos a la defensa se sus respectivos derechos, pues así lo reclamamos de consumo el bien de la humanidad, el interés de la Iglesia y la gloria de Dios” (RRP, “Aglipay’s Reply Drafted by Mabini, 19 August 1899,” vol. 3, 212).

He was excommunicated on the grounds that he performed ecclesiastical duties that were not due to him as a priest. One, as mentioned earlier, was his assumption as military vicar-general, which, he said was not an appointment, but a recognition given to him by Aguinaldo. Another was his manipulation of his appointment to act as ecclesiastical governor of Nueva Segovia for six months, from December 1898 to May 1899. The strong point that the sentence of excommunication delivered to him was the schismatic tendency of his actions.<sup>157</sup>

As ecclesiastical governor, he did oversee the life of the church in Nueva Segovia. He issued circulars, disciplined his priests, and even reopened schools. His motivations, though, were mixed since, he was at the same time trying to win to his side the clergy and faithful to support the war for independence. At that time, it was not just against Spain but also against the United States. Manila was already subjugated by the US. He saw that even with the withdrawal of Spain and the coming of the Americans, things would not be for the better. In the end, because of his excommunication, it would turn out that his office was illicit and even the appointments he made were null and void. He believed that the cause that he, the other clerics, and the revolutionaries were fighting for, given the situation, were justifiable. He fell from disgrace in the eyes of Church authorities after the investigation proved that he did not act in good faith. The accusations were indeed grave, meriting Aglipay excommunication. The other side was, the excommunication that was meted on him by the Archbishop of Manila was said to be too much and highly colored by his anti-indio bias, which, the bishop was known for.<sup>158</sup>

Aglipay was a marked man since. His authority was shaken, unlike what he experienced when he was put in-charge of the whole Diocese of Nueva Segovia where he was heeded unflinchingly by the clergy. He would still have many sympathizers among the clergy and the lay people and be able to wield many of them to fight on his side. It reflected a grave problem within the Church in the Philippines in those times. Even with the kind treatment of the friars by

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<sup>157</sup> “Considerando: Que las dos circulares de fol.º 29 y 30 con sus tendencia cismáticas y sus apelaciones constantes al apoyo constantes del Poder Civil, van directamente dirigidas á separar al Clero de este Arzobispado y al de los Obispos Sufragáneos de sus legítimos Pastores, á los cuales pretende hacer imposible el ejercicio de la jurisdicción espiritual, ya que al atribuirse Aglipay el cargo y jerarquía de Vicario General Castrense, . . .” (“Sentencia Dictada por El Tribunal Eclesiástico del Arzobispado de Manila en el Expediente Instruido Contra el Presbítero del Mismo Gregorio Aglipay,” Fol. Tomo 14, p. 695, UST Archives).

<sup>158</sup> Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, 29.

many Filipinos, including clerics, during the revolution, there remained a malaise among many Filipino clergy concerning their presence and return to authority.<sup>159</sup>

Ignoring the sentence of excommunication, Aglipay would pit himself against the Archbishop of Manila and the Bishop of Nueva Segovia. The ecclesiastical landscape of Manila and Nueva Segovia would change since. The two bishops have decided to appoint Filipino vicars in their respective territories. Aglipay, continued to fight on the premise that Spain was not anymore ruling the Philippines which, in his opinion, also meant a vacuum in ecclesiastical authority.<sup>160</sup> He continued to prod his clergy supporters to assume responsibility, even if provisionally, for the continuance of ecclesiastical life in the Philippines.<sup>161</sup> He tried to motivate them by saying that the situation could also be seen as an opportunity for the Filipino clergy to prove themselves worthy to lead the Church, even as bishops.<sup>162</sup> At this time in the life of Aglipay, no evidence, so far, points to the idea that forming a separate church was crossing his mind. He kept on emphasizing in his *Manifestos* that what they would be doing was on the grounds of their obligation as priests, who were always keeping in their minds that they have the Pope above them as authority.<sup>163</sup>

Having seen that he needed a stronger and more concrete stand, Aglipay decided to organize his fellow Filipino priests. This led to what was called ‘*Paniqui* Assembly.’ Priests from different parts of Northern Luzon gathered in a town called *Paniqui* and came up with a provisional constitution for the Philippine Church. The Constitution was signed on 23 October 1899, by twenty-eight

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<sup>159</sup> “There is no doubt that, in one sense, real anti-friar feeling existed among many of the Filipino clergy. Even if they might have been unhappy over the imprisonment and painful odyssey of the friars, they did not want to see them restored to the parishes, nor the Spanish bishop regain his authority. These included not only men like Aglipay and his secretary Pio Romero, but others as well. But the position taken by the Filipino priests toward the friars was not in itself a measure of their devotion to the national cause, in spite of this confusion of issues both by anticlericals in the government and by the friars themselves each from their own point of view” (Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 105).

<sup>160</sup> “La Iglesia Filipina, desde la extinción de la soberanía española en las Islas, carece de obispos que la gobiernen y dirijan en nombre del Papa” (RRP, “Memorandum Drafted by Mabini to be Signed by Members of the Clergy Concerning the Loss of Jurisdiction of the Bishops, October 1899,” vol. 3, 107).

<sup>161</sup> “Demostrada la falta de obispos capaces en Filipinas, el derecho de conservación que compete a la Iglesia como a toda entidad física y moral, autoriza a los presbíteros filipinos que ejerzan la cura de almas para que puedan administrar los sacramentos in licencia ni autorización del Ordinario, interim al Papa no verifique el nombramiento de obispos competentes con destino a Filipinas a petición y propuesta del clero filipino” (RRP, “Memorandum Drafted by Mabini, 109).

<sup>162</sup> “Demuestre el clero filipino su celo y amor a su iglesia; demuestre su aptitud para regir no sólo los curatos, sino también las diócesis; demuestre que las Ordenes Regulares no son necesarias en Filipinas, para mantener viva la fe en la religión católica, que no puede separarse de la justicia como Vicario de Cristo que es Dios, ha de reconocer los méritos y derechos de los sacerdotes filipinos.” (RRP, “Memorandum Drafted by Mabini,” 111).

<sup>163</sup> RRP, vol. 1, 107.

parish priests and Aglipay himself as president of the Council.<sup>164</sup> The constitution stated that what it had legislated shall be abrogated once the Pope would have made the situation of the Church in Philippines normal with the appointment of bishops.<sup>165</sup> The gist of the text was the desire of the Filipino clergy to go directly to the Pope and seek the appointment of Filipino bishops. At the same time, it gave deference to the newly established government of the Philippines, in case they shall need the help of Spanish bishops.<sup>166</sup> The overall tenor of the text was the idea of a Church that was freer to decide for itself. The body was authorizing itself to initiate what it sees was needed by the Church in the Philippines at that time, while it repeatedly affirmed its adherence to the Pope.<sup>167</sup> The schismatic tendency is said to be on the clause saying that the Council would have the right to propose bishops to the Holy See.<sup>168</sup> Although, looking at it from an ecclesio-pastoral point of view today, the priests did have a serious reason to uphold such a view. The constitution itself acknowledged and repeatedly expressed, its provisional nature.<sup>169</sup>

Things would turn out for the worse in the race to get a hearing from Rome. The bishops would also send a warning to the Holy See against heeding to the demands of nationalist priests. Aglipay would order Isabelo de los Reyes to be an envoy of the Filipino clergy to Rome to ask the Pope to appoint Filipinos as bishops. The mission was a failure.<sup>170</sup> As the American forces were progressing, the Filipino forces were losing. Some organized themselves into smaller units to fight a guerilla

<sup>164</sup> See RRP, vol. 3, 116-117.

<sup>165</sup> “. . . con el fin de proveer a las necesidades de la administración espiritual del mundo más conforme a la defensa de sus legítimos derechos, á la conservación y propagación de la Religión católica y a los deseos y bien espiritual de los católicos habitantes de Filipinas, ha aprobado con carácter provisional las presentes Constituciones, obligándose a guardarlas has que nombrados por la Santa Sede los Obispos que han de gobernar los Diócesis, sea posible la estricta observancia de los sagrado cánones, interrumpida por la actual Revolución” (“The Constitution of Paniqui, 23 October 1899,” RRP, vol 3, 113).

<sup>166</sup> See Canon VIII, in “The Constitution of Paniqui, 23 October 1899,” RRP, vol 3, 115.

<sup>167</sup> See Canon I-3, Canon III-E, Canon V, Canon IX., in “The Constitution of Paniqui, 23 October 1899,” RRP, vol 3, 113-116.

<sup>168</sup> “El derecho de proponer a la Santa Sede a los Obispos y demás dignidades eclesiásticas, enviando en tiempo oportuno una Comisión a Roma para rendir al Vicario de Jesucristo sobre la tierra sobre humildes y respetuosos homenajes e inquebrantable adhesión; recabar de El las gracias y privilegios necesarios para el régimen, gobierno y administración de la Iglesia filipina, y la confirmación o preconización de los Obispos filipinos que sean elegidos ó propuestos” (Canon III, in “The Constitution of Paniqui, 23 October 1899,” RRP, vol 3, 114).

<sup>169</sup> “En cuanto estén nombrados y preconizados por el Papa y consagrados, tomen posesión de sus cargos los sacerdotes filipinos presentados por el Concilio para el Gobierno de las Diócesis de Filipinas, dejarán de observarse las presentes Constituciones, quedando obligado al Clero filipino a la más estricta observancia de las leyes canónicas y del Concordato que la Santa Sede tuviere a bien celebrar con el Gobierno filipino, por los auxilios y servicios que preste para el bien y conservación de la Iglesia filipina. Canon IX (ULTIMO), in (Canon III, in “The Constitution of Paniqui, 23 October 1899,” RRP, vol 3, 115-116).

<sup>170</sup> Mandac, *Life and Work of Obispo Maximo Gregorio L. Aglipay*, 7-8.

warfare. Aglipay himself would have his own organized in December 1890 in *Ilocos*. This was the violent and bloody phase of his life. The Catholic Church was also aware that, priests joining armed struggle was happening elsewhere as well, and was not just a problem confined to the Philippines. She even issued a statement regarding this and said that such priests were automatically suspended from their ministry.<sup>171</sup>

Aglipay would be accused by another general (Tinio) of banditry, but he would also be eulogized in other accounts. Seeing the futility of their efforts, he is said to have ceased fighting on March 1901, a month after Aguinaldo was captured by the American forces.<sup>172</sup> He surrendered to US Colonel McCaskey on 25 May 1901. It is said that his classmate in Intramuros, Dr. Telesforo Ejercito, mediated the negotiation. Upon his surrender, many political prisoners were also released, as a result also of a grant of amnesty dangled by the Philippine Commission to him. He is said to have stayed briefly with a priest in *Laoag, Ilocos Norte*, Jose Evangelista, and left for Manila on June 1901 where he also helped the release of other Filipino priests who were imprisoned.<sup>173</sup> This again affirms the involvement of many Filipino clergy in the revolution. It was a lost war, but the battle for the rights of Filipino clergy would still remain with Aglipay and other Filipino priests.<sup>174</sup> The following year, frustrated and exasperated, in his meeting with some priests and comrades during the war, in a town in *Ilocos* called *Kullabeng*, an account says that he had resolved that it would be better for them to separate from the Pope and form a church of their own.<sup>175</sup>

### *The Emergence of Isabelo De los Reyes*

Aglipay was a paragon of the struggle of the Filipino secular clergy. However, his willingness to combine his cause into the Filipino struggle for independence,

<sup>171</sup> "Decreto de la Sagrada Congregación de Concilio," *Libertas Diario Católico* Año 2, num. 348 (11 de septiembre 11 de 1900), 1.

<sup>172</sup> Mandac, *Life and Work of Obispo Maximo Gregorio L. Aglipay*, 22.

<sup>173</sup> Mandac, *Life and Work of Obispo Maximo Gregorio L. Aglipay*, 23-24.

<sup>174</sup> See RRP, "Aglipay's Fifth Manifest to the Filipino Clergy, 16 August 1902," vol. 4, 127-130.

<sup>175</sup> An account says, "At four o'clock in the afternoon of May 7, 1902, General Aglipay and Crispin Verano arrived on horseback at the house of Ignacio Lafradez in the place called Kullabeng... The next morning, May 8, 1902, many of the parish priests coming from different towns in the Philippines arrived. Many people from the barrios around Kullabeng also came, all of them General Aglipay's comrades during the war... The Reverend Mariano Espiritu suggested that they send three priests to see the Pope in Rome and request him to appoint a Filipino archbishop to head the priests in the Philippines. The Rev. Evaristo Clemente added that they should also request that no more priest of the white race would be sent to the Philippines. The Rev. Pio Romero also suggested their total separation from the Roman Catholic Church... In the end, Father Gregorio Aglipay spoke. He said that it would be better for them to separate from the Holy Father completely. The religion that they would establish would be the fruit of the recent revolution watered with so much Filipino blood. The hearty applause that followed indicated that all of them were in favor of the establishment of a new religion completely Filipino (Ruperto Valbuena, "General Aglipay's Meeting with Many Priests and Wartime Comrades," trans. Apolonio Ranche, *Ranche-ACTS*; Scott, *Aglipay Before Aglipayanism*, 40).

and the politics and power struggle that goes with it, is what distinguished him from other advocates of Filipino clergy rights. It was a high stakes gamble, as shown by how he was eventually dragged deep into armed struggle and decided to be a guerilla leader in the Filipino war against the Americans. He did not advocate a divergent theology at the start. What he and other nationalists wanted was for Filipino priests to be entrusted to administer the Church in the Philippines. A clear and oft-repeated expression of it was to have Filipino bishops. How Aglipay planned it, what he did to the prejudice of his bishop and other Spanish bishops, is what made his actions and those who supported him, contract a propensity to schism. They were aware of it. That was the reason for their repeated profession of allegiance to the Holy See. It would be after his separation from the Roman Catholic Church that he would start to develop a divergent theology. It would be in the development of a new theology and in organizing the IFI that the contribution of Isabelo de los Reyes would be most significant.

De los Reyes was the one who drafted the Fundamental Epistles of the IFI. He published articles and books to expound and explain the teachings of the newly founded independent Filipino church. Such would be his prolificacy in IFI literature that it would be difficult to imagine how IFI would have cemented itself in the Philippine society if it were not for his writings. He even gave the IFI a niche in the literary world. Together with Aglipay, his views and publications were what the members of the new church relied upon in forging their identity in their initial stage. Many of his theological reflections, drawing from rationalism and a form of syncretism of faith with science, would end up as proposals. Many were not received by the greater IFI body. The Catholic Faith was still held onto by many followers. The IFI underwent reforms through the effort of his son, de los Reyes Jr., who also became Supreme Bishop of the church in 1946 and the years after Second World War. Nonetheless, the elder de los Reyes will always be credited for the organization of a church that searched for a Filipino and, even an indigenous, identity.

De los Reyes saw the cause for independence from another dimension. He was from the same diocese as Aglipay. In 1886, at the age of twenty-two, he finished Notary Public at the University of Santo Tomas.<sup>176</sup> He found his passion in journalism and even in his college days, was already contributing articles for several Spanish journals.<sup>177</sup> As he pursued his career in journalism, something would interest him more and would eventually be his passion, Filipino Folklore. His passion for Filipino

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<sup>176</sup> Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes: Father of Labor and Proclaimer of the Philippine Independent Church*, trans. Camilo Osias (Manila: Nueva Era Press, 1947), 3.

<sup>177</sup> Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes*, 4



Folklore, was a result of the influence of a certain Spanish journalist in Manila, Jose Felipe del Pan.<sup>178</sup> The said journalist, once asked for contributions on the subject of Filipino Folklore in the publication *La Oceanía Española*.<sup>179</sup> It would be a twist of fate for de los Reyes after he published his first articles on Filipino Folklore in *La Oceanía* and *El Comercio* in May 1884. He would be introduced and would become a correspondent with other Spanish folklorists in the Peninsula and the rest was history.<sup>180</sup> Henceforth, he became known among the journalists in the Philippines, at that time, for his passion for stories that were characteristically indigenous in the Philippines. A fellow *propagandista* called him ‘Father of Filipino Folklore.’<sup>181</sup> Perhaps it was his natural affinity to the indigenous that made him immediately and easily embrace writing about Filipino Folklore. His mother, Leonora Florentino, was a well-known *Ilocana* poet, or is said to be the first poetess of the Philippines.

These folklorists in Spain were part of a wider movement that started in 1881.<sup>182</sup> It was not originally from the Peninsula but was an influence coming from the first folklore society in London in 1878.<sup>183</sup> During the time of de los Reyes it was still gaining traction to be understood as a science and even a developing one for that matter.<sup>184</sup> One of the aims of the folklorists was to come up with a comparison of the records, such as the ones found in the Philippines, with the other countries. This science was also influenced by Liberals who in turn were influenced by Evolutionism, Krausism, and Spencerian Philosophy.<sup>185</sup> The movement gained interest in Spain because the country itself was searching for its identity.<sup>186</sup> It had lost its territory in the Americas and was invaded by the French. It was, therefore, being used as a tool to find a national identity. De los Reyes followed the same logic. He did not only collect stories, but also dug into the richness of what was indigenous in Filipino culture, especially even before the arrival of the Spaniards or even as far as pre-historic

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<sup>178</sup> “Yo, entonces joven de 19 años, empezaba a cobrar afición al periodismo, y el muy inteligente como amable director de dicho periódico don José Felipe del Pan estimuló mis aficiones con algunos regalos de libros y mi suplicó escribiera el *Folk-Lore Ilocano*” [Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (Manila: Chofre y Comp., 1889), 12].

<sup>179</sup> “En 25 de marzo de 1884, *La Oceanía Española*, habló por vez primera del asunto en su artículo de fondo titulado, “Folk-Lore de Filipinas,” invitando a sus lectores á aportar su contingente y para ello les trazó un programa más ó menos completo” (Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 12).

<sup>180</sup> See also Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 12-13.

<sup>181</sup> William Henry Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985), 245.

<sup>182</sup> See Resil B. Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive* (Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2014.), 2-3.

<sup>183</sup> Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive*, 3.

<sup>184</sup> See also Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 19-23.

<sup>185</sup> Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive*, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Mojares, *Isabelo’s Archive*, 4.

Philippines.<sup>187</sup> With other Filipinos, he wanted to assert that the Islands was not as backward as it was told to them before the arrival of the Spaniards.<sup>188</sup>

De los Reyes also worked on the understanding that the Philippines was a region of Spain, albeit, among the remaining regions (colonies) outside the Peninsula. Even if he came from an upper and educated class, he fondly identified himself with the indigenous Filipinos. In this way, he tried to bridge a divide in Philippine society that was existing between those who were referring to themselves as Filipinos (*creoles, mestizos*) and the *indios* or natives.<sup>189</sup> He considered himself “[A] native writing about his own society, a fact that was not only an intellectual advantage but one with important political implications as well.”<sup>190</sup> He digressed from the traditional way the Philippines had been approached by missionaries, and highlighted and extolled the indigenous and to an extent romanticized that knowledge.<sup>191</sup> What he seems to have been aiming at was to challenge the idea of one culture being superior to another, or one race being more advanced or possessing more virtues than that of another.<sup>192</sup> However, the way de los Reyes presented Filipino folklore was also challenged and looked at disdainfully by his fellow *ilustrados*, saying that it gave the impression not of the advancement but of the backwardness of the Philippines in the eyes of their European counterparts.<sup>193</sup> His works did not go unrecognized for he received several awards for his work.<sup>194</sup> One could say that he had a penchant to extoll apparently, the ignored or disregarded, or those who society looks at as marginalized.

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<sup>187</sup> “Según la primera de las bases establecidas por los folkloristas españoles, el *Folklore* tiene por objeto recoger, acopiar y publicar todos los conocimientos del pueblo en todos los ramos de la Ciencia, (Medicina, Higiene, Botánica, Política, Moral, Agricultura, Industria, Artes, Matemáticas, Sociología, Filosofía, Historia, Antropología, Arqueología, Idiomas, etc.), los proverbios, cantares, adivinanzas, cuentos, leyendas, tradiciones, fabulas y demás formas poéticas y literarias del pueblo, los usos costumbres, . . .” Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> Mojares, *Isabelo's Archive*, 8. Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes*, 14.

<sup>189</sup> “Hermano de los selváticos aetas, igorotes y tinguianes y nacido en esta apartada colonia española, donde la civilización brilla aún con luz muy tenue, confieso sinceramente que muy poco o más bien dicho, nada sé yo de la nueva ocupación del pensamiento humano llamado *Folk-Lore*” (Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 19).

<sup>190</sup> Resil B. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, P.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2016), 353.

<sup>191</sup> “Carried over into the Philippines, *costumbrismo* became a medium for peninsular and creole desires to exoticize and idealize the land of their birth or residence” (Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*, 353).

<sup>192</sup> Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment*, 248.

<sup>193</sup> Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment*, 252.

<sup>194</sup> “The expositions in Madrid, Paris, and St. Louis awarded him medals for his *Historia de Ilocos and Folklore of Filipinos* [Juan Ruiz, *Three Pillars of the Philippine Independent Church*, (Manila: unknown publisher, 1950), 4].

He wanted to tell his readers that they have their own culture too. What mattered for de los Reyes was, by extolling his native folklore, he was also being patriotic.<sup>195</sup>

Having a penchant for the marginalized, de los Reyes emphasized in his writings those who were apparently ignored or unmentioned in history. In one of the articles he published, which, many in Manila had cringed at, was when he questioned why only Spain was exulted in the victory against the Chinese invasion of *Luzon* (led by a pirate named, Limahong), in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the soldiers who fought were also *Ilocanos*.<sup>196</sup> He courted controversy by challenging long held -on beliefs by the people. He, for instance, pricked his readers to rethink who were the real heroes and real villains in history, in the case of what was considered as a rebellion in *Ilocos* in 1762, headed by a certain, *Diego Silang*.<sup>197</sup> Being known in the printing business in the Philippines, and having gained a reputation of being an anarchist, he was at times accused of historical inaccuracy. It was because of him and his notoriety in the printing business that a censorship law was passed.<sup>198</sup>

There was another character of de los Reyes that fortified his nationalism. He became easily identifiable with the plebeian aspect of the revolution, and “more easily than other *ilustrados*, he identified with the plebeian character of the Katipunan.”<sup>199</sup> When the revolution broke out in 1896, a few months before Rizal was executed, he was imprisoned at *Bilibid*, the biggest penitentiary in the Archipelago. By his incarceration he came to know many prisoners during the revolution. It was through the data he gathered from them that he wrote his *Memoria sobre la Revolución Filipina*. He is said never to have really joined any revolutionary society, despite having written a lot and have been critical of the Spanish government in the Philippines. It was in prison that he learned about the Masonic organization, *Katipunan*.<sup>200</sup> His *Memoria* is said to have provided a deeper look into the revolution, which Spain herself in those days was still trying to come to terms with by trying to understand why she lost the

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<sup>195</sup> “Y hablando de patriotismo, ¿acaso no se ha dicho varias veces en periódicos que para mí solo son buenos Ilocos y los ilocanos? Esos artículos y gacetillas de la prensa filipina dando á conocer los meritos de éstos defendiéndolos y pidiendo para ellos buenas reformas, ¿a quién se deben?. . . Cada uno sirva á su pueblo según su manera de pensar, y yo con el *Folk-Lore ilocano* creo contribuir á escalarse el pasado del mio. Todo esto he sacado á relucir, porque para mí, el peor de los hombres es el infeliz que no esté dotado de ese sentimiento noble y sagrado, que llaman patriotismo” (Isabelo de los Reyes, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, 18).

<sup>196</sup> Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment*, 266-267.

<sup>197</sup> Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment*, 270.

<sup>198</sup> Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment*, 272.

<sup>199</sup> Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*, 351.

<sup>200</sup> Jose de los Reyes, 9-10.

Philippines.<sup>201</sup> He also confessed to a confrère, Wenceslao Retana, that he was not really interested in politics, nor were against the friars.<sup>202</sup> From the *Bilibid* he was transferred to the infamous prison in Barcelona, *Castillo de Montjuïc*.

With the peace pact (also known as *Biak-na-Bato Pact*) between Spain and the revolutionaries in the Philippines in 1897, de los Reyes was also released from *Castillo de Montjuïc* and was even offered to be a *Consejero del Ministerio de Ultramar*. It gave a bad impression to many Spaniards, especially among the friars, who perceived that the Spanish government trusted him too much.<sup>203</sup> It was in Spain, during his imprisonment, when he encountered the British Bible Society, in effect, he came up with an Ilocano translation of the New Testament, after he was released.<sup>204</sup> He did not forget his cause and found Madrid as a new stage for his propaganda to promote the independence of the Philippines. Due to the American invasion of the Archipelago, he published in Madrid the newspaper with anti-American propaganda, *Filipinas Ante Europa*. With the looming pacification of the Archipelago, he was repatriated on 1 July 1901 and on 16 October 1901 he arrived in Manila. He would still be under the close watch of the American colonial government because of his reputation for his hard anti-colonial position.

An important part of his sojourn in Spain was his acquaintance with the ‘anarchists’ or those who wanted to overthrow the government and start a cultural revolution.<sup>205</sup> In Madrid, he joined the violent anti-monarchy demonstrations in 1898 where in the famous battle cry was, ‘*Guerra al hambre y analfabetismo*’ or war against hunger and illiteracy. Among those involved were labor organizations who were against capitalists. de los Reyes learned a lot from that situation. He came to discover and made comparisons concerning the predicament of the workers and their struggle to improve their working conditions. What he witnessed in Europe was what he also adopted to the Philippines when he returned.

Already in the Philippines, on 1 January 1902, he was asked to become president of a group of lithographers who wanted to organize themselves. Having

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<sup>201</sup> “No se puede ser la obra de D. Isabelo de los Reyes, contenida en este folleto, una improvisación de un desocupado *diletante* ó un atravimento de un ignorante, y sí el producto de largas observaciones hechas sobre el mismo teatro de los sucesos y contrastadas con el testimonio de pruebas irrefutables. La *Memoria* es un documento histórico que habrán de consultar cuantos deseen saber porque perdió España las Islas Filipinas.” Miguel Morayta, “Prologo,” en Isabelo de los Reyes, *La Sensacional Memoria sobre la Revolución Filipina de 1896-1897* (Madrid: J. Corrales Monserrat, 1899), vii.

<sup>202</sup> See also RRP, vol. 4, 95-104.

<sup>203</sup> Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes*, 12.

<sup>204</sup> Ruiz, *Three Pillars of the Philippine Independent Church*, 3.

<sup>205</sup> William Henry Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica: First Filipino Labor Union* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992), 15.

in mind his experience in Europe, de los Reyes suggested to include other groups as well, such as printers and bookbinders.<sup>206</sup> They were able to organize themselves and a constitution was adopted on 2 February 1902. The *Centro de Bellas Artes* in Manila became their regular meeting place. Among their preoccupations was to petition the American colonial government to implement laws on fair labor practices, considering the presence of many foreign investors in the Philippines. Drawing again from what he learned in Europe, de los Reyes envisioned the gathering to be enjoyable as much as it was instructive (educational-recreational soirees or *veladas instructivas-recreativas*).<sup>207</sup> Eventually, their gatherings became not only a gathering of workers, but people from different social strata in Manila also attended them. The gatherings grew as many also joined the union. As it expanded, it included barbers, carpenters and sawyers, cigar-makers, clerks, and office workers, . . .<sup>208</sup> The effect of the union would soon be felt. Many workers (even non-union members), demanding more from their employees particularly an increase in wages, launched a series of strikes starting April of 1902. As a result, de los Reyes would earn the ire, not only of the American government but also of some business circles in Manila and shall be derided in several publications. Moves shall be made to stop him because many saw him as an agitator and for some even an exploiter of simple people.<sup>209</sup> A case was built up against him. On 16 August 1902 (Two weeks after he proclaimed the IFI) he was arrested. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, he was sentenced to go to prison, in *Malabon* (A district near Manila). An account says that, while in prison, many of his fellow prisoners also admired and expressed their support for him.<sup>210</sup> On 30 January 1903, by order of the American governor of the Philippines, William Howard Taft, his sentence was reduced, and he was subsequently pardoned.

*The Proclamation of the IFI by Isabelo Delos Reyes*

De los Reyes acted as envoy to the cause of the Filipino clergy in Madrid. He was asked by Aglipay in July 1899 and was part of a lay committee who in June 1901 wrote a petition to the Pope to uphold the cause of the Filipino clergy.<sup>211</sup> His negotiation with the Nuncio in Madrid, Nava de Bontifé, only left him frustrated. He is said to have “presented with great respect all the petitions and grievances of the Filipino clergy . . . to the end that a schism may be avoided by the machinations of the Yankee Protestants.”<sup>212</sup> He was given the same reply as to the unsuitability

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<sup>206</sup> Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica*, 1520.

<sup>207</sup> Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica*, 31.

<sup>208</sup> Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica*, 33.

<sup>209</sup> Scott, *The Union Obrera Democratica*, 45.

<sup>210</sup> Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes*, 20.

<sup>211</sup> See RRP, vol. 3, 88-91 and vol. 4, 105-106.

<sup>212</sup> Jose de los Reyes, *Biography of Isabelo de los Reyes*, 21-22.

of the Filipino clergy for the Episcopate.<sup>213</sup> On August 3, 1902, in the presence of around 2000 workers, using as a stage the first labor congress in the Philippines, de los Reyes proclaimed an independent Philippine church with Aglipay as supreme bishop and Taft as an honorary member.<sup>214</sup> Questions remain as to the last straw that led to this proclamation. The proclamation emphasized that it would still be faithful to the Holy Precepts of God and would respect Catholic devotions but avoid exaggerations of them.<sup>215</sup>

Aglipay himself seems to have been caught unaware of it.<sup>216</sup> It seems unlikely though that Aglipay by that time was not already contemplating a separation from the Roman Catholic Church. It is said that, a year before, August 1901, Aglipay, with de los Reyes, had a meeting with some Protestant ministers in the office of the American Bible Society in the Walled-City of Manila.<sup>217</sup> He had a lengthy discussion with them and intimated to them his plan to organize an independent Catholic Church in the Philippines and was asking the support of the Protestants.<sup>218</sup> The Protestants were open on the condition that, like them, they should put to the fore the Bible, allow marriage of the clergy, and not to worship Mary.<sup>219</sup>

Furthermore, there were assemblies held the same year, January and May, by *Ilocano* priests. In the first meeting, the group of clerics was said to have already been hatching a plan to separate from Rome. The second meeting (May 8) was in a sitio called *Kullabeng*, in *Ilocos Norte* as mentioned earlier. At the same time, some proposals, understood to be progressive a modification in doctrine were proposed.

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<sup>213</sup> "... Y como tal presidí varias comisiones notables filipinos que se han presentado a los nuncios del Papa en Madrid, el Cardinal Nava di Bontifé, y el actual. El primero nos contestó con insultante soberbia que el preferiría que "asesinaremos" los frailes que entonces teníamos como prisioneros á acceder a nuestra petición de que dichas dignidades eclesiásticas fuesen desempeñadas por filipinos. . . Con esto muy pobre y denigrante concepto formado por el Vaticano acerca de nuestros dignísimos sacerdotes [unreadable] será manifestar que es imposible toda inteligencia con el Papa (Aplausos prolongados)." "Acta Proclamación de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente, 3 agosto 1902," *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente Revista Católica*, Año 1, num. 2 (18 de octubre de 1903), 6 (Henceforth LIFIRC, Año, num., fecha, pagina).

<sup>214</sup> LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 2 (18 de octubre de 1903), 6-7.

<sup>215</sup> "... [Q]ue desde hoy nos separamos definitivamente del Vaticano, formada una Iglesia Cristiana Católica Independiente, esto es filipina en cuanto al personal. (Prolongada ovación).

Nosotros seguiremos todas las santas inspiraciones de Dios: pero nó las injusticias y los meros caprichos de los hombres [De irantes aplausos]. Respetaremos la devoción á la Virgen y á los Santos, pero sobreponiendo el culto del único Dios" [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 2 (18 de octubre de 1903), 6-7].

<sup>216</sup> "El público es testigo que no soy el autor de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente ni intervengo en su preparación. Estaba durmiendo en la calle Espeleta cuando me departaron y me comunicaron que en un meeting popular celebrado en el Centro de bellas artes e Manila el 3 de agosto 1902 el pueblo Filipino proclamó la Iglesia Filipina Independiente de Roma." ["Aglipay's Letter to Msgr. Guillermo Pianni, D.D., February 9, 1932, (Printed in Iloilo Newspaper El Pueblo, February 24, 1932)," IFI-Box, UST Archives].

<sup>217</sup> Homer Stuntz, *The Philippines and the Far East* (New York: Jennings and Pye, 1904), 489.

<sup>218</sup> Stuntz, *The Philippines and the Far East*, 490.

<sup>219</sup> Stuntz, *The Philippines and the Far East*, 490.

Aglipay, though, said that the declaration be postponed perhaps with the idea of consulting more Filipinos.<sup>220</sup> It was on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1902, more than a month after, did Aglipay accept his nomination as supreme bishop. The IFI considers the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August its official day of foundation. Although, historically, it reckons its beginnings with the martyrdom of three Filipino priests. The proclamation of de los Reyes of the new independent Filipino church, led to the formulation of the *Six Fundamental Epistles of the IFI*, which he himself had written for Aglipay.

The career of de los Reyes as a politician would flourish later. He would be a Councilor, twice, in the City of Manila and become a Senator in 1922. His son, his namesake, would become Obispo Maximo of the IFI and would guide the church in the years after the Second World War. De los Reyes, Jr. would be instrumental in engaging the Church in various ecumenical relations and steer it to 'historical Christianity' by receiving Apostolic Succession through the Episcopal Church of the United States. It still remains a question whether the elder de los Reyes returned to the Catholic faith or not.<sup>221</sup>

#### *From a Movement Demanding Church Reform to a Separated Church*

It took a span of one year for the IFI to be formally organized after its proclamation. This involved the writing of the *Six Fundamental Epistles*. Each Epistle was conditioned by a reaction or clarification to the major changes that the newly founded church was undergoing.

The *First Fundamental Epistle*, issued on 22 September explained the theological reason for the validity of the consecration of a bishop even by a priest.<sup>222</sup> At the same time, it asserted that even recourse to other Apostolic churches would not be necessary for it would mean foreign bondage once again.<sup>223</sup> It was logical that the *First Epistle* was about the episcopate since, one of the main issues that the nationalist clerics were fighting for was the consecration of Filipino priests as bishops. Moreover, Aglipay and Isabelo wanted to establish immediately the legitimacy of their foundation. The *Second Fundamental Epistle*, dated 2 October

<sup>220</sup> RRP, vol. 1, 163.

<sup>221</sup> See also RRP, vol. 1, 163. 504-510.

<sup>222</sup> "Hemos consultado a consabidos Doctores de la Iglesia, así romanos imparciales como la protestantes y cismáticos, y fue unánime la opinión de que semejante consagración será válida é irrevocable por múltiples razones, entre otras las siguientes: 1) Los apóstoles no han prescrito Ritual alguno para esta consagración, bastando solamente la voluntad de la Congregación respectiva. . . ." "Epístola I, Epístolas Fundamentales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente" [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 1 (11 de octubre de 1903):3].

<sup>223</sup> "En la nueva Iglesia Filipina, puede ser todo nuevo, excepto en lo divino, y si fuéramos ahora á buscar obispos griegos, rusos, anglicanos ó protestantes, que consagren á los nuestros, como muchos proponen, eso sería demostrar que acertamos á salir de nuestra esclavitud. . . ." [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 1 (11 de octubre de 1903):3].

1902, was issued in reply to the pastoral letter of the bishop of Cebu, Martin García Alcocer. It branded the movement as a schism. The Epistle says that, the IFI was justified in their actions since it was about their national dignity.<sup>224</sup> With this, it proposed its members to act urgently so it could ordain as many priests as quickly as possible.<sup>225</sup> The perceived heedlessness of Rome to elevate some Filipino clergy to the episcopate was strongly implied in the text. In September, the Filipino clergy, most likely, already had a knowledge of the contents of *Quae Mari Sinico*. As mentioned earlier, many of them, despite the merits of the document, saw that it was not enough to solve the problem of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. The *Second Fundamental Epistle*, was seen as a radical, and even pre-emptive action before the promulgation of the said Apostolic Constitution (December 1902).

The *Third Fundamental Epistle* was an acceptance of the decision already made, the reality of a schism. It meant making some doctrinal changes. It accused, first, the Roman Catholic Church of teaching her faithful fanaticism and even idolatry. The letter loathed at the devotions, especially to the saints that Roman Catholics have, and exhorted that faith should be more rational and biblically based.<sup>226</sup> While it may be said that de los Reyes was influenced by anti-Catholic propaganda even before, the document already showed a leaning to Protestant teachings.

The *Fourth Epistle*, 29 October 1902, was issued three days after the IFI was inaugurated (25-26 October 1902 in *Tondo*, Manila). During the said inauguration, many in the crowd rallied to support him and the Catholic priest who was protesting

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<sup>224</sup> “. . . [L]as revoluciones son perfectamente providenciales: y á pesar causarnos desastres momentáneos, en último resultado nos traen trascendental redención y bienhechoras consecuencias que bendices tantas generaciones... Si el defendernos de semejante atropello, se empeñan en llamarlo cisma, que lo sea. No nos importan los calificativos que graciosamente nos dan nuestros adversarios. Pero de buena fé creemos que na hay tal cisma porque nuestra dolorosa separación se funda en la razón, sobre todo, en la necesidad natural defender nuestros derechos y nuestra dignidad nacional.” “Epístola II, Epístolas Fundamentales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente” [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 3 (26 de octubre de 1903): 10-11].

<sup>225</sup> “Nosotros sigamos nuestro camino con el espíritu puesto en Dios y encargamos á los ilustrísimos y Reverendísimos Obispos de la Iglesia Filipina habiliten los conventos o casas parroquiales para Seminarios y que se apresuren á ordinar el mayor número posible de nuevos Sacerdotes y en caso de necesidad . . .” [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 3 (26 de octubre de 1903): 11].

<sup>226</sup> “En vez de ciertas novenas donde abundan tantas imposturas y ensayos de declaraciones eróticas por frailes ociosos, neurasténicos y ayunos de carne entregad á los fieles el inmortal y único libro de Dios, . . . Dad á conocer en toda su pureza la Sagrada Escritura, pero suprimiendo radicalmente ciertos disparatadísimos comentarios, engendros tan sólo del capricho de osados romanistas.” “Epístola III, Epístolas Fundamentales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente” [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 4 (1 de noviembre de 1903): 15].



against Aglipay ended up being beaten.<sup>227</sup> It was a foreboding of what was to come. It was clear that Aglipay and his cause still had a good number of sympathizers. He was, thus, capable of gaining a lot of support for the newly founded church. Aglipay mentioned, in his Fourth Epistle, that he was accepting the duty that had been entrusted to him.<sup>228</sup> He then explained how dioceses and parishes were to be organized. A peculiar characteristic of the organization of the new church was the creation of a Women's Commission.<sup>229</sup> One could read from the statement that, Aglipay also had his share of struggles in coming up with the decision whether to separate from Rome or not.<sup>230</sup> Here, the oft-repeated grievance of the Filipino clergy was mentioned again, and the heedlessness of Vatican seemed to be the last straw. It then mentioned that it was legal for the IFI to take over the churches, since, the Filipinos themselves were the ones who constructed them.<sup>231</sup> The idea, though, did not really originate from him. It was already a sentiment by many Filipino clergy, as mentioned in the previous discussion. The Epistle also tried to derogate the authority of the Pope saying that the reasons of the IFI was backed by Scriptures itself.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> "The following Sunday the new archbishop, in full regalia, celebrated mass in Tondo, Manila, in the open air before several thousand people. The sensation produced was tremendous. Sympathizers multiplied. A native priest in Pandacan, Manila, made some insulting words to Aglipay and his followers, and when he came out of the church a mob of women assaulted him, tore his cassock to shreds, rolled him in the dirt, and so hustled him that he was glad to escape without a broken head. Members of that congregation sent for the new Archbishop to come and say Mass in Pandacan Church. He came and said a Mass before a vast crowd, while over two hundred irate women took their bedding and cooking utensils and slept in the churchyard to prevent the regular priest from again entering the building. Other Churches invited Aglipay to use their buildings and the city was in furor" (Stuntz, *The Philippines and the Far East*, 490-491).

<sup>228</sup> "A pesar de mi carencia absoluta de méritos, ellos me han designado por vuestro piloto, para llevar a puerto seguro la nave de Jesús.

... [A]cepto resignado esa difícil y espinosa misión, ...

... Vamos pues a crear Comités diocesanos y subcomités parroquiales para repartirnos el trabajo." "Epístola IV, Epístolas Fundamentales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente" [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 5 (8 de noviembre de 1903): 19].

<sup>229</sup> "Y para las obras caridad y para propaganda femenil, se creará en cada distrito parroquial una Comisión de Damas, ..." [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 5 (8 de noviembre de 1903): 19].

<sup>230</sup> "Manifestar á los fieles que antes de tomar esta radical resolución, hemos agotado has las hace la copa de la humillación, en aras de la Concordia y unidad religiosas, ..." [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 5 (8 de noviembre de 1903): 19].

<sup>231</sup> "Procurar que los municipios entreguen á nuestra Iglesia Nacional los templos, las casas parroquiales y los cementerios, de los cuales son los legítimos dueños, por haber sido construidos por obreros y fondos municipales, para su propio espiritual, sin que conste en ninguna parte que hayan cedido su propiedad á la Iglesia Romana" [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 5 (8 de noviembre de 1903): 20].

<sup>232</sup> "Demostrar á los fieles que no somos nosotros los cismáticos, sino el Papa, porque cismático no es el que separa del Papa, sino el que se separa de Dios, de su justicia, y la pureza de su santísima Palabra ..." [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 5 (8 de noviembre de 1903): 19].

The *Fifth Epistle*, 8 December 1902, presented an alternative narrative, which apparently drew from the similar thought as those in the Folklore Movement. It mentioned that the Philippines also had her share of civilization.<sup>233</sup> Then came an analysis of the *Quae Mari Sinico*, which, in the estimation of the IFI and other priests, did not really answer the problem of the Philippines. The cause of dismay was the lack of trust on the part of the IFI that change would happen. For the IFI, the document still had the same condescending tone towards the Filipino clergy and that the friars were the ones who were being heard while they were not.<sup>234</sup> In so far as the IFI was concerned, *Quae Mari Sinico* was a dead letter.

The *Sixth Epistle*, 17 August 1903, was regarding what happened in the Diocese of *Jaro, Iloilo* in the *Visayas*. As mentioned earlier, there was also an association of nationalist clergy in the said place. The clergy also rebelled, in the sense that they do not want to obey their friar bishop, Andres Ferrero. The situation in *Jaro* almost led to a real separation because it is said that by January 1903, several committees were already being organized on the municipal level to create an *Iglesia Nacional Independiente*.<sup>235</sup> Aglipay expected that he would be able to consolidate the IFI with the movement in *Jaro*, but the clergy still professed adherence to the Roman Pontiff, despite their ill-will to their bishop. Aglipay therefore criticized them, and saw them as half-hearted clerics.<sup>236</sup> He strengthened his argument with a short treatise on the importance of liberty. He shared his own struggle and saw that there was no other way but to separate.<sup>237</sup> He continued by saying that they were more on the right than the Roman Catholic Church. Then, he went on to announce the upcoming formulation of the Doctrine and Constitutions of the IFI, which would shape the kind of life the new church was to have. The Epistle was signed by Aglipay himself, already as Supreme Bishop, with other installed bishops and ecclesiastical governors of the IFI, many

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<sup>233</sup> “Por el contrario, hasta entonces Filipinas no había sido esclavo de otro pueblo, y nuestros ilustres abuelos no adoraron en múltiples imágenes de frailes y monjas; pero si adoraron á Dios en símbolo más adecuado y sublime como el sol, . . .” [RRP, “Fifth Fundamental Epistle 8 December 1902,” vol. 4, 191].

<sup>234</sup> See RRP, “Fifth Fundamental Epistle 8 December 1902,” vol. 4, 192-195.

<sup>235</sup> See RRP, vol. 4, 244.

<sup>236</sup> “Esos mal aconsejados, por lo visto, no han comprendido el verdadero objeto de nuestra santa Iglesia Independiente. . . . [N]o se ha formado sólo por la muy humana cuestión de Curatos y Obispados, sino por la imperiosa necesidad de restablecer en todo su esplendor el culto de único Dios verdadero y la pureza de las santas doctrinas de Jesucristo contenidas en el Nuevo Testamento redimiendo las conciencias de todo error, . . .” “Epístola VI, Epístolas Fundamentales de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente” [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 7 (22 de noviembre de 1903): 26-27].

<sup>237</sup> “Pero si nosotros no estamos conformes con los procedimientos del Vaticano, lo natural es que hagamos casa aparte, prescindiendo por completo de él, pero respetándole siempre, y en su lugar, invoquemos para nuestra nueva empresa el eficazísimo auxilio de Dios nuestro Señor, quien jamás lo niega á las almas sinceras que lo desean.” [LIFIRC, Año 1, num. 7 (22 de noviembre de 1903): 26].

of whom were Roman Catholic priests. The following month, 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1903, the *Doctrine and Constitutions of the Philippines Independent Church* was released.<sup>238</sup>

Four months after the inauguration of the IFI, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1903, Aglipay was formally consecrated by several IFI bishops, mainly coming from Northern Luzon. The IFI had been spreading in many regions in *Luzon*. It became a nationwide movement and was able to win converts in the *Visayas* and *Mindanao*. It was able to establish strongholds in the said regions. A dark part of the birth of the IFI, as what happened in many divisions in the life of the Church, was that it also brought about a lot of enmities and, at times, violence among Christians. The American colonial government foresaw its aftermath and had been one of its main concerns. There came a frenzy to seize churches that, not infrequently, led to violence. This prompted Governor Taft to issue the *Declaration of Peaceable Possession*. This meant that any church or convent that had been claimed peacefully by a certain party could claim it as their own. The IFI gained a significant slice of the Christian population of the Archipelago.<sup>239</sup> What stopped its momentum to spread, as scholars and IFI would agree, was when the IFI lost a legal battle in September 1906. Here, the Supreme Court ordered that IFI return to the Roman Catholic Church all the properties it allegedly seized from her.

#### *Reactions and Counter-Reactions*

The Apostolic Constitution *Quae Mari Sinico*, while being deemed as unsatisfactory on the part of the Filipino clergy, was the best balance that the Holy See could provide. The Holy See realized that she had to listen and learn from the Filipino clergy. She could not simply ground her decisions on the predilection of Msgr. Chappelle and the friars. At the same time, should she order the withdrawal of the friars from the Philippines, it would have meant that she was accepting the accusations by the Filipino clergy and revolutionaries against them. The Catholic Church also had to be realistic. She needed to shepherd the six million Catholic faithful of the Islands, which Filipino secular priests would not be able to do by themselves. However, based on figures, there was indeed a glaring imbalance in

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<sup>238</sup> “A constitution was adopted, which was both revolutionary and conservative. It preserved the traditional catholic faith, and doctrine and ritual but emancipated the Filipino Clergy from the arrogant domination of the Spanish Religious Orders, permitted priests to marry, ordered the services of the Church to be conducted in Spanish and vernacular dialects, condemned Mariolatry and abolished excessive fees for the administration of the sacraments and other ceremonies” (“Independent Church Passes Milestone. New Church is Offshoot of Desire for Reforms: by the Most Rev. Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., Chronicle – August 2, 1952, page 1,” IFI-Box, UST Archives).

<sup>239</sup> A more reliable figure would be in the year 1918, where it said to have around 1.5 million adherents or around 15.2 percent of the Philippine population, hence, it was probably a million or less in 1903 (RRP, vol. 1, 225-226).

the distribution of the parishes among the secular clergy and religious.<sup>240</sup> It slowly became clear, that the friars should not go back to the parishes. At the same time, there was already a strong inclination, even among the Spanish bishops, after all the hardships during the war, that many friars preferred to return to Spain.<sup>241</sup> The American colonial government in the Philippines, under William Taft, also saw that the solution was not to allow the friars to go back to the parishes. However, because of the agreement between Spain and the US from the *Treaty of Paris*, the latter also promised to protect them.

There were other events that may have also helped the Holy See to arrive in its decision on how the Church in the Philippines should be reorganized. In the middle of 1900, two Filipino secular priests, Fr. Jose Chanco and Fr. Salustiano Araullo went to Rome with the hope of addressing directly the Holy See about the problem of the Church in the Philippines. It is highly probable that, having met important personas at the Vatican and having had a hearing from them, their efforts were not in vain.<sup>242</sup> Other attempts in the same period to influence the Holy See were made by a layman named Felipe Calderon. By his initiative, a memorial signed by known families in Manila asked the Pope not to return to the friars the parishes and replace the Spanish bishops with Filipino bishops.<sup>243</sup>

If the Filipino clergy were not satisfied with *Quae Mari Sinico*, the friars, on the other hand, were not contented with it as well. This was based on how they received the Apostolic Delegate who was tasked to execute it, Giovanni Battista Guidi. The friars saw him as more heedful to the Filipino clergy rather than to them.<sup>244</sup> This reaction revealed another crack in the Philippine Church itself. There were serious internal conflicts within the Church. This time, it was not between the friars and the secular clergy, but among the friars and the Jesuits. According to an opinion of a Dominican, already mentioned earlier, Evaristo Arias, the latter had also fueled the Filipino hatred for the

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<sup>240</sup> For instance, from 1898 to 1903, it is said that while there were around 675 native clergy and 746 canonical parishes. The native clergy however were directly administering only 150 or 20 percent of those parishes [See also Antonio Francisco de Castro, "Between Madrid and Rome: The Philippine Church in Transition (1898-1902)," in Pilario, *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 32-33].

<sup>241</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 222.

<sup>242</sup> See the analysis of the story in Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 210-212.

<sup>243</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 212.

<sup>244</sup> He was even branded as enemy of the friars and more influenced by the Jesuits (Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 276).

friars.<sup>245</sup> He said that the Jesuits did not perform the role the friars have been performing and, as a result, the people and some revolutionaries have become more sympathetic with them and, even saw them as different from the friars.<sup>246</sup> He said that they even fed the Filipino desire for nationalism.<sup>247</sup> The account of Arias also helped clarify why the Jesuits were not identified with the friars and thus were spared from the onslaught of the revolutionaries. With the desire to get rid of the friars, the Jesuits had been exempted from it.<sup>248</sup>

The reactions by the friars and the secular clergy could indeed be an indication that Leo XIII was on the right track with his Apostolic Constitution. While it had an overly cautious tone on entrusting fully the Catholic Church in the Philippines to the local clergy, Guidi was open to the possibility of immediately giving to Filipino bishops at least two dioceses in the Philippines.<sup>249</sup> He also suggested not to name any Spanish to the episcopate. He thought that it would lead to another failed mission, while at the same time, the move would end the opinion of native clergy's incapacity, and help prevent the schism brought by Aglipay to worsen.<sup>250</sup> He also nominated

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<sup>245</sup> Evaristo Arias, was a professor at the University of Santo Tomas and was known for his theological depth. He was also known in some circles in Philippine society and is said to have been among the most observant as the revolution was happening. His vision though was a Philippines that was always united to Spain (See Villaruel, *Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*, 167-170).

“Hay otra fase que indudablemente ha influido más que la anterior la disminución del prestigio de Clero Regular, y este es el desconcierto que ha introducido entre las misma ordenes la Compañía de Jesús, por la singular manera de ser y proceder de estos benditos Padres. Ni en la organización en la tocando á los ministerios de almas, ni en la enseñanza de la juventud ni en el trato con los indígenas, ni aun en la relativo á las cosas del culto se conforman esos Padres con los demás Religiosas ni con los sacerdotes del Clero Secular. . . . [L]a cuestión es no confundirse con los frailes” (Evaristo Arias, “Apuntes sobre la insurrección de filipinas,” Tomo 98, Fol. 61-62. UST Archives).

<sup>246</sup> “De ahí procede que los filibusteros sin excepción, empezando por Rizal y acabando pro el último catipunan, ilustradillo tengan por amigos á los Padres Jesuitas y por enemigos á los Otras Ordenes, pues saben por experiencia que de aquellos nada pueden tener, mientras que en éstos tienen un perpetuo censor é intransigente denunciador de sus trabajos” (Evaristo Arias, “Apuntes sobre la insurrección de filipinas,” Tomo 98, Fol. 65-66. UST Archives).

<sup>247</sup> “Que resulta de todo esto? . . . [E]xiste una gran discordancia entre esa. Corporación y las demás Corporaciones, discordancia que á pesar del celo de los Padres de unas y otras Ordenes, produce quiebras en el ministerio sacerdotal, comparaciones odiosísimas, rencillas y recelos que aunque disimuladas de transparentan por desgracia y dan arenas á los enemigos de la Religión y de la Patria” (Evaristo Arias, “Apuntes sobre la insurrección de filipinas,” Tomo 98, Fol. 66. UST Archives).

<sup>248</sup> “Los jesuitas ú otros extranjeros, católicos, protestantes ó de otras religiones, que deseen desempeñar particularmente la enseñanza en Filipinas, serán respetados y protegidos por las autoridades filipinas; pero deberán aquéllos pedir á estas permiso y manifestarles sus fines” (RRP, “Aguinaldo’s Decree Concerning the Church in the Philippines,” vol. 3, 119).

<sup>249</sup> Singzon and Barlin for Cebu and Nueva Caceres (Antolin Uy, “The New Dioceses and Bishops until 1901,” in Pilario, *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 92).

<sup>250</sup> Antolin Uy, “The New Dioceses and Bishops until 1901,” in Pilario, *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 92.

eight more Filipino priests, deemed suitable for the episcopate.<sup>251</sup> It was clear that the aim of the Holy See was to ordain Filipino bishops as soon as possible.<sup>252</sup>

Guidi invited Aglipay to attend the Provincial Synod of Manila, scheduled on 7 August 1904, which the latter gladly accepted. Guidi, however, died on 26 June 1904, and Aglipay sent to Pope Pius X his condolences for the death of the Apostolic Delegate. The planned Synod was postponed and had been convoked three years after, in 1907. It was in the said Synod that the IFI was condemned. Leo XIII decided to put American bishops in place of Spanish ones. In 1906, four Filipinos were ordained bishops, and they were distributed to take over four dioceses. The long-term effect of the schism was an overcautious attitude to Filipinize the Church in the Philippines resulting also to a very slow Filipinization of the hierarchy.<sup>253</sup> Looking closer, the Holy See was able to directly control the Church in the Philippines and implement reforms only upon the cessation of the *Patronato Real* and the consequent separation of the Church from the State as enacted by the United States.<sup>254</sup>

The IFI, focusing her energies to defend her position, found a variety of approaches to do it. For example, it affirmed the freedom that the US established in the Philippines. It even compared the American clergy as much better than the Spanish friars and those of Europe, since they seem to be more rational in their actions and not blind followers of tradition.<sup>255</sup> It then expressed what the American clergy would find absurd when they discovered in the Philippines the influence of the religious and how the Filipino clergy ended as such.<sup>256</sup> With the animosity heating-up between the IFI and Catholics, Aglipay would issue a declaration to his committees to placate his followers, at the same time, telling them to be welcoming

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<sup>251</sup> Lucas Leico (Binondo), Juan Gorordo [Secretary of the Diocese of Cebu], Leonardo Tailo, Ignacio Tambungui, Sacerdote Calderon, Sacerdote Pacis [Manaoag], Eulogio Ocampo [Vicar Forane of Pampanga], Julian Ope [Guinobatan Albay] (See Antolin Uy, “The New Dioceses and Bishops until 1901,” in Pilario, *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 101).

<sup>252</sup> See Antolin Uy, “The New Dioceses and Bishops until 1901,” in Pilario, *Quae Mari Sinico and Beyond*, 98.

<sup>253</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 277-278.

<sup>254</sup> See also Antolin Uy, “The Native Clergy From the Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century: The Philippine Revolution and Beyond,” in *Papers from the International Conference on the Centennial of the 1896 Philippine Revolution*, vol. 1, ed. Elmer A. Ordoñez (Manila, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Commission, National Commission for Culture and Arts, 1998), 63.

<sup>255</sup> “El sacerdote católico de América es un hombre completamente distinto de los de su género en Europa. Es un hombre que ama las libertades humanas, tales como las comprende el liberalismo moderno. Es esencialmente liberal y no comprende ni se explica el despotismo de España, Francia, Italia y Austria; . . .” (Dimas-Apakat, “El Catolicismo en America,” *La Verdad*, Año 1, num. 7 (4 marzo de 1903): 2).

<sup>256</sup> See Dimas-Apakat, “El Catolicismo en America,” 2.

to the Roman Catholics.<sup>257</sup> They would strengthen their stand by continuously asserting and uplifting the dignity of the Filipino native clergy especially through their publications. It was in this aspect that they also made strong points. For example, it presented a biography of a certain Fr. Mariano Garcia (1778-1871) of the Diocese of Cebu.<sup>258</sup> The article enumerated his achievements and to exalt him further added the title ‘*Obispo de Cebu*’ to his name, although, he never was. The write-up, though, clarified it by saying that it was by reason of his outstanding achievements that he was offered the episcopate but he declined due to health reasons.<sup>259</sup> They also tried to prove that they were correct in defending the rights of the native clergy by referring to what the Holy See and Guidi did and realized, yet, they said that it was too late since they already decided to separate.<sup>260</sup>

Aglipay and the Filipino clergy also had other vocal sympathizers in those days. Among the well-known was Salvador Pons y Torres. He was a Spanish Augustinian known among his brethren for being intelligent yet delinquent, eccentric, and flirted with spiritism.<sup>261</sup> He was closely associated with Aglipay and his movement and rubbed elbows with Protestants. He was defrocked, but recanted later in his life and returned to the Catholic Church and to his Order. Having returned to the Catholic fold, in Europe, he wrote a manuscript on the IFI, *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*.<sup>262</sup> While in the Philippines, he wrote the *Defensa del Clero Filipino*, copies of which were distributed by Fr. Chanco and Fr. Araullo in Rome, as part of their mission. A complement to the said manuscript was *El Clero Secular Filipino*

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<sup>257</sup> “Debemos amar siempre á todas sin distinciones de ningún género, incluso á los Romanistas, que tanto nos persiguen. Mientras nos excomulgan y nos niegan la sal, el agua, y el fuego, nosotros debemos siempre tener abiertos para ellos nuestros templos, nuestra casa, y nuestra mesa, pagando sus injusticias con la más generosa caridad” [“Manifiesto del Obispo Maximo á los Comités de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente,” *La Verdad*, Año 1, num. 7 (4 marzo de 1903): 2].

<sup>258</sup> “Pruebas del Capacidad del Clero Filipino, Biografía del Reverendo Sr. Dr. Mariano García, Obispo de Cebu,” *La Verdad*, Año 1, num. 8 (11 marzo de 1903): 11-12.

<sup>259</sup> “Pruebas del Capacidad del Clero Filipino, Biografía del Reverendo Sr. Dr. Mariano García, Obispo de Cebu,” 11-12.

<sup>260</sup> “For the sake of the said desire [to keep the Filipinos to the Catholic fold], the Pope gave Msgr. Guidi the permission to implement policies that would be in accord with the desire of the Filipino people, . . . Rome, which, has never given attention to the deep groanings of the Filipino people, . . . Why did they suddenly change the way they look at us Filipinos? . . . It is too late, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente has indeed grown and its roots strengthened, thanks to the persistent efforts of our very respectable countryman, Sr. Gregorio Aglipay, Supreme Bishop and President of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente” [Juan Totoo, “Ang Iglesia Filipina Independiente at ang Roma,” *La Verdad*, Año 1, num. 9 (18 marzo de 1903): 9. The article is in Tagalog and the English translation is by the author].

<sup>261</sup> See also León Ma. Guerrero, “Nozaleda and Pons: Two Spanish Friars in Exodus,” in Anderson, *Studies in Philippine Church History*, 190-193.

<sup>262</sup> A print of the whole work is also in Isacio R. Rodriguez, *Gregorio Aglipay y los Orígenes de la Iglesia Filipina Independiente (1898-1917)*, Tomo 2, *Documentos* (Madrid: Departamento de Misionología Española, 1960).

*Apuntes y Biográficos*, which he dedicated to no less than Pope Leo XIII. His motivation was clear. He wanted that the work of the Filipino native clergy, particularly literary works, be recognized. In his opinion, though sarcastic in tone, they have not been given what was due to them, since those who have been praised were the religious and *peninsulares*.<sup>263</sup> Pons came up with a long list, which included a lot of anonymous secular priests who contributed to the evangelization of the Philippines through their written work in the form of novenas, catechisms, treatises, etc. Although it is not the aim of this work to look into the historical accuracy of all that he wrote, since it presented concrete data, it appears to be more dependable as an argument to uphold the cause of the Filipino clergy and support what the IFI had also fought for.

The schism already happened and as many schisms are, it is difficult, if not impossible to be reverse. The IFI had repeatedly expressed that, it was not their intention to turn their backs from the Catholic Church but for its clergy to be independent from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>264</sup> They also pointed that their separation, and the actions of the Catholic Church later, could be interpreted as a tacit acceptance that reforms indeed had to take place.<sup>265</sup> The IFI would also exult the virtues of Aglipay, believing his fight for Filipinism. Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr. would interpret his actions in a positive light, saying, “He fought against autocratic Romanism, but always acknowledged the high spiritual merit of the Catholic Faith... [He] long found out that reforms in the Roman Communion are always born from the people; never from Curias or Popes.”<sup>266</sup>

#### *A Fast Forward Note*

Guidi was replaced by Ambrose Agius (1904-1911) as Apostolic Delegate. Like his predecessor, Agius worked dedicatedly to the promotion of the Filipino secular clergy. Later on, the Catholic Church had to face the ban of United States to teach religion in public schools. Other religious congregations also started to arrive in the first quarter of 1900s to help in the pastoral needs of the Philippines. This included

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<sup>263</sup> “Son innumerables los trabajos literarios debidos á la pluma de sacerdotes indígenas filipino pertenecientes al Clero Secular, pero hasta hoy nadie, que sepamos, se ocupó de formar catálogos ni estadística sobre esta materia tan importante. Los catálogos bibliográficos se refieren solamente á los escritores peninsulares, españoles religiosos á quienes se han atribuido muchas obras que en realidad ó no eran suyas ó solo en parte les pertenecían; habiendo quedado relegados, con maligna intención al olvido los escritores muchos y buenos su género debidos a los sacerdotes filipinos” [Salvador Pons y Torres, *El Clero Secular Filipino, Apuntes Bibliográficos y Biográficos* (Manila: La Democracia, 1900), 1-2].

<sup>264</sup> Valentin de los Reyes, “Iglesia Filipina Independiente,” *The Christian Register* vol. 11, no. 12 (January 1963): 5.

<sup>265</sup> Valentin de los Reyes, “Iglesia Filipina Independiente,” 5.

<sup>266</sup> Isabelo de los Reyes, Jr., “Bishop Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan, Apostle of Filipinism,” *The Christian Register* vol. 12, no. 8 (September 1963): 5.



providing priests and helping in the Catholic education ministry. Then came the challenge to cope with the American system of education by some Spanish founded institutions, since English was becoming more the *lingua franca* of education. Many of those heading the Church, i.e., Filipino bishops, were still facing to the direction of the glorious Spanish past.<sup>267</sup> This led to what may be called a Hispanized Clergy in an Americanized Philippines even decades after the reorganization of the Church in the Philippines.<sup>268</sup> There was a distinction with the American and Spanish style of education leading to a different way of devotion.<sup>269</sup> The Catholic Church in the Philippines would still be searching for her identity to be more Filipino and to be a Church that is relevant to the lives of the Filipinos. One of the indications that she needed to be more in touch with the reality of the Filipino was in terms of addressing social involvement. It was only through Vatican II that the Church in the Philippines gained more momentum to develop her self-understanding and realize who she really is. The years under a dictatorial government (1971-1986) became a formative year for her to realize who she is, which culminated in the peaceful revolution of 1986. It was a grand miracle many would say. It was also the time, and perhaps the only time, after almost a century of struggle, when Filipino nationalism and Christianity have embraced each other again. This paved the way towards a new era not just for the country but also for the RCCP. She started to envision herself to become a Church of the Poor. This vision, as this study shows, becomes the building ground towards a new relation with the IFI, a new way of ecumenism.

## Conclusion

Learning from Aglipay, his fight for the rights of the Filipino secular clergy was valid. The struggle of the Filipino clergy was real. The nationalism among the Filipino clergy was prevalent and Aglipay was one of the many Filipino secular priests who was clamoring for reform of the Church in the Philippines. There were, however, different opinions on how to address it. Aglipay decided to tread the high stakes, by leaning more on the political aspect of the Philippine Revolution. Throughout the Philippine Revolution, he had been aspiring for a major change in the Catholic Church in the Philippines to happen (i.e., for the Filipino clergy to take over and have Filipino bishops. In this sense, he also used the revolution to push the Filipino clergy agenda). What he and other priests were really asking for, was for the Pope to understand the situation of the Filipino clergy, which they believed would never happen as long as they were under their friar bishops. On the other hand, the friar bishops and the rest of the friars believed that they had to do what they had to

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<sup>267</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 249.

<sup>268</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 247.

<sup>269</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 253.

do. As Spanish friars they had to keep the Filipinos in their Faith, continue the work of civilizing the natives, and keep them under the Spanish crown, all done in good faith. However, what happened to the Filipino clergy during the revolution, and the proclamation of the IFI with the numerous Filipinos who sympathized with it, was a wake-up call for the Church. There came a point that the Spanish *Patronato* system was not anymore working to the advantage of the Church in the Philippines, the world has changed and the Philippines as well. Liberal ideologies and Free Masonry instigated what turned out to be a bloody Philippine Revolution. However, if one were to bracket out the politics and war, the cause of Filipino secular clergy still remained. They were the first nationalists. The Catholic Church had to learn and be more heedful to what the Filipino secular clergy were pointing at.

It may appear that the problem was an over-controlling and over-centralizing attitude of the Church, making the IFI too critical of the Pope and the Holy See. The reverse was the solution. It was only when the Holy See started to directly handle the affairs of the Church in the Philippines did it continue to flourish. It indeed flourished under Spain, with the friars. Yet, the time came at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the friars and Spain, perhaps, had to learn to say ‘mission accomplished’ because the Church in the Philippines had reached a certain level of development, and had to mature and develop her own character. It was hard because it involved a strong sentiment and attachment to the undeniably glorious accomplishment of the friars of Spain in the Philippines. It was made more difficult because it got entangled with prestige and power. It was for this reason that reform of the Church in the Philippines could not be done without a kind of enforcement. Aglipay was a typical example of that enforcement that many had been looking for. He was right in being passionate enough and willing to find all the legitimate means for change to happen. The IFI, even today, as a church, stands by this radicality in approach. It was something that the Church also needed to channel in herself, at that time, and as the history and reality of the Philippines proves, time after time.

Learning from de los Reyes, his exultation of the indigenous was an expression of a search for identity. One thing that the revolution revealed was the need for the Filipino to find out who he was. The Filipinos were searching for an identity as much as Spain was. The data and efforts of de los Reyes proved what had been, later on, proven in the history of the Philippines. Spain and the Christianity it brought did not destroy, but even preserved, and in many cases transformed the indigenous culture of the native Filipinos. It was, moreover, the conserving and civilizing spirit of the friars that kept the Archipelago one, as Christians, at the same time, still diverse, ethnically speaking. The Filipinos needed to search for an identity because, as the causes of revolution proved, the Philippine context was unique.

Again, it happened because of the learning experience by Spain from the Americas, which made the evangelization of the Philippines as humane as possible. What de los Reyes wanted to emphasize, though hostilely, was that the success of Spanish enterprise in the Archipelago was also the success of the natives. What appeared to have been highlighted in the historical annals were the former. De los Reyes wanted to assert that the Filipinos themselves should be credited with what was due to them. This had a strong connection with the spirit of the IFI in asserting the capacity of the Filipino secular clergy. While friars had been credited for much of the evangelizing and civilizing work, the Filipino clergy, had not been credited enough for it. They did a lot. This is something that the Church in the Philippines is, even from the experience of the author, is still in the process of acknowledging and appreciating today.

The authority of de los Reyes was also rooted from his experience in listening to those who were imprisoned during the revolution. It was further enhanced by his association with the workers. The experience of de los Reyes, however, also showed that he got inspirations from Europe and Spain. He could be considered as a person who represented an effort to adopt and synthesize ideas and developments from the West with the Philippine context. The same may be said with how he came to see the Church, and as such, proclaimed and started theologizing on the IFI. Yet, as he himself showed, part of the Filipino and its identity was the three centuries of his Christianization and Hispanization. The Filipino cannot be who he is without assuming the Catholic Christianity by which he was formed for three centuries under Spain. Yet, de los Reyes still had a point. His early attempts, though crude, reflected what the Church in the Philippines had been trying to apply even until today. As a Church, she still needs to learn to be “Filipino enough” and not foreign to her own flock. **PS**

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