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The Dichotomous Legacy of the Catholic Church's Opposition to the Philippine Revolution  
of 1896

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Abstract

This article examines the repositioning of the Catholic Church in the aftermath of the Philippine Revolution of 1896–98, during the transfer of Spanish to American colonial rule. It reviews the consultations between the outgoing Spanish bishops and the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate, Placido Chappelle, in January 1900, and the subsequent religious settlement promulgated in the Vatican's Apostolic Constitution for the Philippine Church, *Quae mari Sinico*, in 1902. The Delegate's identification with the Spanish bishops and their opposition to Filipino nationalist aspirations and the Filipino secular clergy confirmed the anti-Filipino position of the Church in the American colonial period. Both the Filipino bishops and the American bishops opposed independence and distrusted the nationalist leaders as anti-clerical Masons. This is followed by a discussion of the claimed reconciliation of Church and Filipino political aspirations in the post-Vatican II period in the 1960s, which culminated in the Church's role in bringing down President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Committed to a theology of social justice, the bishops now aligned the Church with progressive democratic nationalists. In its successful opposition to the Marcos dictatorship in the name of "People's Power," the hierarchy claimed that through the "Miracle of EDSA"

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the Church had identified with and indeed represented the political will of the Filipino people.

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Notes on Contributor

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## Introduction

The Filipino people have experienced, perhaps more acutely than most other colonised peoples, the dilemmas and ambiguities that the colonial relationship produces. In the first place, exposure to Spanish colonial rule was sustained over four centuries. Secondly, Spanish colonial rule involved a deliberate process of Hispanisation, the key agency of which was the colonial Catholic Church and, specifically, the Spanish religious orders.<sup>1</sup> The Spaniards understood Christianisation as the most effective way of incorporating the Filipino into the Spanish order, and consciously directed their efforts to the transformation of the beliefs and values of their colonial subjects as a strategy of colonial control as much as a mission of religious evangelisation. In the process, Filipino Catholics Filipinised Catholicism. At the folk level, a syncretic Catholicism emerged that combined autochthonous beliefs with Catholic rituals and spirituality. Nevertheless, the rituals and teachings of the Catholic faith and the authority of the institutional Church significantly defined the religious character of Filipino identity.<sup>2</sup>

Under the regime of the *Patronato Real de las Indias*, by which the Vatican transferred in the early sixteenth century, actual control of the Church to the King of Spain, the colonial church identified with and functioned as part of the Spanish colonial system. The Crown exercised complete control over appointments in the Philippine Church from the installation of bishops to the activities of the Spanish religious orders. While disputes between the bishops and the colonial governors could be serious, regardless of these quarrels, Spanish missionaries were the key agents of both maintaining the colonial order and infusing a sense of Spanish Catholic identity and therefore a sense of colonial legitimacy among the Filipino population.<sup>3</sup>

In the latter nineteenth century, with the rise of the nationalist movement, a separate and ultimately competing definition of that identity found expression in the independence

revolution of 1896–98. The establishment of a native Filipino clergy in the eighteenth century, expressing the Bourbon dynasty's desire to curb the dominant role of the Spanish religious orders, introduced a new factor that was to create a nationalist base within the colonial church itself. Significant numbers of Filipino priests supported the nationalist *Propaganda* movement in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>4</sup> Already in 1872, the year of the Cavité Mutiny, three Filipino priests, Fathers Burgos, Zamora, and Gomez, were garrotted and became martyrs to the nationalist cause.<sup>5</sup>

Many Filipino priests were actively engaged in the Revolution in 1896–98.<sup>6</sup> This brought them into direct conflict with their Spanish bishops and the Spanish friars, a conflict that provoked a religious schism and the creation of the independent nationalist Aglipayan Church in 1902. When the United States intervened in 1898 and replaced Spain as the colonial power, involving a military campaign against the Philippine Republic, the nationalist priests supported the struggle against the Americans, who saw them as dangerous opponents.

### The Apostolic Delegate

From 1898, the church in the Philippines faced multiple major challenges. The end of Spanish rule left the colonial church bereft of its state support. The outgoing Spanish bishops were convinced that the Spanish religious orders would remain to administer the church and its parishes. Filipino nationalists were bitterly hostile to the Spanish friars, who were also opposed by a majority of the Filipino clergy. The incoming American administration recognised this as a major problem and moved to resolve it. The transfer of colonial power to the United States with its doctrine of the absolute separation of church and state, alongside its predominantly Protestant orientation, thus presented the Vatican and the hierarchy with serious challenges.

The Vatican's response to this crisis was to send an Apostolic Delegate to the islands. On the second day of 1900, Monsignor Placide Louis Chapelle, Archbishop of New Orleans and Apostolic Delegate to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, arrived in Manila. Chapelle was born in Runes, in France, in 1842. In 1859 he emigrated to the United States and entered St Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. He was ordained in 1865. In 1869 he accompanied Archbishop Spalding to Rome as his theological adviser. His appointment to St Matthew's Church in Washington DC widened his diplomatic contacts. From 1891 he served as Coadjutor and then as Bishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico. In March 1898, he was appointed Archbishop of New Orleans. Leo XIII appointed him Apostolic Delegate to Cuba and Puerto Rico in October 1898, and then as Envoy Extraordinary to the Philippines in August 1899. He served in Manila until April 1901 when he was recalled by the Vatican because of conflicts with the American Governor, William Howard Taft.<sup>7</sup>

Chapelle was the first representative of the Holy See to be sent to the islands in their long Catholic history, and his arrival aroused intense hope and anxiety among the Filipinos, Spaniards and Americans who were concerned about the future of the Church and the resolution of the religious crisis. The Spanish clergy looked to him to vindicate their struggle to maintain control of the church in the transition to American rule. The incoming American colonial administration hoped he would impose a settlement of the religious divisions that had produced a radicalised nationalist Filipino clergy, which, divided from the Spanish hierarchy, threatened new outbreaks of violence in areas already pacified. The Filipino clergy hoped he would recognise their aspirations and allow them a full role in the Philippine Church. They were ready to welcome him with "warm enthusiasm" as their protector against the Spanish friars and the American military administration that had characterised them as "absolutely our most dangerous enemies" and "secret enemies of the government."<sup>8</sup>

From the beginning, the Apostolic Delegate identified himself with the Spanish clergy and distrusted the Filipino priests in general.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, there were already fears before his arrival that Chapelle supported the Spanish religious orders, as the news of his interviews in the American press before his departure filtered into the Philippines. He spoke in their favour and supported their claims to recover their parishes and agricultural estates that were seized during the revolution.<sup>10</sup> Chapelle attempted to combine his support for the Spanish colonial church while unreservedly endorsing American intervention in the Philippines.<sup>11</sup> By February and March 1900, he was publicly and personally attacked in Manila, the expectations aroused by his mission having been disappointed in all but one case: the Spanish bishops and friars found him entirely sympathetic to their cause.

Chapelle's appointment appeared initially a reasonable and even enlightened decision on the part of the Vatican. He had the reputation of belonging to the progressive, "liberal" wing of the American hierarchy. He helped found the Catholic University of America and defended its right to decide on its teaching programme against the efforts of Catholic conservatives to dictate it. His varied career and diplomatic experience suggested that he would take a broader view of the issues at stake in the Philippines. He played a key role as the Vatican's representative in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, persuading the Americans to provide guarantees for church property rights in Cuba. From the viewpoint of Washington, he seemed a flexible negotiator, sympathetic to American rule in the Philippines and willing to "normalise" the Philippine church according to American principles. Thus the American government expected that his appointment would "permit a reorganization of the Church system of the islands, based on changed conditions"<sup>12</sup> The Vatican, for its part, held that the Catholic Church in the Philippines would be far better off under an American administration than under an independent Philippine Republic. This preference was not prompted by its approval of American democracy but rather by the interest in political



stability and by “its indifference to the idea of a native church in the Philippines.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, Vatican thinking in the last years of Pope Leo XIII’s tenure, despite his sometimes progressive policies, was still based on the ultra-montane assumptions that had found expression in the *Syllabus of Errors* and the First Vatican Council’s condemnation of “Americanism.”<sup>14</sup>

### The Vatican Agenda

The initial widespread misunderstanding of the Apostolic Delegate’s purpose in coming to the islands had raised false hopes in the Philippines that he would resolve the religious question. His mission, however, was not to reform the colonial church and accommodate it to the nationalist cause. As it soon became clear, his purpose was to ensure the survival of as much of the Spanish colonial authority of the Church as possible in the transition to American colonial rule. Effectively, this involved hostile opposition to the nationalist cause.

The proposal that a representative of the Vatican should be sent to the Philippines had been discussed at least a year before Chapelle’s appointment. In the few months the Aguinaldo government was able to take diplomatic initiatives, it saw the need for a representative of the Vatican to negotiate a settlement between the Republic and the Spanish hierarchy. The first appeal for a delegate was made by Isabelo de los Reyes in Madrid, who had been appointed by the committees of overseas Filipinos in Paris and Madrid to put the case of the Aguinaldo government to the Papal Nuncio in Spain, Nava di Bontife. In his interview with the Nuncio in January 1899, Reyes presented the request of the Philippine Republic for an apostolic delegate to be sent to Manila and to report back to the Vatican on the needs of the Filipino people. He warned that it was the government’s intention not to release the several hundred Spanish friars held by the revolutionary forces unless the Pope agreed to transfer the friars’ powers to the Filipino secular clergy. Although he was rebuked

for trying to impose conditions upon “the highest authority on earth,” the Nuncio nevertheless saw some merit in sending a delegate to the Philippines. Two weeks later, he wrote to Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, Vatican Secretary of State, instructing him to inform the Archbishop Nozaleda of Manila that the Vatican was considering sending a delegate. Rampolla was Leo XIII’s closest adviser and actually directed Vatican policy in the Pope’s last years. It was almost impossible to distinguish between them in matters of pontifical diplomacy, as “their views were identical.”<sup>15</sup> Cardinal Rampolla in turn wrote to Archbishop Nozaleda suggesting that if he believed a delegate was necessary, the Pope would send one willingly but only on condition that the friars would first be released.<sup>16</sup>

Rampolla instinctively trusted the Spanish Archbishop of Manila as the highest authority and defender of the Church in the Philippines, and rejected the attacks made against him by the revolutionary nationalists as the “bloodthirsty Archbishop.” John Foreman has argued that the Archbishop urged Governor-General Ramon Blanco to suppress any revolt “by fire and sword and wholesale executions.”<sup>17</sup> Rampolla’s major specific concern was the fate of the imprisoned friars and, more broadly, maintaining good relations with Spain and the United States in the transfer of colonial power. Moreover, there was no reason why a nineteenth-century Italian cardinal should be sympathetic to a revolution in the Philippines following what the Church had experienced with the revolutionary nationalists in Italy. As Vatican Secretary of State he shared the prevailing juridical and theocratic view of spiritual and temporal authority, an outlook which found concrete expression in the “policy of temporal aggrandizement” of the Church.<sup>18</sup>

The terms of Chapelle’s commission were set out in the constitution of the Philippine Church, *Quae mari sinico* of September 1902: “It was necessary to restore ecclesiastical discipline promptly. For this purpose we sent Placide Louis Chapelle, Bishop of New Orleans as our delegate. He was to study the situation, take what immediate measures

were necessary, and report to us. This he did to our great satisfaction.”<sup>19</sup> Granted the limitations of his commission, Chapelle had nevertheless to bear responsibility for the exclusion of the Filipino clergy that encouraged the religious schism of 1902, and for perpetuating the externally-imposed authoritarian church governance that set the Philippine Church against the people’s national aspirations for decades to come. Indeed, the necessary reforms were beyond the capacity of any Vatican representative in 1900–1902, but Chapelle ensured that the divisions in the church became insupportable. He was recalled by the Vatican in 1901 amidst almost universal criticism.

The Vatican rejected the American view of the separation of church and state, and by 1901 the Taft Mission in Rome realized the gulf between their views regarding the crisis within the Philippine Church. This gulf quickly became apparent after Chapelle’s arrival in Manila. For him, “whatever the natives are or have, they owe to the friars. By them they were lifted out of savagery and brought under the blessed and refining influence of Christianity.”<sup>20</sup> Chapelle was repeating the arguments proposed by the Spanish religious orders in the *Circular of 1897*, which he had very probably read. As for the friar estates, he absolutely rejected their confiscation and demanded their return to the religious orders.

Chapelle’s views of the Filipinos was unflattering. He quoted with approval the comments made by a former British consul: “the natives are, with some rare exceptions, in need of tutelage, without which they would fall back to the customs of their ancestors, a tutelage that no-one can exercise better than the friars”.<sup>21</sup> The colonial Church did not respond to attempts by a Liberal government in Madrid in 1810 to raise the status of its Filipino subjects. In 1810, Filipinos and representatives from Spain’s Latin American colonies were admitted to the Spanish Cortes.<sup>22</sup> While the racial distinctions between *Peninsulares* (Spaniards born in Spain), *Insulares* (Spaniards born in the Philippines),

*Mestizos* and “natives” had been also been removed in 1810, in practice they remained rigidly enforced in the colony.

Once exposed to the claims of the church hierarchy in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, Chapelle remembered his ultra-montane theology and abandoned his public approval of the American separation of church and state. He now aroused the criticism of the American military authorities, Governor Taft, and even Archbishop Ireland in the United States who could not understand how the chosen representative of the American Church could so alienate them.<sup>23</sup> The Americans misjudged Chapelle as their “double agent” or ally in deciding on the role of the church in the American colonial system. Although his task was to negotiate a settlement between the Spanish hierarchy and the Americans while rescuing the existing ecclesiastical structure from Filipino revolutionaries and aggressive American secularism, “[h]e never gave any evidence of regarding conciliation as part of his mission.”<sup>24</sup>

The Taft Commission took note of the Spanish clergy’s argument that once the friars were returned to their parishes, they would be valuable allies of the incoming American administration, and as representatives of Europe’s civilising mission they would be “efficient instruments in securing peace and order.” But the Commission concluded that hostility towards an American government that supported the return of the friars would far outweigh the claim that the Spanish religious orders would facilitate American colonial control.<sup>25</sup>

### The Position of the Filipino Clergy

Those Filipinos who hoped that Chapelle would be an impartial investigator of their claims thus misunderstood the intention of the Holy See to send an envoy at the request of the Spanish hierarchy in the Philippines. The terms of his mission were not “to plan the inauguration of a new clergy, or to reform the existing one,” as a supporter of the Filipino clergy wrote, but to confirm the legitimacy of the colonial church and its Spanish

constitution. This position was hardened by the outrage at what the friar prisoners had endured at the hands of the Philippine Republic, including the torture of Bishop Hevia Campomanes. Chapelle's intention was to ensure the protection of the Spanish clergy and the restitution of their rights and properties.<sup>26</sup> To achieve this an attempt was made to appeal to the Filipino clergy on behalf of the friars. The Papal Nuncio in Madrid, on 13 March 1899, had written to Rampolla recommending that the Filipino clergy be asked to intercede on behalf of the prisoners, and Rampolla then recommended to Archbishop Nozaleda that he should appeal to the Filipino clergy to negotiate with the revolutionaries for their release.<sup>27</sup> However, only an unrepresentative minority of Filipino priests were responsive to the appeal to help the Spanish bishops steer the church through the transition to American rule.<sup>28</sup>

Despite this, almost all the Filipino clergy condemned the treatment of the Spanish friars by the revolutionaries, not out of obedience to the Archbishop but because, whatever their differences, they could not condone abuses against the inviolable character of the priesthood. On 14 September 1899, the Filipino clergy addressed an *Exposición* to the President of the Republic in compliance with the Pope's request, transmitted by Cardinal Rampolla through Archbishop Nozaleda, calling for the release of the Spanish friars.<sup>29</sup> Chapelle's view, however, was that the Filipino priests were supporters of a revolution that involved a Masonic conspiracy against Catholicism, and this view was reinforced once he met the Spanish bishops.<sup>30</sup>

The nationalists' policy towards the Church was understood by the hierarchy (and, no doubt, by Cardinal Rampolla) as confirming this conspiracy thesis. The Aguinaldo Government in 1898 and early 1899 had moved to bring the secular Filipino clergy under direct government control, ordering them to obey Father Gregorio Aglipay as their ecclesiastical superior and not the Spanish bishops. A decree of July 1898 instructed local government officers to require the Filipino clergy to use the pulpit and the confessional to

inculcate patriotism and obedience to the Republic. They were, in short, expected to act as agents of the Republic.<sup>31</sup> Many Filipino priests accepted this role; indeed, John Schumacher claims that “the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century took its rise from the desire of the Filipino priests—headed by Fr Jose Burgos—to supplant the Spanish friars in the parishes.”<sup>32</sup>

There was, perhaps, a faint opportunity for a sympathetic delegate to appease the Filipino clergy through a careful religious settlement. But although they were careful to leave this possibility open and repeatedly affirmed their loyalty to the Holy See, they refused to recognise the ecclesiastical authority of their Spanish bishops. The Paniqui Constitution marked the culmination of this attempt: The Filipino clergy met at Paniqui on 23 October 1899 to adopt a Constitution that stipulated that the Council of priests would only recognise foreign bishops who were representatives of His Holiness but not as incumbents of Philippine dioceses.<sup>33</sup> This and their incorporation into the Philippine Republic, however, probably rendered a negotiated agreement with the Vatican impossible. The position adopted by the Republican government was that only Filipinos should serve as bishops in the Philippines. Apolinario Mabini, the Republic’s negotiator warned the Vatican in a letter to Archbishop Nozaleda that “before looking after a few religious priests, [it] should interest itself in the fate of eight million Filipino Catholics, who are channelled into slavery by the deed and virtue of that immoral sale” of the Filipino people to an “infidel nation” such as the United States.<sup>34</sup> The revolutionaries, in the event, gained no advantage by attempting to use the friar prisoners to force Spain and the Holy See to grant the Republic recognition. Rather, the prisoners were used by Spain and the United States to discredit the Aguinaldo government as uncivilised and not worthy of formal negotiation.

The Consultations of January 1900

Six days after his arrival in Manila, Chapelle met in secret consultations with the four Spanish bishops to plan the future of the Philippine Church.<sup>35</sup> The Dominican secretary who took the minutes was sworn to silence. The Dominicans, however, could not contain their exultation at the Delegate's sympathy for their cause and soon a fairly accurate account of the consultations reached the Spanish and the American press.<sup>36</sup>

There were reports that resolutions favouring the friars had been agreed at these meetings.<sup>37</sup> The minutes bluntly reveal Chapelle's unqualified consent to restore the Spanish priests to their parishes and agricultural estates, to relegate the Filipino clergy to a subordinate and inferior role, and to ensure that no Filipino priest would be appointed as bishop. The deliberations were critical for subsequent Vatican policy towards the Philippine Church. A transcript of the discussions was sent to Cardinal Rampolla and confirmed him in his opposition to the Filipino clergy. Two years later, Rampolla was responsible for negotiating the religious settlement between the Vatican and the United States and, through his influence, the conclusions of the January 1900 meetings provided the assumptions that shaped the Apostolic Constitution for the Philippine Church, *Quae mari sinico* of 1902. This Constitution confirmed the decision of a significant number of the Filipino clergy to support the schism that had led to the creation of the independent national Aglipayan Church.

Unaware that Chapelle and the bishops had already busily agreed on all the important issues facing the Philippine Church, the Filipino clergy and their supporters among the *principalia* (the educated elite) petitioned him for the expulsion of the friars from their parishes. The petition of "proprietors, merchants, physicians, pharmacutists and other leading citizens" of Santa Cruz, Manila, in January 1900, to Chapelle warned that if the rumours that the Spanish religious orders were to resume control of the parishes proved true, it would have an intensely negative effect on the Filipino people, "who unanimously protest against the pretensions of such individuals who, by their hateful behaviour, caused, to a great

extent, the revolution which shook the Spanish yoke in these islands.”<sup>38</sup> This petition was characteristic of other petitions presented to Chapelle throughout his sixteen months in the Philippines.<sup>39</sup> The agitation produced by reports that he had come as the “joint agent of President McKinley and the Pope to reinstate the friars in their former power” was so intense that the military governor Major General Elwell S. Otis issued a statement promising that “if the Church authorities assign friars to curacies who are obnoxious to the people, they will not be compelled to accept them... the government will not force upon them any ecclesiastical denomination contrary to their wishes”.<sup>40</sup> (Chapelle was later to describe Otis as “of about the right mental calibre to command a one-company post in Arizona.”<sup>41</sup>) Delegations of Filipino priests also called on Chapelle pleading that Filipino secular priests should retain control of the parishes and the need for Filipino bishops.<sup>42</sup> In January 1900 angry crowds demonstrated against Chapelle on at least two occasions: an official reception for him on 23 January was disrupted by hostile protesters shouting “Away with the friars!” and “Death to Nozaleda who protects the friars.” This was followed by Archbishop Nozaleda being stoned in his carriage on his way back to his Palace.<sup>43</sup> These violent demonstrations confirmed Chapelle’s determination to support what he saw as the forces of legitimate authority and order in the Philippine Church. He spoke out against “a great army of enemies” seeking the ruin and destruction of the Catholic Church, which has passed through “a terrible period of persecutions and struggles which it has never before suffered.”<sup>44</sup>

The first meeting in the consultations was held on January 8 1900 between Chapelle, Archbishop Nozaleda, Bishop Martín García Alcocer of Cebu, Bishop Hevíá Campomanes of Nueva Segovia and Bishop Andres Ferrero, Bishop of Jaro, and the Dominican secretary, Father Tomás Lorente. Bishop Arsenio del Campo of Nueva Cáceres by this time had already returned to Spain. Chapelle explained that their resolutions would be referred to Cardinal Rampolla as the delegate of Leo XIII. The bishops then proceeded to discuss the issue that



would most concern them throughout their six meetings: the question of the Filipino clergy and the need to provide parish priests who were not Filipino priests. Archbishop Nozaleda stressed that the need for the European parish clergy was “absolute,” and that the Filipino clergy “are altogether incapable of faithfully fulfilling their sacred ministry as they should”:

The unanimous consensus of previous writers and everyday experience reveal that the Filipino priest is subject to these grave defects: the greatest levity of spirits; an indomitable propensity for the vices of the flesh; a lack of intelligence by which he is impeded from obtaining for himself a suitable and complete education, or at least that in which a reasonably instructed priest ought to rejoice.<sup>45</sup>

The native clergy, he added, suffered from “a total subordination to the temporal things in which [they] pass their time,” they were less concerned with their sacred dignity than with their private prosperity, they suffered from “clerical avarice.” The church was threatened by American Protestantism and the Filipino clergy were incapable of countering this threat. The offensive against the Protestant ministers required a European clergy, and would be “ruined on account of the ignorance and ineptitude of the Filipino priests.” At this point, Chapelle asked if there should be a Filipino clergy at all. Nozaleda’s reply was that the native clergy was a necessary evil. Bishop Alcocer believed that the Filipino clergy were about to destroy themselves, for once they realised that their income from donations and parochial returns had dried up they would abandon their clerical life. The consultations thus began with a unanimous attack against the Filipino clergy.<sup>46</sup>

Later in 1900, Nozaleda in his testimony to the Taft Commission, proposed a racial explanation of the inferiority of the Filipino clergy. Like all Tagalogs they were superficial, easily affected by pleasure, lacking the innate feeling which moved the European races, they

lacked character and moral discrimination. At best they could imitate mechanically the artistic and creative efforts of the white races. There was no sincerity in their friendship and they had no pity. These faults were innate.<sup>47</sup>

And yet the decision to subject the Filipino clergy to the lowest place in the Philippine Church was in effect an admission of failure, since the fundamental object of missionary activity, as set out by the Propaganda Fide, was to establish a self-sufficient local church served by its own secular clergy. Thus, after four centuries of missionary work and two centuries of ordaining Filipino priests, this decision now excluded the Filipino clergy from any positions of responsibility in the church.

The second major issue considered by Chapelle and the bishops was “whether it is appropriate that the Spanish religious orders should remain here to administer parishes.” The bishops turned to this question aware that the Schurman Commission was just then about to publish its report with the recommendation that the friars’ lands should be purchased from them by the government and that the friars should be deported. They were aware that this would arouse the opposition of the American military authorities, since Aguinaldo’s forces still held much of Luzon, which meant that the return of the friars to their parishes would provoke popular risings and could only take place under American military protection. Yet the bishops simply agreed that on this matter there was no need for discussion, “since the will of His Holiness our Lord the Pope concerning the permanence of religious institutes in the Philippines was made altogether clear to them by the most reverend lord Delegate.” The Vatican had decided before Chapelle set foot in the Philippines that the Spanish religious orders were to remain in the Philippines, that is, the Dominicans, Augustinian Recollects, and the Franciscans, the “friar” orders. There was much less hostility towards, and even acceptance of, other foreign religious orders including the Jesuits and the Vincentians.

After their imprisonment and harsh treatment, hundreds of Spanish friars had already left the Philippines and many others also wanted to return to Spain. Chappelle later told the Taft Commission that members of the religious orders had wanted to go elsewhere but that he had detained them. The Principal of the Recollect Order told the Commission that his priests were anxious to leave, “but the Pope at Rome has given his order and there is no recourse except to obey.”<sup>48</sup> Leo XIII or, rather, Cardinal Rampolla, had decided this matter in 1899 and possibly earlier.

The bishops argued that the opposition to the return of the friars “was engineered... and organised by [Filipino] clerics... who burn with the desire of ridding them of the presence of the religious so that the whole field of the Gospel might remain for themselves.” This is why they considered the “suitability of other religious congregations taking up parochial ministry in the Philippines.” Their recommendation was to arrange for European and American priests to come to the islands to replace those Spanish priests who had left since 1898. Nozaleda argued that other European congregations could be assigned to those areas where opposition to the Spanish friars was most virulent. The meetings moved on to consider the dire financial situation facing the church and other matters of administration and church properties including schools, cemeteries, landed estates, corporations and buildings. Inventories had to be made and property rights confirmed with the American authorities. Chappelle recommended “that it would be best for all if all things pertaining to the church of the Philippines were placed under the protection of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.” Placing the Philippine Church under the direct control of the *Propaganda Fide* would provide an institutional replacement from the Vatican for the termination of the *Patronato Real* with the end of Spanish colonial rule. This arrangement would confirm the missionary identity ~~under Rome~~ of the Philippine Church.<sup>49</sup>

### The Apostolic Constitution *Quae mari sinico*

The new Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Guiovanni Battista Guidi, arrived in Manila on 17 November 1902, bringing with him the Vatican's Apostolic Constitution for the Philippine Church, *Quae mari sinico*. Aware of the hostility towards his predecessor, he saw his task as requiring great tact. When he arrived the schism that had threatened the church since Father Aglipay's excommunication in 1899 had already begun, and the Philippine Independent Church already existed. News of the contents of the Apostolic Constitution he delivered had already persuaded a number of Filipino priests to join the schismatic church. When it became clear that Guidi could not satisfy the demand for the expulsion of the Spanish priests, the Filipino clergies of Ilocos Sur and Iloilo also declared their separation from the Roman Catholic hierarchy, though they refused to join the Aglipayan schism. By then the Franciscan Bishop Alcocer of Cebu had replaced Nozaleda and issued a Pastoral Letter in 1902 which condemned "new ideas, new customs and new aspirations" for "false liberties" and "malevolence against venerated institutions of the Church."<sup>50</sup> The Pastoral Letter and the Apostolic Constitution further alienated the local clergy. Despite this, Guidi succeeded in opening communications between Rome and the Filipino clergy until his sudden death on 27 June 1904 ended his attempts at reconciliation.

The Church's terms of a religious settlement in 1900–1902 and the intention to maintain the Philippine Church as a colonial and externally-governed institution was unworkable in the long-term and, in a sense, contradicted the missionary enterprise. By 1906, with the consecration of the first Filipino bishop, the Church realised it had to somehow come to terms with the new situation.

### Early American Rule

American bishops replaced the departed Spanish bishops from 1904. The friar estates were purchased by the U.S. government in 1903, ending the landed power of the religious orders. The appointment of Filipino bishops from 1906 onwards signalled not that the Vatican had by then accepted the necessity to begin a process of transferring authority to a Filipino hierarchy. Rather it was an attempt to accommodate the Filipino clergy within a colonial church that remained under external episcopal control. By 1917, however, four of the nine bishops in the Philippines were Filipino. The gradual replacement of American bishops by Filipino bishops and the eventual Filipinisation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy created the conditions for the Church to at least achieve a *modus vivendi* with the future secular state. There was not, however, any accommodation, let alone resolution, of the opposition between the Church and Filipino nationalism in the American period.

The long-term challenge was for the Church to come to terms with the Filipino nationalist aspirations that had begun with the Propaganda Movement and culminated in the revolution of 1896. This reconciliation was a slow and grudging process that persisted into the post-independence period. The church hierarchy viewed the Catholic faith and the nation-state as distinct and even contested world-views. This went beyond the memories of the anti-clerical hostility of the adherents of the revolution towards the Church,<sup>51</sup> and the anti-clerical actions against it during the American period by Filipino state officials, municipal officers, and those in charge of the public educational system. The basic position of the Church was that the final authority proceeded from God, not from the nation-state. The American bishops in 1912–16 opposed Philippine independence, warning that “[it] would place a tyrannical oligarchy in control of the country... and would mean the destruction of the Catholic Church and the loss of the faith of its seven million Catholics.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, many of the most prominent Filipino leaders were active Masons who opposed any Church intervention in public life.<sup>53</sup> And although leading Filipino Catholics expressed their nostalgia for an idealised Catholic

past, the first signs of an accommodation between the Church and the emerging Filipino state appeared only in the 1930s.<sup>54</sup>

#### Accommodation of Church and State from the 1960s Onwards

In the post-Vatican II era, the Philippine Church supported the struggle for social justice, which aligned it with the progressive democratic nationalists.<sup>55</sup> The hierarchy, in its support of the struggle to remove the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986) claimed to have finally reconciled the Church to the people's political aspirations. Schumacher argues that the Church only realised its potential as a major force in Philippine society and politics, when it intervened against the Marcos regime, and "actually became such a force."<sup>56</sup>

The Church proclaimed the success of People's Power as a "miracle," the divine intervention in 1986 by Our Lady of EDSA, the Manila Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace.<sup>57</sup> The inspiration for the People's Power Revolution was religious rather than political, and while it may or may not have been shared by Marcos's political opponents, it was not shared by the radical Left (who were absent from the mass demonstrations at EDSA). Although the Church's view of the movement was Catholic rather than nationalist, in the struggle against Marcos, it allied itself with the anti-dictatorship forces. This position was profoundly different from the position of the Church in 1900, but it was not seen as a reconciliation or acceptance of the primacy of the secular nation-state. The objective of the Church remained a "Christian Philippines." In his first speech in February 1981 during the first of his two visits to the Philippines, , Pope John Paul II reminded the people that their history "created an obligation and it confers upon the nation a specific mission":

A country that has kept the Catholic faith strong and vibrant through the vicissitudes of history, the sole nation in Asia that is approximately ninety per-cent Christian

assumes by this very fact the obligation not only to preserve its Christian heritage but to bear witness to the values of its Christian culture before the whole world.<sup>58</sup>

The Philippine Church thus persisted in its rejection of the independent authority of the state to rule on social issues, nor did it accept the validity of a completely secular nationalist ideology.

However, it was prepared to support the cause of social justice and political reform on its own terms, and became an independent force beyond the control of President Marcos when the country was under martial law (1972-1986). That its intervention in the 1980s was critical was most vividly celebrated in the campaign by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), led by Cardinal Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Sin, to bring down President Marcos.<sup>59</sup> Beginning in 1979, the CBCP issued a number of pastoral letters that criticised the Marcos regime, its economic abuses and violations of human rights.<sup>60</sup> The turning point that changed it into an active opponent of the regime was the murder of the then opposition leader Ninoy Aquino in May 1983 and the response of the 2 million people who attended his funeral. Three years later, on Sunday, 16 February 1986, the bishops issued a statement condemning the Marcos regime that was read in churches across the country. On February 22, in his sermon on Radio Veritas (the Catholic radio station), Cardinal Sin called on the people to rally around the Minister of National Defence, Juan Ponce Enrile, and the Vice-Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos, who had resigned, and who had declared Corazon Aquino and not Marcos as the legitimate president. Enrile and Ramos opposed Marcos from Camp Aguinaldo and, across the highway, in Camp Crame, on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA).

On Sunday morning, 23 February, an altar was erected on the guard-house of Camp Aguinaldo and Mass was celebrated with the huge congregation that had gathered outside the

barracks. By Sunday afternoon the crowd had reached around half a million, including priests and seminarians and hundreds of nuns. A large statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, was set up over the altar. When tanks and marine forces arrived on the scene they were halted by the crowd, and the people started offering the soldiers food and flowers. The three days and four nights of the People's Power Revolution thus brought down the Marcos dictatorship. In the words of Miguel Bernad:

The events of February, 1986, were proof of the influence wielded by the Church. On Sunday, February 16, from almost every pulpit in the land, the bishops' statement was read condemning the unprecedented fraudulence with regard to the February 7 presidential elections. That statement—and Cardinal Sin's appeal made at ten o'clock on Saturday night, February 22—served to galvanise the people into taking direct action.<sup>61</sup>

For the Church, as noted, the triumph of the People's Power was a divine intervention, the "Miracle of EDSA":

On those fateful four days and four nights of the revolution... literally millions of saints came marching in to protect the outnumbered and doomed rebel group of Enrile and Ramos. The Filipino civilians who massed on EDSA were, of course, not saints in the conventional manner we understand the word. But insofar as they were willing to face death... insofar as they spend that crucial period prayerfully and with a surpassing love... they were saints.<sup>62</sup>



The EDSA Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace, was erected by the Church as a commemoration of the Virgin Mary's miraculous intercession to oust the dictatorship through a peaceful and bloodless uprising. Cardinal Sin described it as Holy Ground. It was claimed there was a second miracle when the Church supported a four-day political protest, "The Second EDSA Revolution," that peacefully overthrew the government of President Joseph Estrada in January 2001 (Our Lady of EDSA website). This provoked a reaction and was followed by attacks against the EDSA Shrine by Estrada's supporters who largely originated in the Manila slums.

Implicitly, the Church's role in the People's Power, as symbolised by the EDSA Shrine, was that it completely identified with the aspirations of the Filipino people for justice and freedom. In this sense, this was the moment when its dichotomous legacy as the Colonial Catholic Church that opposed the Philippine Nationalist Revolution was finally put aside (with the reservations made earlier). Yet, while this may have been true from the perspective of the bishops and the clergy, it may not have been so from the secular nationalist perspective.

### Conclusion

The Catholic Church in the Philippines was both the beneficiary and the victim of Spanish colonialism, which provided it with the means to pursue its evangelising mission. It was a victim because its Christian mission was compromised by its identification with the Spanish state through the *Patronato Rea de las Indias* and its consequent entanglements with colonial policy and the racism and exploitation it entailed. This is not to say that during the Spanish colonial era the Church abandoned its Christian principles or that the Spanish bishops and religious orders were simply the agents of foreign rule. Its commitment to the salvation of the Filipino laity was genuine and involved personal sacrifice. But once

confronted by Filipino nationalism and the threat it posed to the Church and to the Catholic faith, the last Spanish bishops in the islands condemned both the nationalist revolution and the Filipino clergy.

Although the religious settlement advocated by the Spanish bishops and endorsed by the Apostolic Delegate provided the basis for the Apostolic Constitution of 1902, including the decision that the Spanish religious orders would remain in the Philippines (and, implicitly, control the Filipino clergy), it perpetuated the Church's colonialist and anti-Filipino policy by opposing the people's nationalist aspirations and exposing itself to the charge of racial prejudice. Thus the settlement resulted in the schism in 1902 that divided the clergy into two. The consecration of Filipino bishops from 1906 onwards expressed the Vatican's recognition that the settlement of 1902 was unworkable. But it took another sixty or so years for a post-Vatican II Church to unreservedly recognise the political as well as the religious aspirations of Filipino Catholics. In 1986, the Church finally laid to rest the claim that it was the opponent of Filipino political aspirations, and claimed to be their committed champion. That this did not represent a final resolution of its dichotomous legacy proceeded from its understanding of its own religious mission, and not from its endorsing the principles of secular nationalism.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Phelan, *Hispanization of the Philippines*.

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<sup>2</sup> This article draws for its first part on my PhD dissertation, “Church and Revolution in the Philippines”, Australian National University, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> See Schumacher, *Church and State*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 36–47.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Chappelle died in New Orleans in August 1905 during a yellow fever epidemic. Francisco J. Tschan, *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 4, 1930, 11–12; and see Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 194.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, “Instructions to All Station Commanders,” 1610

<sup>9</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 95.

<sup>10</sup> Clifford, “Aglipayanism as a Political Movement,” 280. *Manila Times*, 29 December 1899 and 13 January 1900.

<sup>11</sup> *Manila Times*, 24 October 1899.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, 27 September 1899.

<sup>13</sup> Evangelista, “Religious Problems in the Philippines,” 250.

<sup>14</sup> See Vidler, *Variety of Catholic Modernists*; Ranchetti, *Catholic Modernists*; McAvoy, *The Great Crisis*.

<sup>15</sup> Ruiz, *Three Pillars*, 1–6.

<sup>16</sup> Achútegui and Bernad, *Religious Coup d'état*, vol. 3, 60-61.

<sup>17</sup> Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, 365.

<sup>18</sup> Falconi, *Popes in the Twentieth Century*, 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Quae mari sinico*, Introduction.

<sup>20</sup> “Defends the Luzon Friars”, *New York Times*, 24 October 1899.

<sup>21</sup> “Defends the Luzon Friars,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1899.

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- <sup>22</sup> Pardo de Tavera, *Reseña histórica*, 18.
- <sup>23</sup> Clifford, “Aglipayanism as a Political Movement.” 281.
- <sup>24</sup> Le Roy, *Philippine Life*, 131.
- <sup>25</sup> *Philippine Commission*, 1901, 31.
- <sup>26</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 195.
- <sup>27</sup> Achútegui and Bernad, *Religious Coup d'état*, 60-61.
- <sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Philippine Insurrection*, vol.1, 467: 13, 1971.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy*, 195.
- <sup>31</sup> Taylor, *Philippine Insurrection*, vol. 1, 122:11, 1971.
- <sup>32</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 247.
- <sup>33</sup> Achútegui and Bernad, *Religious Coup d'état*, 112–77.
- <sup>34</sup> *Letters of Apolinario Mabini*, 215–16.
- <sup>35</sup> The original handwritten minutes of the consultations and a typewritten copy are held in the Santo Domingo Archives, the University of Santo Tomás, Manila, under the title *Acta Collationum, quas Episcopi Philippinarum haberunt in Civitate de Manila praeside Rdm. D. Delegado P. L. Chapelle*, Manila, January 1900, vol. 10 of *Historia Ecclesiastica de Filipinas*. Subsequent to my use of them they were consulted by Fr John Schumacher and analysed in his *Revolutionary Clergy* and then published in *Philippiniana Sacra* 9 (1974): 308–51.
- <sup>36</sup> Le Roy, *Philippine Life*, ii, 297–98; *New York Times*, 18 January 1900.
- <sup>37</sup> In their private history of the period, the Dominican Order included a brief report of the consultations, *Recorder*, V, 222–23. This report was used by Father Pablo Fernandez OP, archivist at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, in an unpublished article made available to the author.



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- <sup>38</sup> Quoted in Robertson “The Aglipayan Schism,” 331.
- <sup>39</sup> Rodriguez, *Gregorio Aglipay*, vol. 1, 230–31, 310–11.
- <sup>40</sup> *New York Times*, 18 January, 1900; *Libertas* and *El Comercio*, 8–12 January 1900.
- <sup>41</sup> Blount, “Religious Conditions in the Philippine Islands,” 88.
- <sup>42</sup> Achútegui and Bernad, *Religious Revolution in the Philippines*, vol. 1, 157; Taylor, *Philippine Insurrection*, vol. 1, Exhibit 8.
- <sup>43</sup> Achútegui and Bernad, vol. 1, 156–17.
- <sup>44</sup> Rodriguez, *Gregorio Aglipay*, vol 1, 333.
- <sup>45</sup> *Acta Collationum*, minutes, 8 January, 1900.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Philippine Commission*, 96–111.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Testimony of Very Rev. Francisco Araya, 2 August 1900, 8.
- <sup>49</sup> *Acta Collationum*, January 1900.
- <sup>50</sup> Alcocer, *Pastoral Letter*.
- <sup>51</sup> Schumacher, *Church and State*, 53.
- <sup>52</sup> Archbishop Harty, 1912, quoted in Schumacher, *Church and State*, 49.
- <sup>53</sup> Schumacher, *Church and State*, 53.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.
- <sup>55</sup> Shoesmith, “Church and Martial Law,” 70-89. For a review of Catholic social and political thinking from the social encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII to Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, see Shoesmith, “Church and Martial Law,” 246–57.
- <sup>56</sup> Schumacher, *Growth and Decline*, 247.
- <sup>57</sup> UST Social Research Center, *Philippine Revolution*, 1,
- <sup>58</sup> *Papal Speeches*, 1981, 4.
- <sup>59</sup> Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*, 65ff.

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<sup>60</sup> Youngblood, The Corazon Aquino 'Miracle',” 1241

<sup>61</sup> Bernad, *The February Revolution*, 133-34.

<sup>62</sup> Bautista, *Cardinal Sin*, 188.