The
Hispanization of the
Philippines

Spanish Aims
and
Filipino Responses
1565–1700

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The "Philippinization" of Spanish Catholicism

Given the disadvantages under which the Spanish clergy had to operate, their efforts would have proved abortive if the Filipinos had not voluntarily responded to some features of Christianity. As it happened, the Filipinos endowed certain aspects of the new religion with a ceremonial and emotional content, a special Filipino flavor which made Catholicism in the archipelago in some respects a unique expression of that universal religion. In this process of "Philippinizing" Catholicism the major role belonged to the Filipinos. They showed themselves remarkably selective in stressing and de-emphasizing certain features of Spanish Catholicism.

The Societal and Ritualistic Character of Philippine Christianity

Before the conquest, sacred and profane were often indistinguishable. The pagan religion permeated all phases of life. One of the aims of the Spanish religious was to create a Catholic community consciousness in which the teachings and the spirit of the Church would penetrate into the daily lives of the converts. The religious fostered a series of pious customs to provide daily reminders to their parishioners. The women and the children, for example, were gathered every day at the foot of the large wooden cross erected in the main plaza of each village to chant the Rosary, and in many parishes the children walked through the streets at sunset chanting the Rosary. In other parishes one of the altar boys rang a bell as he walked through the street at sunset, to remind the faithful to say one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the souls in Purgatory. But these measures proved effective only in the cabeza village, where there was a constant community. The majority of the Filipinos lived at some distance from the parish church.

The fiesta system and the founding of sodalities, on the other hand, reached out to embrace the whole scattered population of the parish. Although the majority of Filipinos preferred to live near their rice fields, they could be lured periodically into the cabeza village. The enticement was the fiesta. There were three fiestas of consequence to the Filipinos, namely, Holy Week, Corpus Christi, and the feast in honor of the patron saint of the locality. The parishioners flocked to the cabeza villages for these occasions. Not only did the fiestas provide a splendid opportunity to indoctrinate the Filipinos by the performance of religious rituals, but they also afforded the participants a welcome holiday from the drudgery of toil. The religious processions, dances, music, and theatrical presentations of the fiestas gave the Filipinos a needed outlet for their natural gregariousness. Sacred and profane blended together.

The periodic visits which the provincial superior was obligated to make to the parishes administered by his order were usually the occasion of another elaborate celebration. The visiting prelate and his retinue made an entrée joyeuse into the cabeza village. The European origins of this ceremony, the liturgical prototype for which was Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, go back to the Middle Ages. It is highly doubtful that the Filipinos were aware of the ceremony's elaborate liturgical symbolism, but they evidently relished the pageantry involved.
The founding of confraternities or sodalities of laymen and laywomen also contributed to the formation of a Christian community consciousness. Here is another example of a medieval Spanish institution which served different ends overseas. In the late Middle Ages confraternities (cofradias in Spanish) were voluntary associations whose religious function was the practice of piety and the performance of works of charity. Under the patronage of a particular saint or the Virgin these associations also provided a wide range of mutual aid benefits. Requiem Masses were sponsored for the deceased, their funerals paid for, and their widows and orphans assisted.

Confraternities were founded in many Indian parishes in America whence they were introduced into the Philippines. In the islands the mutual aid benefits, a prominent feature of the institution in Spain, were de-emphasized. The Jesuits skillfully used their sodalities as instruments to consolidate Christianization. The members performed two acts of charity. The first was to visit the sick and the dying to urge them to receive the sacraments and to persuade the infidels to request baptism. The purpose of these visits was to discourage the ill from appealing to clandestine pagan priests for consolation. The other act of charity was for members to attend funerals. The presence of sodality members, it was hoped, might discourage ritual drinking, a custom which the clergy was anxious to suppress.

The Filipinos did not respond to all forms of social indoctrination. The attempt of the Franciscans and the Jesuits to introduce processions of flagellants during the Holy Week ceremonies enjoyed, because of its novelty, some initial success. But since the principle of corporeal mortification was alien to their previous religious traditions, the Filipinos only occasionally showed any sustained enthusiasm for that typical expression of Spanish asceticism. What the Filipinos did accept with gusto were the more sensual and graphic aspects of traditional Spanish observances during Holy Week. Candlelit processions of penitents dressed in hood and gown, large floats depicting scenes from the Passion, the thick aroma of incense, and noisy music were some of the colorful externals of Spanish Catholicism which flourished in a Philippine setting.

Another act of penitence to which the Franciscans sought to persuade the Filipinos was to deprive themselves periodically of their daily bath. Ribadeneyra, the first Franciscan chronicler, quoted with approval the pious legend that the Apostle, St. James the Younger, never bathed during his lifetime, but he ruefully admitted that the Filipinos all too infrequently showed signs of emulating that Apostle's example. No amount of ecclesiastical eloquence could induce the Filipinos to give up their daily bath at sunset, which they took for pleasure as well as for bodily hygiene. In spite of their prejudice against bathing, the clergy had the good sense not to interfere with this Philippine custom.

Accustomed to the water since infancy, the Filipinos did, however, take enthusiastically to another aspect of Catholicism, that is, the use of holy water. Their faith in its efficacy was almost boundless, and their demand for it was insatiable.

It is apparent that one of Catholicism's strongest appeals was its splendid ritual and its colorful pageantry. In this respect the Filipino attitude was not substantially different from most other indigenous peoples of the Spanish empire. But there are special features to the Filipino response. Singing played a prominent role in the pre-Hispanic culture, hence the Filipinos proved eager and talented pupils of liturgical music. They soon acquired proficiency in singing Gregorian chants. They learned to play European instruments like the flute, the violin, and the flagelo with remarkable skill. The Filipino love of pageantry expressed itself in a variety of ways, one of which was the popular custom of shooting off firecrackers as the Host was elevated at Mass.

The pomp and pageantry of the Church's ritual contrast with the simple edifices in which these ceremonies were ordinarily performed. Only in Manila and its environs were there many elaborate stone churches constructed in the baroque style. In the provinces the majority of the cabecera churches and virtually all the
visita chapels were plain, wooden structures built according to the principles of the folk architecture of the Filipinos rather than the monumental architecture of the Spaniards. As a protection against the hot and humid climate these churches were built elevated on thick timbers. The walls were made of bamboo, and nipa palm leaves provided the material for the roofing. The unpretentiousness of these churches apparently did not dampen the enthusiasm of the Filipinos for the colorful rituals of the Church.

The acceptance on the part of the Filipinos of the Catholic ritual pattern had much to do with the eventual suppression of pre-Hispanic ritual drinking. Without being outright hypocrites the Spanish clergy could not oppose moderate drinking as such. Excessive indulgence they could attack as a threat to public morality. What aroused their hostility was that drinking was identified exclusively with the pagan religious observances of betrothals, weddings, and funerals. The missionaries took vigorous measures to wipe out this custom. One method was to denounce offenders from the pulpit. The culprits were ostracized for a certain period of time. Often less drastic measures sufficed. In order to disentangle betrothals from ritual drinking, the religious fostered the custom that the fiscal conduct the ceremony in the presence of the two families, without benefit of alcoholic stimulation. The sodalities contributed to the undermining of ritual drinking at the celebration of funeral rites, as we recently observed. Such a tradition could not be suddenly abolished by ecclesiastical fiat, but gradual progress was registered. Ritual drinking survived longest in the less Hispanized regions of the archipelago such as the Bisayas and Cagayan, but even there the custom was on the decline during the second half of the seventeenth century. But the remarkable fact is that ritual drinking was eventually eliminated among the Christianized peoples of the islands. Ceremonial drinking disappeared after the suppression of the pagan rituals with which, in the minds of the Filipinos, it had come to be identified. The custom withered away as the pagan ritual complex was overwhelmed by the elaborate ceremonies of Spanish Christianity, in which alcoholic stimulation had no necessary function. Thus the acceptance of the Catholic ritual pattern had much to do with making the Filipinos the sober people they remain to this day.

Since Philippine society before the conquest was kinship-oriented, the Catholic custom of ritual coparenthood provided an opportunity, which the Filipinos eagerly grasped, namely, to bring kinship relations into the circle of Christianity. According to the Catholic ritual, each person at baptism is required to have two sponsors, a godfather (a compadre or padrino) and a godmother (madrina). Godparents were also required for confirmation, on the assumption that confirmation was a completion of baptism. At weddings, godparents were optional. The notion of sponsorship does not have a Biblical but rather a customary basis, according to canon law. Baptism was traditionally regarded as a spiritual rebirth at which ceremony spiritual, as opposed to natural, parents were considered necessary. Thus a spiritual and mystical relationship was formed between the godparents and the godchild. No marriage, for example, between them was possible.

Some interesting innovations resulted when ritual coparenthood (compadrazgo) spread to America and to the Philippines. In contrast to Spain, the tendency overseas was to expand the number of people involved. The "blanketing in" of relatives of the participants was common. The relationship between godparents and parents rather than between godparents and godchildren was stressed, thereby creating a functional relationship between age equals rather than an unbalanced relationship between two generations. In the colonies there were sometimes as many as twenty occasions when godparents were chosen, in contrast to the two obligatory occasions fixed by the Council of Trent. Coparenthood was often extended to include such mundane events as serious illness, the first shave of a youth, or the building of a new house. The trend was to choose godparents from a superior social stratum, for the participants in the relationship were under some moral obligation to aid each other. Ritual coparenthood promoted social stability, especially in regard to interclass and interracial relations.
The Spread of Catholicism

Compadrazgo rapidly spread in the Philippines. Conquistadores and early encomenderos frequently served as godfathers to native chieftains and their relatives. Magellan was Humabon's sponsor.17 Legazpi was Doña Isabel's godfather. He also served in the same capacity at the baptism of Tupas, and the Adelantado's grandson was the godfather of Tupas' son.18 During the first generation of missionary activity, the compadrazgo served a symbolic purpose, a visible act of reconciliation between the conquerors and the conquered.

The actual spread of compadrazgo is exceedingly difficult to trace. The available sources contain very little information on the subject. A tantalizing indication of the rapid spread and the social significance of ritual coparenthood can be found in an ordinance of the Audiencia (May 17, 1599) prohibiting Chinese converts from serving as godparents. The edict accused the Chinese of "having a great number of godchildren, both Christian and infidel, in order to have them ready for any emergency that may arise, and to employ them as false witnesses to which they lend themselves with great facility, and at little cost—and for other evil purposes and intents, exchanging with them favors and assistance in their affairs. . . ."19 If more information of this sort were readily available, it would be possible to reconstruct the historical process by which ritual coparenthood blended into or destroyed preconquest kinship relations or created new kinship ties. Since this is not possible with the sources available, compadrazgo must be studied in a contemporary setting, with the tools available to the social anthropologist.

Syncretic Elements in Philippine Christianity

The Filipinos' lack of a solid grasp of Catholic doctrine threatened to cause native Christianity to degenerate into outward ritual formalism. The line between veneration of the saints and idolatry was often crossed, and belief in miracles sometimes provoked a relapse into magic and superstition.

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There emerged no single cult of mass appeal comparable to the celebrated apparition of the Indian Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico. Although there was no Philippine Virgin of Guadalupe, the Filipinos' belief in miracles was boundless and virtually uncontrollable. Few of these "miracles" received any official recognition from the Church, but such ecclesiastical discouragement did little to dampen the simple faith of the Filipinos in the ever-present powers of the supernatural. And to this day in the rural Philippines an atmosphere of the miraculous and the supernatural permeates popular Catholicism.

The suppression of outward pagan rituals did not entail the abolition of a whole accretion of superstitious customs of pre-Hispanic origin. Rather these folk customs were gradually if only superficially Christianized. Friar Tómas Ortiz's Práctica del ministerio, published in Manila in 1731, is an invaluable source for observing the development of this "Christianizing" process. Father Ortiz commented:

... the Indians [the Filipinos] very generally believe that the souls of the dead return to their houses the third day after their death in order to visit the people in it, or to be present at the banquet, and consequently, to be present at the ceremony of the tilao. They conceal and hide that by saying that they are assembling in the house of the deceased in order to recite the Rosary for him. If they are told to do their praying in the church, they refuse to comply because that is not what they wish to do . . . . They light candles in order to wait for the soul of the deceased. They spread a mat on which they scatter ashes, so that the tracks or footsteps of the souls may be impressed thereupon; and by that means they are able to ascertain whether the soul came or not. They also set a dish of water at the door, so that when the soul enters it may wash its feet there.20

One method for apprehending a thief turns out to be a classic example of the coexistence of pagan and Christian elements in which sacred and profane are interwoven. "It is reduced to placing in a tilao, sieve or screen some scissors fastened at the point in the shape of the cross of St. Andrew, and in them they hang their rosary. Then they repeat the name of each one of those who are
present and who are assembled for this. If, for example, when the name Pedro is mentioned, the bilao shakes, they say that Pedro is the thief."

The densely populated spirit world of pre-Hispanic Philippine religion was not swept away by the advent of Christianity. Some Filipino Catholics continued to ask permission from the spirits before doing certain things. The ninos had to be propitiated on occasions, such as before taking fruit from a tree or before crossing a river. Added Father Ortiz: "When they are obliged to cut any tree, or not to observe the things or ceremonies which they imagine not to be pleasing to the genii or the ninos, they ask pardon of them and excuse themselves to those beings by saying among many other things that the Father [the parish priest] commanded them to do it, and that they are not unwillingly lacking in respect to the genii, or that they do not unwillingly oppose their will, etc." Thus did some Filipinos seek to reconcile their pagan superstitions with their Christian beliefs.

Father Ortiz's observations point up the syncretic element in Philippine Christianity during the early Spanish period. It would, however, be rash to postulate a "mixed religion" hypothesis by claiming that the Filipinos worshipped idols behind altars, adopting from Christianity only those elements which harmonized with the preconquest religion. Those preconquest rituals and beliefs which survived the conquest eventually lost their pagan identity and blended into popular or folk Catholicism. With the passing of time this process acquired increasing intensity. In the seventeenth century syncretic elements are often apparent, but in the nineteenth century they are much less so.

Toward the Spanish clergy the Filipinos were capable of showing on occasion a remarkable solidarity, even to the extent of burying, temporarily, personal animosities among themselves. An informal conspiracy of silence operated at times to keep the religious ignorant of the existence of some scandals or the continuance of clandestine pagan rituals. A Filipino who passed on such information to the priest was called a mabitig, a Tagalog word meaning informing or spy. If his identity became known, ostracism by his fellow countrymen was apt to be his lot.

Various means of breaking through the conspiracy of silence were devised. One method was for the fiscales to keep the religious informed. But the fiscales could also be parties to the silent conspiracy. The clergy initially encouraged the writing of anonymous letters. This procedure proved not very helpful; charges made under the cover of anonymity often turned out to be false.

The conspiracy of silence began to lose its effectiveness gradually, as the daily lives and customs of the Filipinos became somewhat more Christianized. The silent conspiracy continued longest in that sphere where Spanish Christianity could offer no satisfactory substitute for traditional pagan observances. Preconquest religion, for example, stressed the causes and cures of illness. Catholicism offered little specific help in this regard. There was no Catholic ritual for curing illness, other than the appeal to prayer. The Church could only provide sacramental consolations to the ill and the dying. But the majority of Filipinos died without receiving the sacraments of penance, Holy Eucharist, and extreme unction. The absence of the Church when death loomed was a salient characteristic of Philippine Christianity. Its causes and its consequences merit some attention.

The Last Rites

Of all the sacraments that of extreme unction caused the greatest amount of controversy. Basic to an understanding as to how this controversy developed must be an awareness of the fact there were usually less than four hundred priests administering to about 600,000 Filipinos. Furthermore, the majority of the natives did not live in compact villages but in small scattered units near their rice fields. The shortage of clergy and the dispersal of the population were the two basic arguments that the regular clergy invoked to justify their refusal to administer the last sacraments in the dwellings of the Filipinos. They argued that a priest would not be justified in spending, for example, three days traveling to
and from a sick person's home located in an inaccessible part of
the parish, thereby depriving the remainder of his parishioners of
his ministrations. In the early 1680's, Archbishop Pardo vigorously
sought to enforce compliance with the canon of the Mexican Coun-
cil of 1585 which ordained that the last rites be administered in the
homes of the dying. That prelate's efforts, however, proved to be
fruitless.

In their correspondence with Archbishop Pardo, the provincial
superiors contended that they had trained the chieftains and the
fiscals to bring the sick in hammocks to the cabecera church before
illness had progressed too far. The provincial superiors con-
cluded that few Filipinos died without the sacraments unless death
occurred suddenly, in which case a priest could scarcely be ex-
pected to be present. Independent evidence does not corroborate
this claim. Not laboring under any such compulsion to rationalize
as were the provincial superiors in the controversy with Arch-
bishop Pardo, Alcina candidly admitted to his Jesuit superiors in
Rome that seven out of every ten Filipinos died without the
sacraments. The religious were sensitive to the charge that they had
abandoned their parishioners on their deathbeds. The vacuum created
by the scarcity of priests and the dispersal of the population was
eventually, but only partially, filled by the growth of a custom peculiar to the Philippines. Specially trained natives visited the
seriously sick and, reciting the Rosary and performing other
pious devotions, did bring the ill some spiritual consolation to pre-
pare them for possible death. These visitors were called magpapa-
hesus, which in Tagalog means "one who makes another call on
Jesus." The genesis of this custom goes back to the seventeenth
century, but it was not prevalent then. The religious superiors in
their correspondence with Archbishop Pardo did not mention it.
It is inconceivable that they would have neglected to do so if this
practice had then been customary. Such a makeshift substitute for
the last rites certainly would have eased the task of justifying
their refusal to administer the last sacraments in the homes.

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The magpapahesus evidently had a Jesuit origin. One of the
duties of the Jesuit sodality members was to visit the seriously ill.
This obligation was originally envisaged as a means of destroying
the influence of the pagan priests rather than as an imperfect substi-
tute for the last rites. Yet this substitute is precisely what it
became in the eighteenth century and afterward, when the re-
ligious, sensitive about the accusations made in the Pardo period,
felt compelled to do something toward consoling the sick and the
dying.

The theological consequences of this neglect of the last rites
may have been grave for many Filipinos. According to Catholic
dogma, a person dying in a state of mortal sin is destined for
eternal damnation. In view of the fact that Filipinos ordinarily
confessed only once a year, it is reasonable to suppose that some
of the seriously ill were not in a state of grace. The most certain
and direct means of winning grace is through the sacrament of
penance. Because of the situation described above, this easier
route was closed to most Filipinos. While it is true that even with-
out the benefit of penance a believer can acquire grace by making
what the theologians call an act of perfect contrition—an act of
sorrow for sin based on the love of God—still, this act is more
difficult of accomplishment for most people than is the act of im-
perfect contrition. The latter is an act of sorrow for sin motivated
by fear of divine chastisement. Considering the inadequacy of
the average Filipino's doctrinal knowledge, it is certainly permis-
sible to doubt whether many of them were capable of grasping the
theological distinction between an imperfect and a perfect act of
contrition. But here is where the task of the historian ends and that
of the theologian begins. What can be said with certainty is that
without the sacraments a believer's chances for salvation are made
considerably more difficult but by no means impossible.

The more mundane consequences for the majority of Filipinos
were as lamentable as were some of the theological implications.
Spanish Christianity provided for the living a splendid liturgy and
a colorful ritual which soon captured the imagination of most
Filipinos. The dying and their relatives, on the other hand, were deprived of the ceremonial consolations of their faith. Furthermore, the dead were usually buried without benefit of ecclesiastical benediction. The dispersal of the population and the exorbitant fees charged by many priests made this ecclesiastical ceremony a privilege of the relatively wealthy. Burial fees often ranged from fifty pesos to five hundred pesos, varying according to the estimated wealth of the deceased.19

The Question of a Filipino Clergy

Many of the characteristics of Philippine Christianity—outward ritual formalism rather than solid doctrinal knowledge, the tendency toward idolatry, superstition, and magic, the conspiracy of silence, and the infrequency of the sacraments, especially the last rites—are largely explainable in terms of two factors. There were not enough Spanish priests to administer the sacraments and the population was highly dispersed. These conditions enabled the Filipinos to be selective in their response to Christianity and to endow the new religion with a unique emotional and ceremonial content. From the viewpoint of the Spanish clergy, the “Philippinization” of Catholicism departed too often from the norms laid down by the Church. There was only one feasible means of checking this trend, namely to train carefully some Filipinos for the priesthood. Six or eight hundred well-trained Filipino clergymen obviously could have rendered invaluable assistance in consolidating the Church’s hold over the people.

In principle, the Church recognized that one of its major responsibilities in a recently converted land was to train a native clergy which in time would be able to assume the administration and propagation of the Faith among their own people. And the Crown, from 1677 onward, urged that steps be prudently taken to train a Filipino clergy. But the Spanish regular clergy adamantly refused to grant ordination to any appreciable number of Filipinos.20 This hostile attitude of the Spanish regulars rested on a selfish desire to preserve their privileges as well as upon genuine scruples of conscience. A numerous Filipino clergy obviously would have undermined the dominant position of the Spanish regulars. According to the administration of the Patronato, title to the parishes was vested in the name of the various orders. The regulars could only be ousted from their benefices by the determined action of the civil authorities. Such a drastic step no governor of the Philippines would undertake, for everyone was aware that the religious were a potent factor in maintaining Spanish hegemony in the provinces. Furthermore, there were no available replacements for the regulars.

The majority of the Spanish regular clergy genuinely believed that the Filipinos were congenitally unfit for the full responsibilities of the sacerdotal state. Friar Gaspar de San Agustín voiced the sentiments of many of his brethren when he wrote:

Rather, their [the Filipinos’] pride will be aggravated with their elevation to so sublime a state [the priesthood]; their avarice with the increased opportunity of preying on others, their sloth with their no longer having to work for a living; their vanity with the seduction that they must needs seek, desiring to be served by those whom in another state of life they would have to respect and obey... For the indio [a native-born Filipino] who seeks holy orders does so not because he has a call to a more perfect state of life, but because of the great and almost infinite advantages which accrue to him along with the new state of life he chooses. How much better to be a Reverend Father than to be a yeoman or a sexton! What a difference between paying tribute and being paid a stipend! Between being drafted to cut timber [for the shipyards] and being waited on hand and foot! Between rowing a galley and riding in one! All of which does not apply to a Spaniard, who by becoming a cleric deprives himself of the opportunity of becoming a mayor, a captain or a general, together with many of the comforts of his native land, where his estate has more to offer than the whole nation of indios. Imagine the airs with which such a one will extend his hand to be kissed! What an incubus upon the people shall his father be, and his mother, his sisters, his female cousins, when they shall have become great ladies overnight, while their betters are still pounding the rice for their supper! For if the indio is insolent and insufferable with little or no excuse, what will he be when elevated to so high a
station? ... What reverence will the indios themselves have for such a priest, when they see he is of their color and race? Especially when they realize that they are the equals or betters, perhaps of one who managed to get himself ordained, when his proper station in life should have been that of a convict or a slave.\textsuperscript{24}

An enlightened Spanish Jesuit, Juan Delgado, answered these declamations with wit and skill. Delgado's apologia for the Filipinos is permeated with the atmosphere of the Age of Reason. Like his contemporary, Montesquieu, Delgado stressed that the character of men is molded in large measure by their environment. Men do not inherit vices and errors but acquire them from experience. Hence such defects are susceptible to rational correction. After urbanely demolishing Gaspar de San Agustín's dismal characterological, Delgado concluded that whatever vices and defects the Filipinos might possess had an environmental rather than a congenital origin. Give some Filipinos a sound and well-supervised education and a conscientious and well-trained native clergy would emerge, according to him.\textsuperscript{25}

Delgado's reasoned defense of the Filipinos was not shared by the majority of the Spanish religious. In the eighteenth century pressure from the Crown and the growth of the population compelled the regulars to use some native priests. Filipinos were not admitted into the regular orders, but some received training as secular priests in seminaries operated by the regulars. The Filipino priesthood, who numbered 142 in 1750, were trained to fill only subordinate positions as secular coadjutors to the religious.\textsuperscript{26} These Filipino clergymen did a great deal of the laborious work of the parish, but they were denied the emoluments and the prestige of heading a parish. The regulars, believing the Filipinos were fit only for subordinate positions, gave them only a minimum of training.

The growth of a native clergy sustained a severe reverse during the administration of Archbishop Basilio Sánchez de Santa Justa y Rufina, who arrived in Manila in 1767. In his attempt to enforce episcopal visitation, the archbishop ousted many of the religious orders from their parishes. He replaced them with Filipino priests. He also had to fill the parishes of the Jesuits, left vacant by the expulsion of the Society from the Spanish dominions in 1767. Poorly trained and half-educated, the Filipino clergymen rendered a deplorable account of themselves. Manila wits quipped "that there were no carabao to be found for the coastal vessels, because the archbishop had ordained them all."\textsuperscript{24} The most lurid fears of Gaspar de San Agustín seemed to come to pass when these semi-literate priests were suddenly put into positions of authority which their lack of sound training did not qualify them to fill. The result of the fiasco was a restoration of the old order. The Spanish religious returned to their parishes, with Filipino priests merely serving as assistants.

In the eighteenth century the Spanish clergy rationalized that the Filipinos were temperamentally unfit for the full responsibilities of the priesthood. The justification for the perpetuation of the system in the nineteenth century was a political consideration. In the face of rising Filipino nationalism aiming at independence, Filipino priests were regarded as potentially if not actively disloyal. The task which the Spanish clergy should have undertaken was not begun until after 1898. Under the American regime, church and state were separated. This change paved the way for undertaking the arduous task of training a competent Filipino clergy, an enterprise supervised by the Catholic hierarchy of the United States.

The Spanish missionaries were not unmindful of the universal character of their own religion, a universality based on the premise that all men are created equal in the image of God, endowed with a common origin and with a common end. It was in the service of this ideal that the religious went to the Philippines in the first place. Nor did the Spanish clergy believe that God spoke only in Spanish. They preached the gospel in many Philippine languages. Catholic equalitarianism and universalism, however, were essentially other-worldly. All men were created equal in the sight of God but certainly not in the sight of their fellow men. This worldly in-
equalities in wealth, status, and intelligence were justified as a necessary consequence of man's imperfect and sinful nature. In the Middle Ages the concept of social inequalities was applied to individuals but not to whole races as such. So it was with Thomas Aquinas, for example. Dante, both one of the last exponents of medieval universalism and one of the first spokesmen of modern statism and imperialism, extended the concept of social inequalities from individuals to races and nations by setting up a hierarchy of races, with Rome at the top of the pyramid. The Spanish humanist, Sepúlveda, molded this Dantesque argument into a justification for Spanish imperialism overseas—the Spanish race was congenitally superior and the Indians congenitally inferior. This idea became a characteristic feature of the colonial mentality. Few Spanish religious in the Philippines could discard this colonialist notion that subject peoples were congenitally inferior. In deliberately stunting the growth of a Filipino clergy, they allowed their Spanish ethnocentrism to override the universal spirit of their creed.

The consequences for the character of Philippine Christianity were momentous. A well-trained Filipino clergy could have done a great deal to root out superstitions, to promote a firmer grasp of the doctrine, and to administer the sacraments with much greater frequency. As it was, there were virtually two religions. One was the Catholicism of the Spanish clergy and the Spanish colonists, and the other was the folk Catholicism of the Filipinos, a cleavage which was sharply delineated along racial and linguistic lines. A numerous Filipino clergy certainly could have done something to bridge the gap between these two expressions of Christianity. The Spanish clergy paid a heavy price for opposing the growth of a Filipino clergy. A trend toward "Philippinization" set in over which the Spanish clergy had little or no control.

If "Philippinization" was unfortunate from a Spanish and Catholic viewpoint, it had much to recommend it in a strictly Filipino context. It meant that the Filipinos absorbed as much Catholicism as they could easily digest under prevailing conditions but not as much as the Spaniards would have wanted them to do. That limited portion of Catholicism which the Filipinos did digest became an integral part of their way of life, and they found in the Church a new sense of human dignity. Catholicism forged powerful bonds of social unity, thereby creating a much needed cushion against the severe economic stresses and strains whose exact character will be discussed in subsequent chapters.