

C. R. Boxer

The Church Militant and Iberian Expansion 1440-1770

Ms. Topica, junamenti in Bulla: Ca illa die 2 principis Iulianicae Societatis translati.

Tôi Là João Nha Sacerdote Annam
Các Đức trao Bula D. th. Papa Clemente thứ
XI đã ra, cũ đã phân, Cuyêr Doãn những sự đời bất
vô thời lễ nghĩa phép nước Đại mình, và người Đại phải
thờ, thì Tôi đã đọc, và biết rõ tường, cũ Đức Lão giữ cũ
như Cậy, cho Bì, cho Bông, cho Chác, cũ Đức Lão được mồm
nào, thời Bối Lương, bồng tôi chỉ Lương cũ như Cậy, thì Tôi
Cam chịu phạt, cũ Tôi Xưng đã đáng phải các wa đã
vô để trao Bula này. Cậy rợ Tôi đã Đến Sách Th.
lưu, Tôi bân Bân, và Tôi cư như Cậy, Tôi xin D.
C. B. cũ Sách Thánh Quan này giúng họ cho Tôi
João Nha chính Thái Tôi đã phả tên mình tôi Giáo Dey

aditus M. D. Joannes Nhus Sacerdos Annamitarum junamentum hoc pro-
nunciis meis in pago lupo thung Anninieg meridionalis Regni Iulianici
Aprilis 1742. In gessum Didoni 2. Datum et supra

An. Hilarius à Beau Ort. 2. M. Episc. Conensis

Vicarius Apostolicus Iulianici Orientalis 2

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and
Iberian Expansion
1440-1770

C. R. BOXER

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The Johns Hopkins Symposia in Comparative History are occasional volumes sponsored by the Department of History at The Johns Hopkins University and The Johns Hopkins University Press, comprising original essays by leading scholars in the United States and other countries. Each volume considers, from a comparative perspective, an important topic of current historical interest. The present volume is the tenth. Its preparation has been assisted by the James S. Schouler Lecture Fund.

Preface

When I was honored by the invitation to give these four Schouler Lectures in 1976, the chairman of the History Department wrote: "I understand you have long been studying native clergies in the overseas empires of European powers. Thus I suggest the theme of 'Christianization of Non-European peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Americas; 1415-1825.' "

In accepting this kind invitation, I made a shift of emphasis in the suggested theme. As can be seen from the book's title, the lectures focus on the aims and attitudes of the Portuguese and Spanish branches of the Roman Catholic church rather than on the views and actions of the papacy at Rome. Naturally, these two themes cannot be completely separated, and they were sometimes in harmony and sometimes in conflict. This constant tug and pull of opinions is, I trust, sufficiently documented in the text; but it could easily have been enlarged upon, had time and space permitted. Equally naturally, the format of a limited lecture series does not allow for a coverage which is all-embracing. I have therefore restricted myself to a consideration of four salient aspects of Portuguese and Spanish missionary enterprise.

The first chapter deals with the racial problems posed by the education and formation of an indigenous clergy among peoples of very different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds from those of the Iberian peninsula. It shows how, after more than a century of almost complete indifference to this problem, the papacy began to press seriously for the ordination of suitable indigenous candidates for the priesthood, but commonly—though not invariably—met with obstruction from the representatives of the two Iberian crowns. It also touches on the

controversial topic of black African slavery, contrasting the indifference of the papacy to the horrors of the West African slave trade with the outspoken protests of a few, if unrepresentative, individual Iberian clerics. The second chapter deals with the cultural problems involved in the presentation of Roman Catholic dogma to peoples who were totally ignorant of this religion. It also briefly discusses the missionaries' own varying reactions to the unknown and unfamiliar faiths which they encountered overseas. The third chapter is concerned with four key organizational problems: relations between the regular and the secular clergy; the mission as a frontier institution from Mexico to the Philippines; the two Iberian royal patronages (*padroado* and *patronato*) of the colonial church; the role of the Inquisition overseas. The fourth chapter discusses another three topics arising out of the first three chapters: the quality and quantity of the converts made by the missionaries of the Church Militant in Africa, America, and Asia; some specific instances of the persistence of idolatry and of synthetic Christianity; the flow and ebb of missionary élan, as reflected in the motives which inspired the spiritual *conquistadores* of the sixteenth century and those of their successors in the ensuing two hundred years.

The great majority of the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries were very conscious of being the vanguard of the Church Militant as well as loyal subjects of their respective crowns. Their convictions and their motives were not necessarily shared by their other European colleagues, although in many instances they were. But for better or for worse, the Iberian spiritual pioneers played a vital role in the overseas expansion of Europe which initiated the making of the modern world.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to the chairman and members of the Department of History at The Johns Hopkins University for inviting me to give the James S. Schouler Lectures in March 1976. I am equally grateful for the hospitality shown me on that occasion, and for the efficiency of the arrangements made by Professor John Russell-Wood. The lectures are published in the form in which they were delivered, but additional and illustrative documentation has been provided in the end notes.

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CHAPTER ONE

Race Relations

Since the church's attitude to race relations is a vast, complex, and controversial topic, this chapter will focus on two principal aspects: (a) the indigenous clergy, and (b) Negro slavery.

The reasons for this choice are not far to seek. It was assumed by virtually all true believers during the period under consideration that the Holy Bible, on which the church's teaching was mainly based, was a divinely inspired work of universal validity for all times, for all places, and for all peoples. Consequently, if the church tolerated—or advocated—a color-bar, and if it made no objections to the "legitimate" enslavement of unbaptized Black Africans, there was no reason for laymen to have any qualms or doubts about such matters. Moreover, it is interesting to see how devout believers reacted on coming into close and continuous contact with races beyond the rim of Christendom, which were hitherto unknown (Amerindians on the other side of the Atlantic, Congolese in West Africa, Japanese in Asia) or which had been known only fleetingly and tenuously (Indian and Chinese) to medieval Europe. Attitudes and convictions formed as the Iberian mariners, missionaries, merchants, and men-at-arms spread around the globe lasted for centuries, and are still with us in varying degrees.

Race prejudice and black slavery were for centuries inseparable, in so far as the vast majority of western Europeans were concerned. The church might with one voice proclaim the brotherhood of all believers; but it might also implicitly or

explicitly sanction a color-bar and slavery. When new or unfamiliar peoples were brought within the fold of Mother Church, why should many of them, even after the passage of several generations, find it difficult or impossible to become ordained priests? Why should others be "legitimately" enslaved for more than three centuries? This chapter does not provide all the answers, being concerned more with hard facts than with speculative theology. But it discusses some of the principal developments in this complex and controversial field, in which the pride and exclusiveness of the church were directly involved.

THE INDIGENOUS CLERGY

However desirable the development of an indigenous clergy may have been in theory, in practice such a clergy took a long time to develop in most countries outside Europe, and in some regions it never existed to any significant degree until very recent years. In many places and for long periods the formation of a responsible native clergy was opposed by those very missionaries who should have been in favor of it—an observation, incidentally, that applies to Protestants as well as to Roman Catholics. Whatever the theory may have been, in practice a colored indigenous clergy was apt to be kept in a strictly subordinate role to the white European priests, particularly where these latter were members of the religious orders—the regular clergy as opposed to the secular clergy. A rapid survey of developments in three continents during three centuries will show how this discrimination arose and the length of time for which it endured in the overseas regions controlled or claimed by the two Iberian crowns of Portugal and Castile, respectively.

West African Clergy

As a result of the Portuguese voyages of discovery and trade along the West African coast during the fifteenth century, many

West Africans were taken to Portugal, primarily as slaves, but some as freemen, or who were subsequently freed. A number of these latter received a religious training and education, the earliest recorded instance being that of a kidnapped black boy who was given to the Franciscan friars of São Vicente do Cabo in 1444, and who subsequently became a friar in that order—presumably a lay brother, although the chronicler who is our source remains vague on this point.¹ Zurara also tells us that next year another black youth was captured near the banks of the River Senegal, whom the Infante Dom Henrique educated in Portugal, apparently with the idea of sending him back to Africa as a missionary priest.² In the event, this Senegalese died before reaching manhood, but this precedent was followed up during the second half of the fifteenth century. We have no reliable figures showing how many actually returned to West Africa as catechists, priests, or interpreters; although the crown certainly envisaged that they should do so, particularly after cordial relations had been established with the Bantu kingdom of Congo during the reign of King John II of Portugal. The German physician, Jerome Münzer, who visited Portugal in 1494, where he was hospitably received by this monarch, states that he saw many black youths who had been, or who were being, educated in Latin and theology with the object of sending them back to the island of São Tomé, the kingdom of Congo and elsewhere as missionaries, as interpreters and as emissaries of King John II. Münzer adds: "It seems likely that in the course of time, the greater part of Ethiopia [i.e., West Africa] will be converted to Christianity. Likewise two German printers went there [São Tomé], one of Nördlingen and the other of Strasbourg. Let us hope that they return safe and sound, since that region is not a healthy one for Germans."³

The most famous of those Lisbon-educated African priests who did return to their homeland was Dom Henrique, a son of the great king Afonso I of Congo, who was consecrated as titular bishop of Utica by a rather reluctant Pope Leo X in 1518. He returned to the Congo capital, Mbanza Kongo—now called São

Salvador—in Northern Angola, in 1521, but he died there some ten years later after a long illness. It would seem that he had become too acclimatized during his long stay in Portugal, since he complained in 1526 that he had been unwell ever since his return to Africa and would like to return to Portugal. Even before his death, King Afonso had sent various young nephews and cousins to be educated as priests in Portugal, in the hope that two or three would likewise be consecrated bishops, as the Congo was too vast for one prelate to supervise adequately. It does not appear that any of them did attain the episcopal dignity, despite the statements of some Portuguese chroniclers implying that they did.⁴ But it is certain that a steady trickle of noble Congolese youths continued to come to Lisbon for their education, which most of them received at the Lisbon monastery of Saint John the Evangelist, popularly known as Santo Eloi. The chronicler and humanist, João de Barros (c. 1496–1570), in his *Cartilha* of 1539, dedicated to the late Infante Dom Felipe, notes of the four Paravá headmen from Malabar who came to Lisbon then: “Your father [King John III] ordered them to be maintained in the monastery of Santo Eloi of this city, so that they can study there with the other Ethiopians from the Congo, from whom we have already formed bishops and theologians, certainly something very new in the Church of God, even though it is prophesied in Psalm 71.”⁵ A number of these Congolese youths died before they had completed their studies at Lisbon, and one of King Afonso’s nephews chose to become a schoolmaster and a married man rather than return to Congo. But the way seemed open for the formation of a fully qualified indigenous clergy in two continents, with the promulgation of a papal Brief in June 1518, authorizing the royal chaplain at Lisbon to ordain “Ethiopians, Indians and Africans” who might reach the moral and educational standards required for the priesthood.⁶

It is obvious that at this period there was no color-bar involved in so far as the development of an indigenous clergy was concerned, whether African or Indian; but it was not long

before racial prejudice made itself felt, although with varying intensity in time and place. The projected evangelization of the Bantu kingdom of Congo had foundered by the mid-sixteenth century, despite its promising start. This story is well known and I will not repeat it here.⁷ Suffice it to remind you that this failure was largely due to the greater attractions of the West African slave trade, in which the missionaries (or some of them) became actively involved. Tropical diseases also decimated the European missionary personnel—never numerous in any event—thus militating against continuity of effort. Nevertheless, a small number of African and Asian students (*estudantes Indios e pretos*) continued to receive an education for the priesthood at Santo Eloi. Some of these evidently returned to their respective homelands, although references are very few and far between.⁸

The growth of race prejudice against persons of black African blood can mainly be accounted for by the development of the Negro slave trade, which received a great impetus during the sixteenth century with the demand for West African slaves in the Iberian colonies in the New World. The association of the Black African with chattel slavery goes back further than that, however, and we find an early instance in the *Travels* of the Bohemian knight, Leo of Rozmital, who visited Portugal in 1466. On taking leave of King Afonso V and his court, this monarch offered Rozmital anything that he would like as a present. The Bohemian asked for two Negro slaves, whereat the king's brother burst out laughing and said he should ask for something more valuable, as the Portuguese enslaved annually "a hundred thousand or more Ethiopians of both sexes, who are sold like cattle."⁹ The number was a great exaggeration, as annual imports could hardly have amounted to a tenth of that figure; but the Duke of Viseu's remark indicates that the upper classes at any rate tended to regard Negro slaves in some respects as subhuman. Similarly, a strong racial prejudice against mulattos was not long in developing, even in the island of São Tomé, where they formed a high percentage of the population by the early sixteenth century. These critics took the common line,

which has been reiterated so often since then, that persons of mixed blood inherited the vices rather than the virtues of their progenitors. Mulattos were repeatedly denounced as being "insolent, mischievous and difficult to manage."¹⁰

In the year 1571, a seminary for the training of local youths (*moços naturais da terra*) was opened at São Tomé by the Bishop (Fr. Gaspar Cão, 1554–74) of that island. Twenty-four years later it was reported that all the priests who were then active in the island had graduated from this seminary. Nevertheless, it had been closed in 1585 by Cão's successor (Dom Martinho de Ulhoa, 1578–91), on the grounds that the graduates were unsuitable and that it would be better to train them at Coimbra, for which purpose he purchased a house to serve as a seminary for them there. Ten years later, the next bishop (Dom Fr. Francisco de Vilanova, 1590–1602) reversed this policy, supporting the local citizens who petitioned the crown to reopen the seminary at São Tomé and close the one at Coimbra. They averred that this latter had never been used for the purpose for which it was intended, since it was very expensive for the islanders to send their sons to Portugal, and in any event the European climate did not agree with them. The crown, through its advisory board of Conscience and Orders, referred this petition to ex-Bishop Ulhoa for his opinion, and he urged that it should be rejected. He alleged that the pagan inhabitants of the West African mainland had no use nor respect for colored clergy and missionaries. They only wanted white evangelists, "whom they call the Sons of God." He added that the mulatto boys of São Tomé were by nature very viciously inclined and that they could only reach the required moral and intellectual standards if they were sent very young to Portugal and educated there until they were ordained. Rather than wasting time in trying to educate mulattos and Negroes for the priesthood, he affirmed, it would be better to send out to West Africa poor white clergy, who had no benefices or livings in Portugal, and to educate white orphan boys for the priesthood at the empty Coimbra seminary. The crown accepted Bishop Ulhoa's advice in the first

place; but Bishop Vilanova seems to have gone ahead and reopened the São Tomé seminary in any event. He declared in 1597 that the graduates and ordinands formed a model clergy and that he had no trouble with them. His successors were mostly far less complimentary about the colored clergy of São Tomé; and in the early eighteenth century there was unedifying rivalry between the black and the mulatto canons of the cathedral chapter, in which both sides resorted to arms and appealed to Lisbon for support.¹¹

The Cape Verde Islands, oldest of the European colonies in West Africa, were described by their disgruntled governor in 1627 as being "the dung-heap of the Portuguese empire." Such prosperity as they possessed was due to the importance of the island of Santiago as an entrepôt for the West African slave trade. The Jesuits maintained a mission on that island and in Upper Guinea from 1604 to 1642, when they relinquished it, owing to the high death rate among their white personnel, and lack of an adequate financial base. The Cape Verde secular clergy, whom they trained during their stay there, was exclusively colored, winning a glowing eulogy from the celebrated Jesuit missionary Padre António Vieira, when the ship which was taking him to the Maranhão put into Santiago for a few days in December 1652. Vieira preached in the cathedral on Christmas Day, and wrote of the Dean and Chapter: "They are all black, but it is only in this respect that they differ from Europeans. There are here clergy and canons as black as jet, but so well bred, so authoritative, so learned, such great musicians, so discreet and so accomplished, that they may be envied by those in our own cathedrals at home." He urged his superiors in Portugal to re-establish the Jesuit mission, and he exhorted the local canons to volunteer for missionary work on the mainland. In neither respect was he successful; and although the Capuchins in 1656 took up the task abandoned by their Jesuit precursors, the seminary vegetated and standards declined disastrously in the second half of the eighteenth century. Of course, there were always honorable exceptions,

and at an earlier period a black priest named João Pinto won high praise from many contemporaries for self-sacrificing labors as a missionary in "the rivers of Guinea" during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹²

The Portuguese conquest and occupation of coastal Angola and their advance into the interior along some of the river valleys, initiated in 1575, periodically brought the problem of developing a native clergy to the attention of the authorities at Lisbon. Apart from anything else, the mortality rates for Europeans in the fever-stricken regions of West Africa were so high that white Portuguese clergy were very reluctant to go there. Accordingly, suggestions for establishing a seminary for the training of black West African clergy, elsewhere than in São Tomé and Santiago de Cabo Verde, were adumbrated from time to time, though there were differences of opinion whether this institution should be located in West Africa itself or in Europe. In 1627-28, for example, the crown consulted the Jesuits at Lisbon on the advisability of erecting one or more seminaries in Portugal, specifically for the training and education of West African youths, who would then be sent back to do missionary and parish work in their own countries, as was still being done on a small scale by the "Blue Canons" of Santo Eloi. The Jesuits replied that such seminaries should be founded in Angola rather than in Portugal itself, since this would be cheaper for the crown and more convenient for the Africans. They added that if the crown should decide to educate these black students in Portugal, this should be done at Lisbon rather than at either of the two university towns, Coimbra and Evora. Black university students, they averred, would be unmercifully teased and bullied by their white colleagues, and they would also be tempted to lead unedifying lives. The Jesuits likewise adduced the undesirable precedent of Irish boys educated in Spain and Portugal, who were often reluctant to return to the dangerous and uncomfortable Irish mission-field, but opted for lucrative chaplaincies in noble Iberian households. The Jesuits concluded that it would suffice to teach these African students