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Missionaries of Indians according to the First Three Councils of Lima

Contextualization

The foundation of the Catholic Church in the New World and its apostolic work among the natives, to whom the message of Jesus was addressed, constitute two of the most exciting moments of the Church that sought to accommodate itself in the new reality, revising its methods of evangelization known up to that moment, its laws and everything that constituted it — perhaps with the exception of the doctrine that could not be subject to revision and accommodation — from its new experience. By the late fifteenth century and past the sixteenth century, since the arrival of Columbus and subsequent conquering and evangelizing visits, the Church had the ability to differentiate her actions, according to the ethnic context where she was, which led her to at least two manifestations, today commonly

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recognized by historians, the Spanish Church and the missionary Church in America. The first sought to be a copy or sister of the most notorious cathedrals of the Iberian Peninsula, Seville and/or Toledo, while the second had to be invented, to be understood, welcomed and appropriated by her new followers. The missionary challenge was not easy, since the composition of American society was made up of indigenous people, migrants from Spain and Europe, Africans forcibly transported to America, where they were treated as slaves, and the mixture of those mentioned. Diversity of beliefs, cultures, languages, etc., required the creation of a new *modus operandi* for the Church, in order to be faithful to its saving mission and effective in its apostolic action towards the social groups that inhabited the Caribbean islands and the continents of the northern and southern hemispheres.

The New World was so large that the arrival of colonizers and missionaries spanned centuries. During this time, dioceses, archdioceses, parishes and missions were created with extraordinary skill — the latter also called doctrines, reductions or towns. The advance of the Church in America was a matter of constant review and debate, especially in the sixteenth century, in provincial councils convened by archbishops, who called for reflection to bishops, religious, civil and intellectual powers of the territories to which they belong. The effects of these meetings were summarized in constitutions that, once approved, were read and acclaimed in solemn sessions and liturgies of the cathedrals of the archbishoprics of Mexico, for the northern hemisphere, and of Lima, for the southern hemisphere. All the clergy were obliged to have a copy of these constitutions, to know and respect them, under the sanction of penalties, including *excomunica*, if the offense or disobedience to them were seen as serious. The first three Provincial Councils of Mexico and Lima are considered to be constitutive for the foundation of the Spanish and missionary Church in America.

The present essay tries to exhibit an aspect of these constitutions, limiting ourselves to the constitutions of Lima that, for the most part, were parallel to those of Mexico. Already at the beginning of this study it is necessary to remember that the society of Peru in the 16th century was mixed. Mainly these lands were populated by Indians (the vast majority), Spanish (increasingly numerous) and blacks (slaves forced to travel to America to be exploited in different jobs organized by the colonizers). From these three groups, new ones arose, already inherent to the new situation in America: mestizos (mixture of Spaniards and Indians), criollos (children of Spaniards born in America, often adverse to Spain), mulattos (mixture of black and white) and zambahigos (mix of black and Indian). From the moment that the seminaries in America arose, which since the Council of Trent were obligatory for candidates for the priesthood, the admission of the Spaniards who were in America was never questioned, nor was that of their children already born in the New World. The debate took place about the possibility of ordering others: mestizos, Indians, mulattos, blacks and zambahigos. This problem

concerned all of Hispanic America. However, since we are dealing here with the Councils of Lima, we reduce our discourse to the geographical limit that this implies. An attempt will be made to exhibit the figure of the ‘priest of Indians’ and their own identity, which the Constitutions themselves differentiated from the priest of Spanish. At the same time, we will be interested in outlining when an Indian could become an Indian priest for the Indians.

Missionaries of Indians and Their Own Identity

The missionary work among natives of the New World coincided with two great events within the church of that time: the institution of the Society of Jesus (1540) and the Council of Trent (1545–1563). Among the multiple contributions that each of these institutions has had in the renewal of the Church of the 16th century, the reform of the clergy and the new method of evangelization of the peoples have to be among the greatest developments that benefited both the church in Europe as in America. And it is not only about the foundation of the seminaries, with renewed spiritual and academic formation programs for their students, but, above all, about the recovery of the spirit of the mission undertaken by the apostles, that is, the conscience about life, a model to be worn by priests and, above all, by missionaries. Evangelization had to be characterized by the purity and uniformity of the doctrine and the missionaries had to witness the proclamation of the Gospel through the sanctity of their lives. Above all, the march of the missions founded among the nations of the newly discovered continents had to have priests and brothers prepared in a different way from that characterized by regular priests. The latter came to America to attend the parishes of the Spanish, without being — neither by appointment nor in spirit — missionaries of Indians. The differentiation between the priest of Spaniards and the missionary of Indians mattered so much that, usually, before crossing the ocean, the religious knew if after his arrival in America he would become a parish priest or missionary. We will seek to clarify the distinctive features of the priest of Indians, both in those arriving from Europe and in those already born and trained in America.

Archbishop of Lima, Don Gerónimo de Loaysa, who convened the first (1552) and second (1567/8) council in Lima, a holy and prudent man, was aware of the great need to have in his archdiocese a skilled, disciplined clergy, agile and holy. Only in this way could he carry out programs and actions in order to found the Church in *Tierra Nueva*: cathedrals, parishes and missions. Selecting missionaries for America, he sought intelligent, committed, and holy men so that through their preaching — verbal and testimony of life — they would lead the Indians to conversion. However, Loaysa also needed priests for the urban parishes, parish priests and academics for the universities, who, when crossing the ocean, would stay in

the Spanish cities in America, assuming the tasks of the parish priest, of professors of the colleges and universities, doctors and experts in laws, etc. Several wanted to travel to America, as life in Europe became less exciting than in the New World where there was a need and opportunity for everything. The holy archbishop knew well that, only by summoning the prelates of his time to Lima and together defining uniform action throughout its territory, as well as the strict implementation of synodical decrees, ensured the advancement of the Church's mission and its success. The decrees of the synods drawn up by Loaysa and his fellow synods were given such importance that, once drafted, they were announced through a solemn reading in the cathedral church, with the obligatory presence of all the prelates, all the clergy, religious and even civil and colonial authorities. It is well known that since her birth, the Church in America knew well, and sanctioned it, that not all were judged fit to administer parishes and missions in America. To go to America, the applicant had to be perceived by the institutions that selected clergy for the new church as a true professional and authentic saint. Disorder, ignorance, discrepancies between missionaries, individualism or negligence were seen as anti-testimony and a great threat to the life of the Church. Such priests were excluded at the time of the selection of the missionaries, or removed from their posts, if their mission did not progress. Traveling to America could not be an opportunity for tourism or adventure, but a responsibility to found a Church; a new Church.

The Second Council in Lima already demanded from the bishops that to the doctrines of Indians they only send the priests who were 'highly tested and well educated'.² Everyone had to apply the same way in teaching Christian doctrine and catechism, while improvisations were a matter of penalty. This regulation was imposed to avoid discrepancies among the missionaries, which could result in confusion for the indigenous people. Good knowledge of local languages was considered essential for the advancement of the mission, to the point that those who did not master it, had their wages reduced by a third after the first year, with the threat of further decrease in the following years.³

The Third Council of Lima (1583), in its first sessions, again revised what was established in 1567, confronting the constitutions with the reality that the extensive archdiocese of Lima lived at that time. Missionaries were expected and required to know the local language and to go to missions willingly. That is why the training of the Indian missionaries was different from that accustomed to the priesthood and already at the time of ordination to the priesthood there were those who received it directly as an Indian priest. Not only in America was such a practice known, several arrivals from Europe already had this title. There

² Segundo Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 1 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses (1551–1772)*, Lima 1951, p. 240.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 240–241.

was awareness that the stay among the indigenous people presented several challenges and not every priest had the ability to face them.⁴

For reasons of uninterrupted and sensitive attention of the indigenous people, the missionaries of the doctrines were forbidden to leave their mission without a license, which they could receive only when it was certain that the successor of the outgoing missionary received everything related to the affairs of the Church and the missionary's responsibilities in order. In the event that such a requirement was not met, the missionary who abandoned the reductions incurred serious ecclesiastical and civil penalties. The Second Council of Lima already spoke on the same subject, demanding that the minimum period of stay of the missionary in his destination village be at least six years and only for a serious cause would it be lawful to shorten it. Upon leaving the mission, it was strictly forbidden and rigorously punished (*excomunica mayor*) that the missionary carry something with him. What must be seen in light of such regulations is that the missionary Church in America and everything it represented and owned belonged to indigenous communities; in great contrast to what was colonial America, where material goods, the labor force and even the lives of the natives were seen, at least in large part, as the property of the colonizers. Such appropriation of the missions by the new Christians could be the main reason for the missions to remain almost intact until today, despite the expulsion of the missionaries, the lack of the clergy, the invasions, the looting, the injustices, among other reasons. It should be added that temporary absences, even if they had been for a short time, like visits to other missions, were restricted, for whatever reason. The missionary was seen as the shepherd who permanently cared for his sheep: he never separated from them.⁵

Nor was it lawful for the missionary to collect alms, in money, kind or service, for any attention given. If he did, he had to pay twice as much.⁶ Above all, in the hour of illness, of *Holy Anointing* and of death, the missionary who visited the needy could not accept any form of payment, even if it was at the initiative of the family of the dying.⁷

But what was most sought after among those who were destined to work among the Indians was that person of good life and testimony. Chapter 40 says directly that if at the time of the missionary's selection there were two candidates and the first had an advantage in the local language, but his life was not exemplary; while the second was less skilled in speaking the language of the Indians, but with an exemplary model of life, the second was, since 'it is more important

⁴ Tercer Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 40 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses (1551–1772)*, vol. III, Lima 1952, p. 339.

⁵ *Ibid.*, capítulo 41, p. 340.

⁶ Segundo Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 9 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, p. 241.

⁷ *Ibid.*, capítulo 10, p. 242.

(without a doubt) to send a person who lives well than a person who speaks well, because it builds much more the good example, than the good words.⁸ Already in 1552, the synod fathers gathered in Lima wrote: ‘that the priests of Indians seek their conversion and salvation mainly with a good example of life, removing from themselves everything that is bad or has a kind of evil.’⁹ Such a conciliar articulation, where the word *mainly* is applied, in no way denies the principal-ity of the action of the Holy Spirit in conversion. However, considering that the Church was born among simple people, the holiness of the apostle was seen as a *sine qua non* for the missionary’s passing to serve the natives.

The Indian missionary also had to be a cultured and disciplined man, prepared to constantly analyze progress in building the missionary people. If we now have a voluminous and precise documentation on the progress of missions in America, it is largely because the missionaries were forced to write a series of documents. Each missionary was obliged to write a list of documents according to a certain order: beginning with the name of the town, followed by the name of the missionary, who wrote books for the baptized, books for married people, books for the inhabitants of each mission (name, alias, names of women and children, relatives), books of non-baptized inhabitants, inventories of goods belonging to the mission, inventories of everything that was produced in the missions with their distribution and sale, among other aspects. At least once a year he had to update all this and write to the bishop, or to the immediate superior, the report on the advancement of Christianity in his mission, speaking about administration of sacraments, catechesis classes, piety of his people, festivities, jobs, diseases and similar actions. Managing a mission was a task that included much more than administration of the sacraments and teaching of the catechism. Caring for the mission as an institution (establishment) went hand in hand with the former. For this reason, only some were considered suitable for such extensive and delicate work when building a church among the original peoples of America.

Although the missionary had to take responsibility for various aspects of the life of the mission, certain trades were prohibited, such as commerce and livestock, although such activities were carried out with the Spaniards and their families. He was also not allowed to work as a farmer, planting or harvesting. And he could not hunt, not even to justify his work in the field due to the greater need he encountered. He was not allowed to dress in profane clothing, carry weapons or anything like that, play cards, or place bets. And he was always forced to wear the habit.

Without a doubt, such regulations helped the evangelized to differentiate between the colonizing and missionary nature of those who arrived in America.¹⁰

⁸ Tercer Concilio. Acción II, p. 339.

⁹ Segundo Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 7, p. 241.

¹⁰ Ibid, capítulo 21 and 22, p. 243.

What is alluded to here confirms chapter 116 of the Second Council of Lima, which requires that missionaries ‘treat the Indians humanely and with love’. Although the chapter itself does not extend further on it, it is evident that at the same time it denounces the colonizers for the abuses against the indigenous.

Great importance was given to the spirituality of the missionary, which was recognized by some external manifestations. For example, the administration of the sacraments should be done with reverence and solemnity, appropriately dressed, in a state of grace and with devotion.¹¹ A study on this topic is needed to better understand how the new ritual administered in the liturgical and religious celebrations was perceived by the natives, and when it was seen as a ritual performed with or without piety and reverence.

Living well with the Indians has been a constant concern of the Church in America, both for bishops and for priests and, above all, missionaries. Without denying the occasional difficulty that may have occurred, the missionary had to be for the natives what a father of the family was for his children — he lives and works so that his children are well, safe and loved. The missionary had to work for the Indians and not the other way around, as was the case in colonial society. Students at school (boys and girls who received catechism classes but did not go to school) were prohibited from rendering certain services to priests, such as bringing firewood and serving *yerba mate*, for example. Rather, at the conclusion of the meeting, the missionary instructed the young people to return to their homes to support domestic tasks.¹²

The clarity and uniformity of the missionaries in announcing the Christian faith to the Indians was important to the Church in America. To achieve this end, the III Council of Lima created a useful tool: the catechism entitled the *Christian Doctrine and the Catechism for the Instruction of the Indians...*, published in 1584. It was done by Dr. Juan de Balba, a native of Lima who graduated from the University of San Marcos. Dr. Juan de Balba was a learned man, professor of the native language at this university. Two catechisms were used: major and minor. Father José Acosta was the author of most of these catechisms based on the official Church content and adapted to the context of the missions and its people. To ensure that the natives understood this teaching well, the catechism was translated into two local languages: Quechua and Aymara. Counting on such a pastoral tool — very advanced for the time — it was possible to transmit the doctrine without errors. The locals received the message in native language and not the language proper of colonizers, which had to be well received and had satisfactory results for both parties.

¹¹ Ibid, capítulo 23 and 24, p. 243.

¹² Tercer Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 43 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, pp. 340–341.

In the 16th century, most Indian missionaries came to America from Europe. But in the following centuries they fostered vocations in America. To better understand this, let us review the organization of colleges, universities and seminaries, as indispensable institutions to organize the priestly formation of the clergy in America, aimed at everyone, Creole, mestizo, native or any other.

Indian Education: Universities, Colleges, Seminaries

Education was organized in a similar way to that of Europe at that time: initial (nursery and grammar), organized in schools that were founded both in cities and in missions; and higher education, offered by universities and seminaries that were only established in cities. The effectiveness of the 16th century church in America in founding universities that were carefully distributed throughout Hispanic America is surprising. Already in the 16th century there were eight universities in America founded in Lima (1551), Mexico (1551), La Plata/Charcas (1552), Santo Domingo/Dominican Republic (1558, Santo Tomás; 1558, Santiago de La Paz), Bogotá (1580) and Quito (1586). Twelve more universities were founded in the 17th century; and in the 18th century, nine. Each of these universities had at least five faculties: Theology, Philosophy, Medicine, Ecclesiastical and Civil Law. However, outside the five main schools, other careers were also organized over time. Some classes were given in Latin, others in Spanish and others in local languages, since among the students, in addition to Spaniards and children of Spaniards, there were also mestizos and indigenous people. Illustrious theologians, philosophers, doctors, mayors, judges, merchants and public servants emerged from these classrooms.

Possibly no religious order managed to contribute to education in Colonial America as the Society of Jesus did, with its system of schools and universities. Some of these institutions still exist, despite the expulsion, cassation of the Order and its subsequent restoration. The Jesuits understood very well that any advance, in order to transform colonial society into a more just and inclusive community for all the sectors that comprised it, needed enlightened minds. A large number of Jesuit missionaries sent to the New World arrived very well trained to assume as educators of all levels and environments where the Society opened its schools. At the same time, some Jesuits were taking professorships at universities founded not only by the Order, but by local bishops. The Jesuits comprehended that their arrival in America had, above all, to favor the humble, indigenous, mestizo, mulatto, black — those most affected by the effects of colonization. Without educating these sectors, it would be impossible to see them in the main positions of the existing institutions, as brothers, priests and bishops.

At each Jesuit mission there was a school where selected boys from society, that is, those who at an early age demonstrated intellectual ability and a suitable temperament for study, were given classes in reading and writing and in all the necessary subjects for a full academic and human formation. Only in this way was it possible to project a partnership with local professionals and leaders, as well as providing excellent priests from their own community. The matter of this school was so important for the church in America (not just for the Jesuits), that the Third Council, speaking to the missionaries of Indians, put it this way: [that the missionaries] ‘hold the schools of the boys as **highly entrusted**.’¹³ It is necessary to clarify that — especially in the context of the reductions of the Jesuits — the best Indian students, after graduation, came to occupy the positions of teachers of letters, of trades, and of singing and music teachers. If the church had doubts about the Indian’s intellectual, spiritual or didactic capacity, such achievements would not have been possible. Several of the indigenous people have been respected as truly learned people and others as skilled and creative artists.

The Cuzco school exemplifies how important and how a Jesuit school, where the children of the Spanish and the main Indians arrived, was and how it worked. The discipline that governed the Jesuit schools marked students for life. Here’s a testimony of it:

At half past five in the morning, the work days (those of feast days an hour later) when the bell rings, they get out of their beds, and then without any sluggishness, to avoid any reason for the punishment, they gather in their chapel, that it is amazingly beautiful, and has a golden cedar altar, which was installed last year; work of great art. Here they are praying, and singing in two choirs *El Alabado*, until six o’clock, when their rector officiates mass for them. Finished this activity they come out, [and] with their little books and other materials to study their lessons in the corridor, in full view of the principal. At 7, at the sound of the bell, they enter the school, where our Spanish pupils and the other children, who come from their homes, attend with a separation of places; and in number they pass 250, because the brother teacher has a very accredited school. At 8:30 our pupils and school-children leave [the classroom] to have a light breakfast: to return with cheer to their studies and tasks, until eleven. And having left the school, they have half an hour of rest. Then they have to eat; and they go with ours to their refectory, where on one side sit our group of students and on the other the rest; and everyone is there, while the meal lasts, with much silence, modesty, and attention to the book, which is read to them in the meantime, while they are sited at the table: as it is styled in our seminars, that the Society has founded in the New World. From the refectory they move to their chapel, where they give thanks to the Lord, sing-

¹³ Ibid., capítulo 43.

ing praises in two choirs, as it already was said. The siesta is spent in the garden, in another corridor next to the entrance, well decorated with paintings, etc. And here a salaried for this purpose teacher, gives them lessons on harp, guitar, vihuela, and other musical instruments, to which our caciques are very inclined. At 2 in the afternoon they return with the others from outside to the tasks of their books, slates, and formulas of Christian doctrine, as they have been put together by Father Gerónimo de Ripalda. The questions [answers of the Christian doctrine] are called arguments, which the children ask each other. And all this last until five in the afternoon: time when they pray the rosary of the Blessed Virgin. And having rested for half an hour, they go back to the question and answer exercise of Christian doctrine. And these are like conferences, which among themselves have what they have studied, specifically on this subject; because its frequent repetition is so important, so that it would be printed as indelible in the memory [of our students]. For the prayers they are gathered in the chapel, where the Father Rector prays with them the litany of the Blessed Virgin, and other prayers. And when they leave the chapel, they go to their rooms to study their lessons, the ones they will report to their teachers the next day. At 8 o'clock in the evening they have dinner, and after an examination of conscience, they go to bed. They have their confessions, and communions at the beginning of each month, apart from other extraordinary ones, [provided on the occasion of] the main festivals, such as that of their Saint Patron, our father San Francisco de Borja, our father San Ignacio, 40-hour Jubilee, etc. Before receiving Communion, they go to the chapel where they read a book about Communion, requirements for it, and effects that are perceived from it, and the Rector talks to them on the same subject.¹⁴

Not all children were selected for the grammar school. That is why the missionaries founded parallel institutions, in order to educate all the children and youth of the native families in human formation and the Christian faith — the main reason for the presence of the missionaries among them. For this purpose, meetings of a religious nature were used, where the missionaries gave spiritual talks. Such encounters included much singing, performed mostly by the professional musicians, but also by the assembled, where Christian doctrine was sung, often singing it in strophic canticles and simple motets;¹⁵ ‘which has caused and causes a lot of edification’. The following is quoted:

¹⁴ AHSI, Perú 17, “*Litterae Annuae 1688-89-90*”, f. 162.

¹⁵ [...] tiene la compañía en el Cusco iglesia particular para los indios, en la cual en ningún tiempo del año ni hora del día deja de haber, muchos de ellos, así hombre como mujeres, rezando y aprendiendo la doctrina y cantando canciones en que se contienen los misterioso de nuestra fe. [AHSI, Perú 19, *Peruana Historia I*, 1567–1625, f. 62].

...and some of them are skilled in music without being able to learn more than by ear and because they do not read music notation, they learn by heart the responses and hymns to sing at their parties and at the masses they say here for their deceased. Every Saturday in their church and chapel they sing the salute of Our Lady and the litany in polyphony and so, on these days, as in their festivals and processions, and in those of our school, the wind-instruments players — [*los ministriles*] — associated in guild, play their horns, flutes, chirimias and trumpets and do this with great skill...

...and this brotherhood [of *los ministriles*] performs also during the octave of *Corpus Christi* and the days of their festivals and jubilees, which are three or four in the year, in which they make a public procession around the square, with their singers and *ministriles* playing...¹⁶

Unlike the schools of Cuzco, Lima, Potosí — and so many more that the Jesuits founded in Peru, where they welcomed students from Spanish families and from the Indian nobility — in the missions between *gentiles*, the classrooms were populated only by the natives.¹⁷ Juli, one of the most famous doctrines in the entire history of the church in America was assumed by the Jesuits in 1576, after its abandonment by the Dominicans. The mission had four churches for four ethnic communities of different languages — that of Santa Cruz (the oldest), that of San Pedro (the central one), that of Our Lady of Asunción and that of San Juan Bautista (the most magnificent). Since the Jesuits moved there, Juli has been the headquarters for a group of missionaries of between 10 to 12 priests and a couple of brothers. From Juli the Jesuit missionaries provided also pastoral care to other communities of Indians who lived in the area. In these environments, free from the Spanish and their already American descendants, the missionaries managed, on the one hand, to know the soul and skills of the locals, and on the other, they took advantage of the moment to make themselves known, without interference or presence of the Spanish, who were banned from living in so called reductions. Environments like Juli allowed missionaries to confirm the authenticity of the conversion and the faith of the Indians, demonstrated through their community and individual prayers. Living among the natives, the missionaries were able to appreciate their habitual conduct, their manual skills (demonstrated in the construction and decorum of the four churches, where even organs were also installed), their intellectual abilities, and much more. The school founded there

¹⁶ AHSI, Perú 23, *Historia General de la Compañía...*, 2:11–12.

¹⁷ The missionaries were instructed that in their villages they should find and manage schools where young people, boys, had the opportunity to learn to read, write, all the curricular subjects of that time. Although Spanish was not spoken in the missions, school students were recommended to learn this language, in order to make them more adept at leading their communities in Colonial America directly and not by Spanish intermediaries. [III Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 43].

counted with a first-rate music institute, from which skilled musicians in singing polychoral masses, villancicos, psalms and motets came out. But what most impressed Juli's missionaries was the discipline of the natives at work, modesty of customs and conduct, as well as piety and enthusiasm of the new Christians in living out their baptismal commitment. Such an environment had to, at least, provoke the missionaries, or simply convince them, that the Indians should be put on the path that would lead them to participate in religious life and the sacramental priesthood. One of the obligations to achieve this end was the foundation of the seminaries, where those admitted could receive adequate preparation to be ordained priests.

The creation of the seminaries raised at the Council of Trent was mandatory not only in Europe, but also in the 'New Church of the Indies, in which it is necessary to cultivate with great concern new progenies of the gospel, so that they can extend and propagate the faith of Christ.'¹⁸ The Provincial Council of Lima of 1552 already promulgated for the entire Domain of Peru the obligatory nature of the declarations of the Council of Trent, so the foundation of the seminary in Lima was a logical consequence of it. Considering that the first missionaries arrived in this area at the beginning of the third decade of the 16th century (1530), the advance of the institutional structures of the Church could be described as energetic. If still in the sixteenth century most of the missionaries in America came from Europe, soon those already born in America managed to outnumber those born in Spain. The pastoral assistance offered to people in America, both to Spaniards and Natives, depended on adequate preparation of priests and religious. The proper functioning of the seminaries in America was very important, that is why the Council of Trent issued a regulation that, of all the economic income that the Church could have at that time in America, 'three percent be taken out and used, and from now on are directed, to the said [institution and management] of the seminars.'¹⁹ With such support, the seminaries became attractive spaces, with extraordinary libraries, chapels, etc., and, above all, with illustrious teachers and spiritual directors. Libraries were well equipped, their collections having thousands of books written by hand and/or printed in Europe. The concern for teaching in America was so authentic and lively that in the closing of the 16th century alone, nearly 30,000 books were shipped from Europe to Mexico. On the other hand, the enthusiasm in America for study and knowledge was so great that even such a shipment of books did not meet the expectations of the locals. They demanded more provisions for their libraries and private collections.

The III Council, to ensure the suitability of the clergy who wanted to train in the seminaries, ordered:

¹⁸ Tercer Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 44 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, p. 341.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Since the Holy Council of Trent, among other things, to be dealt with in the provincial synod, for particular reason commissioned it to effort to institute the seminaries, which with such unity of synodal prelates or (to put it better) from the Holy Spirit they were wanted, and it is a very clear and certain thing that no church or province has such a need for this healthy remedy, as this new church in the Indies, in which it is necessary to cultivate with great concern new plants of the gospel, so that they can spread and profess the Christian faith.

Therefore, this holy synod, recognizing its obligation in this part, requires the omnipotent God to all bishops and prelates, entrusting their consciences as much as possible, to seek and work as soon as possible to construct and establish in their territories the said seminaries.²⁰

The institution and the proper functioning of the seminaries were seen as the responsibility not only of the bishop, but of the entire society. The insistence of the council on this issue clearly demonstrates that the Church in America, practically from its birth, was aware of the obligation to search for vocations in America. It was obvious that founding of the seminaries in America would lead to changes within the Church, and that sooner rather than later all ethnic groups would be admitted to study in them, in view of being ordained priests and bishops, already born in the New World, with a different mentality and experience, with a deep knowledge of local cultures and languages, with less prejudice against ethnic minorities — especially against mestizos and Indians — and with new energy and enthusiasm. The ordination of the Indians was an important aspect of this new reality that the Church in America lived.

Ordination of the Indians

Certainly, the ordination of indigenous people, recently converted to Christianity, has not been a concern for the Church in America since the very start of the first sales from Europe. In the first half of the 16th century, upon arrival in the New World, the Church needed to create its basic local structures, such as dioceses. From there, they moved to establishing of the first three archdioceses: in Mexico, Lima and Santo Domingo, created by Pope Paul III in 1546 and solemnly announced in her bull *Super universas orbis ecclesias*, giving to the local church some independence from the church in Spain. The creation of archbishoprics in America coincided with the beginning of the great reforming council summoned by the Catholic Church (Council of Trent, 1545–1563). Said council had a great impact on the selection of candidates for the priestly ministry, foundation

²⁰ Ibid.

of seminaries and formation of the clergy. Its decrees were also implemented in America, with certain extensions that came from the local prelates. Already at the starting point of the question studied here, it is important to affirm that the privation of ordination of the baptized indigenous people, in the first decades of the presence of the Church in America, was not a consequence of any racist attitude on the part of the Church, nor was there put in query the intellectual or moral capacities of the natives. On the contrary, several emissaries of the Church were so admired by these abilities perceived in the natives that already in the second decade of the 16th century, the children of the Indian nobility, traveled to study in Europe and then, upon completion of their studies and return to America, they served local society in various capacities acquired in the European institutes and academies. On the other hand, in the newly founded schools in America the children of indigenous people were also admitted, which led to the next step: the foundation, since the 17th century, of the schools for Indians. Most of such schools were founded by the Jesuits. Some common problems that worried the missionaries and had to be eliminated before admitting natives to the seminaries were drunkenness in the family, the weak academic formation of the candidate, insecurity about the perseverance, integrity and purity of faith of the indigenous person. The missionaries had to work for decades on these aspects to achieve considerable progress and assertion in above mentioned matters.

In Mexico (1555) and Lima (1567) the provincial councils addressed the issue of the ordination of the Indians. But the result was contrary to what was expected. The natives were not only denied access to the sacramental priesthood, but also to minor orders. As if that were not enough, the synods also prohibited the indigenous people from wearing ornaments associated with the priestly ministry, such as the Liturgy of the Word or the administration of Sacraments, mainly the mass. What softens this decree, which to the reader of the 21st century results rather disturbing, is the recommendation that indigenous people who performed some service in the Church wear distinctive clothing and learn to read, write and be taught Spanish — indispensable conditions for the admission of the candidates to the seminaries. The decree, however, does not say anything about the mestizos, as if this issue had been considered closed or undeniable, in favor of the admission of this group to the priesthood.²¹ In the religious houses of Dominicans, Franciscans (minor friars), Mercedarians and others, the progress was similar to that outlined

²¹ In fact, within the ecclesiastical sphere the issue of the organization of mestizos was linked to illegitimate mestizos and never to legitimate ones. However, Gregory XIII granted the bishops in America to dispense with this impediment. This does not deny that colonial society knew several civilians, including Felipe II and religious such as Fray Francisco Miranda and Fray Antonio de Zúñiga (Dominicans), who were against the ordination of mestizos; even legitimate ones. Other religious, especially Jesuits, insisted that one simply had to choose well among the mestizos, but not prevent them from accessing the priesthood. In any case, the spirits against and in favor of the

by the councils. Namely, those who were admitted to community life, first learned to live as friars, exercising some service in favor of the community, and then they were admitted dressing religious habit, professing religious vows and to being ordained priests. These were nothing more than processes with stages of different lengths, that culminated decades or generations later. However, the Church was progressing in this direction, defining laws, founding formative and academic institutes, looking for financial means needed to run this project, acceptance by colonial society and more. No doubt the Church wanted to get this end quick, but she did not know how. Perhaps Chapter 33 of the Third Council of Lima well sums up the spirit of the time, insisting that only those men who were seen fit for such a ministry be ordained, without reference to race, culture, or other reason. Based on the provisions of the Council of Trent, from Lima it was determined:

they should not admit to the priesthood and sacred ministers those who are unworthy, nor excuse themselves by saying that there is a lack of ministers in the churches [...] it is undoubtedly much better and more profitable for the salvation of the natives there are few priests, and those good ones, that many and bad.²²

It is necessary to add here that certain determinations that the Church made in America have not been without the influence of the civil power, or even, directly implemented out of obedience to this power; especially to the king of Spain and its overseas representatives. For example, the bishop of Quito, Fray Pedro de la Peña, ordained priests mestizos, but left this practice after the intervention from Spain expressed in the Royal Decree that was to be obeyed, and which strictly banned ordaining them. A similar situation had to face the Bishop of Cuzco, Sebastián de Lartaún, who, upon receiving the refusal of the high political spheres, sent a letter to the Court in Spain, assuring that no Spanish man of good life surpassed by virtue most of the mestizos who were ready to be ordained, urging that they admission to priesthood. Lartaún insisted that it was precisely they, the mestizos, who best spoke the local language and understood the culture of the indigenous people, which he himself considered a great advantage for the advancement of the missions in the New World. However, until the next pronouncement of the Church in America (the Third Council of Lima), neither mestizos nor indigenous people were ordained. It is evident, however, that at least some prelates in America were willing to ordain mestizos and indigenous people years before they were accredited to do so. It is also clear that neither in the denial nor in the argument in favor of the priestly ordination of these two ethnic groups

ordination of the mestizos were great. In 1588, after the Pope's intervention, Felipe II changed his mind and revoked the prohibition of previous years.

²² Segundo Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 33 [in: R. Vargas Ugarte, p. 337].

in America were there references to the race of these peoples. Those who denied it, feared that they considered mestizos and Indians insufficiently prepared for the mission that they would have to carry out. And, on the contrary, those who approved their ordination, perceived the most virtuous mestizos and indigenous people as apt to understand the local culture. They also advocated that, precisely, these two groups had the capacity and enthusiasm to live among the natives a life of evangelical witness, in a more transparent and palpable way than the missionaries from Spain.²³ They were convinced that the native priests would give a great advantage for the advancement of the missions.

Not everyone agreed with this opinion. The testimonies of the time sent from America to Spain, relating about life in America, in particular when they discoursed on matters related to natives and mestizos, contrasted sharply with each other, according to the author of the document. While reports of the colonial environment tended to be pejorative and even damaging in describing Indians and their culture, missionary reports routinely presented the natives with admiration. The missionaries were amazed at the faith, skills, obedience, and enthusiasm of the natives. It has taken time to clarify and understand these differences of narration — particularly for people in Europe — and it was one of the main causes for delaying the ordination of the locals.

Towards the end of the 16th century, in 1583, the natives themselves wrote a letter to Pope Gregory XIII urging that, just as other nations had their own priests, the natives should have theirs, since they considered themselves as cultured people and fully prepared for the priestly ministry. Vargas Ugarte quotes this letter that we include and translate here:

Habent Hispani suos sacerdotes hispanos, Galli gallos, Itali italos, indi ex indis et hispanis ortos non habebunt? Objicient fortasse ingenii habetudinem. Non sumus tam barbari neque tan agrestes ut hominum naturam nom sapiamus. Sed haec ad Te latius a nostri sunt scripta; testes sunt ingeniorum nostrorum colendissimi Patres ex Societate Jesú apud quos nos progressus facimus ut tum in latinae linguae elegantia tum in philosophicis studiis tum in theologiae abditissimis sensibus perspecendiis non esxtiterimus omnion inepti sed aliquando de palma cum reliquis hispanis decertamus.²⁴

[All the nations] they have their own priests: the Spanish for the Spanish, the French have the Gauls, Italy has the Italians. Why [West] India and the Spanish Indian troops who are [Christian] [could] not have them? Are we not of the

²³ See: R. Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses (1551–1772)*, vol. III, Lima 1952, p. 44.

²⁴ Roma. Arch. Vatic. Nunziatura di Spagna, vol. 30, p. 440 [after: R. Vargas Ugarte, vol. III, pp. 45–46].

same nature? We are not by nature barbarians, as savages among humans, nor as aborigines, we are not ignorant people. We write these things to you from the very essence of what we are; respected witnesses [of what we are] are the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who live in our midst and who [give testimony] that we are skilled natives, [conscious] of our abilities, we have made progress in studies of the Latin language that we dominate with classiness, as well as in philosophy and theology [learning] its greatest mysteries, and we consider ourselves equal to the Spanish next to whom we fight [for the advance of the Church], but we are considered inferior.

Vargas Ugarte suggests that this letter was written by the Jesuit missionaries, but well expresses the opinion and hopes of the Indians. There is no doubt that the Society of Jesus, upon arriving in America, brought with it a different spirit, bringing priests and brothers formed in newly founded institutions of their own that did not need to reform their convents and seminaries to introduce reforms of the Council of Trent, as was the case with Dominicans, Franciscans or Mercedarians. The church in America gained a lot with this arrival of missionaries with another perspective of evangelization among the natives. A large group of Jesuit scholars, experts in culture and religion, anthropology, politics, medicine, education, architecture, law, poetry and music, dance, crafts, livestock, and much more, did not imposed their own culture and skills to diminish or eliminate local civilization that had all of this, but rather used their knowledge to learn the same from the Indians and then create, between missionaries and natives, a new culture, a missionary culture. From this moment on, the narration about indigenous people changed. In a short time, the Jesuits were present and began to employ their influence in all spheres of the life of the church in America. Few like them managed to penetrate local cultures and understand the life of the natives. Three Jesuits, Joseph de Acosta, one of the four theologians²⁵ of the III Council in Lima, Jesús Balthasar Piñas, provincial, and Juan de Atineca, rector of the house of the Company in Lima, represented the Society of Jesus in the conciliar debates, in preparation of documents and in its presentation in the cathedral of Lima, fighting to open the way for the ordination of the natives.

The third Council of Lima (1573), called by the Archbishop of Lima, D. Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo, is considered as the formal moment that opened the way for the ordination of the mestizo and the Indian.²⁶ In its second session, the fruits of which were formally presented on the feast day of the Assumption of the Virgin

²⁵ Another three were fray Bartolomé de Ledesma, Dominican; fray Juan del Campo, Franciscan; and fray Luys Lopez, Augustinian.

²⁶ The same phenomenon, but in Mexico, was somewhat different compared to Lima. Here we deal only with the jurisdiction of the Lima church.

Mary (August 15), two chapters of the same document established the following regarding the formal requirements for the priestly ordination in Latin America. There is no mention of origin of the candidate, but solely of his worthiness. Here are the two chapters.²⁷

Chap. 31

In conferring the sacred orders, especially as a priest, what the bishops must mainly look at is the provision of suitable workers to this great harvest of the Indians, since this province is the main care of the episcopal office and thus it must be ensured that those who are called to the grace of the gospel have ministers, as far as possible, endowed with the zeal of souls, and that they have them as many, as it is necessary: so being those who seek to be ordained suitable and wanting to dedicate themselves to teach Indians the Christian faith, they should not be rejected, considering their culture lesser, but rather due to the time that the need of this church of the [West] Indies will last, they must be sought and included among men of good life and of satisfactory eruditions and who [in addition] are fully proficient in the language of this land...²⁸

Chap. 33

[...] And thus, they should not admit to the priesthood and as consecrated ministers those who are unworthy, nor excuse themselves by saying that there is a scarcity of ministers in the churches, since the number of them has already grown.

And when they are missing, it is undoubtedly much better and more profitable for the salvation of the natives to have few priests, but those good ones, than many, but uncaring.²⁹

Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo was a cultured and holy man and it is not surprising that under his leadership such advances had been possible. It is true that the license for the ordination of mestizos and Indians in chapters cited here was only implicit, but without doubt, this approval was included. A decade and a half after the conclusion of the Second Council of Lima (1567), the Church in America, under the leadership of the holy and wise archbishop, managed to define that in admission to the sacramental priesthood the race of the candidate was no longer conclusive, but rather his aptness to serve the people and bear witness to Gospel, as proper of consecrated minister. And although it is true that years passed until this authorization was implemented, it can be affirmed that ninety years after the arrival of Columbus in the West Indies, just forty-two years after

²⁷ This transcription of the text applies to the spelling of the text to the rules in force now.

²⁸ Tercer Concilio. Acción II, capítulo 31 [in:] R. Vargas Ugarte, p. 336.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

the conquest of Peru and just thirty-one years from the institution of the bishopric in Lima, the Catholic Church in the New World had such an advance that it knew how to make way for the ordination of the natives. In practice, however, neither Dominicans nor Augustinians, Franciscans, Mercedarians, not even Jesuits took advantage of this opportunity that the Third Council offered them. At times, particularly in the case of the Dominicans, the attitude of the friars was contrary and even adverse to the Indians. This could suggest that there was a great distance in the way of thinking between the holy and illustrious Toribio de Mogrovejo and his conciliar surroundings, on the one hand, and the current and obtuse religious clergy — mainly the Dominicans — on the other. Finally, despite the fact that Mogrovejo held his chair for more than twenty years, it could not be shown that he had ordained an Indian to the priesthood. Perhaps it was political and colonial obstacles that prevented this step.

Concluding his chair, Mogrovejo had so many clergy that the conciliar disposition on ordination lost much of its demand and drive. Opinions on this matter are not unanimous.³⁰

Concluding Remarks

One of the greatest challenges faced by the Church in the 16th century was the expansion of its presence into the New World. Already from the first decades of her arrival in America, she had to find new ways to serve the Christians who traveled there looking for a better life than that of the Old World in the 16th century. America opened new opportunities for everyone, but at the same time it was a place of great injustices, suffering and abuse, especially against the natives. The conquest of the native peoples, their exploitation and slavery, went against, not only the teachings of the Church (which accompanied the transfer of the Spanish to the new lands), but also against the will and the elaborated laws in the court of Spain for America. Abuses and exploitation of the natives seriously damaged missionary work among the natives, the purpose of which was to lead them to conversion and to build together a new Church — different from the Spanish Church in America, a missionary church, a church of Indians and missionaries. Not all priests were considered fit for such a task. The demands fell on men of integrity, intelligent, authentic in their faith, sensitive and in solidarity with the Indians, whom they had to serve. They were called priests or missionaries of Indians, unlike priests of Spaniards or other priests. They were no longer parish priests who exercised different ministries in favor of the Church in Spanish cities

³⁰ See also: V. Trujillo Mena, *La legislación eclesiástica en el virreinato del Perú durante el siglo XVI*, Lima 1963, pp. 68–70.

in America. The mission was not only to evangelize the Indian or another non-Christian who was part of the new society in America. Evangelization began with the missionary who had to reach spiritual advancement and maturity, be an intelligent man, learn from the local culture, be respectful of the Indian, know about the doctrine and method of teaching, give visible testimony of his faith, etc. It was not until the missionary was considered evangelized that he was granted a license to evangelize the Indian.

The context of the new cultures was extremely important for the missionary church, reason why the successive councils in Lima and Mexico insisted on the theme of the presence of the Church in these new contexts where the missionary had the obligation to learn and make their own. With the progress made over the years, another challenge arose, more sensitive but more urgent than knowing the local cultures: making the Indians become missionaries of the Indians. Such an opportunity appeared at the III Council of Lima. From this moment on, there was an opportunity to send native missionaries to the original peoples in America. However, it would take many more decades for such an opportunity to come true.

Misjonarze dla Indian według wytycznych pierwszych trzech Synodów w Limie

Streszczenie

W czasie podboju i kolonizacji Ameryki hiszpańskiej Kościół katolicki miał co najmniej dwa różnorodne sposoby porządkowe: a) Kościół hiszpański i b) Kościół misyjny. Istniała wyraźna różnica między nimi, poczynając od grup etnicznych, wśród i dla których działały, metod pracy duszpasterskiej, stylu liturgii, treści katechezy, praw kościelnych, a nawet tożsamości księży, którzy mieli być kapelanami tylko jednej z tych społeczności. Niemal od samego powstania instytucji Kościół katolicki w Nowym Świecie miał zdolność różnicowania swojej działalności apostolskiej w zależności od grupy etnicznej, która go tworzyła. Zaszczepienie hiszpańskiego Kościoła w miastach kolonialnych w Ameryce było stosunkowo łatwe. Jednak zbudowanie nowego Kościoła — Kościoła misyjnego — wymagało stworzenia nowego *modus operandi* dla jego działalności apostolskiej. Praca misyjna wśród Indian nie mogła być powierzona któremukolwiek księdzu lub bratu, który czułby się powołany do podjęcia działań wśród Indian, ale zakonnikom i księżom specjalnie dobranym, by zamieszkać wśród ludności rodzimej i przygotowanym inaczej niż duchowieństwo świeckie. Pierwsze trzy Synody w Limie i ich równoległe Synody w Meksyku poruszyły tę kwestię na kilku swoich posiedzeniach. W artykule staram się przedstawić ówczesnych misjonarzy Indian, którzy choć niejednokrotnie nie uchowali się od niedoskonałości i błędów, umieli wypełniać misję z logiką i z apostolską odwagą, przestrzegając instrukcji synodów.

Słowa kluczowe

misjonarze Indian, synody w Limie, seminaria w Ameryce Kolonialnej, święcenia Indian, redukcje

Keywords

Indian missionaries, Lima councils, seminars in Colonial America, ordination of Indians, reductions

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