

Brazil and Latin America: from Patronage to Globalization*

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If there is something the Church should not fear it is globalization. The Church herself was born with universal or “globalized” concepts, like the Lord’s command sending her to all nations, and her belonging to a Kingdom whose confines go beyond all the empires: from the Roman empire, which she overcame, not without difficulty, especially through the strength of the martyrs, confessors, and saints, down to the forms of “nazism” she has encountered during her two thousand years of life, whereby the title has been conferred on the Church of ‘expert in humanity’.

Without presuming to present interpretations that delineate only one subsequent way of acting, this text intends to be an instrument so that at least decisions condemned to failure will not be made because of the simple fact that they ignore the enormous experience of the Church as institution; hence the greater importance of history as a contribution to this Congress.

Again by way of introduction to this paper, another affirmation is proposed as a justification of Brazil’s centrality here. There are more elements of convergence than differences in a hypothetical, comparative picture of the Lusitanian and the Hispanic evangelizing action. Moreover, without getting lost in details, despite the more dynamic civilizing process or implantation of the ecclesiastical structures of the Spanish Crown compared to the Portuguese in the New World, it can be said that both have converging characteristics that distinguish them more from what was done by the rest of Europe than from one another. This offers an opportunity to make an Iberian approach to the question and only later to make the necessary distinction in order to present the specific way in which the Portuguese Crown carried out this epic action.

We are about to take a look at the scenes from a society in which the rules of behavior were outlined by the Catholic Church, both from the catechetical viewpoint by affecting fundamental points of life cycle, and from the social viewpoint by permeating all the cultural levels with her moral reference point dictated by the rule of faith. The rhythm was given by Christianity, a society rooted in the Catholic values in which the whole social pyramid was immersed: from the King, the “Vicar of God”, who had to protect his subjects and confirm them in the faith, down to its most fragile members: orphans, widows and the destitute, the object of public and private charity. To tell the truth, the colonizing spirit of the Latin immigrant was capable to influencing behind the scenes, and this allowed not only a certain moral flexibility, but also a “pari passu” course between the sacred and the profane. In this context, the Church’s visibility under the protection of the institutionally recognized ecclesiastical authorities attained elevated social levels. During the time of the Prelature of Rio de Janeiro, the Prelate already enjoyed incomparable prestige with the social classes, but he lacked greater respect on the part of the local authorities which he acquired immediately when Rio was elevated to a Diocese, or rather, with the arrival of the first Bishops.

As to ecclesiastical geography, considered on the basis of the formation of the Episcopal sees of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, it can be stated that it accompanied the Portuguese colonizing process. Initially, Portugal dominated the so-called West Indies in an almost epithelial way, that is, along its coastline. It was undoubtedly for strategic defensive reasons that it only penetrated a small part of its immense, unknown territory. Since the coastal strip was populated first, the major centers took on the appearance of capitals and grew potentially into

* The many, long notes of the Portuguese original text are not translated into English, for which we ask the understanding of the author and of our readers. The complete version in Portuguese will be available at www.stellamaris.net.

the future dioceses. Only in the seventeenth century at the beginning of the expeditionary process into the interior, there was a strong awareness of the need to elevate the large centers that were already established to Episcopal sees. It can be said that in a contradictory way, as a result of Portugal's slowness in organizing its immense territory into dioceses, the unity of the new lands was strengthened in the beginning. In the same way, the unity of the ecclesiastical power contributed to the direct subordination to the great religious head who was the King himself in the lands of the Patronage because it was normal for religion to be a fundamental ingredient of Lusitanian identity, even in the Orient. Reference to the Orient becomes necessary here to understand those times which, in some way, were already globalized. The Bishops had jurisdiction there over that vast territory and exercised the function of the Inquisitor as in other places. In this context, the Bishops were authorities respected by the Crown who could assume the colonial government if necessary. Although most of the time they exercised this power in an interim way, it was possible for them to receive the title of Viceroy. This participation by the Church in the affairs of State and vice versa was ultimately reflected in the Bishops' reasoning when they made their requests to the Crown, just as it was when the Kings insisted on the rights of Patronage as promoters of the Church when they turned to the Pope, generally in rather zealous terms, with regard to the ecclesiastical interests. Fearless missionaries also collaborated who had the same mentality as the Bishops, and they strengthened their images and the King's with the missionary centers. Especially Franciscans, Jesuits, Capuchins and Dominicans worked there, but also Benedictines and Carmelites. "To resolve a conflict between the Orders, in 1693 a certain subdivision of the territory was proposed between the Jesuits, Franciscans, Capuchins and Carmelites". However, this project did not succeed because the missionary action of these Orders was quite diversified and each one established a kind of relationship, with different races that made up the society. After that, non-indigenous vocations grew, with mestizos or rare negroes presenting themselves to the ranks of religious life who easily adapted to the local customs and European languages.

A fruit of the "pluri-racialism" of the Portuguese were the mestizos. Based on the experiences begun by John II in Sao Tome, they naturally benefited from the law of the "Ventre Livre" (free womb). This successful Portuguese creation made mulattos an important element in the substratum of the emerging society with an incomparable exchange between whites and blacks. Mulattos were usually well accepted and, as a result, had the chance to climb the social pyramid because they were easily absorbed by the need for bureaucratic jobs and at times reached the clerical ranks. By the way, it was from the Island of Sao Tome near the Equator that Vieira himself and his companions reached us with their missionary zeal and ardor.

It is interesting to note that during the period studied here, Brazil, following the example of the Metropolis, used Angola as the destination for its deportees, including gypsies who had arrived in Brazil right after its discovery, originally from Limoeiro in Portugal. Angola enjoyed little prestige because starting from Philip's reign, it was gradually transformed into a sort of penitentiary for the colonies and constantly received contingents of deportees, who came more frequently from Brazil in the eighteenth century. This note is not meant to distract the reader in any way from the fact that deportees from Portugal were not sent only to the African coasts, but also to Brazil and, on a lesser scale, to the Orient where, moreover, there was a system of exchanging deportees with Angola in order to send them to the provincial regions.

With regard to the Portuguese dominions on the African continent, although they were discovered first, the framework for developing the missions was less favored than in other places.

In order to understand the globalized levels of Portuguese colonization, some examples from Guinea or Cape Verde can be used. Despite the initial protection of the Infante Henry,

because of the infertility of the lands and the unhealthy climate, settlement was delayed resulting in limited ecclesiastical development. At the price of much diplomacy, the Diocese was erected, but under Philip's domination, decadence came to the archipelago. There was no clergy. This was the time when ecclesiastical ministry had a breathing space through the Jesuit missions in that region. In 1652, Father Antonio Vieira landed on the island of Santiago together with three Jesuits who went on to Maranhao. They stayed there for four days and carried out the apostolate by preaching and administering the sacraments. He liked the missionary work there so much that he expressed his desire to the Superiors of the Company in Portugal for the Jesuits to continue to carry on missionary work in that harvest. By that time the religious framework had already been inverted. In the See of Cape Verde, when addressing the canons and the chaplain-singers, Vieira did not hesitate to tell them that if they left the chairs of the See and preached to the people throughout the vast diocese, that song would be much more pleasing to God! The action by the Capuchins, who succeeded the Jesuits in the missions of Cape Verde, was carried out with the same zeal. However, with the Restoration, they were dispersed and a diplomatic crisis began with the Apostolic See that affected the clergy. Despite the Bishops' subsequent attempt to solve it, the crisis continued throughout the eighteenth century.

In Guinea, because of its similar characteristics and the initial protectorate, its historical development was not much different. The Franciscans were the first to preach the Gospel in present-day Guinea, Bissau and Cacheu. The Portuguese had settled along the coast in 1484 but they lost interest in it when overseas activity developed in Brazil, India and the Far East. Therefore, it was only to a few that the Portuguese turned their attention in the territories of present-day Guinea where Christian communities already existed at the end of the sixteenth century in Buba, Geba, Farim ... under the responsibility of the Franciscans. In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits worked in Guinea with some enthusiasm and great sacrifice and they continued there until the year 1637. Under Philip the Portuguese element lost its prestige, and the action of the Roman See only worsened the situation of the missions. Again based on Vieira's letters, the conclusion was that in 1654 the missions of Guinea were entrusted to the Italian Capuchins. The Portuguese Capuchins from the Province of Piedade also tried to carry out that mission. Two religious began who were followed by others. At that time (1663 and 1664) conditions were favorable because they had the protection of the Catholic rulers: Dom Vicente from the regions of Rio Nuno, and Dom Tomas from Serra Leoa. The Churches or hermitages that existed in 1669 on the coast of Guinea only corresponded to the centers of Cacheu, Geba, Baloula, the region of Rio Nuno and Ponga. The first Bishop of Cape Verde who visited Guinea was Dom Frei Vitoriano of Oporto. He landed in Guinea in March 1694 and visited Bissau, Geba, Cacheu and Farim. It seems that the ruler of Bissau, Bocampolco, who hastened to present his respects to the Bishop, had been baptized by Frei Francisco of Guarda. It is certain that his successor was baptized in Lisbon by the Archbishop of Rhodes, the Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal, with the King, Dom Pedro, as god-father. The eighteenth century was one of missionary decline everywhere. In 1741, an attempt was made to take care of the diocese of Cape Verde on which Guinea depended. The Bishop, Dom Frei Joao of Faro, took three Franciscans and seventeen secular clerics with him from Lisbon. They were shipwrecked and some drowned, while others were taken prisoner and ransomed some time later.

On the other hand, the novelties from America were creating excitement in European circles in a different way than those from the colonization in Asia and Africa. Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century were already familiar with Asia and Africa from the classical Greek and Roman authors and the tales of some travelers like Marco Polo. America, on the contrary, represented the discovery of a vast region that had to be integrated into a worldview that was still largely medieval. This caused revolutionary transformations, ranging from the

intellectual world of thinkers to eating habits, and raised questions about the nature of the Indios who were brought, together with exotic animals, to the Metropolis.

The first impression because of the luxuriant and mysterious nature was that of a “vision of paradise”. When Christopher Columbus went around Cape Hermoso on the coast of Haiti, he was enraptured by “the very good, mild fragrance of flowers or trees, the sweetest thing in the world”. Astonished by the fertility of the land where he had just landed, Pedro Vaz de Caminha considered it so fertile “that he wanted to take advantage of it and threw himself into it for its beneficial waters”. He imagined that America was the El Dorado and that the Amazons of ancient legends lived there.

With time, this perception changed, but until the mid-nineteenth century, the American continent kept a certain mythical aura because of its fantastically wonderful, fertile, terrestrial space filled with riches to be exploited and sin too. More importantly, the discovery of other societies and customs contributed in a decisive way to shaking up the traditional concept of the world and called for an extraordinary effort to adapt. It was the “vertiginous space” that ultimately led the medieval view of a closed world to the idea of the infinite universe. These nuances of the colonial mentality, considering its limits, should not be overlooked in understanding its causes and emitting historical judgments with less risk of error.

In 1516, a poet of the Portuguese court believed that “everything has already been discovered; what is far is now near to us; the newcomers are certain to have the earthly treasure”. With that look at the future and that concern for the riches of the Earth, the modern world truly began.

With regard to the prevailing spiritual situation in Portugal and Spain during the period between 1650 and 1750, the opinion of historians is that the Church’s structure was impregnated with the “Ancien Régime” mentality. The Church had a privileged social position both because of the possessions accumulated in the urban centers and rural regions, and the recognition of the people who gave her the authority not only to lead the faithful in the properly spiritual areas, but also to influence them in the political area. With her economic self-sufficiency and public credibility, the Church made herself respected by means of her own State.

By projecting herself into the eighteenth and nineteenth century with the objective of understanding better the importance of certain facts capable of changing mentalities -- that is, the period after 1750 until 1850, the so-called “Enlightenment” among ecclesiastics -- it is easier to see the possible illuminist roots at the beginning of the eighteenth century that already governed certain ideals in the Church. As the historian Jedin stresses, the typical Spanish illuminists are all Catholics with no anti-clerical traces, in the strict sense of the word. The urgent need for socio-economic reform did not diminish the wide range of values built around the supernatural. The same author also states that the government’s interference in the ecclesiastical administration cannot be attributed to illuminism but to the ruling government. According to Vicens Vives, who divides Spanish illuminism into four periods, if the major exponents of these periods were not priests or religious, they were laymen who not only had Catholic roots, but were deeply religious.

More has to be known about the geographical and socio-economic perspectives of the Iberian Peninsula to understand their influences on the colonial territories. There was a proportional disparity between Portugal and Spain: while Spain had eight ecclesiastical provinces and 56 dioceses in the seventeenth century and 59 in the eighteenth, Portugal had only three Provinces and 16 dioceses in the eighteenth century. It is not hard to imagine how much the proportional patterns influenced the formation of new dioceses. In particular, it can be speculated “ad intra” that there was a certain resistance on the part of the continental Church in order to keep its “matriarchal” status, or better, to present itself with the higher

status of “Patriarchal”, which in fact happened, in order to maintain an ecclesiastical balance or prestige starting from the Metropolis.

In terms of population, at the end of the sixteenth century, Portugal amounted to 1,250,000 inhabitants -- in Darcy Ribeiro’s words, “a handful of people”, -- whereas there were 9,485,000 inhabitants in the entire peninsula. Castile alone had 6,910,000 inhabitants of whom 33,087 were secular priests, 26,297 men religious and 20,369 women religious. These three categories together made up 11.33/000 of the population. Different from the facts researched by Felipe Ruiz (the source used here based on the survey of the Crown of Castile), other sources give a greater total ecclesiastic population of 200,000 persons. At the end of the seventeenth century, the population decreased due to disease and wars and started to grow again in the eighteenth century. According to Canga Arguelles, in 1797 there were 10,541,221 inhabitants of whom 57,488 were secular priests, 49,365 men religious and 4,000 women religious.

On the threshold of the eighteenth century, Portuguese America found itself divided into an Archbishopric, Bahia, created in 1551, and the Bishoprics of Rio de Janeiro (1676), which included the Southern strips that had a high rate of immigration, Olinda (1676), and Sao Luis do Maranhao (1677). In 1720, the Bishopric of Belem do Para was erected, to which would be added the dioceses of Sao Paolo and Mariana in Minas Gerais in 1745, and the Prelatures of Goias and Cuiaba in Mato Grosso.

Just as for the Archbishop Primate of Bahia, from the Church’s viewpoint the Bishops constituted the authorities responsible for the conduct of the clergy and the faithful, the distribution of the sacraments, and the observance of doctrine transmitted through catechesis and sermons. In each cathedral there was a chapter around the bishop made up by different ecclesiastics, the capitulars, whose function was to advise him, substitute him in his absence, and perform a series of auxiliary activities, such as collaborating in the formation of aspirants to holy orders.

Each bishopric was divided into parishes or communities and for the colonists, these were the most visible signs of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. Every parish had a mother church as its see, and it was governed by a parish rector. Since the parish was large and populated, it also had branch churches and chapels. Only the Crown could create parishes by virtue of the Patronage, although many times this was done in response to the requests of the faithful. However, faced with the people’s need and the sovereign’s delay in deciding, the Bishop would often erect a mother church. In such cases, the new ecclesiastic boundary was called a curacy.

Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the bishoprics of Brazil only had about 140 parishes. With the impulse given by the subsequent growth in population, the parishes multiplied and reached nearly 600 at the end of the colonial period. Despite this, the number of faithful in each parish continued to be very high, on an average between 6,000-7,000, without mentioning the chronic lack of priests in the poorer parish communities, and the enormous size of many parishes, especially in the hinterland. These circumstances, aggravated by the Bishops’ long absences and the presence of Indios and Africans with different religious traditions, suggested the limits of the Brazilian colonial Christianization process.

In sixteenth century Europe, the Protestant and Catholic reforms grew out of a new religious sensitivity. This modern devotion proved to be less obsessed with the performance of liturgical rites that characterized medieval Christianity. Contrary to this, a more interior practice was sought in which people’s daily behavior and the purity of doctrine were what counted. Despite the religious wars that lasted until the mid-seventeenth century, it was this renewed Christianity that was later implanted both in the Catholic and the Protestant regions, thanks to better preparation of the clergy and the Church’s more active presence among the faithful, for instance, through the Bishops’ pastoral visits to their dioceses.

In Brazil, however, the Patronage had always hesitated to spend the revenue from the tithes to support worship; on the other hand, after 1750, it restricted the autonomy of the Regular Orders. As heir to the medieval Portuguese traditions, but also to indigenous and African customs, colonial religiosity was only slightly influenced by the Catholic reformation inspired by the Council of Trent, and generated a proliferation of forms of popular religiosity that were not too orthodox, that is, they were far from the doctrinal standards of the Church.

Rather than becoming an instrument of people's formation, religion among the persons farthest from the religious generally continued to be a magical practice aimed mainly at ensuring some earthly advantages for the faithful. This phenomenon found fertile terrain in the mythical African universe always mixed with the prevailing Christian culture.

Anything at all was a reason for invoking the saints or Our Lady. From this viewpoint, eternal salvation itself depended more on carrying out the rituals of the sacraments or on the funeral rites than on a proper Christian life. From this came the proliferation of sacred images in oratories everywhere in houses, in the streets, and altars to which supplications were made in a colloquial way as if members of the family were being addressed. From this also came the promises, the pilgrimages to the shrines, the feasts, processions, and the difficulty in distinguishing Christianity from the indigenous and African traditions which is responsible for the so-called syncretism that has characterized the religious practices in Brazil yesterday and today.

Another expression of this traditional religiosity is constituted by the Brotherhoods. Located in an altar or church and inspired by devotion to a Saint, or Our Lady, they multiplied in the eighteenth century, especially in the small towns and mining villages.

Like microcosms of the colonial world, the Brotherhoods were the means whereby people organized the limited social and religious life of their times. Their lives continued to gravitate almost entirely around the religious ceremonies and events, just as had been done centuries before them.

The roots of Patronage were legitimated on the basis of the medieval concept of heredity. Actually, it was not usurpation on the part of the Portuguese monarchs of the Church's religious rights, but rather a typical form of compromise between the Church of Rome and the Church of Portugal. By adding the titles of 'grand master' of religious orders to their political rights, the Portuguese monarchs exercised both civil and religious power mainly in Portugal's colonies or dominions. As a matter of fact, the title of 'grand master' granted by the Holy See to the Kings of Portugal also conferred spiritual power. Consequently, the Patronage conferred the right on the Kings of Portugal to collect and administer the ecclesiastical tithes.

Right at the time of the discovery of Brazil, these collections came under the direct responsibility of the Kings of Portugal who as grand masters of the Order of Christ, had to take care of the spiritual good of their colonies too. Moreover, it was the monarch's duty to present the names of the persons chosen to occupy the government of the dioceses, parishes, and other ecclesiastic benefices, as well as to oversee the construction and conservation of the buildings for worship, the remuneration of the clergy, and the propagation of the Christian faith. In this perspective, the king became a kind of "papal delegate" for Brazil, the "actual head of the Church". Only confirmation of the Portuguese monarch's religious acts was left to the Pope. In an attempt to promote the political and religious administration of the colonies, a Board of Conscience and Orders and an Oversees Council were created, again as bodies resulting from the Patronage regime.

Patronage, in fact, a blend of the temporal and the spiritual spheres, came directly from Portugal with an interval of Spanish dominion, in the concrete forms it had taken on in the Iberian Peninsula. In this regard, as we can verify in the terms of the erection of the Bishopric of Bahia and later in the Bull of erection of the Diocese of Rio de Janeiro, it is noted that never before nor since has any sovereign exercised such complete dominion over

the Church in his territories with the Pope's consent, and this was all a result of the Church's alliance with the Patronage of the Order of Christ embodied in the Portuguese sovereign.

This, therefore, is how the Church originated in the lands of Brazil. The greatest testimony to this can be seen in the foundation of the (soteropolitano) Bishopric. It was both protected and dominated by the Portuguese Crown and withstood the various inconveniences of that relationship of dependence or subordination to the King, while it was only linked indirectly to the Petrine See. On the other hand, it should be added that among the negative effects of the Patronage in Brazil, there was the barrier raised to the entry of missionaries from Propaganda Fide who could have expanded the evangelizing process carried out by the Religious Orders since there was a fruitful launch in the territories subordinated to Propaganda Fide.

In addition to the Patronage, missionary activity was impeded in the seventeenth century by the Dutch occupation in the North and the French in the South. However, the greatest scourge was the prevailing pro-slavery system. Eloquent voices had spoken out against it, such as the Jesuit, Father Antonio Vieira (1608-1697), and later the first Constitutions of Bahia, whose voice was raised not entirely too late in the 1707 Synod. Although this was also a reason for the abolition of indigenous slavery in 1758, black slavery continued to drag on painfully until the end of the nineteenth century.

In brief, Patronage had developed as a system aimed at favoring the propagation of Christianity in the lands taken from the Moors through the "Reconquista". Afterwards, subsequent Papal bulls confirmed this privilege/right to the Portuguese Crown and extended it because of the maritime expansion, to its dominions in Africa, Asia and America.

Through the system of Patronage, it was up to the Crown to build the temples and maintain worship in those territories. In exchange, the King could indicate the titleholders of the bishoprics and the parishes and collect the tithe, the most important tax at the time, which turned into income for the royal coffers.

To ensure the administration of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of religious life in general, the Crown had the Court of the Board of Conscience and Orders (1532). The Court was in charge of preparing the royal decisions regarding spiritual and administrative matters, and it had comparable importance to that of the Overseas Council in governmental matters.

Although the duties inherent in the Patronage were not always completely fulfilled, its prerogatives guaranteed the monarch dominion over all the steps of the ecclesiastical career, thereby making the priests who entered it equivalent in many ways to subordinates of the Crown. On the other hand, while the Bishops had some room to maneuver, normally only responsibilities of a theological and doctrinal nature were given to the ecclesiastical authorities.

The historian Arlindo Rubert has a negative opinion about the action of the Portuguese Patronage as an institution that impeded the evangelizing process because of its bureaucracy, especially when it incurred expenses, albeit of an ordinary nature. A clear case was the foundation of seminaries, which was delayed for more than a century, "through the fault of the Patronage". In the view of other authors, the Patronage left profound marks on Brazilian society, including the Church, but in particular it set the theoretical bases for the law that is still in force in Brazil today.

These words on the Apostleship of the Sea in Latin America, especially Brazil, conclude by calling attention to the multifaceted specificity it requires. At least one example can be used: this country, with its continental dimensions, has a second sea, the Amazon River. It is so big that its opposite bank is very far beyond the horizon, and for this reason it is compared to the sea. But no matter how complex the challenges have become with scientific progress, on the banks of this river (the largest in the world for its volume of water), we find real life situations similar to those of colonial times. This requires a response from the Church that is no less effective than the exemplary response given by most of the first missionaries who imprinted a Christian character on the various coastal or riverain peoples that has remained

until our times. Today, parallel to the artisanal or elementary boats that help these very simple people from day to day, this same river has been transformed into a passageway for transatlantic tourist ships and cargo vessels that connect countless seaports. From this comes a tangled web of new challenges, whose greatest danger is a kind of missionary weakness in proclaiming the Gospel.

If someone here wants to stand up and protest about referring to a river in a Congress on the Apostleship of the Sea, let this reference be supported by an argument that is as rhetorical as it is realistic: scientists affirm that the volume of fresh water that flows from the mouth of this river is so great that it reaches 200 km. into the sea. Perhaps the Apostleship of the Sea could claim an equivalent, opposite influence. For it is only with this kind of flexibility of concepts or dynamics in constant re-adaptation in her apostolic action that the Church can continue to be the bearer of the Good News and reach the changeable confines of the age of globalization with an efficacy similar to that of the great ones who preceded us in history, especially during the time of the Lusitanian Patronage.

Lastly, the constant errors of the apostolate in the past compel us to be humble in pointing out the probability that many others will be made. These errors should at least be lessened by the force of history that spares us from repeating them when we are attentive to previous experiences, and by the fearlessness that comes from the helm of Peter and his collaborators in this Pontifical Council which constantly gives us guidelines, such as the Apostolic Letter *Stella Maris*, the Instruction *De pastorali migratorum cura*, and also the “Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Tourism”. These greatly reassure the “Boat-Church” the sight of the “Lighthouse-Christ”, and the route to the “Glorious-Port”.