

Fernando Filoni, *La Chiesa in Iraq. Storia, sviluppo e missione. Dagli inizi ai nostri giorni*, Librería Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2015, 255 p.

His Eminence Fernando Filoni was especially prepared to write about Iraq, since after other diplomatic services, he was the nuncio in Iraq and Jordan from 2001 to 2006, and from 2006 to 2007 in the Philippines, with residence in Hong Kong and responsibility for relations with China Church. He was the substitute for General Affairs and now the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Grand Chancellor of Urbaniana University.

A fruit of his period in Middle East is the book we intend to present. The author follows a strict chronological order, but he opens the narrative with a short panorama since the creation of Iraq after the decomposition of the Ottoman Empire (Versailles 1919 e Sèvres 1920).

The first chapter is precious for a better understanding about the origin of Christianity in Mesopotamia which, after excellent theologians like St Ephrem, became Nestorian under Barsauma and evangelized China.

We enter later in the long period of Arabic and Mongol empires, with the complex description of different lines of patriarchs. However, since the 13th century we have some Franciscans and Dominicans in Mesopotamia, in link with Rome. After the council of Trent, and especially with the creation of “Propaganda Fide” (1622), the discalced Carmelites arrived in the region and two Latin dioceses were erected: Isfahan (Persia) and Baghdad (Iraq). By the protection of King Louis XIV, we find French missionaries and bishops in this period, in the midst of many difficulties. We have also the appointment of Apostolic Delegates for

Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Armenia, with the task of helping the neo-converted to the Catholic Communion of Nestorians, Jacobite and Armenians. Pius IX gave the bull *Reversurus* (1867) to facilitate the return to the Catholic Church. Later we find the repercussion of Vatican I in the Middle East (problems of patriarch Audo). Leo XIII called The Apostolic Delegate of Iraq the “conciliator”. The city of Mosul was elected as See for the Apostolic Delegation and an inter-ritual seminary was created for the formation of clergy (1878). After the First World War, Baghdad will be the See of the Delegate.

We have still the description of the Armenian genocide (1915-18), the beginning of the kingdom in Iraq (emir Faysal I), the republic since 1958, and the action of Pius XI. Remarkable was the endeavor of the Dominican François Dominique Berré, archbishop of Baghdad and Apostolic Delegate of Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Minor Armenia, in favor of the orphans of the war, and the religious congregations. He died in 1929. In 1932 the Jesuits from Boston arrived to create a school demanded since many years. The period of the World War II was still very difficult, Iraq entering in the alliance with England. After the War, the country had different governments, but the discovery of oil opened new possibilities for development. From 1968 to 1979 Saddam Hussein was vice-president, and the ideas of the party Ba’ath – socialism and nationalism – spread in Iraq. Hussein became president in 1979. We have tensions with the Kurdistan, and especially the war with Iran (1980-1988), with many casualties. In general there was a politic of Arabization against the Christians. In 1990 we saw the invasion of Kuwait and consequently the first war of the Gulf. Later, on March 19, 2003, there was the second war of United States and England: the *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. John Paul did

all his efforts to avoid this war. Saddam was captured in 2006 and hanged. A pro American government has been put in place, with an effort of democratic collaboration between Shiites, Sunnites and Kurds.

The author of the book devotes the last chapter to the Holy See and to Iraq. Since he was somehow protagonist in the events, the narrative and the statistics have great value. Filoni underlines the Christological declaration of 1994 reopening the dialogue between Chaldeans and Catholics. Similarly with the Jacobite, Armenians and Orthodox there is always dialogue. The presence of Christians in Mesopotamia is not only very old but represents an important element for the peace and balance of the region. The author confesses his admiration for these Christians often suffering persecutions and exiles.

To put end to this presentation, we can copy a paragraph of Muhammad Fuad Masum, president of Iraq in a letter to cardinal Filoni (October 2014): “The Iraqi Christians have been always part of the living conscience of the community, and through that, they have been extraordinary messengers bringing the message of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and citizens in the manifestation of human nature of Iraqi people, whose persons have the characteristics of bounty, love and peace” (p. 233). For the Western Christians, the book has the precious value of showing the life and suffering of early Christians in the Middle East.

Fernando P. Guillén Sch.P.

Mary John Mananzan OSB, *Shadows of the Light. Philippine Church History under Spain. A People's Perspective*, Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., Quezon City, 2016, 214 p.

During my stay in Mexico, I had the occasion to read the book *Visión de los vencidos* Published by León Portilla, UNAM, Mexico, in 1971 (5th), a history of the country from the perspective of the “indios”. Since normally the historians assume the perspective of Spanish conquerors—Bernal Diaz el Castillo—the book offers a balanced contribution, e.g., with the impressions of the Aztecs.

The well-known Benedictine sister Mary John Mananzan gives us a similar attempt: what was the experience of the “indios” at the arrival of Spaniards and the subsequent conquest? Even if in some cases the sources are not very abundant we are grateful to Sr. Mananzan for this essay.

The author explains the places she visited for her research: in Spain, Archivo General de Indias (Sevilla), Archivos (Valladolid) and Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid); in the Philippines, Archivo General de la Nación. The book has a curious story. It was lost during ten years, but finally it was found again and published by Claretian Publications in 2016.

Sr. Mary John exposes the list of questions that guide her in the research. Her concern is principally to understand the Filipino Church of today, but she studies only the Spanish period (1521-1989) as the basic background of the present situation. The book has abundant quotations in Spanish, but an English translation is always offered. The critical apparatus is very accurate.

The first chapter is a general introduction to the “Pre-History of the Church in the Philippines”. We find

there not only a description of economy, laws and culture of the people, but also an exposition of the Spanish Church in 16th century, after the conquest of Granada and the discovery of America. It really is the *Siglo de Oro* of Spain, including reforms and mystical movements. We underline the positive description of the Filipino population according to the author. Moreover, we are informed of the opinion not verified in Pedro Paterno—*La Civilización Tagalog*, Madrid, 1887—according to which Christianity should have arrived in the Philippines before the Spanish conquest.

A crucial chapter is the second where we are instructed about the “Plantatio Ecclesiae”.

There is a long description on the first evangelization, its methods and its negative aspects. In general, the witness of the friars and the assiduous work produced an abundant harvest of baptisms. However, the author points also to the defects of these beginnings: the method of suppression of idolatry, the military help in preaching, the question of tributes and the forced labor. The final appraisal is rather critical.¹

The 3rd chapter tackles the “Conflicts and Controversies”. It deserves to know the principal events of 17th century like the Dutch Threat, the Moro Wars, the Uprisings, the conflicts between Church and State and within the Church and the visitation controversy.

In the following chapter the author deals with a specific problem in the history of missions: “The Development of an indigenous Clergy”. It should be a crucial problem of the Church during the 18th century that coincides with the change of dynasty from Austria to Bourbon in Spain. The perspective is large and embraces the economic innovations, the ideas of

¹ We do not find allusions to the religious authors like Lucio Gutierrez O.P. or José Arcilla S.J. who are in general so positive for the first evangelization.

“ilustrados”, the British invasion and some native uprisings. On an ecclesiastical point of view, the author deals with the lands of the friars, the expulsion of the Jesuits and the synod of 1771, the second of the Philippines that was not approved by the *Consejo de Indias*. But another important attempt of this period is the formation of a Filipino Clergy. The efforts to establish a Diocesan Seminary were difficult, until the creation of San Carlos Seminary, at the end of the century, with the controversial figure of Archbishop Basilio Sancho, who tried to ordain abundant priests, secularize missions and do the canonical visit.

We observe later the climate of the Church during the 19th century, when the struggle for independence was growing in the country. The author represents well the opposition between the native clergy, more and more implicated in the movement for independence and the Spanish friars clearly against it. The period is very intense. Spain is in full decay. The government, often anticlerical, tries to support the Spanish friars. Among the Filipino clergy some figures emerge like Frs. Pedro Pelaez and José Burgos. We find also information of some movements, like that of Hermano Pule, and especially the Cavite Mutiny and its consequences. What was the place of the Church in the two movements, Propaganda and Katipunan? In any case, we can speak about a “Revolutionary Clergy” (cf. Schumacher).

Sr. Mananzan adds a special chapter about the woman in the Filipino culture, before Spanish conquest and after the Christianization of the country. She has found many interesting witnesses, and try also to explain the ideas about women in the classical Spain (St. Anthony M. Claret). The final balance is rather a defense address in favor of the role of the women in society and Church, according to the traditional qualities they have shown in history.

Sr. Mary John Mananzan has offered us in the book an original perspective on the Spanish evangelization of the Philippines. Since she had the purpose to give the “people’s perspective” maybe she is abundant in the negative aspects of this history, for example in the simultaneous presence of gospel and colonization, in the methods of preaching (*tabula rasa*), in the subsequent ambitions of friars in lands and power, in the constant conflicts and uprisings, and “Moro” wars, and especially in the opposite positions of friars and Filipino clergy at the period of the fights for independence. The lights are also underlined, particularly in the witnesses of evangelizers and in the success of this first period. The final chapter about feminism is quite original and deserves to be pursued. In any case, we are grateful to the Benedictine Sister for this work that comes to enlighten the Filipino Church History with new approaches in the midst of an abundant bibliography, since the Christianity of the country is a subject of passionate research and study. Will it be possible to pursue the study to include the American period and even with the Church after the independence until today?

Fernando P. Guillén Sch.P.