

reasons. Many Spanish superiors must not have appreciated investing resources and money into educating “their” Jesuits, only to lose them all at once to the Americas. The Roman policy, on the contrary, insisted on giving Spanish Jesuits the freedom to express their missionary desire without anyone redirecting it to closer horizons. From this point of view, Pallas’s book was following the Roman directives and inviting aspiring missionaries to speak up.

2.2. Book IV—“Spiritual Advice”

In the chapter of *Misión a las Indias* entitled “Spiritual Warnings for Religious People Who Wish to Undertake a Mission to the Indies,” Pallas provides spiritual counseling and practical advice to his readers—whom he imagined were not all Jesuits.¹⁶ His treatise belongs to the genre of practical missionology because “it includes the missionary formation process, the transit from the homeland to the missionary countries; information useful or indispensable for the missionary; what behavior the new missionary should exhibit, and finally the aims and means of his endeavor.”¹⁷ The purpose of Pallas’s entire book was, in fact, to give useful and concrete advice to his readers—not only before having obtained their licenses, but also after. Nobody should have felt uncomfortable or anguished by vocational doubts, discovering unexpected or repellant aspects of the missions only once they arrived abroad.

It was apparently not uncommon for neo-missionaries to be dissatisfied with their offices and duties in their new environments. A few confreres who preceded Pallas in the West Indies by a few years had caused a great scandal. Might this have reached Pallas’s ears, giving him another reason to write his treatise, as well as another reason for his superiors to approve it before sending it to Rome? Two of these missionaries, the Spaniard Antonio Rubio (1548–1615) and the Sicilian Vincenzo Le Noci (1543–93) had arrived in Mexico, not too far from Peru, a few years before Pallas.¹⁸ Both found it very

16 “De algunas advertencias espirituales para los religiosos que huvieren de emprender la misión de las Indias.” Pallas, *Misión*, 227–77.

17 “la misionología práctica . . . incluye el proceso de formación de los misioneros, que cubre el tránsito desde la patria de origen a la misión; los conocimientos útiles o necesarios al misionero; la conducta del nuevo misionero, los fines y los medios de las misiones, entre otros.” Acosta, “Problemas,” 52.

18 On Antonio Rubio and for bibliography on his figure, see the online *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, s.v. “Rubio, Antonio,” by Victor Salas, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_127-1. On Le Noci, see the article by Mario Scaduto, “Il matematico Francesco Maurolico e i Gesuiti,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 18 (1949), 126–41. See also Antonella Romano, “Prime riflessioni sull’attività intellettuale dei Gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva: L’impossibile dialogo tra Roma, Spagna e Nuovo Mondo?,” in *I gesuiti ai tempi di Claudio Acquaviva, Strategie politiche, religiose e culturali tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. Paolo Broggio et al. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007), 261–86.

difficult to adapt to their new lives, which led them to reject their duties and protest in every way, actively trying to be sent back to Europe. Both dedicated themselves only to the studies in which they were most interested (philosophy and editing sources) instead of to the evangelization of the indigenous people. Both, finally, were able to sail back: Rubio officially, after being elected procurator, while Le Noci left before receiving any formal authorization to do so. Both managed to pursue their intellectual ambitions and wrote abundantly about their favorite subjects: for Rubio, logic, and for Le Noci, astronomy. Both of them, evidently, did not consider the Americas to be an appropriate location for intellectuals and believed that the missionary effort requested there was not compatible with their aspirations. Their obstinacy “seems to express a refusal for the mission, with them not wanting to be included in a new, complex environment . . . which is a very restrictive reading of the Jesuit motto . . . *totus mundus habitatio nostra fit*.”¹⁹ More generally, Rubio and Le Noci are examples of a generation of young missionaries whose ambitions had not been adequately evaluated from Rome.

Their case may or may not have been known to Pallas; if it was, it is likely that the rumors came to him through informal channels. It is certain, however, that Pallas insisted on a point that the case of Rubio and Le Noci well exemplifies— aspiring missionaries should always keep in mind their purpose. This was the only way to offer a positive contribution to the global Jesuit enterprise.²⁰ Even if it might seem surprising, there were too many people who (according to Pallas) applied for the Indies for the wrong reasons and realized their mistake only when it was too late.

First of all, many men were drawn to the missions mainly for “the curiosity and the appetite of seeing many new lands and areas, and other admirable and strange things, with the excuse of coming to convert the gentiles.”²¹ Pallas was scandalized: these reasons were not enough to apply to be missionaries. He could not believe that someone could be so foolish to face a long oceanic journey, so hard and often fatal, “only for this vanity.” He knew enough history to see that adventurers and explorers had always been ready to risk everything to discover something new, motivated by their ambition. This could not, however, be the case for religious people, whose only interest had to be a desire to share the light of the gospel with those who still lived in darkness.

19 “sembra esprimere il proprio rifiuto della missione, dell’inserimento in una società complessa . . . lettura molto restrittiva del messaggio ignaziano e della sintesi nadaliana del *totus mundus habitatio nostra fit*” (the whole world must become our home). Romano, “Prime riflessioni,” 268.

20 Pallas, *Misión*, 228.

21 “la curiosidad y appetit de ver muchas tierras y partes nuevas, y otras cosas admirables y peregrinas con capa de venir a convertir gentiles . . . for solo esta vanidad.” Pallas, 228.

Pallas thus condemned those who wanted to go to another part of the world only to improve their status and conditions of life. He saw this as “a quite frequent illusion” that was, however, inconceivable for a Jesuit.²² When someone felt miserable and worthless in his own country or when he did not have any talent and was not able to live according to the rules of his order, he might possibly see the Indies as the perfect solution. This, though, was “a disproportionate remedy:” the “change of climate” was not enough to become better. After moving, these people always brought with them the cause of their own unhappiness: themselves.²³ Even more tragic was that after such a difficult and dangerous journey, some of them became aware of this, but it was too late to go back. There was no remedy for their mistake, and they caused damage not only to themselves but to their orders, confreres, and the people to be converted.

Pallas also reprimanded missionaries who wanted to acquire more esteem and credibility in such distant territories. Changing location did not correspond to having any greater public recognition; those who left Europe with this plan would not receive the glory they craved and would be even more desperate for all of the years to come. Pallas had an *exemplum* for this case as well: he had heard of a young European who tried to study in local universities without any success. Deeply frustrated, this boy thought that going to Peru could be a perfect solution for his situation: the confreres there would have been unremarkable, with scant education, and he would have stood out as a person of the utmost value compared to them.²⁴ He started boasting about his scholarly talent as soon as he was aboard the ship, pretending to be an expert in theology, logic, and metaphysics, and humiliating the crew with his intellectual pride. Once he arrived in Lima, however, he immediately noticed that the local university was not a primitive aggregation of ignorant people, but attended by educated scholars. It was impossible for him not only to be better than them, but even to reach their level. He left his residence and spent the rest of his days “working in a recently discovered local mine.”²⁵

Pallas's review of the wrong reasons to apply for the Indies included an expectation of finding great wealth there; the desire to sustain their families; and living without any worries and with liberality.²⁶ Here he was probably referring to the “many recommendations from Rome on religious men who cared about the

22 “engaño . . . más frecuente.” Pallas, 228. As noted above, Pallas never addressed “Jesuits” but more generically, religious people; thus, adapting to his point of view, this essay employs the terms “Jesuit,” “missionary,” and “religious” as synonyms.

23 “remedio . . . desproporcionado . . . la mudança de los climas.” Pallas, 229. Pallas here quotes and mentions Seneca and Justus Lipsius (1547–1606).

24 Pallas, 230.

25 “se uvo de ir a trabaiair en un asiento de minas recién descubiertas.” Pallas, 230.

26 Pallas, 230.

economic problems of their Spanish relatives.”²⁷ In the case of Peru, such a motivation was not unusual. Pallas admitted that the Indies were wealthy and full of treasures, but it was hard to become rich, and in any case a missionary should never have been concerned with these goals. It was unacceptable to forget about their vow of poverty pronounced when entering the Society of Jesus. Anyone who left for these secular ends would have gone to the Americas and died in the same way—completely in vain.²⁸

Another kind of fool went to the Indies to try to live with greater freedom. For a missionary, an excess of liberty simply meant living like a beast, despising religion and the salvation of one’s own soul, and dying in sin. Pallas invited these people to repent before it was too late, in apocalyptic tones. Finally, there were those who faced the overseas trip under the false pretense of doing good only for their egoistic vanity, in order to gain the honor and recognition with which missionaries were welcomed everywhere.²⁹

The best way not to fail in the missionary enterprise was to have its aim clearly in mind. Aspiring missionaries needed to understand that leaving or not did not depend on them—it was a decision beyond their will. God was the only one responsible for it because he instilled this desire in their souls “with inspirations and with supernatural aids.”³⁰ For this reason, on the one hand, if a calling were true, it was impossible to resist. On the other hand, “indifference and resignation” were fundamental for an aspiring missionary.³¹ God manifested himself through the superiors’ words and decisions. Candidates for the Indies could therefore legitimately desire to be sent on mission, but always while being ready to stay in their own countries if God and their superiors did not choose them.

Missionary life was hard and dangerous, but those who endured it received two “incomparable and inestimable gifts.”³² The first was “peace and tranquility of the mind”: no problem was too big for them. These men were always at peace: “while praying . . . reading . . . working . . . writing.”³³ When facing obstacles, they could always rely on God’s support. Even death could not scare them because their final destination was the kingdom of heaven.

27 “numerosas recomendaciones de Roma sobre religiosos que se preocupaban de los problemas económicos de sus parientes españoles.” Aliocha Maldavsky, “Entre mito, equívoco y saber, 50.

28 Pallas, *Misión*, 231.

29 Pallas, 232.

30 Pallas, 232

31 “indiferencia y resignación.” Pallas, 233.

32 “incomparables e inestimables dones.” Pallas, 234.

33 “paz y quietud del alma . . . orando . . . leyendo . . . trabajando . . . escribiendo.” Pallas, 235.

Interview with the Missionary: Frequently Asked Questions for Jesuit Petitioners for the Indies
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