

CHRISTIANITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IN THE NEW WORLD

by David M. Traboulay

In the discovery of the New World, the tradition of violence is well known. Thirsty for wealth and generally insensitive to the humanity of the Indians, the Spanish conquerors exploited the native Indians to the point of death. BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS wrote of the early treatment meted to the Indians of Española: "It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel, not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent the Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all."¹ Even OVIEDO, the fifteenth century chronicler who was critical of Indian intelligence, agreed that the Spanish treatment of the Indian was excessively harsh. The result was that the Indian population declined at an alarming rate. In Mexico, the population declined from 16,861,408 in 1532 to 1,069,255 in 1608². To be sure, the Indians were not immune to such European diseases as small pox, influenza, measles, typhoid, and malaria, and this must have contributed to the drastic decline in population. A greater cause has to be the brutalization the Indians suffered. Torn from their families and everything that gave meaning to their lives, they experienced the severest of conditions in the mines and plantations. LAS CASAS related that in Cuba "while the minero was eating, the Indians were under the table, just like dogs and cats, ready to snatch a bone, suck it first, then grind it and eat it with cassava. The Indians were totally deprived of their freedom and were put in the harshest, fiercest, most horrible servitude and captivity which no one who has not seen it can understand"³. In the face of such evidence of inhumanity and destruction, it is difficult to find an overall plan of colonization. But there was one.

The medieval spirit had not died in Spain. Indeed, Spain had successfully concluded its crusade against the Moors in Granada the same year of the discovery of the New World, which strengthened the unity of Spain and the uniformity of Catholicism. In an age that was witnessing the rise of the secular spirit and the fragmentation of Christendom, Spain saw herself as the protector of Christianity, the defender of the medieval concept of a uniform, Christian society. When the rest of Europe was implanting the concepts of reason and humanism, Spain was exalting the banners of the wisdom of faith. Initially, Columbus wanted to sail to Cathay to raise enough money to undertake a crusade to the Holy Land.

¹ B. DE LAS CASAS, *Historia de las Indias*, ed. and trans. by A. M. Collard (New York, 1971), bk. 2, ch. 8.

² ALONSO DE ZORITA, *The Lords of New Spain*, ed. by B. Keen (Rutgers University press, 1963), p. 9.

³ LAS CASAS, *op. cit.*, bk. 2, ch. 14.

LAS CASAS saw the discovery as the manifestation of God's infinite mercy: "It is very clear that the boundaries of Christ's empire could be vastly extended by spreading the Christian religion to all its countless parts and by increasing the number of its worshippers to include such fine rational creatures in such great numbers."⁴ On May 3, 1493, Pope ALEXANDER VI granted to the monarchs of Spain dominion over the newly discovered lands and asked them to send men of excellent character, learned, and experienced, to instruct the natives in the Catholic faith⁵. In 1508, Pope JULIUS II gave the king of Spain the right to present candidates for the office of bishop and other beneficed posts⁶. The politico-religious nature of the Spanish monarchy was not new. In 1484, during the crusade against the Moors in Granada, Pope INNOCENT VIII had given the Catholic monarchs the same right. This meant that the king of Spain had the responsibility for Christianizing the natives. In addition, the king was entitled to the ecclesiastical rent which the natives and Spanish inhabitants had to pay. This right carried with it two duties, namely, to build churches and to endow them for the future⁷. This then was the ideal. Perhaps the essential evil lay in the ideal. For, in the papal authorization for the creation of a Christian colonial empire, there existed implicitly the justification for inferiorizing the culture of the Indians. None of the pro-Indian reformers, however, felt that the Christianization of the Indians was tyrannical because a cardinal assumption was the superiority of Christianity.

The politico-religious ideal had to reconcile the economic interests of the conquerors. So the system called *encomienda* was instituted whereby a Spaniard received a grant of land and an allotment of Indians to serve him from the royal governor⁸. In return, the *encomendero* was to protect the Indians and instruct them in the Catholic religion. The *encomienda* must not be seen solely as a royal grant. It was rather a system of colonization. Ideally, the *encomenderos* were to be protectors of the Indians. In many ways, the *encomienda* was not unlike the feudal system. There was the same personal relationship between lord and vassal. To be sure, this situation was dying out in Spain with the strengthening of the monarchy. But there was no such strong central power in the New World and the feudal pattern was the order of the day. In truth, it was not long before the horrible reality of the conquest received official sanction. If Queen Isabella cannot be charged with inhumanity, Ferdinand can.

⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. 1, ch. 76.

⁵ F. J. HERNÁEZ, *Colección de bulas, breves, y otros documentos relativos a la iglesia de América y Filipinas*, 2 vols. (Brussels, 1879); PEDRO DE LETURIA, *Relaciones entre la Santa Sede e Hispanoamérica*, revised by A. de Egaña, vol. 1 (Caracas, Venezuela, 1959), 155—204.

⁶ LETURIA, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸ L. B. SIMPSON, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, (Berkeley, California, 1950).

Seeing the discovery as an opportunity to build up the royal treasury, he pursued policies with little thought for the Christian theory of the conquest. He gave Yañez Pinzon permission to colonize Puerto Rico and to apportion land and Indians among settlers. He encouraged the enslavement of Indians, especially Caribs, granted the colonists the right to recover run-away slaves, and legitimized the kidnapping of Indians.

In Europe, theologians and canon lawyers raised several questions as to the nature of the natives and Spanish sovereignty over them⁹. Many saw in the discovery a continuation of the idea of the crusade, that is, to extend the kingdom of God to the infidels. This scenario was not new. The western crusading spirit was already four hundred years old and it was not easy to convince Europeans that the new infidels were different. In one way or another, theologians turned to the thirteenth century theologians for their sources. HENRY OF SUSA (d. 1271) had stated that the pope was the universal vicar of Christ and held power not only over Christians but also over the infidels. THOMAS AQUINAS had rejected this. For him infidels did not lose their dominion and sovereignty because they were infidels. Sovereignty stemmed from human right. The distinction between faithful and unfaithful pertained to divine right and could not annul human right. In the sixteenth century, there was a return to the philosophy of Aquinas. Cardinal CAJETAN, the most outstanding Thomist of the day, was clearly echoing the views of Aquinas when he said that infidels were legitimate possessors of their land and that no king or emperor had the right to make war against them to deprive them of their land. He contended that even Jesus Christ, who was given all power on heaven and earth, did not send soldiers or armies to take possession of the world but saintly preachers, like sheep among wolves. He advised the sending of good men who would convert the natives to Christianity by their preaching and example, and not men who would oppress them and deprive them of their property¹⁰.

One of the first commentaries on the discovery was given by JOHN MAJOR, the Scottish theologian who was lecturing at the university of Paris between 1505 and 1518. In his commentary to the second book of *Sentences*, published in 1510, he stated categorically that the pope was not the lord of the temporal world. Dominion was not founded on faith or charity but on titles of natural right. Infidels therefore possess true social and political dominion. However, in his opinion, they could lose this right if they opposed the preaching of the gospel. He justified the Spanish conquest as a preparation for the spreading of the gospel. In a subtle fashion, he linked the Spanish conquest with the process of civilizing the Indians because they lived like animals. Like so many anti-Indian advocates, he cited ARISTOTLE'S *Politics* that some men are by

⁹ LETURIA, *op. cit.*, pp. 261—298.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

nature slaves and others free, that one race should rule and the other obey. In short, MAJOR was saying that the conquest was justified because it would bring civilization to the Indians¹¹.

In 1539, FRANCISCO DE VITORIA, the great Dominican professor at the university of Salamanca and perhaps the thinker who exercised the greatest influence in Spanish America, also affirmed in his lectures that neither the pope nor the emperor had the power to deprive the Indians of sovereignty. But Vitoria denied the need of an army to assist the missionaries as constituting the justification of the conquest. He contended that it was just to make war on them only if the Indians actually prevented the preaching of the gospel, killed or ill-treated the missionaries, or persecuted those Indians who were already converted to Christianity. However, he rejected all justifications of slavery. He conceived of a short of paternalistic protectorate under the guidance of Spain. Yet, he hastened to add that this was to benefit the Indians, not the Spaniards¹².

Another theologian at the university of Salamanca, MATIAS DE PAZ (1512), wrote a treatise on the Indians in which he held that the pope, as vicar of Christ, had temporal jurisdiction over the whole world. He felt that it was not just for Christian princes to make war on infidels to dominate them for their wealth, but only to spread the faith. If the Indians refused obedience to the king and rejected Christianity, they could be enslaved. At the same time, he pointed out that Spaniards who forcefully converted Indians should make appropriate restitution to them¹³.

The conquest, therefore, raised much discussion in Europe. Since they accepted the supremacy of Spanish civilization and Christianity, they all felt that the Indians should become Christian and Spanish. Spain was certainly not the only imperial power to assume that its values were more civilized than those of its colonial peoples. Nevertheless, it was in this same assumption of superiority, which is nothing but a tragic blindness, that the germ of the failure of its colonial policy lay.

There were two aspects of the struggle for Indian freedom. On the one hand, the friars had to defend the Indians against the cruelty of the colonists. On the other, the struggle was more positive in that they strove to create conditions which would be more conducive to Christian values. To be sure, in an atmosphere of greed and inhumanity this was not easy. In Peru, where the conquest was attended by unspeakable atrocities and followed by civil war among Spaniards, the difficulties and the hope of those who worked tirelessly to bring about a more humane society was well expressed by the Dominican, VICENTE DE VALVERDE in a letter to the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 290; V. BELTRÁN DE HEREDIA y M. DE LOS HOYOS, *Fray Francisco de Vitoria Buralés. Contradicción y réplica respectivamente*, (Burgos, 1952).

¹³ J. LOPEZ DE PALACIOS RUBIOS y MATÍAS DE PAZ, *De las islas del mar océano. Del dominio de los reyes de España sobre los indios*, (Mexico, 1954).

king in 1539¹⁴. In this opinion, all the fruits of the earth should revere God because He was their creator. If this were done, then the world would be just. He said that the Indians should be defended against the snares of the colonists who were like wolves in their rapacity. He warned that unless the power of the colonists was curtailed the Indians would be in danger of being wiped out. Unreasonably, the Spaniards violated the freedom of the natives. To deprive an individual of his freedom was tantamount to depriving him of his life. In some ways, he continued, the condition of the Indian was worse than that of the slave. For the slave was the property of his master and could be traded to another. This at least gave the slave the hope of being free from a cruel master by being sold to another master. Lamentably, the Indians did not even have this option because they were bound in perpetuity to their master. He said that the law should be made public because it was unjust to condemn the Indians for an infringement of the law if they did not know the law. VICENTE thus suggested that the solution to the Indian problem lay in humane laws.

Fray TOMÁS DE SAN MARTIN, a colleague of VICENTE, saw the benevolent authority of the king as the hope for Indian freedom¹⁵. The king was, in his opinion, the *bona fide* representative of God. By participating in the enterprises of the king, one was actually doing the will of God. The first conquerors, he said, should have considered whether the tribute they exacted from the Indians was ill-gotten. He felt that their conquest was not just as the conditions for a just war did not exist. Self interest was the source of the cruelty they meted to the Indians. Openly flouting the laws of the king, they had subjected the land and exacted tribute indiscriminately and unscrupulously. Since the king did not know this, they possessed the land as if it was their own. TOMÁS insisted that the lands of the New World belonged to the king. He said that the fact that the Indians were not Christian could in no way justify the excesses of the colonists. He stressed that the colonist was obligated to educate the Indians in the Christian way of life, protect them, and look after them. Lamenting that there were few who observed the laws issued by the king, he related that he had seen more than twenty thousand Indians die as the colonists took away their food and sent them to the mines. He concluded by saying that the greed for wealth generally cost much sweat and lives. On another occasion, he related how the colonists made the Indians undergo extremes of heat and cold to bring barrels of wine from the ships to the interior. Always the moralist, he sarcastically said that when the barrels of wine arrived, the colonist thanked God, declaring that he was going to make a rich profit and would soon be wealthy.

¹⁴ *La iglesia en Peru. Colección de documentos*, vol. 1 (Seville, 1943), doc. 57.

¹⁵ L. A. EGUIGUREN, "Fray Tomás de San Martín", *Mercurio Peruano* 32 (1951) 195—204; —, *Alma mater*, (Lima, 1939), p. 30.

Implicit in the arguments of TOMÁS DE SAN MARTIN and VICENTE DE VALVERDE was the contention that fundamentally freedom could be achieved by humane laws issued by a wise king. They correctly saw that the problem was institutional. But law and freedom were ideal solutions that depended greatly on the interplay of political forces in Spain and America. It is to the credit of the Indian reformers that they did not limit their struggle over abstractions but also addressed themselves to tangible problems, offering realistic solutions to them.

The treatise of JERÓNIMO DE LOAYSA, protector of the Indians in 1542, is sufficient testimony of this. He recommended that a house be built in every village where an Indian chief resided which would serve as both church and school¹⁶. The Indians were to be told of their errors in worshipping stones and idols, that their souls did not die, and that those who were baptized would go to Heaven when they died. They were to be told of Adam and Eve and how all men inherited their sin, of the incarnation of Christ, and the redemption of mankind. No one was to be forced to become a Christian. Rather, he should be persuaded by the truth of the gospel, the law of grace, freedom, and the reward of happiness. He observed that many priests administered the sacrament of baptism indiscriminately, without investigating whether the Indians really wanted to be baptized. JERONIMO admitted that many offered to be baptized through fear or to please their masters. He advised that no one was to baptize a child unless prior consent was received from his father and that adults be instructed for a month before baptism. They should know to make the sign of the cross, say the credo, the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, and the ten commandments. As for the regulations concerning fasting and abstinence, they were not to eat meat, cheese, milk, eggs, and butter on the vigils of the Nativity and the Resurrection, the Fridays of Lent, and other days stipulated by the church. The colonists were reminded that they could not ask the Indians to work on feast days. All priests were encouraged to learn the Indian language and emphasize to the Indians that all mankind tended to sin but that the sacrament of penance reconciled man to God's love and grace. This treatise by bishop LOAYSA is valuable in that it showed with great detail the teachings that informed the Christianization of the New World. One could applaud the emphasis on freedom, the importance of ideology, the encouragement to learn the Indian language. Although men like JERÓNIMO were genuine in their love for the Indian and almost heroic in their struggle for justice, they unconsciously contributed to the inferiorization of Indian culture by teaching Christianity in European forms. History is full of such ironies and we must not unduly take JERÓNIMO to task for a failing which all imperial nations have practiced.

Ideally, those who strove to Christianize the Indians ought to have canalized Christian ideas in Indian cultural forms. To do this means not

¹⁶ *La iglesia en Peru*, doc. 106.

only an understanding of Indian culture but also respect for it. This is why the efforts of Fray DOMINGO DE SANTO TOMÁS are significant¹⁷. Prior of the Dominican convent of the Rosary in Peru and professor of theology at the university of San Marcos, he wrote the first book on the grammar of the Indian language. As a theologian and teacher, he saw the need for an understanding of the Indian language to communicate effectively with the Indians. Much more importantly, he saw the logic and harmony of their language and commended its tone, its pleasing sound, and the facility with which it could be written. He concluded that most certainly the Indians were not uncivilized¹⁸. In the struggle for the Indians, DOMINGO was unique in that he was one of the first to seek to understand the cultural forms of the Indians and see in them the marks of a high civilization. His defense of the Indians then was based upon the understanding of the Indian consciousness and the certainty of the civilized nature of their culture.

An activist, his primary concern was to better the conditions of the native population. In a letter to the king in 1562, he implored him to be sympathetic to the needs of the Indians and pleaded for a humane solution to the problem. He said that crowds of allegedly aristocratic Spaniards were arriving daily and their attitudes were causing great discontent¹⁹. Nepotism and corruption were rampant and offices were given only to those who gave or lent money in return. In this climate of corruption, he observed little concern for the spiritual welfare of the Indians. As for their temporal welfare, it could not be worse. Saddled with innumerable hardships, they were forced to work in the mines. He reminded the king that a Christian king was morally committed to provide for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Indians. Highly critical of the *encomienda*, he attacked the fact that it was granted in perpetuity. He felt that the power of the colonists was so great that they could make peace and war when they wanted and it was therefore necessary to restrict their power. He warned that if the *encomienda* continued to be held in perpetuity, the death-knell of royal authority would certainly sound. In addition, the Indians had sworn that they would rather die than allow it. He reported that many meetings of Indians were being held to discuss the question and present a strong protest against it. In another letter, he advised the king and queen not to come to Peru. Spain, he said, was an earthly paradise compared to the horrors that were practiced in Peru. He often went to the mines to investigate the conditions that prevailed there and suggested that the

¹⁷ R. PORRAS BARRENECHEA, "Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás, fundador de la universidad y descubridor del quechua", *Comercio*, May 12, 14, 1951; DOMINGO DE SANTO TOMÁS, *Gramática o arte de la lengua general de los indios de los reynos del Peru*, ed. by R. Porras Barrenechea, (Lima, 1951).

¹⁸ J. T. MEDINA, *La Imprenta en Lima* (Santiago de Chile, 1904), vol. 1, p. 62.

¹⁹ *La iglesia en Peru*, doc. 276.

physical facilities be improved, a greater quantity of maize be made available to the Indians, and that a Christian supervisor be appointed who had a wide knowledge of the land and genuinely shared the grief of the Indians.

His encouragement of the study of the Indian language did have some repercussions. In 1579 the viceroy declared that both religious and lay students had to take a course in Quechua and that no cleric was to receive the licentiate without completing a course in it. All parish priests were required to take an examination to test their knowledge of the language and could not hold their offices if they did not do this. Interestingly, as the struggle for the Indian was beginning to wane towards the end of the sixteenth century, many colonists intensified their campaign for the suppression of the chair of Quechua at the university, arguing that there were many Indian dialects and it would be more relevant to teach the Indians Spanish.

These friars, then, were actively involved in the political life of Peru, unafraid to stand up to the threats of the colonists. One finds them in the roles of critics and conciliators, always on behalf of the liberation of the Indians. Theirs was a charity of action. For them, charity meant confronting the authorities who perpetrated a system of injustice, building schools, learning and writing about Indian customs. By attacking the privileges of the colonists, they implied that privilege was not Christian.

The school was one of the main means of Christianizing America. Contact with the colonists could only alienate the Indians from Christianity preached by men who tried to win them over to a doctrine of peace and love but who were unable to influence their own people with such a philosophy. The hope then lay in educating Indian children in a cloistered situation where, separated from the ways of the colonists and their parents, they could live a disciplined Christian life. In one of the first schools, that of San José in Mexico, one sees the Indian students happy in their environment where joy and cooperation are stressed²⁰. Under the guidance of the Franciscan, PEDRO DE GANTE (Peter von Gent), the students were taught to read, write, and sing in the mornings while in the afternoons they received religious instruction. He allowed them to assist at all religious feasts and to sing the canonical hours with him. Selecting fifty of the more advanced students to help him preach the gospel on Sundays, he instructed them in the message of the gospel readings of the following Sunday, divided them in pairs, and sent them to areas around Mexico city. Though the orientation of the school was clearly towards a disciplined life, PEDRO did not dismiss the Indian tendencies of his students and encouraged them to sing and

²⁰ GARCÍA ICAZBALCETA, *Bibliografía mexicana del siglo XVI*, ed by A. Millares Carlo, (Mexico, 1954), p. 91; E. A. CHAVEZ, *Fray Pedro de Gante. El primer de los grandes educadores de la América*, (Mexico, 1934).

dance when feast days were celebrated. His students easily learnt their lessons, the catechism, and music. When he introduced the study of Latin and the Latin chants, he found that they were able to grasp these subjects with such excellence that he once boasted to the emperor that he had Indian singers who could shine in the royal chapel. The curriculum later expanded to include embroidery, sculpture, painting, carpentry, and tailoring. The school of San José raised such hopes that in 1533 the archbishop of Santo Domingo wrote to the emperor suggesting the foundation of a college of higher education for the Indians²¹. He reported that the students at PEDRO DE GANTE's school had performed so well as to leave no doubt that they were capable of doing equally well in more advanced subjects and said that the Franciscans had agreed to coordinate the proposed college.

The request did not fall on deaf ears and on Jan. 6, 1536, the college of Tlaltelolco was founded²². The plan of studies embraced the trivium, quadrivium, sacred scripture, medicine, and painting. The beginning classes were conducted in the Mexican language and the more advanced in Latin. The competence of the Indians in classical European studies was supported by the Dominican, JULIÁN GARCÉS, a former student of the Spanish humanist, ANTONIO DE NEBRIJA²³. In a letter to Pope Paul III, he defended the Indians against those who said they were intellectually inferior. He felt that the Indians displayed greater facility and aptitude for learning than the Spaniards. They wrote Latin and Castillian better than the Spanish students, were neither boisterous nor unruly, stubborn nor pretentious, harmful nor quarrelsome. Pleasant and obedient to their teachers, they did not indulge in complaints, gossip, insults, and other vices typical of Spanish students. He found their sense of discipline exceptionally good. At the dinner table, they never asked for more than they received. When told to sit or kneel, they did so willingly. They could count, read, write, paint, and generally performed every mechanical or liberal art clearly and quickly. In short, Fray JULIÁN found them intelligent and always willing to learn.

All the students had their meals together. The senior students were placed in charge of the others to insure that order was kept. At midnight, they awoke to recite matins and lauds. On certain days, they sang the *Te Deum* at the end of matins. The church bell woke them in the morning and they went in procession to the church where they recited softly the

²¹ FERNANDO OCARANZA, *El imperial colegio de indios de la Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco* (Mexico, 1934), p. 31.

²² JUAN ESTARELLAS, "The College of Tlaltelolco in the problem of higher education for the Indians in XVIth century Mexico", *History of Education Quarterly* 2 (1962) 234—243; F. BORGIA STECK, *El primer colegio de America, Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco*, (Mexico, 1944).

²³ GENARO GARCÍA, *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de Mexico* (Mexico, 1907).

four minor hours of the breviary before hearing mass. When the students appeared in public, they had to wear their caps and gowns.

Many of the graduates of the college achieved renown. PABLO NAZAREO translated the epistles of St. Paul and the gospels into Mexican. He had lived with the Franciscans since he was a boy and was well trained in Latin, rhetoric, logic, and philosophy. His wife, María, was the daughter of Juan Axayaca, brother of the great Mexican chief, Moctezuma. PEDRO JUAN ANTONIO displayed such excellence that he went to Spain to attend the university of Salamanca and in 1574 published a Latin grammar, *Arte de la lengua latina*. ANTONIO ELEJOS who was Franciscan provincial in 1613 wrote two works: *Homilia sobre los evangelios de todo el año* and *Doctrina cristiana de la lengua Pima*. In 1552 MARTÍN DE LA CRUZ wrote a book in Mexican on the medicinal herbs used by the Indians which was translated into Latin by another Indian student, JUAN BADIANO. FRANCISCO BAUTISTA DE CONTRERAS became governor of Xochimilco. ANTONIO VALERIANO was a gifted Latinist and was considered another Cicero²⁴.

The Franciscans allowed the Indians to administer the college between 1546 and 1566 but the college did not do well under their control and reverted to the jurisdiction of the Franciscans in 1573. Still, the visitor of the Franciscan province in Mexico in 1569, JUAN DE OVANDO, was very satisfied with the college²⁵. He felt that the Indians were intelligent students and would prove to be useful to secular and ecclesiastical institutions as interpreters and translators. Replying to some criticism of the college, he argued that in his opinion the Indian students were well-mannered and loved to learn. To the charge that once the Indians became proficient in European studies they would not hesitate to be critical of authority and would become pompous and haughty, he replied that he doubted it.

The resentment of the colonists seemed to have taken its toll. When the list of graduates was published in 1606, the plan of studies was more typical of an elementary school than a college. Attempts by the Franciscans to restore the college as a center for the serious studies of the humanities proved futile because of inadequate financial assistance. The success of the college in a sense had shown clearly that the Indians were intelligent and capable of receiving an European education. It also showed that the transplanting of European institutions could be successful. But the colonists could not allow this. For Spanish social, economic, and political supremacy was based on the assumption of Indian inferiority and any evidence to the contrary must be hidden. The seventeenth century saw the introduction of the term, *limpieza de sangre*, whereby students had to present a certificate to prove that both of their

²⁴ BORGIA STECK, *op. cit.*, pp. 51—59.

²⁵ *Códice Franciscano del siglo XVI* (Mexico, 1941), pp. 62—65.

parents were of pure Spanish stock²⁶. At the Jesuit college of San Pablo, Indian and Negro boys could not sit on the top steps of the stairway which were reserved for Spanish boys²⁷. This institutionalization of racism provides still more evidence that the movement on behalf of the Indian had failed.

It is clear then that the struggle for Indian equality was a planned one. While the political battle was going on in Spain and the New World to reform the existing colonial institutions, the friars did not overlook the priority of educating the Indians in the Christian way of life. In the midst of a chaotic world, they strove to bring peace and order based upon freedom and equality. This association between universal freedom and Christianity is evidence that historically Christianity was a viable social philosophy in helping to restore the dignity of man. While the charge that Christianity in the New World was essentially European Christianity and the reformers wanted to Europeanize the Indians is not totally unfounded, there is little evidence that the earlier reformers denigrated Indian ways. More importantly, they stood up for the Indians in the concrete, lived and suffered with them, sincerely hoping that the world of peace and love was possible.

Ironically, the best known defender of the human rights of the Indians, BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS, has been credited with the responsibility for the general insensitivity of Spaniards to the rights of Negroes. In his utopian memorial of 1517, he advocated the introduction of Negro slaves because he felt that they would be better able to withstand the work imposed by the Spanish colonists. But, when he learned that the slaves were captured unjustly and treated harshly, he declared that it was as unjust to enslave Negroes as it was Indians. Although there was some concern on the part of the Crown and the religious orders for the Negroes, generally there was no significant pro-Negro movement. In the first place, they were slaves and legally did not have rights. Secondly, men did not yet conceive that slavery was in itself immoral. The questions posed by humanitarians of the day were the treatment of slaves and whether they were enslaved in a just war.

As early as 1509 there was an order from the Casa de Contratación to sent Negro slaves to Española. European business firms sought contracts to provide the colonies with Negro slaves. In 1528, the German firm of Welser received a contract to provide 4,000 slaves in four years; in 1600 the Portuguese Governor of Angola, Juan Rodríguez Coutinho, received the monopoly to bring 4,250 slaves from Africa to the center of the slave trade in the New World, Cartagena. With their hands and feet chained, huddled in an overcrowded compartment where they

²⁶ JOHN TATE LANNING, "Tradition and the enlightenment in the Spanish colonial universities", *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 10 (1967) 705-721.

²⁷ L. MARTIN, *The intellectual conquest of Peru*, (New York, 1968).

neither saw the sun nor moon, and fed a little bowl of flour and a small cup of water, their journey, which lasted for two months, was a nightmare of whipping and curses. On arrival, these living corpses marched out to a platform to be gazed at by the crowds who assembled "some motivated by greed, some by curiosity and others by compassion"²⁸. The majority of slaves came from West Africa, and the slave centers were Cacheu in Portuguese Guinea, Cabo Verde, São Tomé, and San Pablo de Loanda; slaves from Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, and Sierra Leone were sold at Cacheu and were considered good natured, happy slaves who did not lose an opportunity to play music and dance even when they were doing very difficult jobs; slaves from the Sudan were sold at São Tomé and were described as lazy and sensual; and the Bantus, considered a weak and disease prone tribe, were sold at San Pablo de Loanda.

This was the world in which ALONSO DE SANDOVAL intruded himself. Born in Seville on December 7, 1576, he came to the New World the following year with his parents, Don Tristán Sanchez and Doña Beatriz de Aguilera²⁹. On July 30, 1593, he entered the Society of Jesus, completing his studies in philosophy at the Jesuit college of San Pablo in Lima and theology at the Jesuit college in Cuzco. The education of Jesuits in Peru was directed towards preparing members to work among the Indians. Before being ordained, a Jesuit had to have a good command of the Indian language and, after ordination, he had to spend three years among the Indians. When Alonso became interested in the Negro slaves is uncertain. It could have been at the college of San Pablo where was a demand for courses in the language of the slaves and Father Luis Lopez was counsellor to some 2,000 slaves. Alonso was not the first to raise protests against the cruel treatment of slaves. In 1573, BARTOLOME DE ALBORNOZ criticized the hypocrisy of those who said that it was good for the Negroes that they were brought to the New World because they would then be exposed to the teachings of Christ. Sarcastically, he asked: "Is it the law of Christ that the freedom of the soul is to be paid with the servitude of the body? Now, the one whom they make Christian, they deprive of liberty which God naturally gave man." His work, *Arte de los contratos*, was banned and not reprinted. In 1587, TOMÁS MERCADO, professor of theology at the Dominican college in Mexico, condemned the deceit used by the slave dealers in bringing Negro slaves to the New World, who justified their action by the presumption that Africans were barbarians, irrational, and never motivated by any sense of justice. The

²⁸ ALONSO DE SANDOVAL, *De instauranda Aethiopum salute* (Bogota, 1956), bk. 1, ch. 18, pp. 107—108; J. BAUMGARTNER, "P. Alonso de Sandoval und die Neger-sklaverei". *Die Missionspastoral "De instauranda Aethiopum salute von 1627"*, *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 1971, pp. 409—448.

²⁹ J. MANUEL PACHECO, *Los Jesuitas en Colombia* (Bogota, 1959), vol. 1, pp. 239—268; —, "El maestro de Claver, Alonso de Sandoval", *Revista Javeriana*, Sept. 1954, pp. 80—89, 146—155.

council of Lima of 1582 asked owners not to forbid their slaves from contracting marriages and not to separate couples³⁰.

ALONSO's concern then was in response to the intensification of the problems of slavery. For there were already 12,000 slaves in Lima in 1568. That the Jesuits should be in the forefront of this ministry should not be surprising. Founded in 1534 in Paris as a reaction against the irrelevance of the learning of the time, the Jesuits were in the vanguard of the missionary and humanitarian activity that was one of the results of the Catholic reformation³¹. Armed with considerable experience in Europe and India, the Jesuits arrived in Peru in 1568 to tackle the problem of instructing the new peoples in the Catholic faith. Undeniably, the Jesuit prescription for these peoples was European Christianity. But the European experience was not yet so broad as to acknowledge the diversity of civilizations. Uniformity was the order of the day and their attempt to create Europeanized Indians must not blind one to their successful attempts at bettering the Indian position in the educational and social fields.

ALONSO was sent to the Jesuit college of Cartagena which was founded in 1604 to train its members to work among the slaves. He responded with sincere anguish at the inhumane treatment meted to the slaves who "did not understand Spanish nor cared to, murmuring tearfully without anyone being able to understand"³². His first responsibility was to go from door to door, soliciting contributions for his order. In 1606 he accompanied the vice-provincial, Fr. DIEGO DE TORRES, to Urabá where they were well received by the Indians and built a small chapel. They then proceeded to Antioquía, Remedios, and Zaragoza, where he decided to work among the Negroes: "How great it would be to take these Negroes from the abyss of sin, since a single soul is of such importance, and return it to the grace of God even for a single night". With little thought for his own life, he committed himself totally to the cause of the Negro slaves. When in 1611 a boatload of slaves arrived from Cabo Verde and it was rumoured that the slaves were stricken with smallpox, the city officials forbade their entry into the city. Undaunted, ALONSO continued to visit the slaves, winning the admiration of his provincial, Gonzalo de Lyra; "His love for his ministry is great and he undertakes the task of fishing for souls with the utmost care, not bothering to rest either at night or during the day with such dedication that his superiors have personally intervened to moderate his zeal."³³ In a letter to Lyra, ALONSO urged the provincial to allocate more members for the mission

³⁰ J. SACO, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el nuevo mundo* (Havana, Cuba, 1938), vol. 2, p. 78.

³¹ *Monumenta missionum Societatis Iesu*, ed. Wicki (Rome, 1948), p. 166.

³² J. CASSANI, *Historia de la provincia de la compañía de Jesus del nuevo reino de Granada en la America* (Caracas, 1967), pp. 62—63.

³³ PACHECO, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

among the Negroes. It was to be expected that those involved in the slave trade would consider ALONSO their enemy. On one occasion he was denied entry into a compartment where a slave woman was ill. Barging his way into the room, he found her all skin and bone, on the verge of death. There was little he could do but hear her confession and remain with her until she died. Once sold, the slaves' lot was not bettered and they were treated more like beasts than human beings. Compelled to work in the mines, they worked from sunrise to sunset. Sometimes they had to work at night. It was no wonder, ALONSO remarked, that a man who was a captive in Argel among the Moors could say that Christians punished more slaves in one week than the Moors in one year.

The question of baptism disturbed him. He was told that the slaves were baptized before embarking for America but he doubted its legitimacy and was very critical of the way they were baptized. A cleric would ask the slaves in the ports of Cacheu or Cabo Verde if they wanted to be baptized. Upon their affirmative reply: "yes, yes, yes", they were baptized without being instructed as to its significance. Some accepted it unwillingly, believing it to be a device of whites to kill them; some thought that their heads were being washed to give them relief from the intense heat; and others, that it was a medicine against illness. Emphasizing that the slaves must be instructed before baptism, he was confronted by the problem of language. Recognizing that the slaves were from different tribes and spoke different languages, he made a note of those slaves who knew Spanish, what African language they spoke, and the name of their master, and persuaded them to act as interpreters. Eventually, the college of Cartagena hired eighteen Negro interpreters, some of whom mastered eight languages and one who spoke eleven. Having reasonably solved the problem of communicating with the slaves, he would enter the barracks where the slaves were herded on their arrival and try to allay their fears. He said that some of the slaves refused to be baptized, adamantly professing their faith in Islam.

In 1617 news arrived that he was to receive an assistant, the famous PEDRO CLAVER who, inspired and trained by ALONSO, would also make the mission to the Negro slaves his life's work³⁴. That year ALONSO went to Lima where he translated a biography of St. Francis Xavier written in Portuguese by JUAN DE LUCENA and collected his material for a book on the Negroes. Returning to Cartagena in 1620, PEDRO CLAVER and he continued to instruct the Negroes, but not without criticism. In a charge which might have arisen from envy, they were accused by the secular clergy of working for their own temporal benefit and were forbidden to administer baptism except to a person who was at the point of death

³⁴ ANGEL DE VALTIERRA, *El santo que libertó una raza: San Pedro Claver*, (Bogotá, 1954).

or when there was no parish priest. The Jesuits responded by inviting some secular priests to join them in instructing the slaves. Finally realizing that the ministry to the Negro slaves was extremely difficult, these priests convinced the bishop to allow ALONSO to baptize the slaves. In 1624 ALONSO was named rector of the college of Cartagena where he encouraged his fellow Jesuits to work among the slaves. On retiring from this position in 1627, his colleagues paid homage to his untiring zeal: "No one doubted that he should be called apostle in every sense of the word since he was the first to dedicate himself to the instruction of the Negroes in the Indies."

His monumental book, *De instauranda Aethiopum solute*, was published in Seville in 1627. A mixture of geography, history, and religion, he synthesized existing scholarly knowledge of Africa with the accounts of travelers to Africa and his own first-hand experience. The major theme was the wretchedness of the life of the slaves and the need for a ministry among them. In his treatment of the customs of the various African tribes, he observed that the Madingas were active in proselytizing to the Islamic faith among the other tribes. The major Islamic influence originated from the Moslem Berbers who made trade agreements with the negroes of West Africa. He said that the attraction of Islam and the local tribal cults often caused Christian Negroes to renounce Christianity and return to their original cults. ALONSO placed great blame on the tribal chiefs who, whenever they needed money, would invite the Portuguese to their kingdom to buy slaves. With sarcasm, ALONSO related the justification of Negro slavery given by a chief: "Because God had created whites first and then Blacks who, because they were last, were ordered to serve their greater brothers."

Negroes from Guinea were intelligent, always happy beating their drums, singing, and dancing, and were excellent in running and jumping. They did not wear clothes but in the presence of Spaniards they did. Their king was always accompanied by a retinue of five or six thousand men. Commoners who visited the king had to kneel, bow their heads, extend both hands, then take a handful of earth three times and throw it over their heads. The nobility squatted and were required only to appear to grasp the earth. No one was allowed to speak directly to the king for reason of state, only through a mediator. All, including the king, sat on the floor to eat and were generally satisfied with a little. The Biojoes ate from the same plate. Wine made from the palm tree and a drink called *po* were very popular. Moments of happiness and grief were accompanied by intoxication. A person could consume great quantities of alcohol was highly honored. Polygamy was practiced and children were brought up by their mothers until they reached the age when they could take care of themselves. Some tribes punished adulterers and others did not. Kings beheaded their unfaithful wives and the adulterers; the rest of the populace could seize and sell the adulterer but no

harm was to be done to their wives. They buried their dead on a mound enclosed in a thatched house. When someone died, notice was sent to all the relatives and the different villages, who would then bring gold and other valuables which would be divided in three; the first they buried with the dead, the second they gave to the king, and the third to the relative who was looking after the funeral. Kings were buried secretly because the amount of gold was great and would lure thieves. In some tribes others were immolated with the dead king. At the funeral, the dead man's first wife led the gathering and was expected to remain in mourning for a year. After the burial, all returned to the village square where the young sang and danced in praise of the dead man while the old sat in the square. The dead man's cows were killed to feed the gathering and the hides given to his wives³⁵.

Several tribes worshipped statues of their ancestors but the Islamic religion was very popular. There were many mosques and Moslem schools where the Arabic language was used. ALONSO recalled with alarm the zeal of the Moslem missionaries and how easily they won converts. Families worshipped their own household god. Houses were covered with straw and great care was observed in supervising their cities. Every night certain men patrolled the very wide streets, shouting to families to put out their fires so as not to risk setting the city on fire. In the mornings they cleaned their teeth with a piece of branch called *cuaquo*, washed the floor and walls of their homes with water and combed their hair, wetting the comb with oil to make their hair shine. Then they began the ceremony of driving out evil spirits. They boiled feathers of different birds in a liquid called *mazamurra*. To the accompaniment of chants they drove the devil into the streets and then threw the brew into the street. The Negroes of the Congo and Angola loved cats and dogs. Good natured, they loved to play their six stringed guitar. In Angola, the people were docile and believed in one god.

Here was the first attempt to understand the slave by understanding his social environment in Africa. In an age when most Europeans saw only blackness and judged all Negroes to be similarly inferior to them ALONSO preferred to show that the slaves were products of different tribal groups and, more importantly, members of societies which had civilized political, social, and religious forms. Indirectly, he contrasted the annihilation of the personality of the slave in the New World with the sense of identity that he possessed in Africa. Cut off from his tribal and family ties, the slave, with his eyes constantly filled with tears, was perpetually sad as he became subject to the inhumanity of the slave traders and plantation masters.

What were ALONSO's views on Slavery? Confessing that he treated everyone as he thought just, he supported the views of LUIS DE MOTO-

³⁵ SANDOVAL, *op. cit.*, bk. 1, ch. 11, pp. 63—69.

LINIA who, in his *de iustitia et iure*, held that African slavery was unjust and all who participated in it had sinned grievously³⁶. The two conditions to justify enslaving a person, namely, to be made a prisoner in a just war and to be condemned to slavery as a punishment for crimes, did not obtain in the case of the African slaves. ALONSO was very much a man of his times in not condemning slavery as an institution. He could see clearly that the slaves' exposure to a new society was traumatic and the only new focus of relations was his cruel master. To expect ALONSO to conclude that all slavery was unjust would have been to see him in a context of religious, economic, and social values that did not take definitive shape until the eighteenth century. Very much the heirs of the Roman tradition, Spanish lawyers agreed that slavery was an institution whereby someone was subject to another contrary to nature. But no one drew the conclusion that what was contrary to nature ought to be abolished.

At any rate, African slavery was for ALONSO unjust. He laughed at those who said that the lot of the slaves was better in the New World than in Africa where they were all slaves of their kings: "It is known that in the beginning of the world Our Lord did not people the earth with masters and slaves." To demonstrate that slavery was contrary to nature, he cited TERTULLIAN that "everyman is by nature free but iniquity or adversity made him a slave" and SOLOMON that "the poor man and the king, the monarch and the shepherd, were born from one same lot and passed under the same laws; nature did not pay greater care in creating the prince than the plebeian. Both great and small have one beginning and must have one end."³⁶ ALONSO's pain at seeing the sick slaves left lying on the ground to die, unclothed, was genuine: "They usually died without anyone grieving or caring about their bodily and spiritual ailment. It is uncertain whether they die from neglect or from illness. I have seen this with my own eyes and wept... I remember seeing among many others two who were already dead, lying on the ground like animals, their mouths facing upwards, open and full of flies, their arms crossed as if to signify the cross of eternal condemnation for having died without receiving baptism... would to God that I could inflame the hearts of those who read this and encourage them to help these poor people who have so little assistance."³⁷ ALONSO died in 1652.

The motives of the conquest of the New World were complex. Many were simply interested in increasing their wealth and power. For them the discovery had no ideological significance and, with debateable justification, could argue that it was they who developed the New World. The attitude of the Crown was ambiguous. Viewing the New World as a Spanish colony, it sought to mitigate the exploitation of the colonists

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 14, p. 97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

by creating institutions like the Council of the Indies and the *audiencia* and issuing innumerable laws. But a colony exists for the good of the mother country and, in truth, the essential problem lay in the very notion of colony. In addition, Spanish institutions were hierarchical and certainly not representative of the native population. The Crown was also the patron of the Catholic Church in the New World and in theory was entrusted with the responsibility of promoting and defending Christian values.

The conquest, then, witnessed the interweaving of these different motivations. Those who struggled for Indian freedom tried to bring about the realization of the Christian conception of the conquest to extend the kingdom of God by peaceful means. Their crusade is more easily explicable if it is understood in a medieval context. In some ways, the scenario of the New World was the same as the twelfth century. While the Christian armies marched in battle array against the Moslems, Franciscan and Dominican friars were journeying to Islamic lands to win over the Moslem by peaceful means.

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, it appeared that the attempt of the pro-Indian movement to create a New World in which all men were brothers had failed. As for the African slave, the decline in the population of the Indians forced the colonists to turn to African slaves to satisfy the demand for cheap labor. Thus began the enslavement of the African, the horrors of which ALONSO DE SANDOVAL adequately described.

Though the church was unable to prevent the debasement of the negro, there were men who were active in the struggle for their dignity. Accepting the long held notion that though the body was enslaved the soul was free, they felt that by participating in the Christian way of life the slaves would enjoy the kingdom of God. But the failure of Spanish Christianity to achieve the harmonization of races in the New World must not blind one to the heroic efforts of those who saw in Christianity the hope of realizing true human dignity. There have been few instances of such a concerted effort to bring about the universal brotherhood of man by peace and love. Their defense of the principle of freedom, their struggle to get the authorities to make restitution to the Indians, their willingness to die for their ideals, are qualities that have inspired many.