

primary responsibility for change must be with those who have the power for it, then South Africa has a huge and destructive vacuum there. But other nations still have some power to pressure the Republic into change; and they too ignore or trivialize their responsibility (how greatly our government's reception of P.W. Botha earlier this year consolidated his position in white South Africa!) 'The international community', wrote Desmond Tutu in 1981, 'must make up its mind whether it wants to see a peaceful resolution of the South African crisis or not' (*Hope and Suffering*, Fount, 1984).

Those who have power to decide do not have the will. The Church of Christ, which has—to however limited an extent—the will does not have the power: not least (now) because it has long been so slow to use what power it has. Meanwhile, people continue to die. The gospel tells us, among other things, that God's cause in the world is the cause of those helpless victims of the aggression of white wealth and greed. It does not ask us to wallow in guilt or self-abasement, but it does demand that we look hard and candidly at what we can do to bring political will to our own country in its dealings with South Africa, and to bring power to our fellow believers there—by the active awareness and support that makes it harder for the South African Government to ban, detain or murder Christian leaders, by our efforts to keep in touch with the Church in the Republic and help its clergy and teachers to travel, study and grow in imagination and resource; and by persisting hard prayer. *Nkosi sikhelel'i Africa*: God bless Africa; guide her rulers, guard her children, give her peace, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Prophet and Apostle: Bartolomé de las Casas and the spiritual conquest of America

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I: Defender of the Indians or Satan's tool?

In his *De procuranda indorum salute* (1589) the Spanish Jesuit, José

de Acosta, a former provincial of his order in Peru, lamented that nowadays the gospel and war were all too closely associated.¹ He was at pains to reject proposals mooted by a fellow Jesuit that Spain should invade China so as to bring that great empire into the fold of the Catholic Church. Not that Acosta was a pacifist, since he defended the right of a Christian Prince to establish forts in heathen territory for the protection of trade and the preaching of the gospel. Moreover, in regions like Amazonia, inhabited by mere savages without any law, king or fixed abode, there was a positive duty to introduce some form of political order so that the natives could be taught the elements of civility and Christianity. Any resistance to this imposition of a protectorate could be justly quelled by force of arms, albeit applied with paternal firmness. As for the justice of the previous conquest of the relatively advanced kingdoms of the Incas and Aztecs, Acosta simply counselled a closure of debate, arguing that with no chance of restitution or restoration, any further discussion of the question merely served to provoke dissension between the spiritual and temporal authorities. In any case, had not St. Augustine clearly stated in his *City of God* that all kingdoms begin in violence and conquest? If the Apostles had not sought to overthrow the Roman Empire, a state which St. Augustine had denounced as founded on war and ambition, why should priests and religious now query the justice of Spain's dominion in the New World? Emphasis rather should be placed on the Papal Donation of 1493, which had granted the Catholic Kings sovereignty over the new discoveries so as to ensure the evangelisation of their inhabitants. After all, contemporary experience in Africa suggested that where conversion was not accompanied by the protection afforded by a Christian Prince, relapse into idolatry was almost inevitable, granted the inconstant nature of most barbarians.

That Acosta carefully refrained from any mention of Bartolomé de las Casas was an enforced tribute to the strident campaign launched by Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy of Peru 1569—81, to blacken the reputation of the great defender of the American Indians. Not content with the seizure and execution of Tupac Amaru, the last Inca Prince to enjoy any sort of independence, Toledo equally strove to destroy any Inca claim to legitimate sovereignty. With this end in view, he commissioned Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa to write a *History of the Incas* demonstrating that their empire was a gross tyranny created in a relatively recent cycle of wars and perpetuated by the exploitation of the conquered peoples. The remnants of the Inca nobility resident in Cuzco were summoned by the viceroy to hear a public reading of this authorised history and then obliged to sign a notarised declaration testifying to its accuracy.² The purpose of this sinister farce was to discredit Las Casas's central affirmation that Indian lords possessed

legitimate authority over their subjects and hence could not be justly deprived of their office on the pretext of conversion to Christianity. Moreover, Las Casas had then proceeded to argue that the way in which the New World was brought under Spanish dominion was essentially unjust and contrary to the gospel. Indeed, towards the end of his life, he declared that the entire period of conquest and government between 1492 and 1562 was little more than a story of tyranny, and suggested that Peru should be restored to the Incas. As for Hernán Cortés, the great conqueror of Mexico, he should have been hung as a common murderer instead of being rewarded with a title of nobility. So acrimonious were Las Casas' published comments on the conquerors that one close associate of Viceroy Toledo, possibly his Jesuit confessor, seriously suggested that with his usual astute skill Satan himself had used the good intentions of Las Casas for his own ends, seizing upon the denunciation of the conquest as a means of discrediting and undermining the entire Christian project in the New World.³

To understand the impact of Las Casas on sixteenth century Spanish America, it is necessary to return to the start of his career as defender of the Indians. At the same time, it is advisable to view him in the context of fellow missionaries, since it offers us a Christian perspective on his life-long campaign. That Las Casas should have been detested by the conquerors is readily apparent; just why he also attracted the criticism of other religious is less well studied.

II : Las Casas' conversion

If we accept the account provided by Las Casas in his *History of the Indies*, it was in 1514, which is to say at the age of thirty and some twelve years after his arrival in Hispaniola, that he experienced a crisis of conscience over the treatment of the Indians. For although he had the rare distinction of being the first priest to be ordained in the New World, as much as any other settler he lived off the proceeds of unpaid Indian labour, employed either in agriculture or in gold-mining. Indeed, he had participated in the brutal conquest of Cuba and in recognition of his services had been awarded an encomienda or grant of Indians on that island. But the refusal of his Dominican confessor to grant him absolution stirred his conscience, which was, so to say, then pierced by the scriptural text assigned for his Easter sermon, which bluntly declared:

If one sacrifices from what has been wrongfully obtained,
the offering is blemished;

the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable....

Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes

is the man who offers a sacrifice
from the property of the poor.
The bread of the needy is the life of the poor;
whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood...

(Sir. 34, 18—22)

Powerfully moved by these harsh words, taken from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, Las Casas renounced his *encomienda*, and with the encouragement of the Dominicans returned to Spain to campaign at court to secure justice for the natives of the New World.⁴

In later years, when he reflected on the sequence of events which comprised the first discovery and conquest of the New World, Las Casas advanced the stern Augustinian doctrine that in all generations God had predestined an unknown number of souls for salvation and that in fulfilment of this providence had chosen Spain and Columbus as his instruments for bringing the gospel to the peoples of the Indies. But although he painted a largely sympathetic picture of Columbus, he condemned the great discoverer's ignorance of divine and natural law, which drove him to corrupt the entire providential venture by the unprovoked seizure and enslavement of defenceless Indians. If Columbus's subsequent torments gave hope for his eternal salvation, little could be said in favour of Nicolas de Ovando, Governor of Hispaniola since 1502, who introduced the system of *encomiendas*, a legal institution by which most Indians were distributed among the Spanish settlers and henceforth obliged to supply free labour in return for elementary instruction in Christianity. In practice the system proved worse than outright slavery, since men were separated from their families, and set to work either in the fields or mining for gold, fed on an inadequate diet and subjected to abuse. Any resistance was countered by massacre and enslavement. The result was that the Indian population of Hispaniola rapidly diminished, with overwork, malnutrition and epidemic disease all playing a part in what became a demographic catastrophe of unparalleled proportion. Moreover, as manpower dwindled, so the Spaniards raided other islands of the Caribbean for slaves, under the pretext that their inhabitants were guilty of cannibalism. The conquest of Cuba was accompanied by atrocities deliberately inflicted so as to quell resistance and terrorise the survivors. Recalling the horrific scenes he had witnessed, Las Casas later wrote: 'All these deeds and others, foreign to all human nature, mine own eyes saw, and I now fear to relate them, not believing myself, since perhaps I might have dreamt them'.⁵

Lest this emphasis on terror and atrocity be thought overdrawn, we have only to turn to Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, himself an eye-witness, who, in his *General History of the Indies*, described how the conquest of Darien by Pedrarias Davila unleashed on the unfortunate natives of the Isthmus fierce veterans of the Italian wars who in their

pursuit of gold and slaves soon devastated the entire region. Of the treatment of the Indians by one band, Oviedo wrote: 'They tortured them, demanding gold, and some they burnt and others they gave to be eaten alive by dogs and others they hanged and on others they practised new forms of cruelty'. This testimony is all the more significant in that Oviedo, the chronicler who most faithfully expressed the ethos of the conquerors, had little sympathy for the Indians, viewing them as close to beasts and irrevocably damned for their sins, writing: 'this people is by nature lazy and vicious, of little faith, melancholic, cowardly, of low and evil inclinations, liars and of little memory and constancy...In the same way that their skulls are thick, so their understanding is beastly and ill-inclined'. Thus, although he deplored the crimes of the conquest, albeit seeking to place the blame on men of base birth, suspect Jews or foreigners, he actually welcomed the disappearance of the native population of Hispaniola, both as divine punishment and as marking the end of Satan's kingdom on that island.⁶

Part of the problem stemmed from the way in which the New World was explored and settled. For if the Spanish Crown supported the voyages of Columbus and outfitted the expeditions of Ovando and Pedrarias, all other ventures were privately organised and financed, subject only to royal license. The result was that men of all classes and conditions joined the expeditions which ravaged their way across and around the Caribbean. In essence, they formed free companies, led by *caudillos* or captains, and, although subject to rough military discipline, were rewarded by a share in the eventual plunder. In the case of settlement, the leading men obtained *encomiendas*. Reminiscent of the English bands which invaded France during the Hundred Years War, but now equipped with fire-arms, these companies of free-booters were licensed by the Spanish Crown and justified their raids by invocation of the Christian faith. More a savage parody than a perpetuation of the crusade, the medieval mentality which still haunted many of the 'gentlemen-companions' who led the expeditions is best observed in Oviedo's proposal to the Crown, presented in 1519, that a military order should be established in the Caribbean, with a mother-house in Santo Domingo and a hundred knights to patrol the confines of empire.

Needless to say, the Spanish Crown did not condone the excesses of the conquerors and indeed from the start attempted to safeguard the rights of its new vassals. Queen Isabella sharply reproved Columbus for despatching Indian slaves for sale at Seville and demanded that they be released and returned to the New World. Nevertheless, as first established, the *encomienda* could be depicted as a paternal institution whereby settlers instructed their wards in Christian doctrine and European crafts in return for labour on their

lands. It was not until 1511 that the Dominican, Antonio de Montesinos, preached a public sermon in which he denounced the ill-treatment of the Indians of Hispaniola in terms that provoked local anger and royal disapproval. It was to counter such criticism that in 1512 King Ferdinand promulgated the Laws of Burgos, designed to protect the Indian from abuse. Despite their touching insistence on a meat diet and doctrinal instruction, these decrees offered little by way of practical alleviation, since they sought merely to regulate the *encomienda*, with the obligation of unpaid, compulsory labour still preserved.⁷

With little else to recommend him than his experience of the New World, strong Dominican support, and fluent latin acquired from humanist masters at the Seville cathedral school, Las Casas remained in Spain from 1515 until 1520, treating first with King Ferdinand, then with the regent, Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros, and finally with the Flemish ministers of the young King Charles, soon to become Emperor Charles V. In a series of memorials, carefully pitched to attract court interest, Las Casas sought both to remedy current injustices and to influence the future course of colonisation in the New World. In all the projects of this period there was an insistence on peaceful conversion and prospective profit. What is startling about the *Memorial de Remedios* of 1516 is the degree to which it anticipated the future structure of colonial government.⁸ Certainly, Las Casas reported that Hispaniola had been already depopulated, with only 15,000 Indians left out of the million inhabiting the island in 1492. In Cuba 100,000 natives were driven to work for the Spaniards so that they had no time for their own fields. But the main thrust was on practical recommendations. For a start, Las Casas advocated the outright abolition of the *encomienda*. In future, Indians should only work for Spaniards when they were paid a wage. To replace the authority and civilising hand of the *encomendero*, Indians should be gathered together into villages, each with a church and a hospital, governed by a priest, either recruited from the mendicant orders or from qualified secular clergy. As for the Spaniards, farmers rather than adventurers should be sent out, in the hope that each Spanish farmer could take a number of Indians under his wing, working together, teaching them the forms of agriculture, and possibly intermarrying with them. In general, the relation between the settlers and the Indians was to be strictly regulated. No more than a third of all male Indians between the ages of 25 and 45 were to be called upon to work for the Spaniards, and they were to work for only two months in the year and at no more than twenty leagues from their village. All labour was to be remunerated. Here, then, was a remarkable forecast of how the colonial system was to operate in the last decades of the sixteenth century.

These plans only applied to the Caribbean islands, since for the mainland, still largely uncharted, Las Casas suggested that settlement should be limited to a series of ten fortresses situated at intervals of about a hundred leagues, each governed by a captain and garrisoned with a hundred men whose chief task was peaceful trade with the surrounding Indians. All further armed incursions were to be forbidden, so that the Indians could be peacefully attracted to Spanish rule. An indispensable element of this scheme was the appointment of a bishop for each fort, accompanied by a band of religious recruited from the Franciscans and Dominicans. These bishops were to be like 'those of the primitive church, walking barefoot wherever required'. Conversion of the Indians was to be peaceful, and, if martyrdom awaited the missionaries, this was a price worth paying. Once pacified by the attractions of trade and Christianity, the Indians would accept the authority of the Catholic King and willingly pay the taxes necessary to support government.

To implement these proposals, Las Casas himself obtained royal support to establish a settlement at Cumaná on the northern coast of Venezuela. Much attention has been concentrated on his archaic suggestion that his settlers should be known as 'knights of the golden spur' and be attired in crusading tunics. What is more important is the scope and nature of Las Casas's scheme. Originally, he had applied for a grant of no less than a thousand leagues of coastline, an area eventually reduced to a tenth of that figure, which is to say, some three hundred miles. The economic basis of the venture was trade with the Indians combined with agriculture in the vicinity of the fort at Cumaná, with the profits accruing to the chief settlers, Las Casas himself and to the Crown in the form of taxes. In short, this was a project of peaceful Spanish colonisation, justified by the prospect of some profit but animated by the long-term expectation of the conversion and purification of the mainland Indians. What the scheme lacked was practicability. For Cumaná was situated close to the pearl-fishery at Cubagua, an island base of Spaniards who raided the mainland for slaves and had thus already antagonised all Indians in the surrounding region. By the time Las Casas led his expedition to the chief settlement, the Indians had already murdered two Dominican missionaries in an adjoining zone and were determined to resist all further encroachment on their territory. The upshot was that Las Casas proved unable to persuade a sufficient number of farmers to accompany him, so that he had to rely on the usual heterogeneous assortment of Spaniards who went to the New World. Once attacked by the Indians, the friars and settlers were obliged to abandon the settlement, not without loss of life, and with the loss of all the capital investment of the Crown and Las Casas. It was the crushing failure of the Cumaná experiment in 1520 that drove Las Casas to abandon all

further attempts at colonisation.

For the next fourteen years he remained in Hispaniola, where he entered the Dominican Order and spent his time in study, writing and meditation. His failure was seized upon by the chief chronicler of the Indies, Fernández de Oviedo, who in his *General History of the Indies*, published in 1535, described the episode in sarcastic terms, concluding that it demonstrated that all attempts to convert the Indians required prior conquest by the Spaniards.⁹

III : Spiritual conquest in Mexico

The set-back at Cumaná was all the more disastrous for Las Casas in that during the same years, 1519—21, his old friend and fellow encomendero in Cuba, Hernán Cortés, abruptly and gloriously transformed the entire pattern and image of Spanish conquest in the New World. The dismal picture of unrestrained devastation of a tropical paradise was replaced by all the excitement of an epic conquest of a great empire by a mere handful of Spaniards. Turn only to the full text of Oviedo's *General History* and observe how the conquest of Mexico exceeds all other narratives of Spanish exploration and conquest, both in its drama and its intrinsic interest. At the same time, recall that it is a story that was first told by Cortés himself in his letters to Charles V, letters skilfully framed so as to magnify the scale of events and justify his defiance of the royal governor of Cuba. No friend of Cortés, Oviedo took care to comment on the dark side of the story: the unwarranted massacre of the population of Cholula ordered by Cortés and the unprovoked attack by Pedro de Alvarado on the defenceless young nobles of Tenochtitlan. Nevertheless, the sheer grandeur of the events led him to praise Cortés as a great captain cast in the mould of Caesar or Cyrus.¹⁰

Moreover, if Cortés allowed his men to enslave the defeated Mexicans, branding their faces, nevertheless, in general he sought to restrain the conquerors from any wanton devastation of the native population. True, he extended the system of encomiendas to New Spain, but in the context of an advanced society with a settled peasantry and a native nobility, these grants took the form of tributary labour performed in rotation. Equally important, Cortés recommended the Emperor to send religious to New Spain, as Mexico was then called, to convert the Indians. Indeed, according to one ecclesiastical chronicler, the greatest act of Cortés' life was when he knelt in the dust before the assembled nobility of Mexico, both Indian and Spanish, to kiss the hands of the twelve travel-stained Franciscan friars who had walked barefoot from Veracruz.¹¹ Thereafter, he assisted their efforts and demanded that all Indian lords in the

environs of Mexico should send their children for instruction by the mendicants. In return for this support, the Franciscans always defended the reputation of Cortés.

The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico, for so the mendicants named their enterprise, forms one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the Catholic Church. Recruited in the recently-founded, reformed province of San Gabriel de Extremadura, the observant Franciscans who went to the New World were animated by a lively expectation of the rebirth of the primitive church. For, after an initial phase of 'coldness', in part no doubt promoted by the vigour with which the friars smashed their idols, the Indians came flocking to hear the news of the Christian god. In the ensuing decades thousands were baptised *en masse*, with the children of the nobility brought to the convents for education and thereafter employed as interpreters and acolytes. The resources of the liturgy were exploited to the full, with an elaborate calendar of feasts celebrated by processions, dances, passion and nativity plays, and accompanied by out-door Masses, daily instruction and sessions of penitence, all devised to replace the cycle of pagan ceremonies. If we are to believe the chroniclers, the Indians adopted their new religion with great enthusiasm, temporarily submerged in a moment of ritual euphoria.

Moreover, within the space of a generation, the mendicant orders—for the Franciscans were soon joined by the Dominicans and Augustinians—succeeded in resettling most of the population, concentrating scattered hillside hamlets into towns laid out on a grid system, centred on a main square usually dominated by a high-vaulted, single-naved church, constructed in Gothic style, albeit often decorated with a Renaissance or plateresque facade.¹² In the first decades after the Conquest, the mendicants acted as the political guardians of the Indian community, seeking to defend their wards from the worst abuses of the *encomenderos* and other Spaniards. In this period they were assisted by the hierarchy led by Bishop Juan de Zumarraga, himself a Franciscan conversant with the writings of Erasmus, who prepared a catechism which spelt out Christian doctrine in simple biblical language.¹³ At this stage, there was the hope that the bishops, recruited from the religious orders, would eschew the pomp and wealth of their European counterparts.

The belief that the primitive church had been born anew in Mexico was deepened by the unexpected symmetry in the relation between the Indians and the religious. For if the mendicants' chief social ideal was poverty, then the Indians' exiguous diet, paucity of material possessions and general lack of any acquisitive spirit were interpreted as signs of evangelical simplicity. The very obedience of the Indians to their social superiors and their docile and phlegmatic nature were all further evidence of their vocation as Christians.

Needless to say, to win such souls required exemplary dedication from the friars, who were expected 'to walk unshod and barefoot, with habits of thick serge, spare and torn, to sleep on a single mat with a staff or a bundle of dry grass for a pillow, covered only by an old shawl.... Their food was a tortilla of maize and chile, with cherries and tuna fruit'. Moreover this strenuous regime was matched by the necessity of adapting themselves to the very character of their neophytes. 'They had to put aside the anger of the Spaniards, their pride and presumption, and make themselves Indians with the Indians, phlegmatic and patient as they are, poor and naked, gentle and humble, as they are'. In all this there was a congruence between Indian expectation and mendicant practice, since pagan priests as much as Catholic religious practised self-flagellation and long periods of fasting.¹⁴ Both Spaniards and Indians still inhabited a spiritual universe in which laceration of the flesh, penitence and prayer were sources of social authority.

An essential element of the mission was the study of Indian language and religious belief. Here the Franciscans took the lead, on the one hand printing grammars, vocabularies, prayerbooks, catechisms, sermons and even selections of scripture, all in native languages, and, on the other hand, systematically examining native religion, its moral ideals, its pantheon of deities and its calendar of feasts. At the College of Santa Cruz Tlatelolco, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún taught latin and spanish to a select number of pupils and then, with the collaboration of these pupils, wrote a *General History of the Things of New Spain*, a monumental text in parallel columns of nahuatl and spanish, lavishly illustrated, which offered an encyclopedic survey of Indian religion and culture. Its most striking feature was its reliance on oral testimony and use of nahuatl for the original text.¹⁵ To justify his life-long study of paganism, Sahagún cited the example of St. Augustine's *City of God* and argued that without a thorough knowledge of Indian thought and practice, the Church could not hope to root out idolatry or even perceive its devilish subterfuges.

Thus to describe the spiritual conquest is, of course, to repeat what the chroniclers wrote. There was a dark side to the story. The Franciscan Fray Toribio de Motolinia made no bones about the necessity of armed conquest before the entrance of the Christian mission; the alternative was unfruitful martyrdom. Moreover, the mendicants had no compunction in smashing idols and levelling temples to the ground. Thereafter, they did not shrink from whipping, imprisoning or sending into exile any recalcitrant Indian priest or noble. Indeed, the lord of Texcoco, Don Carlos, who reneged on his Christian education, and encouraged his subjects to worship their ancient gods, was burnt at the stake. In Yucatán, the discovery of

widespread syncretism, with trusted native lieutenants engaged in surreptitious pagan ceremonies, drove the local Franciscans into savage repression, with hundreds of unfortunate Indians imprisoned and tortured.¹⁶ Moreover, if, in the years immediately after the conquest, the Franciscans had sought to educate the sons of the nobility at Santá Cruz Tlatelolco with the aim of forming a native priesthood, they quickly became disillusioned with the experiment, with the result that all Indians were banned from ordination for the priesthood, a ban which was not lifted in any appreciable fashion until the eighteenth century.

If the chroniclers celebrated the spiritual conquest in dramatic tones, it was because many of the Franciscans in Mexico were inspired by the theories of Joachim de Fiore, the twelfth century Cistercian abbot who had divided all history into three grand stages governed respectively by God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Many Franciscans accepted St Bonaventure's identification of St. Francis as the angel of the apocalypse who would unlock the seal of the sixth age, an epoch characterised both by the unprecedented preaching of the gospel and by the advent of the Antichrist. This sixth age also marked the start of the Joachite stage of the Spirit, which would be consummated in the final millennium before the second coming of Christ and the Last Judgement. One further sign of the sixth age was the advent of a world emperor and an angelic pope. The tide of apocalyptic expectation ran particularly strongly in the sixteenth century, and in Spain the accession of Charles V with his unprecedented concentration of territories in Europe renewed hopes of universal empire.¹⁷

For Motolinia, one of the first twelve Franciscans to come to Mexico, the conversion of the Indians marked a decisive stage in the march of the Faith ever westwards, from its birth in the East to its final destination in the West, with Mexico the main highway leading to China. He observed that Mexico was similar to Egypt, both in its previous paganism and in its current enthusiasm for the faith, declaring it 'a suitable land for hermits and contemplatives'. In similar vein, he apostrophised the capital: 'You were once a Babylon, full of confusion and evil; you are now another Jerusalem, mother of provinces and kingdoms'. The barbaric decrees of a heathen tyrant had been replaced by the wise laws of the Catholic King. By far his strongest figure was the invocation of the Exodus, in which the Mexicans were identified as a new Israel, once labouring under the burden of idolatry in Egypt, then suffering the ten plagues of conquest, disease, forced labour and yet more epidemics, until at last they reached the promised land of the Christian Church. He praised Cortés as 'the chief captain of this western land' and as 'a child of salvation', who had both protected the Indians and encouraged their

salvation.¹⁸ The implications of this figure were rendered explicit by Motolinia's chief disciple, Jerónimo de Mendieta, who defined Cortés as another Moses leading the new Israel into the Holy Land. This identification acquired further significance, when he remarked, albeit wrongly, that Hernán Cortés and Martin Luther were born in the same year of 1484. In all this he discerned a marvellous spiritual symmetry. For if in 1519 Luther led into heresy and hence damnation the proud, rich nations of northern Europe, in the very same year Cortés overthrew Satan's kingdom in Mexico and brought its poor, humble people into the fold of the Catholic Church. The spiritual conquest thus occupied a central place within the divine economy: the first, if not the last time, that the New World was called in to redress the balance of the Old. Writing at the close of the sixteenth century however, Mendieta repudiated the joyful exuberance of Motolinia. For the Indians had continued to dwindle in number, afflicted by a cycle of epidemics and the still oppressive demands for labour by the settler community. If only the Indians could be put on an island, he exclaimed, 'then they would live quiet and peaceful lives in the service of God as in an earthly paradise'. As it was, Mendieta compared himself to the prophet Jeremiah lamenting the fall of Jerusalem, with the new Israel suffering captivity in a modern Babylon.¹⁹

IV : Las Casas' mission

For Bartolomé de las Casas the news from Mexico failed to alter his view of the conquest; he remained more impressed by accounts of Spanish oppression than by stories of immediate conversion. In 1531, still resident in Hispaniola, he addressed a memorial to the Council of the Indies, warning its ministers that all faced eternal damnation if they allowed the destruction of the New World to continue.²⁰ After a decade of prayer and study, Las Casas now wrote with prophetic authority in a manner quite distinct from his early memorials. The Emperor had been charged by the Apostolic See with the conversion of inhabitants of the Indies, placed as another Joseph over a new Israel. Yet until now only thieves and tyrants had entered the New World, killing, torturing and oppressing, with the result that over two million people had already died. Thousands of souls 'called by Christ at the eleventh hour of the evening for eternal salvation' had been lost. Moreover, after the wars carried on against all divine and natural law were finished, there followed 'the second and unmerciful sorrow of tyrannical government' in which Indians, apportioned to the conquerors in encomiendas, were exploited to the point of death. Just why God permitted such terrible punishments was a divine secret, but woe to the instruments of his wrath! Then, in a key passage taken

from St. Augustine's *City of God*, he exclaimed: 'what do we see in great kingdoms without justice, but great *latricinios*, which, according to St. Augustine, is to say the dwellings of thieves'. Yet it was still open for the Councillors to save their own souls, become 'the redeemers of this great world' and achieve a great 'increase in temporal riches of the state of the King' through the abolition of the *encomienda*. What had to be done was to quit the present tyrants from their place of command and install prudent, just governors, each assisted by a bishop and up to twenty religious recruited from the Dominicans and Franciscans, protected by coastal fortresses and garrisons of a hundred men. The Indians should pay a universal tribute to the Crown, which would be collected by the religious. As it was, the Spanish government in the Indies had been grossly tyrannical and the Indians were quite justified in maintaining armed defence of their liberty.

Not content with remaining any further in Hispaniola, in 1534 Las Casas joined a Dominican mission to Peru, which, by reason of the civil wars in that country, ended in Nicaragua. There, and in Guatemala, he soon acquired the good opinion of both governors and bishops for his zeal in preaching the gospel to the Indians. But he was shocked by the devastation of Central America wrought by a few years of Spanish occupation. 'This Nicaragua is a paradise of the Lord. It is a delight and joy for human kind', its fields as fertile and green as gardens in Spain. Yet where only eight years ago it had 600,000 native inhabitants, now only 15,000 Indians survived. Thousands had been enslaved and carried off to the Islands or more recently to Peru. In this letter to a personage at court, he defended his own record, declaring that he had laboured for over twenty years 'to serve my God and to assist in the salvation of those whom He bought with his blood and that the state of my king might grow immensely'. It was he who had first drawn attention at Court to the destruction of the Indies and who had encouraged the Dominicans and Franciscans to go to the New World. It was largely thanks to 'those great friars of St. Francis of New Spain' that Mexico had escaped the worst depredations of the conquerors. As it was, the only 'true servants that His Majesty has here are the friars, provided they are good religious'. All the rest was a story of tyranny, with the German Welser in Venezuela acting like wolves in the sheep-fold. Not that Spaniards lagged far behind, since with the murder of Atahualpa in Peru, Francisco Pizarro and his band had usurped what the Pope had given to the Emperor.²¹

This passionate letter was followed in 1537 by an agreement with the Governor of Guatemala that the still unpacified zone known as Tezulutlán in the area bordering on modern Chiapas should be reserved for peaceful conversion by the Dominicans, with all other

Spaniards forbidden access. Although Las Casas' biographer, Fray Antonio de Remesal, composed a lively narrative of how the Dominican mission led by Las Casas succeeded in pacifying and converting the hostile people of this region, modern research has shown that there is little basis to the story. All that Las Casas did was to come to a secret agreement with the Indian chiefs in which protection and honours were offered in return for entrance of the religious. It was only in the 1540s that the mission proved successful. By then Las Casas had been appointed Bishop of Chiapas and it was as bishop that he first entered what was then baptised as the province of Verapaz. His tactics here, if more prudent than depicted by his biographer, were nevertheless in accord with the principles, more fully elaborated in later tracts, that the authority of the Indian princes should be maintained, with conversion effected peacefully through their assistance and protection. His success in obtaining the exclusion of other Spaniards from the territory exemplified what was to be the ambition of all future frontier missions.²²

In 1538 Las Casas went to Mexico City, where, far from being impressed by the results of the spiritual conquest, he protested strongly against the practice of baptism of adults *en masse* and indeed obtained an episcopal condemnation of the policy. For Motolinia, who boasted of baptising fourteen thousand Indians in two days, it was intolerable that Las Casas should interfere with a spiritual conquest which had brought salvation to so many. Oddly enough, **Fernández de Oviedo**, the bitter enemy of Las Casas, offered support for the Dominican's objections when he sardonically reported from Nicaragua that he had found it common for Indians to be baptised after hearing one sermon, often delivered through an interpreter, and having learnt by rote the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary', with the result that they soon forgot the very elements of their new religion. He mocked the careful account kept by one friar, who between September 1538 and March 1539 had baptised no less than 52,558 persons, records kept, so he averred, so as to obtain appointment as bishop from the Council of the Indies.²³

It was during his stay in Mexico, 1538–40, that Las Casas probably wrote what in many ways was his most attractive work, *The Only Way of Attracting All Peoples to the True Religion*, a text which survives in Latin in an incomplete or unfinished form. It is by far the most theological of his writings, with much of the argument taken from such Church Fathers as St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine. The chief premise is that all peoples in the world possess much the same range of human qualities and that in all nations God has predestined a certain, albeit unknown, number of souls for salvation. In consequence, it was a spiritual necessity that the gospel should be universally preached in the same way to all men. Moreover, all human

beings had implanted within them a natural light which impelled them to seek the one true God. Similarly, all men naturally sought to know the truth and, where not hindered by sin, to follow the path of natural virtue. God was wisdom and Christ a *dios-libertador*, a liberator-god, who brought freedom from the burden of sin. It thus followed that the kingdom of heaven, which was what the gospel announced, had to be preached with love and by means of rational persuasion. The road to faith was similar to that leading to knowledge since in both operations of the intellect conviction or a conclusion was attained by examination of a sequence of reasoning, albeit in the case of faith with will rather than reason dictating the final affirmation. Preaching the gospel was thus a work of persuasion, of moving affections and providing reasons. In this context, the figure of the apostle was all-important: offering an example in his own life of the truths he preached, the preacher had to show that he stood to gain no financial profit or political power from the conversion of his audience. In advancing these arguments, Las Casas cited the gospels, presented St Paul as the very image of the true apostle, and alluded to St. Augustine of Canterbury's mission as an historical example of peaceful conversion.²⁴

With his case established by a multiplicity of citations and arguments, Las Casas then turned to condemn the men who had conquered the New World and to controvert the religious who argued that conquest was necessary if the gospel was to be preached with any success. In short, he condemned both Cortés and Motolinia. In dramatic terms, he described the horrors of conquest—the massacre of innocents, the seizure of women, the enslavement of captives, the loss of political freedom, and the murder of kings—all scenes which he had witnessed or which were all too fresh in common memory. What could fill the hearts of the subjugated except terror and hatred? How could the gospel be preached under such circumstances? Where were the occasions of reflection, the opportunities for quiet persuasion, when fear dominated men's minds? How could the gospel be preceded by war? After all, 'war was but murder, a common act of banditry committed among many'. As for the Conquerors who paraded their Catholic Faith as a rallying cry in battle, they were no servants of Christ but rather so many devils, the children of Satan. Indeed, to attempt to spread the gospel at sword-point was to fall into the heresy of Mahomet, the vilest of the enemies of the true faith. 'These men (are) the precursors of Antichrist and imitators of Mahomet, being thus Christian only in name'. Moreover, turning to Aristotle, he further argued that 'the government which is acquired through force of arms or which in any way has been acquired against the will of the subjects is tyrannical and violent'. The true purpose of government was the well-being of the subjects, not the profit and

glory of the governor. Furthermore, since the Indians possessed their own forms of political authority, it was against all divine and natural law to deprive them of their own government and liberty. In short, the conquerors were thieves and murderers who could only expect salvation if they made an act of restitution of all the goods and land they had stolen from the Indians. For the present, however, their crimes had thrust them beyond the pale of Christian charity.

In 1540 Las Casas returned to Spain, there to renew his campaign on behalf of the Indians. Here is no place to discuss the intellectual background which lay behind the promulgation of the New Laws of 1542. What does concern us is the extraordinary vehemence with which Las Casas sought to persuade the Emperor Charles V, in these years resident in Spain, of the necessity of reform. In one memorial he advocated the immediate emancipation of all Indian slaves and the outright abolition of the *encomienda*, defining the Indians as free vassals of the Crown liable only for the payment of royal tribute. Only with such drastic measures could the Indians be rescued from the tyranny that had destroyed the majority of the population and reduced the survivors to a condition so full of terror that they had become like rabbits awaiting their death. God had chosen Spain for the grand task of making the New World Christian, yet in the event it was Lucifer who had gained the victory. As for the *encomenderos*, the best remedy would be to seize half their property and use the proceeds to attract other settlers. Indeed, in New Spain it was advisable to imprison about twenty of the richest *encomenderos*, confiscate their property and dispatch them home to Seville. As it was, rumour on the streets of Spain had it that the riches of the Indies all came from murder and theft. If reform was not forthcoming surely God would punish Spain for all the evils wrought in the New World.²⁵

Further to persuade the Emperor, in 1542 Las Casas composed his most notorious and virulent tract, *The Most Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. It related, island by island, province by province, how bands of Spaniards, invariably described as tyrants and thieves, had burned, tortured and murdered their way across an entire world inhabited by innumerable villages of docile, gentle, largely defenceless natives, a sequence so destructive that after half a century of European settlement some fifteen million Indians had disappeared from the face of the earth. The absence of any names in the text invested the train of conquest with the impersonal character of some infernal process, as if packs of wolves had been unleashed to ravage great flocks of sheep. It was a bitter inflammatory diatribe, monotonous and repetitive in style, but full of vivid incidents of atrocity, some personally witnessed, all presented without palliation or qualification. Published without license in 1552, the tract was later translated into most European languages, often accompanied by

lavish illustration, and served as a major text to discredit Spain and her overseas empire.²⁶

These powerful memorials, when taken with other reports from the Indies, bore fruit in the New Laws promulgated in 1542 which demanded the immediate emancipation of all Indian slaves, stripped all officials and rebels of their *encomiendas*, and decreed that all existing *encomiendas* should terminate upon the death of their encumbents. Equally important, the nexus of labour was abolished, so that henceforth Indians would be liable only for tribute in the form of money or goods; any Indian working for a Spaniard would in future receive a daily wage. Needless to say, these reforms met with intense opposition from the colonists, an opposition which in Peru issued into open rebellion and the murder of the viceroy. In fear of unrest elsewhere in the empire, in 1545 the Crown reneged on outright abolition of the *encomienda* and allowed these grants to continue for a further life upon the death of their possessors.

To assist in the implementation of the New Laws, Las Casas accepted appointment as bishop of Chiapa, a poor diocese on the borders of modern Guatemala and Mexico, taking with him a large mission of young Dominican friars. However, he soon came into conflict with the settler community, the civil authorities and his former patron, the bishop of Guatemala. For Las Casas insisted that absolution should be forbidden to all Spaniards, even on their deathbeds, until they signed a formal act of restitution, returning to the Indians all the goods and property they had acquired. All slaves had to be freed forthwith. To ensure compliance with this decree, he withdrew all licences to hear confession from untrustworthy clergy. The result, needless to say, was uproar as the citizens of Chiapa found themselves unable to comply with their Easter obligations or indeed celebrate Holy Week in the customary fashion. At the same time, Las Casas warned the newly-established *audiencia* of Guatemala, the local crown court, that all cases of ill-treatment of Indians came under his jurisdiction as bishop. Failure to comply with his demands would entail excommunication. In this headlong onslaught on vested interests, Las Casas succeeded in arousing opposition on such a scale, that, if his life was not in danger, as later biographers averred, his position soon became untenable.²⁷ Within little more than a year, Las Casas decided to abandon his diocese and return to Spain, there to renew his campaign, both intellectual and political, on behalf of the Indian. Much in the same way as the early medieval hierarchy had sought to quell the excesses of the feudal nobility by invocation of ecclesiastical sanctions, so also Las Casas attempted to employ much the same array of spiritual powers to reform the very structure of colonial society.

For the remainder of his life, which spanned the years 1547—66,

which is to say between the ages of sixty-three and eighty-two, Las Casas devoted his still-abundant energies to writing and politicking on the Council of the Indies. His celebrated debate with Sepulveda, his vast treatise on Indian culture, the *Apologética Historia Sumaria*, and the often autobiographical *History of the Indies* were all written or completed in these years. All we need to observe here is that throughout these years Las Casas continued to act as defender of the Indians. In 1554 the encomenderos of Peru offered the Crown four million ducats for the rights of perpetuity of inheritance and of jurisdiction, both criminal and civil, over the Indians. In short, they wished to convert the encomienda into a full-fledged feudal fief. This proposal was warmly debated in the Council of the Indies for no less than eight years before its final rejection. Throughout this period Las Casas played a leading role in mobilising official opinion against the colonists. In a strongly worded letter to Bartolomé Carranza de Miranda, a fellow Dominican and at that time a trusted councillor of Philip II, he once more recommended abolition of the encomienda. As for defence and internal peace, that could be best handled by installing a military garrison of 500 men in Peru and another 300 in Mexico.²⁸ In an outspoken letter to the king, he warned against conferring jurisdiction on 'traitors and tyrants': if rebellion against the Crown had occurred in 1542 what was to prevent the sons of those rebels from taking advantage of their new-found power in the future?

The continual insistence that conquerors were tyrants warrants further discussion. For although Las Casas certainly cited all the contemporary texts dealing with tyranny, starting with Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*, he also found inspiration in St Augustine's *City of God*, from which he had directly quoted in his 1531 memorial addressed to the Council of the Indies. It is remarkably instructive to pursue that famous passage across the length of its paragraph, for there we read:

Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal bands but petty kingdoms? A gang is a group of men under the command of a leader, bound by compact of association, in which the plunder is divided according to an agreed convention. If this villainy wins so many recruits from the ranks of the demoralised that it acquires territory, establishes a base, it then openly arrogates to itself the title of kingdom....

Here in this passage, written a thousand years before the discovery of America, we encounter a pretty accurate definition of the conquistador band. Indeed, if we turn to the Spanish translation of the *City of God*, we find the very same words, since the term leader becomes *caudillo* and the compact of association *compañía*. The free

companies of adventurers who conquered the New World were indeed bands of men, subject to a leader, united in quest of plunder. Moreover, St Augustine did not hesitate to dismiss the glory of a Caesar as the expression of his lust for dominion and quoted with evident relish the famous retort of a pirate to Alexander the Great that the only difference between them was the scale of their operations. So too, Las Casas denounced Cortés and Pizarro as mere brigands and eventually came to damn the very Spanish empire in the New World as rooted in tyranny and exploitation.²⁰

In short, although Las Casas, as befitted a good Dominican, strained to locate arguments in Aristotle and Aquinas to buttress his case, he was profoundly Augustinian both in natural temper and in his moral and political philosophy. It should be remembered that he entered the Dominican Order at the age of 40, and until then had more studied canon law than theology. The works by which he is remembered comprise a narrative history, an original exercise in comparative ethnography and several polemical tracts, all written in Spanish and far removed from the calm scholastic style of Vitoria or de Soto. Moreover, if in his defence of the Indians Las Casas relied on Thomist principles of natural law, in his attack on the conquerors, an attack which he maintained for half a century, he questioned the very legitimacy of Spanish dominion in the New World. True, he accepted the Papal Donation as the foundation of Spain's sovereignty, but in his insistence on royal authority, on the government of a viceroy backed by a military garrison, he displayed an absolutist bias common to much Augustinian political theory in the sixteenth century. Whereas the conquerors aspired to create a feudal society in the New World, based on a contractual relation with the Crown, Las Casas denied their claims any justice and looked to the Crown to install a protectorate, with Viceroys governing the Indian community through the mediation of the mendicant orders. If, throughout his career, he obtained a hearing at court, it was surely because he always exalted royal power, investing its authority with a providential aura. In regard to the colonists, the defender of the Indians was thus an architect of Habsburg absolutism.³⁰

V : Two dreams

In 1555 the Franciscan missionary in Mexico, Fr Toribio de Motolinia, wrote a vehement letter to Charles V sharply criticising Las Casas for the publication of his attacks on the conquerors. Not all Spaniards were guilty of the crimes attributed to them. Moreover, in New Spain the great loss of Indian population had been caused by epidemic disease rather than by ill-treatment or massacre. Cortés had

always sought to defend the Indians from the worst abuses of his followers and had encouraged the mendicants in their missionary labours. In any case, any attempt to preach the gospel in Mexico without the protection of the conquerors would have led to pointless martyrdom. The Aztecs themselves were newcomers to the central valleys and their empire had been created by force of arms and sustained by the terror of human sacrifice. As for Las Casas himself, Motolinia recalled an incident where Las Casas had refused to baptise an aged Indian on the grounds of insufficient knowledge of doctrine, despite the fact that the man had walked miles to come to church. He marvelled how the Emperor's council could abide 'a man so vexatious, unquiet, importunate, argumentative and litigious...' He had known Las Casas for fifteen years and throughout that time the Dominican had been the source of constant upset and confusion, always engaged in controversy and slander, rarely attentive to the spiritual needs of his flock.³¹

It would be wrong to dismiss this criticism as the expression of personal jealousy or of rivalry between Dominicans and Franciscans. What was at issue here was two distinct views of the Church and of the nature of conversion. For Motolinia, influenced by the millennial expectations of Joachim de Fiore, the mass conversion of the Indians of New Spain announced the advent of the sixth age of the Church. Time was short and all speed was necessary if the great work was to be completed. Moreover, with the associated ideas of a world emperor overthrowing the forces of Satan in armed conflict, it was presumed that salvation was to be found in history before the Last Day. By contrast, for Las Casas, with his Augustinian conviction of the predestined salvation of the elect, embodied in a pilgrim church, all hopes of universal salvation were a delusion. How could the Indians enter the kingdom or even understand the gospel if they were filled with terror or hatred? It was first necessary to establish a just society before true conversion, which is to say conversion obtained by peaceful means, could occur. Thus, whereas Motolinia devoted his entire life to creating a Church, initiating entire Indian communities into the practice and devotions of medieval Catholicism, a religion which endures to this day, Las Casas devoted his formidable energies to promoting a reform of the structure of colonial society with the aim of securing for the Indian a just recompense for his labour and civil liberty. If the Franciscan laboured as an apostle, seeking to bring sacramental grace to those in darkness, the Dominican acted as a prophet, denouncing the crimes of men in power, and proclaiming the necessity of justice for the poor and oppressed. Where both agreed was in their high view of Indian capacity and that the religious should serve as the political guardians of the Indian communities.

In his last will and testament, Las Casas declared that God had

chosen him to defend the Indians from the injustice of 'we Spaniards' and prophesied that God would punish Spain for its crimes in the New World. As this emphasis on justice and judgment reveals, Las Casas displayed little hunger for the great harvest of souls gathered in with such enthusiasm by Motolinia and his brethren. Rather than an apostle, Las Casas is best defined as a prophet, albeit a court rather than a country prophet, more at home in the council-chamber than in the wilderness. His message was nonetheless harsh. If at the height of the Renaissance, Savonarola denounced the worldly corruption of that culture as a betrayal of the spiritual destiny of Florence, so, equally, at the moment when patriotic, imperial euphoria in Spain reached its historic climax under Charles V, with the country seen as the chief bulwark of the Catholic Church against the Turk and the Protestant, Las Casas publicly condemned the entire conquest of the New World as a monstrous injustice, as a betrayal of Spain's providential mission, more the work of Satan than of Christ. It has been argued by Professor J.H. Hexter that both Machiavelli in *The Prince* and More in *Utopia* glimpsed, as in an intense vision, the nature of contemporary political power, albeit, in More's case, of a commonwealth based on contrary principles. So, too, Las Casas was haunted by much the same kind of vision, of a living Utopia in the New World, an earthly paradise, destroyed by the advent of the Prince, with leaders like Cortés and Pizarro winning fame and riches through the destruction of Indian society.³² It was that vision which impelled him forward on his life-long campaign to remedy injustice and, equally important, to demonstrate with all the learning then available, be it patristic, classical, humanist or scholastic, that the peoples of the New World were in all things other than Christianity as human, as moral and as civilised as the nations of Europe.

- 1 José de Acosta, *Obras* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, Madrid, 1954) pp. 392—410.
- 2 Roberto Levillier, *Francisco de Toledo* (Madrid, 1935) pp. 198—205, 276—295.
- 3 See the 'tratado de doce dudas' in Bartolomé de las Casas, *Obras escogidas* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, 5 vols., Madrid, 1957). V. 485—534; for the attack on Las Casas see the text of 'Anónimo de Yucay (1571)' ed. Josyane Chinese in *Historia y Cultura* 4 (Lima, 1970) pp. 105—52.
- 4 Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias* (3 vols., Mexico, 1951) III, 92—100.
- 5 *Ibid.*, II, 264.
- 6 Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (Biblioteca de autores españoles, 5 vols., Madrid, 1959) on Indians I, 31, 67—8, 112, 124; on tortures etc. III, 235.
- 7 The text of these laws can be found in L.B. Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, (Berkeley, 1966) pp. 32—35.
- 8 These memorials are printed in Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, V, 6—39.
- 9 For the Cumaná episode see Las Casas, *Historia*, III, 368—86; Oviedo, *Historia general* II, 194—99; and Marcel Bataillon, *Estudios sobre Bartolomé de las*

- Casas (Barcelona, 1976) pp. 45—179.
- 10 Oviedo, *Historia general*, IV, 97, 259—63.
 - 11 Jerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, (Mexico, 1971) pp. 210—11.
 - 12 On the mendicant mission see Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico* (Berkeley, 1966) and George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture in the Sixteenth Century* (2 vols., New Haven, 1948).
 - 13 See also Silvio Zavala, *Sir Thomas More in New Spain. A Utopian Adventure of the Renaissance* (London, 1935).
 - 14 Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, pp. 222, 250.
 - 15 On Sahagún see Munro S. Edmonson (ed.) *Sixteenth Century Mexico. The Work of Sahagún* (Albuquerque, 1974).
 - 16 See Ricard, *Spiritual Conquest* pp. 269—72; and N.M. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule* (Princeton, 1984) pp. 286—318.
 - 17 Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Late Middle Ages. A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969).
 - 18 Toribio de Motolinia, *Historia de los indios de Nueva España* in Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Colección de documentos* (2 vols., Mexico, 1971) I, 177, 274—76, 194; on Motolinia see George Baudot, *Utopie et Histoire au Mexique* (Toulouse, 1976).
 - 19 Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica*, pp. 174—7, 513—24, 556—63; on Mendieta see John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley, 1970).
 - 20 Las Casas, *Obras escogidas* V, 43—55; the citation from St. Augustine occurs on p. 50.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, V, 60—66.
 - 22 See André Saint-Lu, *La Vera Paz: esprit évangélique et colonisation* (Paris, 1968) pp. 68—114; Bataillon, *estudios* pp. 181—244.
 - 23 H.R. Wagner, *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de las Casas* (Albuquerque, 1967) pp. 98—104; Oviedo, *Historia general* pp. 367—384.
 - 24 Las Casas, *Del único modo de atraer a todos los pueblos a la verdadera religión* (Mexico, 1975) for Christ as liberator see p. 157; for war p. 345; for conquerors pp. 375, 390, 402.
 - 25 Las Casas, *Obras escogidas* V, 126—33.
 - 26 Las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, reprinted in his *Tratados* (2 vols., Mexico, 1965) I, 3—173.
 - 27 Wagner, *Las Casas*, pp. 107—70; Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, V, 213—33.
 - 28 Las Casas, *De regia potestate* (Madrid, 1969) pp. 175—226.
 - 29 See St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Penguin edition, London, 1967) p. 139.
 - 30 The best survey of sixteenth century political thought is Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1978). Note that the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives, repeatedly cited St Augustine in his condemnation of contemporary warfare in his *Concordia y discordia* (Mexico, 1940) pp. 105, 159.
 - 31 The letter is translated in James Lockhart and Enrique Otte (ed.) *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies* (Cambridge, 1976) pp. 218—47.
 - 32 The will is printed in Las Casas, *Obras escogidas*, V, 539—40; see also J.H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1973) pp. 179—203.

*** *Editor*: The first of the four lectures, “Las Casas: Hero and Villain”, given by Dr Felipe Fernández-Armesto of St Antony’s College, Oxford, was on the historiography of Las Casas. Its main theme—the very varied roles in which Las Casas has been cast since his death—was one of the subjects of November’s editorial *Bartolomé de las Casas OP 1484—1984*. A different version of the second lecture (the one published here) can be found in D.A. Brading, *Prophecy and Myth in Mexican History* (Centre of Latin American Studies, Cambridge, 1984). Dr Bernice Hamilton gave the third lecture, which was on Las Casas’ fight at the Spanish court to defend the Indians. The last one, “‘All the Lineages of Men are One’: Las Casas’ Evolutionary Anthropology”, given by Dr Anthony Pagden of the Cambridge History Faculty, will appear in *New Blackfriars* in 1985.

J.O.M.