

The Las Casas-Sepúlveda Controversy: 1550-1551

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Introduction

“I am the voice crying in the wilderness...the voice of Christ in the desert of this island...[saying that] you are all in mortal sin...on account of the cruelty and tyranny with which you use these innocent people. Are these not men? Have they not rational souls? Must not you love them as you love yourselves?”¹ These phrases, spoken in 1511 by Antonio de Montesinos, one of the first Dominicans to arrive in the island of Hispaniola, reflect that the Spaniards were not a monolithic band of greedy *conquistadores* who merely sought to exploit and kill the American Indians. On the contrary, the Spanish discovery and subsequent conquest of the New World inspired a serious, if not heated, intellectual controversy regarding the rationality and Christianization of the Indians. The debate reached its height in 1550, when the King of Spain, Charles V, ordered a *junta*, a group of jurists and theologians, to meet at Valladolid in order to hear the arguments in favor and against the use of force to incorporate the Indians into Spanish America. On the one side was one Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a prominent humanist and Greek scholar who justified conquest and evangelization by war. His opponent, fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, in contrast, was a staunch advocate of peaceful and persuasive conversion. So it was that the most powerful man, Charles V, leader of the most powerful nation in the world, Spain, suspended all wars of conquest until a group of intellectuals grappled with the morality of Spain’s presence and enterprises in America.

The great debate of Valladolid coalesced around long-debated issues, particularly the right of conquest and just war, which epitomized the contrast between the Indian and European worlds. Valladolid was the culmination of a long series of intellectual controversies regarding the nature and the role of the Indians in Spanish America. Significantly enough, although the Spaniards actually sat down to discuss the fate of the Native Americans, the Indians did not benefit in any tangible way from the debate. Las Casas, in spite of his failure to “win” his disputation with Sepúlveda, managed to represent the Indians at the royal court, and thus, to keep the Indian plight at the center of Spanish policy. In so doing, he was able to momentarily thwart the continuation of the *encomienda*, a system whereby Indian workers were allocated to Spanish settlers on the understanding that they would be instructed in the Christian faith in return for their labor. The debate, however, was carried out in a strictly theoretical manner; that is, in seeking to determine the legality of waging war as a means of Christianization, Sepúlveda and Las Casas exclusively relied on European secular and religious sources. Their use of the Spanish legal

framework sheds light on the narrow scope of their discussion. Although Las Casas tried to prove his thesis with his experiences while he lived in the New World, both he and Sepúlveda failed to compromise, which would have had a greater impact on the crown's policies regarding the condition of the Native peoples of the Americas.

Historiography

With the five-hundredth anniversary of friar Bartolomé de Las Casas' birthday in the 1970s, historians began to reassess the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy. In their biography of the friar, for instance, Henry Raup Wagner and Helen Rand Parish point out one of the positive outcomes of the debate. In the ensuing years after Valladolid both Las Casas and Sepúlveda claimed that the *junta* had ruled in their favor, but no records exist confirming such contentions. To be sure, the junta, which first met in August of 1550 and then in April of the following year, did not reach a formal decision in regards to who "won" the dispute. Nevertheless, Wagner and Parish observe that the debate not only served Las Casas to establish himself as the outstanding defender of the Indians, but it helped buttress the movement to reform the *encomienda*, an institution which allotted the colonists free Indian labor. Moreover, Las Casas' disputation at Valladolid ensured that the 1542 New Laws, which were initially designed to abolish the *encomienda*, were to remain in effect. Therefore, the effect of the debate was to at least keep the Indian cause in the minds of the Spaniards.²

In the 1970s, too, other scholars emphasized the positive outcomes of the debate, although from a different perspective. From the Caribbean phase of the conquest at the turn of the sixteenth century to the 1540s, the Spanish crown sought to prevent the *encomenderos* from becoming a powerful nobility. In the process, the monarchy drew a temporal and convenient alliance with the Catholic Church, which effectively served to diminish the influence of the *encomenderos* at the royal court. Lewis Hanke, in his analysis of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy, writes that crown and church united with one main purpose, that of centralizing, and thus, wresting power away from the *encomenderos*. As he asserts, "Probably never before, or since, has a mighty emperor...ordered his conquests to cease until it was decided if they were just."³ From this perspective, thus, the significance of the debate lies in the Church's impact, as represented by missionaries such as Las Casas, on the Spanish crown's policies in the New World.

In the 1980s, scholars looked at the impact of the debate on the perception of the term “American.” For Clara Alicia Jalif de Bertranou and Gustavo Gonzáles, the Las Casas-Sepúlveda debate constitutes the first serious theoretical attempt by Europeans to understand the diverse native cultures of the New World. With the debate emerged the concept of an American cultural duality, a polarized viewpoint between civilization and barbarism, which thereafter became ingrained in the American psyche. In other words, “with the dispute of Valladolid [were] inaugurated...two contrasting modes [civilization and barbarism] of understanding that which is American.”⁴ In the ensuing decades after Valladolid, Europeans, as well as American-born peoples, tended to see Native American cultures through this polarized framework, considering themselves to be part of the civilized world.

With the five-hundredth anniversary in 1992 of Christopher Columbus’ landing in the New World, historians once again turned to the significance of the debate. “By any standards,” Robert McAfee Brown contends, “the debate is one of the most extraordinary events in Western political history: A country engaged in conquest is accused of doing so unjustly.”⁵ In this case, Las Casas was the accuser, while Sepúlveda stood as the representative of the *encomenderos*, which made him the principal defender of Spain’s presence in and exploitation of the New World. Consequently, the Las Casas-Sepúlveda disputation was an exclusively intra-European affair. Although by the mid-sixteenth century Las Casas was the representative of the Indians at court, the latter were completely excluded from a discussion about their own fate. In short terms, while Spain sought to categorize a new race into the European worldview, it neglected to directly hear the “other,” Indian side.⁶

During the 1990s, scholars of Latin American history also documented the source of Las Casas and Sepúlveda’s theoretical premises. To be sure, neither side advanced notably original arguments. Their theoretical framework derived from pre- and medieval European religious and secular authorities. These included Aristotle, the Sacred Scriptures, Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom, and a pioneer in the modern theory of international law, the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria. As D.A. Brading shows in his study of Creole national identity, not only did Sepúlveda and Las Casas rely on similar, if not the same, authorities, but they also molded and intermixed them to suit their respective arguments.⁷ This is unsurprising if we consider that sixteenth-century Spain was partly characterized by the intertwining of medieval and Renaissance thought.⁸ In sum, historians have analyzed the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy’s impact on the Spanish crown, the Catholic Church and on subsequent perceptions of Native American peoples, while documenting the Spaniards’ use of similar religious and secular sources.

The arguments presented by Las Casas and Sepúlveda to the *junta* of Valladolid were too abstract.⁹ Neither Las Casas nor Sepúlveda were without their own following; that is, both operated within the highly legalistic Spanish court system, and so they could not have failed to influence the Spanish intellectual world. At the same time, their contentions were heavily influenced by Spanish legislation, which dated from the discovery of the New World to the mid-

sixteenth century, regarding the evangelization and exploitation of the Indians. That Las Casas and Sepúlveda's theses were within and were influenced by a similar legal system, however, did not mean they were compatible. Although McAfee's assertion on the overall significance of the controversy for European political history is worth noting, it must also be pointed out that the Spaniards did not address the Indian cause in a pragmatic manner. Their failure to bring about any significant benefits for the Indians lies, not only in the narrow legal system within which it took place, but also in the lack of compromise by both sides. Both Las Casas and Sepúlveda staunchly clung to their respective and opposite theories of Indian rationality and evangelization. While the former favored peaceful conversion, the latter argued for compulsory evangelization of the Indians. Not surprisingly, they failed either to significantly ease the plight of the Indians or to stop the eventual demise of the *encomienda* system.

The Context of the Debate, 1492-1542

From the time Columbus landed in Hispaniola in 1492 to 1550-1551, when the Valladolid debate took place, the Spaniards had been divided in regards to the rationality and Christianization of the Indians. Disagreement, nevertheless, had not stopped the Spanish monarchy from taking concrete measures. Only a year after the sermon by Montesinos in 1511, the Spanish crown issued a series of laws intended to regulate Indian-Spaniard relations. Shortly after the Dominican condemned his compatriots' brutal treatment of the Caribbean Indians, the monarchy promulgated the Laws of Burgos, the first concrete regulations to govern Indian-Spaniard relations. The laws, which were influenced by Las Casas, stipulated that Spaniards who benefited from forced Indian labor, or the *encomienda* system, would diligently see that their subjects be properly instructed in the Holy Faith. Novel as the laws may have been, however, they soon fell into oblivion; one thing was to order the *encomenderos* to comply, but an entirely different matter was to force them to abide by the law. In this sense, Montesinos had preached, the crown had proclaimed the Laws of Burgos, but the plight of the Indians had remained relatively the same.¹⁰

Then came the 1537 papal bull, which though proclaiming the Indians rational beings, effectively gave the Church, and for that matter the Spanish monarchy, supreme rights in the New World. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI had granted Spain general dominion in America, in the process empowering the crown to carry out the evangelizing mission in Spanish America. In his 1537 *Sublimis Deus*, Pope Paul III went further by confirming the Indians' capability to understand and receive the Christian faith. But the papal bull was not only a dogma enunciated by an influential institution, the Catholic Church, but also a politically-motivated strategy. By proclaiming that the Indians were fit to receive the faith, the pope essentially legitimized Spain's presence and religious duty in the New World.¹¹

Neither the Laws of Burgos nor the *Sublimis Deus*, however, had the impact, in Spain and in Spanish America, of the 1542 New Laws. As with the Laws of Burgos and the *Sublimis Deus*, Las Casas was crucial to the passage of these new regulations. Shortly before 1542, he had written extensively to the Council of the Indies, the supreme body regulating Spanish-Indian relations, condemning the *encomenderos*' treatment of the American natives. For example, in 1539 Las Casas had horrified the royal court with his *The Devastation of the Indies*, a highly descriptive, but also somewhat exaggerated account of Spanish cruelty in the Caribbean, in the process greatly influencing the court's deliverance of the 1542 regulations. The laws were designed to abolish the *encomienda* system within a generation by outlawing its perpetuation through inheritance. This, in turn, had shaken early Spanish colonial society, a world deeply embedded in the *encomienda* system, to its very roots.¹² Such was the background to the debate of Valladolid; the scene was now set for the actual theoretical debate between Las Casas and Sepúlveda.

The Theoretical Debate

Before discussing the debate, an examination of the principal writings upon which Las Casas and Sepúlveda based their arguments at the *junta* of Valladolid is in order. In 1544, probably encouraged by Fernando de Valdés, the Cardinal of Seville and president of the Council of Castille and an opponent of the New Laws, Sepúlveda had composed his Latin dialogue, *Democrates secundus*, a highly "chauvinistic and dogmatic" work.¹³ In it, he sought not only to legitimize, but to persuade the Spanish intellect about the justice of the wars of conquest in the New World. Organized into opposites—that is, into the Indian and Spanish cultures--*Democrates secundus* is based on renowned medieval authorities, particularly Aristotle. For Sepúlveda, the Indians were irrational beings whose inherently inferior condition immediately made them slaves by nature. He argued that if they refused to accept Spanish rule, they could be enslaved. Furthermore, if the Indians resisted enslavement, the Spaniards had the legitimate right to wage war on them. How was this perspective on Native American cultures received by the Spaniards? According to Anthony Padgen, Sepúlveda failed to get substantial support in European intellectual circles, such as the universities of Salamanca and Alcalá, precisely because of his deviance from addressing the subject in strictly theological terms. Therefore, it was not so much Sepúlveda's derogatory treatment of the Indians, though this was also a cause, but his secular viewpoint that caused much controversy among Spaniards.¹⁴

This was crucial to Las Casas' attack on the humanist scholar. As stated above, shortly before the passage of the New Laws of 1542, friar Las Casas had horrified the Council of the Indies with his eyewitness account, *The Devastation of the Indies*, in which he had chronicled Spanish cruelty against the native population of the Caribbean.¹⁵ In addition, before leaving

America for good in 1547, the friar had infuriated the *encomenderos* in New Spain with his *Confesionario*, which contained twelve rules urging the denial of absolution to *encomenderos* who refused to make full restitution to the Indians. In the late 1540s, on hearing about the existence of Sepúlveda's *Democrates secundus*, Las Casas hurried to compose his Latin work, the *Apologia*, a work aimed at debunking one by one his opponent's shaky theological propositions in order to prove the rationality of the Indians. In concise terms, the *Apologia* comprised his theological position, a theoretical argumentation which closely corresponded with Sepúlveda's work.¹⁶

But what were the actual arguments presented by Sepúlveda and Las Casas to the *junta* of Valladolid? In essence, the debate revolved around the long-debated question of the judiciousness of declaring war against the Indians before instructing them in the Christian faith so as to facilitate their conversion. As noted above, the two sides based their arguments on the Bible, the Church Fathers, and Spanish medieval as well as Renaissance thought and law. For his part, Ginés de Sepúlveda put forward four propositions in favor of the just war against the Native Americans: first, the Indians were barbarians; second, they committed crimes against natural law; third, the Indians oppressed and killed the innocent among themselves; and fourth, they were infidels who needed to be instructed in the Christian faith. Las Casas, in contrast, set out to expand and clarify each one of these points. In the process, he came to advocate the essential unity of humankind; that is, the Indians, though at a different and backward stage of human development than the Europeans, were no less rational and adept to peacefully receive the Christian faith than the peoples of the Old World. Also, Las Casas came to conclude that Spain's sole role in the New World was spiritual rather than economic or political. In sum, since the Indians were rational and civilized human beings, Spaniards had no right to subject them neither to slavery nor to war.¹⁷

On the one hand, Sepúlveda reasoned, the Indians were a barbarian race whose natural, inferior condition entitled the Spaniards to wage war on them. To bolster his point, the humanist scholar cited Aristotle's theory of natural slavery. In the third century B.C.E., the philosopher Aristotle had differentiated between human groups among whom reason dominated over passions, namely the civilized, and the barbarians, among whom passions prevailed over reason. For Aristotle, the latter were naturally subservient to the former. In 1500, Sepúlveda sought to apply this theory to the Indians. Accordingly, he argued that among the Indians passions ruled over reason, and so they were servants by nature. War against the Native Americans, then, was justified. As Sepúlveda put it, "being slaves by nature, [the Indians], uncivilized, barbarian and inhuman, refuse to accept the rule of those civilized [the Spaniards] and with much more power than them."¹⁸ As a result, the Spaniards, who as civilized people were inherently superior than the Indians, had no option but to declare war against the Native Americans. In this respect, Aristotle contributed the perspective with which Sepúlveda categorized the Indian cultures.¹⁹

Las Casas was at great pains to refute this contention. In the first place, he opposed the use of the term “barbarian” in such a general manner. The friar went on to attack, not Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery, but Sepúlveda’s application of it to the Indian case. That is, he accused his archrival of falsifying and generalizing the Aristotelian doctrine on barbarism.²⁰ Las Casas went on to meticulously differentiate between four types of barbarians: those exhibiting any cruel and wild behavior which goes against human reason; those lacking a written language to express themselves; those who had neither an understanding of justice nor of human communities; and, those who were non-Christians. Whereas Sepúlveda specifically referred to the third category when describing the Indian cultures, Las Casas broke down the Aristotelian doctrine on barbarism in order to demonstrate the Indians’ non-barbarian state. Moreover, the friar declared that the Indians lived in harmonious and civilized communities governed by strict, if not superior, laws than such ancient civilizations as the Romans and the Greeks. As for the second category of barbarism, Las Casas emphasized the Indians’ beautiful and highly intricate languages. Although he admitted the existence of idolatry and human sacrifice among some Indian communities, the friar also pointed out that such people were a relatively small number, a group which in fact had existed in most cultures throughout history. And as for the fourth category, that of non-Christians, “the Indians were pagans, but that only called for Spaniards to help them, through persuasion, to receive the Gospel.”²¹ Las Casas, determined to refute Sepúlveda’s arguments, then strove to demonstrate to the court of Valladolid that the Aristotelian theory of natural slavery was irrelevant to the Indian case.

Sepúlveda’s second argument in favor of just war revolved around the Indians’ crimes against natural law. The Indians’ deviance from Spanish customs and law immediately granted the Europeans the right to punish their crimes against nature. The Spaniards, in the humanist scholar’s view, were fully entitled to punish other peoples for performing such vicious practices as idolatry, sodomy, and cannibalism. Wars had to be waged “in order to uproot crimes that offend nature.”²² This was an obligation to which every Spaniard, whether secular or religious, had to conform.

To this argument, Las Casas replied that punishment required jurisdiction. Specifically, neither Charles V nor Pope Paul III had jurisdiction over infidels. Christians, therefore, could not punish the Indians for their idolatry and human rituals. This Las Casas sought to prove by citing three precedents. First, though Muslims and Jews who lived within the jurisdiction of a particular Christian ruler were subject to the same civil laws as all Christians, in theory he or she could not punish them for their religious beliefs. Second, no Christian monarch had jurisdiction over unbelievers living outside his or her territories. When it came to heretics, however, Las Casas conceded that Christian rulers had the legitimate right to take measures to punish them, for they had failed to stand by God’s word. But the Indians, who had never been instructed in the faith, were outside Charles V and Paul III’s jurisdiction. They were pagans, it is true, but not heretics. In this respect, the peoples of the New World could not “be punished by Christians, or even by the Church, for any crime at all, no matter how atrocious it may be.”²³ At this juncture,

Las Casas was reaching one of his most radical arguments: Spain's only purpose in the New World was spiritual rather than political or economic.

As his third argument in favor of just war, Ginés de Sepúlveda maintained that the Indians oppressed and killed the innocents among themselves. That those who were sacrificed on a continued basis by the Aztecs, for example, could do nothing to save themselves demonstrated the need by other peoples, such as the Spaniards, to intervene. On this basic premise Sepúlveda was not alone; he found some backing in such notable authority as the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria. Wars were just, Sepúlveda insisted, because they would "save many innocents, who [the Indians] immolate every year, from great injustices."²⁴ Whether this speculation would prove true or not, he did not prove it to his audience at Valladolid.

Here Las Casas precariously entered into the heart of his thesis. How could the friar defend human sacrifice, or even cannibalism? Las Casas acknowledged the existence of idolatry and cannibalism among some Native Americans, but he seemed to justify such acts. It is true, he noted, every individual was by international law obliged to prevent the innocent from being unjustly treated. On the other hand, Las Casas cited such Church Fathers as Saint Augustine and Saint John Chrysostom, both of whom had opposed the use of force to punish crimes against nature. Human sacrifice was wrong, perhaps an idiosyncrasy caused by the distinct physical landscapes and environments of the Americas, but it would be better to avoid war by any means possible. In short, the greater of two evils—the lesser being human sacrifice—had to be avoided at any cost. The Indians, an evolving human race, needed to be persuasively converted, not killed in wars of conquest, to Christianity.²⁵

Lastly, Sepúlveda speculated, war would prepare the way for the preaching of the faith in the New World. For him, the use of force was a necessity in order for missionaries such as Las Casas to successfully carry out the evangelizing efforts in the New World. Had not Constantine the Great used force in the fourth century A.D. to bring the pagan peoples of Europe under the Christian religion, Sepúlveda asked his opponent. In addition, he, like Las Casas, cited the Bible in various occasions so as to bolster his argument. For instance, he used the parable of the wedding feast in Luke and Matthew, where the lord of the feast commands his servants to go to the road and "force" any passerby into the celebration. Consequently, the Sacred Scriptures, Sepúlveda concluded, actually implied that pagans should be Christianized by force.²⁶

Not surprisingly, Las Casas disagreed. First, he recognized that the Bible could be interpreted in different ways, depending on the circumstances. The ultimate meaning of God's word, however, should not be so distorted as to lose its meaning. How could have God commanded his church to kill pagans in war in order to save them from their ignorance, Las Casas furiously responded to Sepúlveda. As Las Casas himself put it in referring to the humanist scholar's use of the Bible, "there is tremendous rashness, then, in presuming to prove by any means of [the wedding feast] parable that Christ commanded his Church that...it should use physical compulsion on unbelievers before the faith is preached to them."²⁷ Furthermore, the

friar again distinguished between heretics and pagans; not incidentally, he declared the Indians pagans, a group which had to be, not violently punished, but peacefully converted to Christianity.

These were the arguments presented by Las Casas and Sepúlveda to the *junta* of Valladolid in 1550-1551. Did anyone of the two “win” the debate? No records of the actual proceedings have been found to date, which forces historians to rely on the two sides’ later accounts. As expected, both Sepúlveda and Las Casas claimed to have prevailed at Valladolid. Such contentions, however, cannot be taken for granted, and so the historian must study contemporary and later sources to obtain a better grasp of whether the jurists and theologians at Valladolid favored anyone side.²⁸

The Aftermath of the Controversy

In the ensuing years after Valladolid, Sepúlveda continued to be the champion of the *encomenderos*, while Las Casas established himself as the outstanding defender of the Indians. In so doing, both of them significantly expanded on their arguments. For instance, Sepúlveda wrote *Rash, Scandalous and Heretical Propositions*, which was followed by Las Casas’ *Historia de Las Indias* and the *Historia Apologetica*, all of them finished in the 1550s. As a result, the two continued to denounce their respective writings.²⁹

Although the cloudy atmosphere of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy eventually faded as the Spanish presence in the New World became permanent, the questions raised in the debate, though in modified form, continued to have an impact on colonial life. For example, Sepúlveda’s arguments in favor of war as a means of pacification partly influenced the Council of the Indies in its policies of “war by fire and blood.” But the Las Casas’ movement against the advocates of conversion by force also found some backing both in New Spain and Perú. In northern New Spain, or the Chichimeca area, judge Alonso de Zorita and the Franciscan Jacinto de San Francisco adopted peaceful policies to pacify and convert the nomadic tribes. In the meantime, the debate led to a more serious study of Native American cultures. More and more missionaries, particularly Bernardino de Sahagún, came to learn Indian languages and culture, in the process documenting the natives’ rationality and overall way of life.³⁰

Outside Spanish America, the debate also had some impact. First, with the conquest of the Philippines in 1571, Spaniards once again faced the issue of Spain’s right of conquest. As with the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy, the Spaniards were divided in regards to the imperialistic attitudes of the time. Specifically, there developed an anti-imperialistic movement, headed by the Dominicans in the Philippines, which challenged Spain’s dominion there. For the Spanish Dominicans, the papal bulls granting Spain exclusive dominion over far-away lands were not enough; thus, they asked King Phillip II, a request to which he partially caved in, to respect the sovereignty of the people of the Philippines. Shortly thereafter, other Europeans took

the lead in denouncing Spanish imperialism. For instance, the Dutch, French, and British opportunistically used the writings of Las Casas. Their criticism of Spanish imperial policy centered, not on its negative effects for the Indians, but on Spain's enormous political and economic power. In other words, Europeans attacked the Spaniards because they sought to displace the Iberians' lead in the expansionist movement of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries.³¹

Conclusion

What was the significance of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy? The *junta* did not reach any clear-cut decision regarding the rationality and Christianization of the Indians. On the one hand, the jurists and theologians of Valladolid could not have conceivably recommended to Charles V to permanently stop all wars of conquest in the New World and to merely seek the peaceful Christianization of the Indians, as Las Casas had proposed. On the other hand, if Sepúlveda's harsh attack on Indian culture was intended to influence the Spanish crown to revoke the 1542 New Laws, he failed, for Las Casas effectively frustrated any immediate attempts by the *encomenderos* to have the laws revoked.

The outcome of the debate was to slow down, as opposed to instantly eradicate or to forever perpetuate, the *encomienda* system. While Sepúlveda's abstract arguments failed to immediately affect royal policy, Las Casas, with his idealistic viewpoints, eventually came to grips with the Spanish Empire's interests and survival in the New World. Once the crown managed to curb the *encomenderos'* power, it proceeded to terminate its temporal alliance with the Church. In 1550, the scholar Sepúlveda and the friar Las Casas, drawing from European secular and religious sources and previous Spanish legislation regulating Spanish-Indian relations, sought to set the terms of the evangelization of the Native Americans. In the end, the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy, despite its impact on later European and Latin American generations, failed to substantially improve the plight of the Indians.³² No positive outcome came out of the debate; no realistic solution could have resulted, for the debate was carried out in too theoretical a framework. Both sides, determined to prove or disprove the legality of war as a means of conversion, adamantly stuck to their respective writings, and thus failed to reach a realistic and concrete compromise. Not surprisingly, the debate failed to materialize into palpable benefits for the Indians. Its legacy lies in the Spaniards' disregard in addressing the crude conditions of the Indians from the "other," Indian perspective.

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- ¹ Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America. Empires and Sequels 1450-1930* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997), 83.
- ² Henry Raup Wagner and Helen Rand Parish, *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas* (New Mexico: The University of New Mexico Press, 1967), 181-182.
- ³ Lewis Hanke, *All Mankind is One: A study of the Disputation Between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in 1550 on the Intellectual and Religious Capacity of the American Indian* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 67.
- ⁴ Clara Alicia Jalif de Bertranou and Gustavo Gonzáles, "Conflicto y Discurso sobre el Hombre Americano. La Polémica Las Casas-Sepúlveda," *Cuadernos Americanos* 35, 6:5 (Sept-Oct. 1992), 25.
- ⁵ McAfee Brown, Robert. "1492: Another Legacy: Bartolomé de Las Casas--God over gold in the Indies." *Christianity and Crisis*. v.51 (Jan. 13, 1992), 415.
- ⁶ Frey, Herbert, "La mirada de Europa y el "otro" indoamericano," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 58:2 (Apr-June 1996), 53-54.
- ⁷ Brading, D.A., *The First America: the Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State 1492-1867* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 80-88.
- ⁸ Traboulay, David M., *Columbus and Las Casas: the Conquest and Christianization of America, 1492-1566* (Maryland: University Press of America, Inc.,1994), 167.
- ⁹ I do not intend to address questions about the two protagonists' lives and motivations behind their positions. To learn more about these questions, the reader should consult such biographical works as that of Wagner and Parish, and Angel Losada. And of course, the student of Latin American colonial history should read the writings of Las Casas and Sepúlveda. See, for example, Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense. The Defense of the Most Reverend Lord, Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, of the Order of Preachers, Late Bishop of Chiapa, Against the Persecutors and Slanderers of the Peoples of the New World Discovered Across the Seas*, ed. and trans. Stafford Poole (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974); Idem, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, trans. Herma Briffault (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Idem, *Apologetica historia sumaria*, ed. Edmundo O'Gorman (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1967); Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Tratado sobre las Justas Causas de la Guerra contra los Indios*, trans. Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo and Manuel Garcia-Pelayo (Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1941); Idem, *Democrates secundus*, ed. Angel Losada (Madrid, 1951).

10. Hanke, 8-9; Wagner, 10-11.
11. Bakewell, 143; Jalif de Bertranou and Gonzáles, 36-39. As with the Law of Burgos, the *Sublimis Deus* was greatly influenced by Las Casas and his followers. Accordingly, it is no surprise that the bull later served Las Casas as a point of reference in his 1550-1551 disputation with Ginés de Sepúlveda.
12. Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, 7; Hanke, 60-61.
13. Anthony Padgen, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 109.
14. *Ibid.*, 110-118.
15. Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies*.
16. Hanke, 57-58; Traboulay, 167; Angel Losada, "The Controversy between Sepúlveda and Las Casas in the Junta of Valladolid" in *Bartolomé de Las Casas in History. Toward an Understanding of the Man and His Work*, ed. and trans. Juan Friede and Benjamin Keen (Illinois: The Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 280-282; for a discussion on the texts thought to have been read before the *junta*, see Silvio Zavala, "Aspectos Formales de la Controversia entre Sepúlveda y Las Casas en Valladolid, a mediados del siglo XVI y observaciones sobre la apologia de Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas," *Cuadernos Americanos* 212, (1977), 137-162.
17. Frey, 62-68; Las Casas, *Bartolomé de Las Casas. A Selection of His Writings*, ed. and trans. George Sanderlin (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1971), 19.
18. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Tratado*, 153.
19. Frey, 58.
20. Las Casas, *In Defense*, 41-53.
21. Losada, 285.
22. Sepúlveda, 155.
23. Las Casas, *In Defense*, 54-55.
24. Frey, 66; Hanke, 89; Sepúlveda, 155.
25. Las Casas, *In Defense*, 212-215.
26. Luke 14.15-24 and Matthew 22.1-14 Revised Standard Version; Sepúlveda, 155-157.
27. Las Casas, *In Defense*, 269. In this, Las Casas was in accord with traditional church doctrine, which, with the Protestant Reformation in Europe, tolerated no religious dissension.

²⁸. Hanke, 113-122.

²⁹. Wagner and Parish, 189-190.

³⁰. Traboulay, 183-184.

³¹. *Ibid.*, 185-188.

³². For a discussion of the legacy of the Las Casas-Sepúlveda controversy on anti-racism and anti-colonialism, see Benjamin Keen, "The Legacy of Bartolomé de Las Casas," in *Essays in the Intellectual History of Colonial Latin America* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 57-69.