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Reason and Liberation in the Andes: The Dominicans and the Defense of the Indians in the Sixteenth Century

by HENRIQUE URBANO, O.P.

THE SUBJECT I INTEND TO DISCUSS has many facets. On the one hand, it is very familiar because the first groups of Dominicans who arrived in America came from a rich tradition of friars who were educated with great ascetic rigor as well as scientific training. On the other hand, America was for them a very complex *terra incognita* both politically and economically. The kingdoms of Mexico, for example, could be compared with those of the Incas, but it would not be correct to compare them with the Amazonian groups since the latter had not yet achieved the same degree of political and technical advancement. However, in the eyes of the theologian and from an ethical point of view they were all equal.¹

Faced with the diverse socio-political, ethical, and religious experiences of the American peoples, and in order to prepare the ground and assure proper communication with them, the first groups of friars searched deeply into their baggage of sociological arguments in the hope of identifying pastoral practices that might be productive or at least correctly formulated. This was not an easy task. On the contrary, one might note that while the landscape was novel and dazzling, the ground was inhospitable and slippery.²

If one considers the physical and psychological conditions under which the first Dominican friars labored, and the human resources available to them for an understanding of the reality present before

their eyes, there is no doubt that evangelization of America in general, and of the Andes in particular, seemed to be an impossible task to achieve; such were the magnitude and the gigantic dimensions of this task that no human hand or human words would be able to wholly comprehend it, or even simply to imagine it.³ There was, one must admit, something mysterious in this enterprise that we, as children of these more enlightened and rational times, will never fully understand. Something slips through our fingers: the simplicity of sixteenth century pastoral and ethical practices as performed by the first groups of evangelists contrasts sharply with the huge scope of the mission they undertook, as well as with the great disparities among the people who would be the first recipients of Gospel preaching and Christian doctrine. These general considerations are not superfluous. If I make them now it is because when the time comes to bring up certain facts, one tends to overlook them simply because they are common knowledge. They are so basic and important that I wish to emphasize them and to regard them as general background to explain the pastoral practices of the Dominicans in the Andes, as well as some of the ethical principles that motivated them. First, I will discuss some of the characteristics of life in Andean societies; second, I will refer to the socio-political and religious environment around the first Dominicans; third, I will comment on the first evangelization efforts; and last, I will emphasize the ethical and political program that the Dominicans outlined. Of course, since time is short my discussion of all the above points will be brief.

The Andes in 1532: Two Contrasting Views of the World

Since we are talking about Dominicans we must not forget that one of the most exceptional witnesses of the encounter between Spaniards and Incas was Friar Vicente de Valverde.⁴ A heavy responsibility rests on his shoulders because the epic of the military conquest of the Andes attributes to him the strange and tragic dialogue that sent the Inca Atahualpa to his death. This page of

history has not yet been fully explained, and perhaps it will never be. I am taking it only as a symbol of two views, that is, the confrontation of two religious systems, two political powers, two types of society. Each one, as Todorov would say, was defined by mythical or theological discourse: on the Inca side, theocratic power was invested in Atahualpa; on the Spanish side, a captain and a friar acted as representatives of an Emperor and a Pope. For the former, Sun and Inca were one and the same, also insofar as political, administrative, and religious power was concerned. This was not true from the Christian point of view: temporal power and spiritual power were invested in two different persons. In short, from the very first encounter between Spaniards and Incas the problem of communication emerged; religious metaphors were translated into mythical and theological language.⁵ On the side of the conquerors all eyes were on Valverde, for obvious reasons: the Dominican friar was charged with the responsibility of making statements that might be more convenient under the circumstances, knowing full well that the Spaniards who are present did not agree as to the fate of the Inca and the land. On the Andean side, the Inca was the symbol of the Sun, the sacrament of the earth and its peoples. Valverde had no doubt as to his own "truth" or the one God that he preached. For the Inca, the problem of the gods was secondary as long as his own symbolic function was respected. Needless to say, such positions and languages were not only mutually exclusive but also mutually incomprehensible. It was a conversation between men who were deaf, both physically and symbolically, since even the linguistic translation was impossible. I will not dwell on this point, but there is a personal dimension of Friar Valverde that I would like to bring up.

Valverde was a religious of San Esteban de Salamanca, and especially of San Gregorio de Valladolid, which was the favored place, both spiritually and intellectually, for all sixteenth century Dominicans. He was not, then, just an adventurer with no roots. On the contrary, there was not in those "hard times," as St. Teresa would put it, a convent more worthy of admiration than San

Gregorio, or more dedicated to the education, study, and reformation of monastic and conventual practices. Access to such an institution was possible only after rigorous selection in the various Spanish Dominican communities.⁶ What prompted Friar Vicente to cross the ocean and set foot on faraway lands? What thoughts filled his days spent among the motley crowd assembled by Pizarro, to whose family he was related?

It is not easy to answer these questions. Friar Valverde's personality was complex. He did not disregard the problem of the native population. He saw the desolation and destruction spread by Spanish forces. He wrote to the King. He was concerned. He was shocked by the contrast between his first and his second visit to Cuzco. The first time he was dazzled by the orderly design and the size of Inca constructions; the second time he lamented the demolishing fury of the conquerors. In their anxiety to build their own homes, the invading mobs ransacked old buildings and destroyed pre-Columbian structures and walls. The queen was worried. She wrote to Friar Vicente and commanded him to enforce the ordinances and to investigate the real nature of the native people and their possessions, and — a more peculiar request — to see if what was sent to the Crown from the Inca's ransom was in accord with the provisions of the law.⁷ For our purposes there is still a more important event: by a royal decree of June 14, 1536, Friar Vicente was appointed protector and defender of the Indians.⁸ Hernando de Luque, who organized the conquest effort with the Pizarros, was the first protector, but had to resign for health reasons. He was followed by the first Dominican, Friar Reginaldo Pedraza, who was named protector of the Indians by a royal decree dated March 1, 1531.⁹ He was a companion of Pizarro and Valverde, and the Superior of the first group of Dominicans that crossed the Andes. Friar Reginaldo was to receive the initial recommendations from the Crown regarding maltreatment of the Indians in northern Peru and the demographic collapse of the Indians, a fact that was already reaching alarming proportions. He wrote, ". . . said Indians have so decreased in number that said lands are almost depopulated, which

is a disservice to God our Lord, and there are also many other evils."¹⁰

Beginning with Pedraza the responsibility of Protector would remain in the hands of the Dominicans for a long time. When he left Peru in 1531 or 1532 (he died perhaps in 1532), he was succeeded by Valverde. After he was appointed Bishop of Cuzco, Valverde became increasingly concerned about the Indian problem.¹¹ The Crown was aware of the situation:

We are deeply interested in the survival of the Indians in our provinces and their conversion to the Catholic faith, this being our main concern. Therefore, we place our trust in your loyalty and conscience, so that you will understand that through your good vigilance and zeal you will act as protector and defender of the Indians of said provinces. We also command that in the said province of Peru you will take great care to observe and visit said Indians so that they will be well treated and employed, and they will be taught the principles of our Catholic faith by those who are in charge of them, and that you observe the laws, ordinances, and prohibitions emanating from the Catholic Monarchs, our parents and grandparents, and also from Ourselves, regarding good treatment and survival of said Indians. . . .¹²

Life in the Andes in those days was tragic. As a bishop and a relative of the Pizarro family, Valverde was in the midst of intrigues, fights and fratricidal wars. Hatred was so intense and so deeply rooted that nobody listened to anybody else. The authority represented by royal documents remained just so much paper. Valverde was not able to control unleashed passions, or to bring peace to his own relatives, so what he could do on behalf of the Indians was even less. In 1539 he wrote to the king:

I traveled through a great part of this land and witnessed so much evil that having seen the land before I could not help feeling very sad; because of the natural quality of the natives

and their skill in learning about our holy faith, as well as the size and the fruits of this rich land, great care should be taken of them. This is why the sight of so much corruption would move anybody to great compassion.¹³

From the beginning the forces in Peru distinguished themselves by their clumsiness and lack of dignity. They were blinded by gold and silver. In the midst of all this, one may catch an occasional glimpse of a great soul in the written testimonies of Valverde. And I say "occasional glimpse" because it is difficult for the modern mind, with its heavy load of myths regarding the "noble savage," to understand what happened in Cajamarca. From a political point of view there is no doubt that Pizarro was responsible, but it is surprising to find a note of self-interest and meanness in some of Valverde's reasoning. On the other hand, it is also true that his letters and reports to the Crown denote a resolute will to build an Andean church on solid foundations.

The Dominican chronicler Meléndez tried to exonerate Friar Vicente from any guilt in the death of Atahualpa. He did it in a subtle manner by resorting to Valverde's Dominican environment, which included Pedraza and other religious who were very close and faithful to the ideals of the Dominican community of Hispaniola (1511), created by Friar Pedro de Córdoba and thrown by Bartolomé de las Casas into the stormy waters of the struggle against corruption, injustice and the bloodthirsty attitude of many of the Spaniards.¹⁴ In this respect two other names must be added: Minaya de Paz and Berlanga.¹⁵ Minaya de Paz raised his voice against the practice (condoned by Pizarro) of making slaves of the Indians. For this he would suffer great humiliation. Berlanga, as Pérez Fernández correctly emphasized, was entrusted by the Crown with an important mission in Peru, where he did not remain silent regarding the outrages suffered by the Indians. Berlanga was also the highest expression of the Dominican community project in Hispaniola, where he was for a long time the superior as well as the prophetic

executor of its ideals.¹⁶

This first stage of the Dominican presence in the Andes is somewhat unusual. It was dominated by the presence of Friar Vicente Valverde. However, the role he played as spokesman for the work of evangelization in the new lands was part of a family enterprise of Conquest, dominated by interests that were not quite Christian, and even worse, carried out by deeds and circumstances which were often less than humane. This is the great contradiction in the presence of this Dominican friar in the Andes. I referred to it as tragic. Even his death at the hands of Indians on the island of Puná covers a life of incomprehensible and uncertain steps with a mantle of deep desolation. It would be unjust, nevertheless, to deny him all credit. He showed sensitivity to the kindness of Andean people and the greatness of the pre-hispanic past, as well as sadness when faced with the destructive results of the conquerors' greed. Such feelings attest to his background in Valladolid and its underlying ethical principles. Such principles may have been affected by the contact with unscrupulous members of the conquering forces in Peru, or perhaps, the seed of personal ambition detracted from the generous and evangelical impulses and drowned them in the murky waters of selfish interests that often lead to pettiness. This first attempt at communication between two cultures would be followed by the arrival of new Dominicans with a more definite program, and from an ethical point of view, with a stronger and more evangelical orientation.

The missionary experience of Valverde is enlightening. It was a personal initiative at the service of the Crown, not a Dominican enterprise; in other words, it was not the result of a collective project of the Order to serve the Church. By that I mean that the presence of Valverde in America was decided upon at the royal and ecclesiastic levels once the Pizarro venture was organized. As Pérez accurately remarks, Valverde travelled as chaplain to Pizarro in a venture to conquer lands for the Crown. Although he was still under the authority of a conventual superior, he accompanied the

forces to Peru without any canonical responsibility or even agreement on the part of his Order for his decisions. Such decisions were exclusively his own. This may be the reason for the doubts of Pedraza and Minaya and their demand that the evangelical ideals be respected. It would also explain Berlanga's reservations that gave rise to strong suspicion about the honest purpose of the Pizarro enterprise. Pedraza, Minaya and Berlanga are the symbols of the Dominican community project that already had deep roots in America. Let us see how it developed in the Andes, and the problems it caused.

The Dominican Community Project: Reason at the Service of Justice

A few years passed between the first attempt to create a stable Dominican community in the new lands discovered by Pizarro and the arrival of a significant group of friars. Despite the official history of these events written by Juan Meléndez, it was a confusing time, and the chronicles do not manage to clarify the facts.¹⁷ Pérez tried to introduce some order, and succeeded. Thus we can establish the chronology of the Dominican project in the Andes more precisely. I will recall a few important facts. First, the unsuccessful travel south by some Dominicans. They traveled with the group of Bartolomé de las Casas, no less. They were Rodrigo de Ladrada, Pedro de Angulo and others not known, perhaps Luis Cancer.¹⁸ Second, the next serious and successful attempt by Dominicans to settle in Peru was that of Berlanga from Panama. Pérez gives a different date from that offered by Meléndez. The arrival of the first group in Lima was at the end of May or beginning of June 1536. They were three Dominicans: Juan de Olías, Francisco Martínez Toscano, and Agustín de Zuñiga.¹⁹ On these three fell the responsibility of creating the new province of Peru, separating it from Santa Cruz in Hispaniola. The second group, recruited by Valverde in Spain, arrived in Peru in May or June of 1537, followed by another group of eight friars gathered in Spain by Martinez Toscano. This last

group would give Peru at least three friars, among them Tomás de San Martín.²⁰ Third, there was the creation of the Dominican province of San Juan Bautista in Peru by decree of January 4, 1540. Tomás de San Martín was the first provincial. When he was appointed Bishop of Charcas he was replaced by Domingo de Santo Tomás, who had been in Andean lands since 1540.²¹ No doubt both Tomás de San Martín and Domingo de Santo Tomás gave the new province the impetus it needed to be formed with its own personality while following closely on the steps of the community project in Hispaniola. I will now discuss this point.²²

Valverde died on October 31, 1541.²³ Two other Dominican bishops would head the first episcopal sees: in Lima, Jerónimo de Loayza, and in Cuzco, Juan de Solano. Strictly within ecclesiastic terms, there is no doubt that at the administrative level, ecclesiastic affairs bear the mark of the Dominican Order. However, the distinction I made previously can be applied here again: it is not the same thing to be appointed bishop because of pastoral experiences with local roots, and to be appointed as a reward for some service to the Crown or because of family connections. We have seen already how Valverde was incorporated into the Pizarro venture. In Lima, Loayza also appears in the Andean religious horizon for the same reasons. Perhaps Solano was suggested by Las Casas after the resignation of Bartolomé Carranza de Miranda.²⁴ Las Casas trusted Solano, although it is not clear — within the sequence of Solano's pastoral activities — what his main motivation in the conduct of the unfortunate Cuzco diocese was.

Among the Dominicans who arrived in Peru to form the initial nucleus of the province of San Juan Bautista, there were two outstanding figures: Tomás de San Martín and Domingo de Santo Tomás. Their administrative responsibilities and their determination to carry out a pastoral program of true prophetic quality made these two the standard bearers of the new American church. It is not my intention to disregard the work of other and anonymous friars; without them Friar Tomás and Friar Domingo might not have

been able to succeed in their efforts. It must be recognized that it was precisely that anonymous mass of friars that bore the responsibility for spreading the good news of Spanish Catholicism for several decades. The Dominicans were a cohesive, resolute group. Placed in strategic areas, the new convents were very active among the Indians as well as among the Spaniards. Official documentation attests to this fact.

The actions of Friar Tomás de San Martín are still regarded with admiration. He sent the friars over the immense Andean territory while at the same time handling the political missions entrusted to him by the Crown or the authorities in Lima. He never gave in to personal interests. He was well informed of the struggles in favor of native populations. He exchanged opinions on pastoral matters with the Bishop of Chiapas and accepted the latter's viewpoints. He did not write much. We know that he wrote a text on Andean religion, and summarized all his experiences in *Parecer* that served as a dialogue with Las Casas about measures to be taken in Andean socio-political and religious areas. It is a brief summary of his experience and his plans for the rest of his tenure as bishop of Charcas.⁵

The voice of Friar Tomás was heard, and it echoed throughout the Andes. He advocated and fought for a just treatment of native populations. We have no examples of his noble language but only indirect references. The Council of Lima used the records of its meetings to express annoyance at Friar Tomás' relentless judgment and clamor for justice:

This Council discussed the manner in which the Reverend Father Regent (Friar Tomás de San Martín) yesterday from the pulpit made accusations against some members of this Council without any justification. He must be made aware of the reaction of the authorities, and for this purpose Mr. Nicolás and Mr. Antonio de Ribera have been delegated to make him understand that the government of the city has been insulted by his remarks from the pulpit, and that henceforth, whenever

he finds fault with the city authorities, he should speak to them directly rather than use the pulpit for this purpose.²⁶

He spoke very harshly about the conduct of the conquerors. Here are some examples:

Everything they possess and have exacted as tribute from the Indians, who were in such manner discovered and conquered, has been misappropriated and should not be carried away since they (the conquerors) did not fight a just war or observe any natural, divine or human laws, but only obeyed their own interest They were always motivated by personal interest, and in the eyes of the natives this was the only justification for their plundering.

And if anybody claims that the Indians can be conquered, subjected and made to pay tribute only because they are barbarians and not Christians, I state and affirm that such person is not a Christian and is incapable of understanding that it is God's wish that conversion to Christianity be a free choice. Only the natural law proves who is worthy of being a conqueror or a tributary. . . .²⁷

There is no doubt about the influence of Las Casas on Friar Tomás de San Martín. In his examples he claims that the Spaniards used the Indians as mules and forced them to walk great distances through rugged territory, carrying wine and other products that their master took from their lawful Indian proprietors. And what can one say when Friar Tomás is enraged by the gambling with which the Spaniards squandered the tributes exacted from the native populations, and after such losses returned to the poor Indians for more plundering? To remain silent about such injustices would be to close one's eyes to crimes against humanity. That is why he asked repeatedly for clerics who were honest, brave, just and not motivated by self-interest, and that no "idiots and bunglers" be sent to the Indies, because their shortcomings would reflect upon those

who sent them and also on their ability to confess and to preach.²⁸

The personality of Friar Domingo de Santo Tomás was just as strong as that of Friar Tomás de San Martín. Both had the same background having served as conventual superiors, provincials, and bishops of Charcas. They both had the same concerns, and their life stories ran so parallel that it can almost be said that they shared the same political and ethical principles with regard to the numerous and tragic events of the ever-changing and unpredictable Andean venture. There is not the slightest doubt of their intentions when it came to upholding the rights of the Indians and their capacity to choose their political and religious destiny in complete freedom. They were also clear as to the role that the Crown and the Spaniards should play in the New World. In my opinion, the communion of thought and action is the result of a political and religious vision that transcended the two men without detracting from their respective personalities. They espoused the same cause. Their objectives were born from a common heritage to which I have referred already as the Dominican Community Project.

In 1550, after ten years in the Andes trying to lay the foundations of a society based on justice, Friar Domingo de Santo Tomás wrote to the king about the things he saw and the future he envisioned for that rich and strange land. It was not a formal letter, but only an account of events that took place: "I will not speak of anything that I have not witnessed myself." It was also a program from which he would never deviate as local superior, provincial, or Bishop of Charcas. What he told the king was born from a conscience that had been wounded by injustice. He spoke as a Christian and as a religious:

With regard to the past disorders committed since the discovery of these lands, and the cruelty and barbarism exhibited by the Spaniards, it is only recently that we begin to see a certain degree of order; nothing more can be said, since one can only weep at the events that we have witnessed here and hope that those who are guilty will later repent.²⁹

The events to which he referred were extremely serious, and he spoke of them in such a direct manner using such crude words that the truth would be invalidated should one try to soften it by resorting only to the imagination:

And it is a fact that since this land was discovered no more respect has been shown toward these unhappy people than toward wild animals, by depriving them of their possessions and by killing them; it was thought that everything on this land was common property and that the Indians were only useless animals. . . .³⁰

Friar Tomás did not surrender to the situation, on the contrary, he analyzed, evaluated, and suggested remedies. First, he referred to the tribute that should be paid by the Indians. This subject was difficult and his greatest concern was to define proper parameters. The interests of the Crown conflicted with the establishment of religious institutions. To begin with, the tribute was too high; it should be revised and measures should be taken for its implementation. The experience he gained months before by order of La Gasca made him an authority on the subject. Second, travelers to the Indies should be selected in order to prevent the arrival of undesirable Spaniards, corrupt governors, and above all, greedy clerics. Third, there was the problem of the *encomiendas* and of the Indians included in them. The opinion of Friar Domingo coincides with that of the Bishop of Chiapas: to forbid the transfer of Indians and the breakup of their families. Fourth, there was the work in the mines. For him, it was the devil's invention:

It is now four years since — for the ruination of this land — a gate to hell was discovered through which great numbers of people are entering, and by which Spanish greed offers sacrifice to its God: I speak of the silver mines called Potosi. .

. . .³¹

Popular wisdom accepted this idea according to which the devil resided in his kingdom in the depths of the earth. How could the Spanish Crown reconcile the kingdom of Satan with that of evangelical justice? The times were difficult indeed. The royal treasury was empty, but Friar Domingo did not retreat. He looked for a solution, and decided for free enterprise, however, he did not see clearly how this could be accomplished, since gold and silver were found in harsh places and intemperate climates. To look for them was to die a slow death.³²

Friar Domingo offered concrete and realistic programs to deal with some of these problems: create schools and hospitals, and give the people time and the opportunity to exercise the right to choose their political destiny and to embrace the tenets of the evangelical ideal. At no time did he advocate the imposition of laws since God had created humans to be free, but there is no freedom without responsibility. The slightest attempt to contravene this principle goes against the human condition. For this reason, Friar Tomás' pronouncements about labor and the tribute imposed on the natives by Spaniards were not acceptable. There was no excuse for them because they were not even rules or suggestions born from religious ethics. Reason and "natural" justice dictated them.

The scope of these ethical principles is impressive. On the one hand, there was the logic of open and generous humanism based on the affirmation of equality of all men and peoples; on the other, the strengthening of religious principles within the American context. Everything was new. Spanish Catholicism was in urgent need of solid principles; in the midst of the storm it was not easy to visualize the road that should be taken. This explains the rigor of Friar Domingo's principles and their consistent enforcement. To deviate from them would have opened the door to all manner of transgression; to abide by them, even in an atmosphere of uncertainty, would lead to a safe destination. The responsibility to determine the tribute to be imposed on the Indians is crucial for the evaluation of his viewpoints. This aspect merits our attention.

The document of 1550 was an authentic life plan and political statement, from which he would never deviate. The subjects he selected and the solutions he suggested were clear and definite, as well as significant. The personality of Friar Domingo is reflected in them as in a mirror. In the first place, there was the socio-political reality of the Andes and the upheaval caused by the Spanish presence; in the second place, a dispassionate and rational analysis of native life after the fratricidal wars between Christians and the peace mission of La Gasca; third, a sober and keen insight into clerical conduct. He raised his voice when he discussed injustice and the gravity of events, but he sounded more conciliatory when he tried to search for solutions and offer reasons for his proposals.

The personality of Friar Domingo is better explained by the very complex problem of taxation. To reach a just decision it was necessary to have a sound knowledge of the populations involved and to make an evaluation of their local resources. It was necessary to have the ability to measure the impact of the steps to be taken after a fair assessment of the tributes from the various persons, families and each *ayllus* (units of domestic production) had been made. From the evidence now available on the mission entrusted by La Gasca to Friar Domingo, as well as from the 1550 document, everything seems to indicate that he possessed the rare and necessary qualities to perceive reality and to evaluate it accordingly. The founding of Dominican convents and the assignment of religious personnel throughout the Andes together with Friar Tomás de San Martín, or by request from the new religious province, allowed him to inquire into and find out about the different customs, climates, and historical experiences of many Andean peoples. He did not accept the idea of one uniform "imperial" *Tawantinsuyu*. On the contrary, he pointed out the diversity and tried to give definite reasons for their geographic existence, and also to explain what was suggested to him by the historical experience of the Andean societies. People dispersed over hills and valleys, cold and warm areas, deserts and deep rivers could not be regarded as one sole region or be integrated

under one command.³³

As of 1550 Friar Domingo would never stop participating in public life. Many were those who sought his advice. His public outlook could not be separated from the religious vision of a future Andean region. Both originated in a keen observation of reality and were based on his solid philosophical and theological background. It would take a long time to list all the answers that Friar Domingo gave on the most pressing questions of a society that was taking shape before him. Let us take the example of a letter he wrote to Las Casas. The date given by Vargas to this document was the year 1562.³⁴

In his letter he recalled the unjust behavior of the Spaniards after the defeat of Gonzalo Pizarro. Urged by economic reasons, the victors fell upon the Indians, robbed them of their possessions and treated them as animals. Friar Domingo would never forget this event in his letters and documents. As a remedy he recommended that tributes be restructured by order of the Crown and according to the ability of each people or region to pay, taking into account family size, their basic needs and the freedom to which they were entitled. Without these measures it would be futile to speak of a Christian doctrine, since there would be no time to listen to it or to understand it. He also took up the subject of the mines, which he had called the "mouth of hell" ten years before. He tried to find a solution to the evils resulting from injustices committed against the will of the Indians: that they should not be forced to work in the mines, and that neighboring towns should be invited to work for a just salary and other compensations. As on other occasions, he raised his voice against the abuse committed by the *encomenderos* and *corregidores*, whom he accused of distorting the royal will by lying and profiting in a wicked manner. He admitted that there was still time to correct the situation. It was obvious that demographic growth of the Indian people had been stunted by heavy work and other excesses. Should things continue in this manner, there would be no more hands to do the work. He made recommendations as to the administration of justice, and the building of hospitals and bridges to be financed by

the *encomenderos*. All this was inspired by his balanced judgment of the current possibilities and the kindness of well-meaning people. Fair compensation should be paid to those in charge of administering justice so that they would not take profit from their positions by exploiting the Indians.

The year 1562 was also the time of his appointment as Bishop of Charcas. He could not reject the appointment or abandon his commitment to a just cause, so there was no change in his behavior and pastoral activities. The struggle for justice became more intense, and while the Indians supported it, the Spaniards — particularly the *encomenderos* — fought back with slander and lies.³⁵ They resorted to any means to harm Friar Domingo's reputation. The stakes were very high, but the Bishop of Charcas never relented. He followed closely the evolution of Andean society, sought peace in the midst of war, justice in the midst of evil. He was perhaps the best promoter of the Dominican Community Project in the Andes being motivated by reason, restrained passion, and an unfailing willingness to take action.

The Fate of the Dominican Project within the Colonial Regime

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century the viceroy Francisco de Toledo arrived in Peru.³⁶ The Chucuito area was one of the most desirable in the Andes because of its large population, cattle, and rich wool. The exploitation of the silver mines in Potosí made it even more attractive because of the possibilities it opened to those who could not find workers. The Indians were Crown Indians, that is, they enjoyed royal privileges, and could not be subdued by the *encomenderos* or the Spaniards in general. We know that Dominicans were in the region around 1540 and that they built modest churches and convents. Also, that as of the 1550s the number of Dominicans increased and pastoral work was carried out with great sacrifice. The two areas where Friar Tomás de San Martín and Friar Domingo de Santo Tomás were provincials eagerly accepted the Dominican message, and there are no indications that either one ever deviated

from the rules imposed by the provincial chapters and the advice of both superiors.

There was, however, a Spanish presence that objected to anything that was related closely — or otherwise — to the Dominican Community Project. Of course, the name of Las Casas was anathema to the ears of *encomenderos* and *corregidores*. Because of what had happened in other cases, and dealing with religious of the nature of Friar Domingo or Friar Tomás, it would be easier to arouse suspicion and denigrate the workers than to blame the teachers. The events at Chucuito confirm this rule. There were two “visits” that interfered with the smooth operation of the area. The first of these was made in 1567 by Garci Diez de San Miguel.³⁷ The second was conducted six years later by a person who was far from altruistic — Friar Pedro Gutierrez Flores.³⁸ These were the golden times of the Toledo years, which coincided with the weakening of the Las Casas project in America.

Between the two “visits” there was a radical change in socio-political conditions. During the first visit there was an inquiry into local resources with the excuse of reforming the tax structure. There was nothing special about it that might disturb the pastoral work of the Dominicans. The testimonies of the chieftains agreed that the number of the religious dedicated to the *doctrina christiana* was satisfactory, whereas the Spaniards considered it insufficient for such a large territory and population size. During the second “visit” there was an outpouring of accusations of corruption against the Dominicans, supported by secret documentation. The contrast in tone between the two visits is so disproportionate, and the underlying reasons so disparate, that one cannot avoid this simple question: where is the truth? It cannot be explained by the time elapsed between the two “visits” which was not very long. And it is hard to imagine that the superiors of the Order would allow the majority of the alleged offenses to continue without putting a stop to them. One must look for other reasons to explain the bureaucratic maneuver of Friar Pedro Gutierrez Flores.

A first indication would be found in the new goals set for the government of Peru. With viceroy Toledo's program and his determination to extend it to the whole territory, the Andean region entered a new era. The foundations were laid for colonial society. Toledo also wanted to eradicate all trace of Las Casas' influence through his works or writings in the Andes. He embarked for Peru with such intentions, and he never deviated from them. The anti-Las Casas fever aroused strong feelings of revenge in Spanish circles as soon as Toledo opened the door — however slightly — to their vindication. Many who had been silenced under the previous authorities now raised their voices. From then on the doors were open to recover lost ground and to take over regions where natives had found a refuge under the protection of the Crown and the religious. Toledo aspired in this manner to enrich the royal treasury, while *encomenderos* and *corregidores* dreamed of making their fortune.

On November 7, 1572, Toledo was in Chucuito together with the provincial Alonso de la Cerca and his vicar.³⁹ The viceroy brought several charges against the religious, imposed punishment on the friars who had disregarded the orders of civil authorities, demanded the refund of unjustified salaries, ordered friars to live as religious in three or four convents, demanded the return of the temporal jurisdiction they had assumed, and ordered them to submit to the bishop's authority. La Cerda consulted his Council, also present in Chucuito, and responded to the viceroy's demands on November 29. The tone of his reply was harsh, something to which the viceroy was not accustomed. However, to accept the viceroy's pronouncements would have meant giving in to the basest Spanish interests, and thus the only solution was to fight them.

La Cerda admitted that the friars were imprudent in admitting a fugitive from justice into one of their houses, for which those responsible had been soundly reprimanded. But he rejected all other allegations. The Dominicans lived a poor and honest life and their salary was lower than that paid by the Crown to priests and

other friars. While some of them asked the Indians to work it was they who, under normal circumstances and with the approval of the chieftains, devoted themselves to pastoral and evangelization work. With respect to the living conditions that the viceroy wished to impose, he reminded him that this matter was outside the viceroy's jurisdiction; even more so, the order that the friars should render an account to the *corregidores*. This was an insult to the Dominicans in their struggle against the corruption of the *corregidores*, and for Friar Alonso de la Cerda it was like a slap in the face:

. . . even if this judgment contained only such an unjust and immoral provision that would require our submitting to the authority of a *corregidor*, we would renounce all allegiance to the laws not only of this province (Chucuito) but also of all the kingdom.⁴⁰

Knowing Toledo's temper and the manner in which he implemented his reforms there is no doubt of the outcome of the meeting in Chucuito: the Dominicans abandoned the area, and secular clerics and Jesuits were appointed in their place. The latter were entrusted with the July doctrines, which would open the door to Guaraní missions. By the reports that Jesuits sent to their superior we know that the Dominican effort was not in vain. The Jesuits found a rather large Christian community, but this was not the opinion of *encomenderos* and *corregidores*. The community project of the Province of San Juan Bautista became hopelessly isolated from colonial power, and as a result the native population lost one of its staunchest allies.

The courage of Friar Alonso de la Cerda and his Council must be emphasized, and also his dedication to a project for Andean society based on strict application of a Dominican ideal of justice, ethics, and well-ordered politics. We know of a letter from Friar Alonso to Licenciado Obando upholding the moral principles espoused by former Dominican superiors. In it he renewed the Las Casas denouncement against forced labor for the Indians in the mines.

Toledo had agreed to such practice but used the granting of a salary as camouflage. La Cerda warned him, "Beware, Your Grace. This is a very serious matter and your soul may be damned for allowing such unfair practices . . ." ⁴¹ His second warning was with regard to the cultivation of coca. One fourth of the Indians who worked on the plantations in hot mountainous regions would die. He also complained against the taxes imposed by Toledo as being excessive and inhumane. He examined the reasons for such taxation under La Gasca and the reasonable explanations given by Friar Domingo de Santo Tomás, with whom he discussed the subject in depth. One must not lose sight of the fact that taxation existed as a means toward a just government and to help in promoting the Catholic faith. He brought up the problem of the Inca succession. The Viceroy believed that it had been solved with the death of rebellious Incas, but it was not so. There were still legitimate Inca heirs, and he said it was unfair to deal with them in the inhumane manner that was common in those days with the full knowledge of the authorities. ⁴²

I draw my own moral conclusions from the history of the "Chucuito scandal." There were no unexpected dimensions in the Dominican Community Project: The first was Toledo's administrative revolution, to which I already referred, and the second was the underlying presence of the Council of Trent in shaping emerging Andean Catholicism. It is not a mere coincidence that Toledo reminded the Chucuito Dominicans of "common rights . . . and ultimately the Council of Trent." ⁴³ A few years later (1582-1583) the Third Council of Lima confirmed what was already being done in practice. The two projects — Viceroy Toledo's visit and the Third Council of Lima — cannot be separated; Toledo for the administration and political organization, and the Council for ecclesiastic and pastoral matters. Within this context and deprived from any political "space," the Dominican Community Project that was born and had developed from the 1530s was beginning to languish. Already in the 1570s there was insidious reviling by its Spanish attackers and some dissidence by the Dominican Community. The

Society of Jesus would profit from this situation and present itself as the standard bearer for the new times, both with respect to Toledo's plans and the ecclesiastic guidelines issued by the Council of Trent and the Third Council of Lima.⁴⁴

In my opinion, as of 1570 the socio-political and religious developments in the Andes could hardly be reconciled with the Dominican Community Project. On the one hand, Spanish policy distanced itself from the experiences that proposed a return to pre-hispanic institutions within the colonial regime. On the other hand, the Catholic Counter-Reformation generated a new type of devotion and religious feeling characterized by the individual's access to salvation through ascetic exercises and total surrender of the soul to a spiritual director. Community responsibility was being diluted and with it the Dominican socio-political and religious Project that was so markedly community-oriented. The influence of the Counter-Reformation and the new spiritual orientation of the young and dynamic Society of Jesus resulted in the weakening of community ties. Thus, pastoral practice and religious bureaucracy could disregard them.

There is a provision in Toledo's text that might be easily passed over but might be regarded as the symbol of what I have been inferring. I refer to the viceroy's intention to impose on the Dominicans of Chucuito the obligation of reassembling in three or four formal convents, to live according to all the rules of monastic life. The Provincial La Cerda and his Council realized the evil purpose behind the apparent legality of the Viceroy's maneuver. To acquiesce would mean to clip the wings off pastoral and catechetical work and to confine the political and social responsibility of the emerging Andean Catholicism within four convent walls. Friar Alonso rejected the suggestion with sound arguments:

We consider the rule for the religious to go around in pairs to be very acceptable, and we always abide by such a rule, but when more than two are involved it is not always possible to be together because their presence may be required in different places and all of them together would not be more useful than

just one, since the laws of charity demand that we respond to all spiritual needs....⁴⁵

Brief Conclusion

The Dominican foundation for an original socio-political and religious project had been laid. From a distance of five centuries one can easily understand the greatness of soul and the will of iron demonstrated by its promoters and the problems they had to fight. With rare exceptions and without any hesitation they continued this struggle from their various official positions. From Mexico to the outer fringes of the Andes there was one solid purpose and a multi-faceted practice that was expressed in rules of ethics and political principles that were clear, just, and adequate to the situation. All of this could not be explained without a common project arising from the passionate dedication of Las Casas on the one hand, and Andean reason, truth and justice on the other.

(Translated by Alexandra Tcachuk)

Endnotes

1. Literature about the Dominicans in America is abundant, but somewhat scattered. The records of three conferences were published in Spain in recent years: *Los Dominicos y el Nuevo Mundo*, edited in Madrid (Deimos publication, 1988, 1989, 1991), which collect monographic studies of variable quality, but in general they are repetitive and tiresome. For the Andean region the works of the memorable José Maria Vargas concerning the province of Ecuador are pioneering documents by collecting the known data in several volumes: *Historia de la Provincia de Santa Catalina, virgen y mártir de Quito de la Orden de los Predicadores*, (Quito, 1942-1986). Yet to be published are the collection of documents by Vacas Galindo, an Ecuadorian Dominican and indefatigable researcher. In Peru no recent history of the Dominican Province exists. For a resume of Juan Meléndez' *Tesoros verdaderos de las Indias en la Historia de la gran Provincia de S. Juan Bautista del Perú, del Orden de Predicadores*, (Rome, 1681-1682, 3 volumes), see José Maria Vargas Arévalo, *Los dominicos en el Perú* (Lima, 1960). At the beginning of the present century Domingo Angulo published numerous documents and a very detailed inventory concerning the Dominican library. In recent years *Cuadernos para la historia de la evangelización en*

América latina, edited by Las Casas Center (Cuzco), published some studies with recent data concerning Dominican history in the Andes. The most significant contribution is that of Ramon Ramirez of the Province of St. Lawrence of Chile, *Los Dominicos en Chile*, (Santiago, 1979), and *Relación de los Capítulos provinciales de la Provincia de San Lorenzo Mártir, de Chile, de la Orden de Predicadores* (Santiago, 1982, 2 volumes). More recently published is an anthology of documents concerning Latin American Dominican history edited by A. Esponera and J. B. Lassegue entitled *El corte en la roca, Memorias de los dominicos en América (Siglos XVI-XX)*, published by Las Casas Center (Cuzco, 1991). Also see J. M. Pérez, *Evangelización y liberación*, (Las Casas Center: Cuzco, 1990).

2. The literature concerning these varied themes is abundant. Interesting, without doubt, for our purposes: Luciano Perena Vicente, *Misión de España en América, 1540-1560*, (CSIC, "Francisco de Vitoria" Institute: Madrid, 1956).

3. Pedro Borges, *Métodos misionales en la cristianización de América, Siglo XVI* (Biblioteca Misionaria Hispanica, Departamento de misionología española, CSIC: Madrid, 1960). Also by the same author, *El envío de misioneros a América durante la época española* (Biblioteca Salmanticensis 18, Universidad Pontificia: Salamanca, 1977).

4. Recent publications concerning Fray Vicente Valverde do not exist. See "Valverde, D. Fr. Vicente" in *Diccionario histórico-biográfico del Perú*, Volume VIII, edited by M. Mendiburu (Lima, 1890), p. 249f. See also J. M. Vargas, *La conquista espiritual del imperio de los Incas*, (Prensa Católica: Quito, 1948). Vargas refers to A. Fernández' *Historiadores de San Esteban de Salamanca*, Vol. I, lib. III, ch. X,XI.

5. T. Todorov, *La conquete d'Amérique*, (Seuil: Paris, 1982).

6. Gonzalo Arriaga, *Historia del Colegio de San Gregorio de Valladolid (1649)*, (Valladolid, 1930).

7. M. Mendiburu, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

8. M. Mendiburu, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

9. F. Isacio Pérez, *Bartholomé de Las Casas en el Perú*, (Centro Las Casas: Cuzco, 1987, number 163), p. 83.

10. Emilio Lissón Chavez, *La Iglesia de España en el Perú, Colección de documentos para la historia de la Iglesia en el Perú, que se encuentran en varios archivos*, Vol. I, Number 2, (Seville, 1943), pp. 27-30.

11. Lissón Chavez, *Idem.*, pp. 44-47; 51; 70-71.

12. Mendiburu, *Idem.*, pp. 258-259.

13. Lissón Chavez, *Idem.*, n. 57, p. 101.

14. Miquel Angel Medina, *Una comunidad al servicio del indio, La obra de Fr. Pedro de Córdoba, O.P. (1482-1521)*, (Instituto Pontificio de Teología: Madrid, 1983).
15. There is not much recent literature concerning these two religious. Pérez Fernández collects the essentials: *op. cit.*, pp. 43-132.
16. Pérez Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
17. Meléndez, *op. cit.*
18. Pérez Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 52; also in 95.
19. *Ibidem.*
20. Pérez Fernandez, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.
21. Pérez Fernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 100; Lisson Chavez, *op. cit.*, vol I., number 4, pp. 190-203; J.M. Vargas, *Fr. Domingo de Santo Tomás, defensor y apóstol de los indios del Perú, Su vida y sus escritos* (Santo Domingo: Quito, 1937), *Escritos*: p. 1ff.
22. Unfortunately there has not even been an attempt at a biography of Tomás de San Martín. As for Fr. Domingo de San Martín, the Las Casas Center in Cuzco will publish this year, *Razón y liberación en los Andes. Domingo de Santo Tomás (1540-1570)*.
23. Mendibiru, *op. cit.*, p. 260; Pérez Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 131, number 153, mentions the time as winter 1542.
24. Mendibiru, *op. cit.*, Volume VII, p. 356. He writes that Solano was named for having renounced the bishop of Chiapas — Bartolomé de Las Casas. This is an error. This refers to Caranza.
25. Pérez Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
26. L. A. Eguiguren, *Las constituciones de la Universidad y otros documentos*, Vol. II, (UNMSM: Lima, 1951), p. 45.
27. Eguiguren, *Ibidem.*
28. Eguiguren, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.
29. Vargas, *op. cit.* 1937, p. 2.
30. Vargas, *op. cit.* 1937, p. 3.
31. Vargas, *op. cit.*, 1937, p. 15.
32. J. M. Barnadas studies the problem posed by the mines of Petosí in *Charcas 1535-1565*, (CIPCA: La Paz) p. 264f.; Silvio Zavala, *El servicio personal de los indios en el Perú*, (Colegio de Mexico, 1978).
33. Barnadas, *op. cit.*, pp 281-282.
34. Vargas, *op. cit.*, 1937, p. 87f. The document is not dated, but Vargas asserts that it is from 1562. Pérez Fernández discusses the problem and states that it must have been written immediately after March 14, 1564. See Pérez Fernández, *op. cit.*, 340, number 46.

35. The letter in which Fr. Domingo thanks the king for his nomination as bishop of Charcas and decides not to accept it is worthy of being read for the provincial's modesty and for his desire to continue struggling against the injustice which reigned in the Andes. See Lissón Chavez, op. cit., volume II, number 6, pp 213-214.
36. Concerning Toledo see the monumental work by Roberto Levillier. *Don Francisco de Toledo, supremo organizador del Perú, Su vida, su obra (1515-1582). Anos de andanza y de guerras (1515-1572)*, (Escapapa-Calpe: Madrid, 1935). But Pérez Fernández provides a masterful synthesis of what pertains to the consequences of his arrival in Peru for the Dominican province of St. John the Baptist. Pérez Fernández, op. cit. pp. 363-582.
37. *Garcí Diez de San Miquel en el año 1567. Visita hecha a la provincia de Chucuito por . . . Documentos regionales para la etnología y etnohistoria andinas*. Vol. I, tr. W. Espinosa Soriano, (Casa de la Cultura del Peru: Lima, 1964).
38. The documents of this "visit" were published in part in the documents of Garcí Diez de San Miquel (see note 37) and in *Historia y Cultura*, Number 4, 1970, entitled "Documentos sobre Chucuito." I published the document relating to the number of religious and priests who passed through the region of Chucuito from the conquest to 1572 in H. Urbano, "El escándalo de Chucuito y la primera evangelización de los Lupaqa (Perú). Nota en tomo a un documento inedito de 1574," in: *Cuadernos para la historia de la evangelización en América latina*, Volume 2, (1987), pp. 203-228.
39. There are several recent works on this topic : N. Meiklejohn, *La Iglesia y los Lupaqa de Chucuito durante la Colonia*. (Centro Las Casas: Cuzco, 1987); H. Urbano, "El escándalo de Chucuito y la primera evangelización de los Lupaqa (Perú)," in *Cuadernos para la historia de la evangelización en América latina*. Volume 2 (1987), pp. 203-228.
40. Lissón Chavez, op. cit., vol. II, number 9, (Seville, 1944), p. 653; complete documents from page 642 to 655.
41. Lissón Chavez, op. cit., vol. II, number 9, (Seville, 1944), p. 622.
42. Lissón Chavez, *Ibidem*. Of interest is the letter from Archbishop Loayza to the king regarding some of Toledo's decisions. In: Lissón Chavez, E., op. cit., vol. II, number 9, (Seville, 1944), document number 415, pp. 609-610.
43. Lissón Chavez, op. cit., vol. II, number 9, (Seville, 1944), p. 654.
44. Ruben Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios limenses*. (Lima, 1951-1954), 3 volumes; Francesco Leonardo Lisi, *El Tercer Concilio Limense y la aculturación de los indigenos sudamericanos (Acta salmanticensis, Estudios filológicos, 233: Salamanca, 1990)*.
45. Lissón Chavez, op. cit., vol. II, number 9, (Seville, 1944), p. 650.