

#### 14.25 Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: “On the Indians” (c.1547)

Englander 1997: 321–2

You should remember that authority and power are not only of one kind but of several varieties, since in one way and with one kind of law the father commands his children, in another the husband commands his wife, in another the master commands his servants, in another the judge commands the citizens, in another the king commands the peoples and human beings confined to his authority. . . . Although each jurisdiction may appear different, they all go back to a single principle, as the wise men teach. That is, the perfect should command and rule over the imperfect, the excellent over its opposite. . . .

The man rules over the woman, the adult over the child, the father over his children. That is to say, the most powerful and most perfect rule over the weakest and most imperfect. This same relationship exists among men, there being some who by nature are masters and others who by nature are slaves. Those who surpass the rest in prudence and intelligence, although not in physical strength, are by nature the masters. On the other hand those who are dim-witted and mentally lazy . . . are by nature slaves. It is just and useful that it is this way. We even see it sanctioned in divine law itself, for it is written in the Book of Proverbs: “He who is stupid will serve the wise man.” And so it is with the barbarous and inhumane people [the Indians]. . . . It will always be just and in conformity with natural law that such people submit to the rule of more cultured and human princes and nations. . . . Such being the case, you can well understand . . . if you know the customs and natures of the two peoples, that with perfect right the Spaniards rule over these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in wisdom, intelligence, virtue, and humanitas are as inferior to the Spaniards as infants to adults and women to men.

## 14.26 Bartolomé de las Casas: "On the Indians" (1552)

Englander 1997: 324-9

1. The Roman Pontiff . . . has the authority and the power of Christ himself, the Son of God, over all men in the world, believers or infidels, insofar as it necessary to guide and direct men to the end of eternal life and to remove any impediments to this goal. . . .
10. Among the infidels who have distant kingdoms that have never heard the tidings of Christ or received the faith, there are true kings and princes. Their sovereignty, dignity, and royal pre-eminence derive from natural law and the law of nations. . . . Therefore with the coming of Jesus Christ to such domains, their honors, royal pre-eminence, and so on, do not disappear in fact or in right.
11. The opinion contrary to [the above] is erroneous and most pernicious. He who persistently defends it will fall into formal heresy. It is likewise most impious and iniquitous and has been the cause of innumerable thefts, violent disturbances, tyrannies, massacres, larcenies, irreparable damages, the gravest sins, infamy, stench, and hatred against the name of Christ and the Christian religion. . . .
20. The kings of Castille are obligated by the Apostolic See and also by divine law to procure, to provide, and to send with all diligence qualified ministers to preach the faith everywhere, calling and inviting the people in the Indies to come to the wedding and banquet of Christ. . . .
22. The gospel should be preached peacefully, with love, charity, sweetness, and affection, with meekness and good example. The infidels, especially the Indians (who by nature are very gentle, humble, and peaceful) should be persuaded by gifts and presents, and nothing should be taken away from them. . . .
23. To conquer them first by war is contrary to the law, gentle yoke, light load, and sweetness of Jesus Christ. It is the same approach that Mohammed and the Romans followed when they disturbed and plundered the world. It is the same manner that the Turks and Moors have adopted today. . . . Therefore it is iniquitous, tyrannical, and infamous to the sweet name of Christ, causing infinite new blasphemies against the true God and against the Christian religion. And we have abundant evidence of the damage that this warlike approach has done and is still doing in the Indies. Since the Indians regard our God as the most cruel, unjust, and pitiless god of all, the conversion of the Indians has been hindered, and it has become impossible to convert infinite numbers of infidels. . . .
28. The Devil could invent no worse pestilence to destroy all that world and to kill all the people there . . . than the . . . institution used to distribute and entrust Indians to the Spaniards. This was like entrusting the Indians to a gang of devils or delivering herds of cattle to hungry wolves. [It] . . . was the most cruel sort of tyranny that can be imagined, and it is most worthy of infernal damnation.