**(6:21) De Las Casas and Sepúlveda Debate Treatment of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Questions**  1. What term does Sepúlveda use to describe the indigenous people of the Americas?  2. According to Sepúlveda, when are slavery and “booty” justified?  3. What does Sepúlveda recommend for governance in the Americas?  4. What evidence does De Las Casas offer to refute claims made by Sepúlveda?  5. If you were in the audience during this debate, what questions would you ask them?  6. Whose position do you agree with more? Why? | |  |
| **Theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda** | | **Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas** | |
| “The servitude contracted in a just war is legal, and the booty acquired becomes the rightful possession of the victor. But concerning these barbarians, the plight of the Indians defeated by Spanish arms in formally declared war is very different from the circumstances of those who, through prudence or fear, delivered themselves to the authority of the Christians. Just as in the former case the victorious prince may determine, according to his will and right and bearing the public good in mind, the fate of the vanquished, in the latter both civil laws and *jus gentium* (international law) would rule unjust to deprive the natives of their goods and to reduce them to slavery; it is, however, licit to keep them as stipendiaries and tributaries as befitting their nature and condition.”  “The nature of their governance over the barbarians must be such that the latter will not be given, through the granting of a degree of freedom unwarranted by their nature and condition, the opportunity to return to their primitive and evil ways; on the other hand, they must not be oppressed with harsh rule and servile treatment, for, tired of servitude and indignity, they may attempt to break the yoke to the peril of the Spaniards.” | | “Among our Indians of the western and southern shores (granting that we call them barbarians and that they are barbarians) there are important kingdoms, large numbers of people who live settled lives in a society, great cities, kings, judges, laws, persons who engage in commerce, buying, selling, lending, and the other contracts of the law of nations . . . Reverend Doctor Sepúlveda has spoken wrongly and viciously against peoples like these, either out of malice or ignorance . . . and therefore, has falsely and perhaps irreparably slandered them before the entire world? From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by others, except to be taught about the Catholic faith and to be admitted to the sacraments. They are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion and custom . . . Since, therefore, every nation by the eternal law has a ruler or prince, it is wrong for one nation to attack another under pretext of being superior in wisdom or to overthrow other kingdoms. For it acts contrary to the eternal law, as we read in Proverbs . . . ‘This is not an act of wisdom, but of great injustice and a lying excuse for plundering others.” | |