

THE INCA GARCILASO DE LA VEGA
HUMANIST
INTERPRETER OF THE INCA RELIGION

If the *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, published in 1609, for a long time enjoyed an authority and exceptional prestige, if this work created the image in the French 18th century of an ideally ordered, just and virtuous society, it was no doubt due more to the admirable skill with which Garcilaso presented an especially brilliant and fascinating picture of the civilization of his maternal ancestors, the lords of Peru, than to the title of Inca, in which he could take pride—as the son of a Peruvian princess and a noble Spanish conqueror—or to the fact that he witnessed the aftermath of the conquest and the fall of the empire. It was perhaps a too attractive picture, and toward the middle of the 19th century it raised some doubt and scepticism. The *Commentaries* were then considered to be a romanticized history of the Inca civilization, even a utopia pure and simple. Modern criticism has reversed this view. It has pointed out that

Translated by Victor A. Velen.

many facts in the book were valid, and that some were indisputable. Recent works¹ tend to revindicate in their conclusions the historical importance and the sincerity of Garcilaso, without denying in the process the stylization, idealization and prejudices of the book. The viewpoint of the erudite Peruvian scholar Porras Barrenechea is in this respect significant: "The image of the Inca Empire that Garcilaso projects," he writes, "is neither false nor deceptive. It is only one-sided. He gathered and related essentially favorable facts, those which exalted the memory of the lost empire and not which would have justified its disappearance..."²

And Porras notes that the tendency to apologize is evident in particular in the chapters dealing with religion. José de la Riva Agüero recognized, as early as 1910, that several of Garcilaso's assertions, such as of "monotheism," the absence of fetichism or animism, the non-existence of human sacrifice, are in contradiction to the almost unanimous testimonies of other chroniclers and that they could not withstand critical examination. Contemporary ethnologists also rarely refer to the *Commentaries* in treating the Inca religion, a religion which one of them, the late Alfred Métraux, defined in these terms: "The religion of the Incas, to the extent it is known to us, appears to be an amalgamation of naturalistic cults, elementary fetichism, animist beliefs, theological fancies and complex and refined rituals strongly tinged with magic."³ This global image is far removed from the image given by Garcilaso, as we will see. But we do not purpose to discuss here the historical value of the *Commentaries* in this regard. Garcilaso, perhaps more than others, agrees with Métraux who also speaks of those "Spanish chroniclers who are always ready to impute to the Indians their own motives." It is precisely Garcilaso's motives that

¹ A. Miro Quesada, *El Inca Garcilaso*, Lima, 1945; Porras Barrenechea, *El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega*, Lima, 1946; Luis E. Valcarcel, "Garcilaso y la etnografía del Peru" in *Nuevos Estudios sobre el Inca Garcilaso de la Vega*, Lima, 1955; J. Durand, "Garcilaso between the World of the Incas and that of Renaissance Concepts," in *Diogenes*, No. 43, Fall 1963.

² Porras Barrenechea, *op. cit.* p. 15.

³ A. Métraux, *Les Incas*, Le Seuil, 1961, p. 115.

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interest us here. We would like, after analyzing briefly the structures of the religious system in the *Commentaries*, to look for his sources of inspiration, not in the Peruvian tradition,⁴ but in European humanism of the 16th century.

I. THE INCA CULTS ACCORDING TO THE "COMMENTARIES"

If one compares the description of religion in the *Commentaries* with the one given by chroniclers who treated the same subject before Garcilaso, the most striking aspect is its coherence. The subject of religion is not dealt with only as an account, a linear and disconnected inventory of dogma and cult, but it is organized into a genuine system, in which the author attempts to establish an order, a hierarchy, and to interpret the diverse elements. On the other hand, as a result, this system cannot be considered apart by itself, but must be tied, in order to give it its full meaning, to the ternary and gradualist conception of history which gives the work its orientation.

Gradualism, providentialism, messianism.

Garcilaso assumes three successive stages, *three ages* in the history of Peru: 1) the first age was that which preceded the accession of the Inca dynasty, in the course of which the Indians, deprived of political and spiritual guides, lived as barbarians and were addicted to the most abject idolatrous cults. They worshipped many base idols and practiced human sacrifice; 2) the second age was the age of the Incas, who reformed morals and taught the worship of the Sun; the third and final age was that of the Spanish conquest and colonization; it represented the happy conclusion of the Peruvian historical process, the perfect achievement, to the extent that this period was the period of the Christianization. Although the history of this third age is not dealt with in the *Commentaries* (it was to be treated in the sequel, *General History of Peru*), it must be

⁴ The religious historiography of Peru, prior to the *Commentaries*, is sometimes a tributary itself of European humanism, in varying degrees. One thinks of Las Casas (*Apologetic History*) and of Acosta (*Natural and Moral History of the Indies*).

taken very much into account because the second age acquires all of its cultural and religious significance in terms of this crowning age. The age of the Incas, in fact, providentially prepared the way for the advent of faith, and this Garcilaso expresses very clearly at the beginning of the book (I, LX and I, XV).

Manco Capac, the first Inca, the founder of the dynasty, appears as a messiah, a redeemer. His father the Sun, moved to pity by the moral and material distress of the Indians, sent him to Cuzco, the center of the Peruvian world, in company with his sister Mama Ocllo: "Our Father the Sun, seeing humans such as those I have described to you, took pity on them, and sent from heaven to earth a son and a daughter in order to instruct them in the knowledge of Our Father the Sun, so that they could worship him and hold him for God" (I, IX).

The idolatry of the first age.

The religion taught by Manco Capac is first explained in relationship to that of the first age. In the early chapters Garcilaso depicts the Indians, addicted to the most abominable vices, practising incest, sodomy, cannibalism and human sacrifice. The multiplicity and the nature of the idols that they worshipped bear witness to the baseness of their religion; the meanest worshipped plants, flowers, trees; others, mountains and stones; still others, animals—jaguars, pumas and bears; others, who had more sense, made a cult of rivers and springs... But all were given over body and soul to the devil.

The spiritual conquest of Peru.

Manco Capac attempts first to extirpate these various forms of idol-worship, preferably through persuasion, and to preach the gospel of the Sun. Garcilaso imputes a genuine sermon to the first Inca. "On the other hand he opened their eyes to the lowness and ignominy of their multiple gods. What aid, what succor could they expect from such vile creatures? Had they received from these animals favors comparable to those which

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they received every day from their Father the Sun? He asked them to consider, for one look would be enough to undeceive them, that it was the sun which gave life to all these herbs, plants, trees and everything they worshipped, in order to serve man and to feed animals. Take note of the gulf, he said, that separates the brightness and the beauty of the Sun and the filth, the ugliness of the toad, the lizard and all these beasts that you take for gods. Are they not more likely to inspire disgust and horror than to be worthy of respect?" (II, XVI)

As he is dying, Manco Capac charges his son Sinchi Roca with "the conversion of the Indians to the knowledge and worship of the Sun" (II, XVI). And all his successors were to respect his religious testament. Every time an Inca wanted to conquer a province, he first addressed an ultimatum to the enemy chiefs inviting them to embrace the religion of the Sun. This procedure is repeated monotonously throughout the book. The majority of the foreign tribes easily let themselves be persuaded. Others had the religion of the Sun imposed on them by force of arms.

Idolatry of the Sun, a cult of worship.

Garcilaso writes that the Incas held the Sun (*Inti*) "to be the supreme god, sole and universal, whose light and warmth gave life to all things on earth" (VI, XX). We note that the Sun is not thought of as a creative god, and moreover that the expression "sole god" (*único dios*) has here the sense of "sole idol." The Sun was their only *visible* divinity, one reads again in various places; and when the author describes the interior of the temple of the Sun at Cuzco, he specifies that outside of the golden disk which represented *Inti* "they had no other idol." Thus, according to Garcilaso, the idolatry *stricto sensu* of the Incas is limited to the cult of the Sun. This idolatry is characterized: 1) by the concrete (visible) nature of its object; 2) by a cult of worship; 3) by the existence of temples erected to the idol; 4) by the existence of sacrifices offered to it. *Inti* was worshipped in several sumptuous temples, such as the *Cori-cancha* at Cuzco or the temple of Titicaca. These temples contained "incredible riches." The festival of the Sun, the *Inti-*

Raymi on the June solstice, was celebrated with extraordinary brilliance and ceremonial; the people fasted for three days before the festivity. The priests sacrificed numerous lamas on this occasion...⁵

Cults of veneration.

The Moon, although both sister and wife of the Sun, did not have divine rank: "They did not worship her as a goddess, they did not offer her sacrifices, nor did they erect a temple to her. She was deeply revered as a universal mother, but they did not go further in their idolatry" (II, I). However, a hall was consecrated to her in the *Cori-cancha*: "the women went there to call on the Moon and to request her protection, since they considered her to be the wife and sister of the Sun, the mother of the Incas and of all their descendants." (III, XXI). The mummies of the queens were placed at each side of the silver plaque sculptured with a woman's face, representing the Moon.

The cult of the Moon and the dead queens thus exactly paralleled the cult of the Sun and the dead kings, with the difference that it was a cult of veneration and not of worship, a cult of *dulia* and not of *latria*.

In addition to the Moon, her servants, the stars, were venerated, and a hall, next to that of their mistress, was also consecrated to them. "They said that the stars walked in the sky next to the Moon, as her servants, and not with the Sun, for they are seen by *night* and not by *day*" (III, XXI).

The sun had his servants as well: lightning, thunder and thunderbolts, all three designated by the name *illapa*; the rainbow, which the Incas adopted for their coat of arms; and finally the star Venus, the "page" of the sun.

Next in line to these celestial bodies, the Indians venerated a multitude of objects, very different from each other, under the generic term of *huacas*, by which one could mean a mountain, figurines, sacrificial objects or curiosities of nature. Garcilaso admits that this word, in the sense of *quechua*, could have meant

⁵ On the sacrifices to the Sun, see II, VIII. On the other festivals of the Sun, see VII, V and VII, VI.

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idol, but he hastens to add that the subjects of the Incas did not look to the *huacas* as idols—contrary to their ancestors of the first age—, that they only venerated certain sacred qualities in them. Thus, Cuzco, the capital of the empire, was itself *huaca*.

Deism. Pachacamac.

While the Incas in fact worshipped only one god, the Sun, they also conceived of a supreme God, so different from the Sun that Garcilaso did not contradict himself in writing of the monolatry of the Incas: "For they had only *two* gods, who were *Pachacamac*, invisible and unknown, and the Sun, visible and known." *Pachacamac* was more an abstract principle than a god. "They said that *Pachacamac* was the one who animated and assured the functioning of the universe, but they did not know him, since they had never seen him and for this reason they built no temples to him and offered him no sacrifices; and yet they worshipped him devoutly (that is, in their minds), and looked upon him as an unknown God" (II, II).

The concept of *Pachacamac* was discovered through logical reflection, by the exercise of natural reason (*lumbre natural*). Having thus elevated their thought to this concept, the Incas vaguely caught sight of the true God: "The Inca kings and their *amautas*, who were their philosophers, perceived (*rastrearon*) through natural reasoning the true God, our Lord, who created heaven and earth...and they called him *Pachacamac*" (II, II).

Garcilaso appears to attribute this deism mainly to the aristocracy, the elite, rather than to the mass of Indians. One could determine in the course of the history of the dynasty an evolution of the most enlightened minds, who, since the time of Manco Capac, had been fervent believers in *Pachacamac* and the Sun, but who began as time went by to question the foundations of the latter cult to the exclusive profit of the deism of *Pachacamac*. The Inca Tupac Yupanqui was thus believed to have questioned the supremacy of the Sun. He is believed to have said, "Inti is not free; he is like an arrow which one sends where one wishes it to go, and which cannot go where it wants" (VIII, VIII). And the next-to-last Inca,

Huayna Capac, exclaimed, "Well then, I say that our Father the Sun must have a master greater and more powerful than himself. A master who orders him to take this course that he follows every day without stopping: otherwise he would stop from time to time in order to rest at his leisure..." (IX, X).

Garcilaso evidently intended to emphasize the consciousness of this relationship of cause to effect between what is moving and what is being moved when, for the interpretation of the word *Pachacamac* generally given by earlier chroniclers (*Pachacamac*: the creator of the world), he substituted this semantic analysis: "The word is composed of *pacha*, the world, the universe, and *camac*, the present participle of the verb *cama*, which means to animate, this verb being derived from the noun *cama*, which is the soul. Pachacamac means: he who gives animation to the universe, and, more exactly and completely, he who does for the universe what the soul does for the body" (II, II).

This description of the Inca religion—or rather its main cults—according to the *Commentaries*, calls for some observations. It is significant, in the first place, that no trace of animism or fetichism is found in any of these cults, that they all escape the devil, when the devil appeared so frequently in the writing of earlier historiographers. The author informs us that the Incas always had pure intentions and a spontaneous aversion to evil. "They called the demon Zupay, which means devil, and when they pronounced his name, they first spat on the ground as a sign of malediction" (*Ibid*). And if Garcilaso sometimes admits the existence of certain demoniac rites, he immediately leads us to believe that those who practiced them were not to blame, but were rather the hapless victims of the enemy of men.

It was nonetheless a form of idolatry—Garcilaso does not deny it—that was particularly evident in the cult of the Sun, a visible, concrete idol, an object of the kind of worship owed only to God. But this idolatry itself (and its extensions, the cults of veneration) is given to creatures most worthy of admiration, respect and gratitude for the benefits which they dispense. If Garcilaso writes that this religion of the celestial bodies had been revealed by the first Inca, he clearly invites us not to take this myth literally, no more than that of the redeeming

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mission of Manco Capac, even if in a more general, more literary perspective he attributes the civilizing and religious contribution of the Incas to the designs of Providence. Hence it follows implicitly from his account of the Inca religion that it could only have been invented, protected from demoniac inspiration, through thoughtful contemplation of the miracles of nature.

II. THE INCA CULTS AND CHRISTIAN HUMANISM

Let us now consider, looking at some examples, what this religious system owes to the theological conceptions of European humanism.

The example of Saint Augustine.

In his *Civitas Dei* Saint Augustine, to show the superiority of Christianity over the religion of the Romans, which he reproached for its polytheism (*turba deorum*) and the character of its gods and cults, which he judged, according to the case, to be criminal, scandalous, unworthy or ridiculous. He also reproached the Romans for having chosen their gods and their cults, not according to reason, but through some aberration or under the influence of the devil.

Garcilaso transposes this criticism of paganism, as seen "by an outsider,"⁶ applying it to the first age of Peruvian idol-worship. The process is identical: the same polytheism, the same immorality of the gods and the cults, the same irrational choice of the latter, and the same devotion to the devil.

However, Saint Augustine admitted there were positive elements in the religion of the Ancients, namely, those that were derived from "natural theology." He recognized that the philosophers, particularly the Platonists, had understood the ordering of nature and had concluded that there must indisputably be a primary cause: "They saw that what is changeable is not the sovereign God; and it is for this reason that, in searching for

⁶ Jacques Perret, "Vue d'ensemble sur les livres VI-XI" in vol. II of *La Cité de Dieu*, Paris, Garnier, 1960. We refer always to the Garnier edition.

God, they looked beyond any mutable soul or spirit" (VII, VI). But before the Platonists, Varro, the author of the *Divine Antiquities*, had vaguely conceived of the true God (*Unum tamen deum colendum esse censuerit*): "This same author, so penetrating and learned, also says that the one who only appears to understand what God is regards him as a soul that rules the universe through motion and reason. Believing this, he does not yet possess the full truth, for the true God is not a soul; he is the author, the creator of the soul" (IV, XXXI).

Garcilaso projects these positive aspects of the religion of the Ancients, this natural theology into the second age of Peruvian worship, whose gods and cults presuppose a rational choice. At the highest level the *amautas*, just as Varro, conceived of (*rastrearon*) the true God, mirrored in their *Pachacamac*, who also "rules the universe through motion." And when Tupac Yupanqui and Huayna Capac contest the supremacy of the Sun, seeing in *Pachacamac* the sole master who commands motion, when they express this conviction without so much as denying the popular cult of the Sun, do they not manifest the same intelligence but also the same hesitations as Varro, of whom Saint Augustine said: "He does not hesitate to admit that if he could reconstitute the city, he would consecrate and name the gods after the norms of nature. Nevertheless, if Varro had been able to disengage himself from the prejudices of tradition, he would have professed and taught the cult of one, sole God, who governs the universe through motion and reason" (*Ibid.*).

But Tupac Yupanqui and Huayna Capac, au fond, placed themselves on a religious level above that of Varro. In fact their popular cults, their monolatry, were not unworthy; they were derived from natural theology, since they had been selected "from natural models" and since this choice had been perfectly judicious. Did not Saint Augustine also say that God had "made the Sun as the most magnificent of material light and given it a practical form and brilliance?"

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Latria and dulia.

Evidently Garcilaso did not have to read Saint Augustine in order to distinguish between the concepts of latria and dulia. But neither can we disregard the fact that many chapters of *Civitas Dei* deal with this problem and that their author defines these concepts in terms that are often found in the *Commentaries*. Saint Augustine takes care to specify that only the *invisible* God may be worshipped, that no sacrifices may be made to the saints, nor should temples be built to them, that one must honor only the servants of God: "In front of these monuments to martyrs, the sacrifice is offered only to God, who had made them men and martyrs and had associated them with the heavenly glory of the holy angels." In conformance with this definition, Garcilaso modifies the goal of seemingly animist cults of the *huacas* when he writes, with regard to one of their varieties, the *apachectas* (small stone mounds that the Indians raised on top of mountains, for propitiatory purposes), that, in honoring them, the Peruvians intended only to give thanks to *Pachacamac* (II, IV).

Would the Incas of Garcilaso have been able to adopt as their own the declaration of the bishop of Hippo, on condition however that the word *martyrs* be replaced by *Moon*, and the word *thunder* by *huaca*...and that the term *pagans* be understood as the barbarians of the first age of idol-worship? "We neither honor our *martyrs* with divine honors, nor human crimes as the *pagans* do their gods. We do not offer sacrifices to them nor do we transform their turpitudes into religious festivities" (VIII, XXVII).

Luis of Granada and the hierarchy of creatures.

The heir of the Platonists and Stoics, Luis of Granada, endeavours to show in the *Introduction to the Symbol of Faith* (1582) how divine Providence stands out among the marvels of creation and how contemplation of the order of creation and of the hierarchy of creatures leads to their understanding in principle. He distinguishes various degrees of perfection in nature; the creatures are divided according to an ascending order that

proceeds from the simple to the complex, from the immobile to the moving and the motivator, from the imperfect to the perfect. Garcilaso conforms to this order when he enumerates the various divinities worshipped from the first age to *Pachacamac*.

The Sun occupies the first place in the main world of Luis of Granada: "The Sun is the most excellent of the corporeal creatures; it bears many resemblances to its creator" (II, IV, III). Garcilaso uses the same term *excellence* with regard to the Sun, and as Luis of Granada, in its etymological sense (II, I and II, XIX).

Luis of Granada took recourse to two other arguments in order to prove the existence of God: one is the aesthetic order, the other is the pragmatic order. Contemplation of the harmony of creation and the beauty of creatures, on the one hand, the conscience of the benefits bestowed on men by nature on the other, lead to the recognition and, from there, to love of the Creator.⁷

Garcilaso uses these two arguments in his *Commentaries*, against the religion of the barbarians of the first age and to defend that of the Incas. It will be recalled that Manco Capac, referring to the aesthetic argument, invited a comparison of the beauty and the brilliance of the Sun with the ugliness and filth of the toad or lizard, the idols of the pre-Peruvians. So far as the pragmatic argument is concerned, he justified, as we have seen, the majority of the Inca cults.

The theme of the redemption.

Finally, in its apologetic perspective, the *Introduction* attributes primordial importance to the dogma of the redemption. We have seen that our apology of the Inca religion transposed this dogma

⁷ The apologetic of Luis of Granada makes use of and develops the arguments (from cause to effect, pragmatic, aesthetic) of Stoic theology represented by the *De Natura Deorum*, of Cicero, in which it can be seen that the idea of god in the mind of men derives essentially from "the regularity of motion, the revolution of the heavens, the distinction between the sun, moon and all the stars, their utility, their beauty, their order; the sight of similar objects in itself shows sufficiently that they are not due to chance..." (translated from II, V, in *Les Stoiciens*, Bibl. de la Pléiade, p. 414).

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within the framework of a fabulous, poetic and conventional theology. But Garcilaso closely follows Luis of Granada. The civilizing work of Manco Capac was exercised in four areas: 1) the extirpation of primitive idolatry; 2) the predication of the religion of the Sun; 3) the reform of morals; 4) the diffusion of this triply beneficent influence from Cuzco, the center of the world. We have listed here the services of Manco Capac, without deviating from the *Commentaries*, in the order in which Luis of Granada lists the "labors" (*hazañas*) of Christ. We will also see that the work of Manco Capac appears as a simulacrum, as the providential prolegomena of the work of the son of God, whose mission, according to Luis of Granada, was: 1) to rid the earth of the blasphemy of idolatry; 2) to lead men to the knowledge of the true God; 3) to reform man's morals; 4) to subject the head of the world, that is, Rome and its emperor, to religion and its kingdom" (*Introduction*, IV, X and XI). Furthermore Garcilaso himself speaks of the *hazañas* of Manco Capac (I, XVII).⁸

⁸ We obviously do not claim that Saint Augustine and Luis of Granada were Garcilaso's only European sources. The Inca could just as well have first had recourse to the lessons of Plato, whose ideal republic hardly left any place for irrational myths or indecent cults. For Plato, the quarrels and passions of the gods were incompatible with the order and harmony that reign in the just State. We should point out that the *Commentaries* try precisely to give the image of a just and harmonious state from which base and ignorant cults would be excluded. We should also point out that, for Plato, the philosopher constructing the ideal city would substitute the imperfect gods conceived in the image of man by the idea of Good, represented by the Sun in a visible world. The Incas Tupac Yupanqui and Huayna Capac undertook a revision, analogous to an imperfect, poetic and civil theology, according to Garcilaso, by according—just as Plato did—the greatest importance to the idea of first cause.

Garcilaso, on the other hand, takes from the utopian thought of the Renaissance, also nourished by Plato and Saint Augustine. In this respect, we should not ignore the influence that could have been exerted on the Inca by Thomas More's *Utopia* (1510), which abolished private property and conceived—in the last chapter—of a religion not dissimilar to that of the *Commentaries*. At least Garcilaso's idea of the two ages of idolatry, which foresaw the advent of the third age, that of Christ, may be found in it. The first age would correspond to the enlightened idolatry of the Incas: "Some worship the Sun, others deify the Moon or some other planet. Some venerate as a supreme god a man whose glory and virtue once had a particularly strong impact," More wrote; he too followed the current of Platonist thought. The second age would correspond to

But these few examples suffice to show the debt that the Inca Garcilaso owed to certain humanist theology of his time. In conformance with the criteria of this theology, he adapted to the Inca religion the rational structures of the best religion of non-believers that could be imagined by the Spanish Catholics of the 16th century. By reflecting in their cults the harmony of the universe, the laws governing this universe, the monarchs of Cuzco could have attained the highest moral and intellectual level that could be reached by men who lacked the illumination of the Revelation. For they could still have superimposed the concept of first cause, of a prime mover, the deism of *Pachacamac*, on the monolatry of the Sun, which already represented appreciable progress in cosmogonic thought. Monolatry and deism, far from contradicting each other, were thus supposed to be situated on the same ascending spiritual line and were to have marked, within the Inca age, two successive phases of philosophical thought in the elaboration of a natural religion. Thus the Incas are supposed to have reached the frontier of God, by their own means and thanks to Providence.

the natural religion established by the *amautas* and the Inca sovereigns, with the belief, according to More, in "a sole God, eternal, immense, unknown, inexplicable, beyond the perceptions of the human mind, filling the whole world with his omnipotence and not with his corporeal size." The sage Utopus plays the role of a religious reformer comparable to that of Manco Capac, with this difference—certainly important—that he decreed religious freedom and proscribed all proselytism. Utopus thus envisaged that the third age—the advent of faith—would be realized, not by following an "authoritarian evangelization but by the moral prestige of the story of Christ's life."

This comparison is all the more interesting since More made of his Raphael Hitlody, the inventor of Utopia, a former friend of Americo Vespucci on his first voyages. Thus More's *Utopia*, inspired by the first American discoveries, would find its historical confirmation in the *Commentaries*. We could from here conclude, with L. A. Arocena, that: "Garcilaso found, or believed he found, in the traditions of the Inca empire all the most audacious constructions that Renaissance humanism invented. Thus...he was able to show the conquerors that in overthrowing the secular throne of the sons of the Sun, they had in a way destroyed their own dream." (A. Arocena, *El Inca Garcilaso y el humanismo renacentista*, Buenos Aires, 1949).

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Garcilaso's particular motivations.

There can be no doubt that Garcilaso carefully organized his system in order to prove that the Indians of Peru were especially capable of receiving the faith because of the enlightened action of their kings, and that the religious system then contributes to supporting the apologetic thesis of the book. Still we must examine the reasons that prompted Garcilaso to construct such a minutely organized apologetic mechanism. It seems that in addition to a sentimental motive—a pious wish to dignify the memory of his maternal ancestors—there were motives of a political character that should not be ignored.

In fact, the *Commentaries* developed apologetic theses opposed to those that had been propagated on the same subjects by the group known as "Toledista." Francisco de Toledo, viceroy of Peru from 1569 to 1582, adopted a Draconian policy with regard to the descendants of the dynasty, whose existence he considered to be a permanent danger; his policy culminated in the execution of the last Inca, Tupac Amaru, in the square of Cuzco, in 1572. The research on the Inca past (*Informaciones*) ordered by Toledo, the *History of the Incas* by Sarmiento de Gamboa, inspired by him, endeavoured to show—in answer to the accusations of Las Casas⁹—that the Inca kings had been usurpers and bloodthirsty tyrants, that their succession was illegitimate, and that their religion was of the basest kind, composed of ignoble and inhuman practices, etc. It would follow from this, according to the legal standards of a Francisco de Vitoria, that the descendants of these kings could not have the least pretension to a title of sovereignty over Peru. Consequently, the Spanish viceroyalty considered itself in the right to dispose at will of the titles and property of the heirs of the dynasty.

Garcilaso, in correspondance conducted with Peruvians, friends of the Jesuits who remained in contact with the missions of Peru—and the Jesuits did have a bone to pick with Toledo—could not ignore the existence and character of the colonial

⁹ Las Casas, who contested the rights of Spain over Peru, went so far as to demand that the Crown reconstitute the country to the legitimate descendants of the Inca Huayna Capac. (*Treatise on the Twelve Peruvian Questions*, 1564).

policies of the viceroy, which moreover concerned him directly. His relatives, mestizes of royal blood, had been condemned to exile, while he was returning from the Alpujarras expedition in which he took part in the battle against the Moors under the banner of the king of Spain. His bitterness might be imagined all the more, since after having for a long time and uselessly solicited duties and honors by right of his father, the conqueror Garcilaso de la Vega, any hope that he could have nourished for honors by right of his mother, the princess Chimpu Occlo, were thereafter destroyed by Toledo. And what is more, the Inca no longer even had the right to set his foot in his Peruvian homeland.

And everything evolves as though Garcilaso had found in European humanism the strength and the resources to generalize, and thereby sublimate, his personal griefs and to appoint himself as the interpreter, the literary ambassador of his unfortunate co-religionaries in the hope that he could perhaps contribute by his book toward improving their status and fate.¹⁰ For this it was first necessary to rehabilitate the cultural and political history of the dynasty that had been calumniated by the Toledistas. The *Commentaries* were this *Defense and Illustration*.

Each of the major theses of the book, in fact, take the opposite side of one of Toledo's arguments. To the Toledista version of the cruel and illegitimate conquests of the Incas is opposed the concept of paternalistic and civilizing conquests. To the Toledista affirmation that the Inca succession was illegitimate, Garcilaso answers that it was legitimate. The accusations of bestiality (cannibalism, sodomy, human sacrifice, etc.), which appeared in the writing of Sarmiento de Gamboa, are relegated to a shadowy pre-Inca past, to the first historic age of Peru, and the Incas are exonerated of them. But the masterpiece of this defense is the religious system that Garcilaso attributes to the Incas.

For it permits him to transcend the discussion by situating it no longer only on the juridico-historical level, but on the level of Providence, of which the Incas were the instruments. Their conquests were first of all spiritual conquests in order

¹⁰ Cf. last chapter of *Commentaries*.

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to propagate the religion of the Sun and the deism of *Pachacamac*, necessary stages on the road to God. To the Toledistas, who did not hesitate to affirm that the indigenous zeal of Las Casas was animated directly by the devil, Garcilaso replies by crowning his own indigenous thesis with the halo of divine approval. This indirect sanctification of the dynasty is finally the best apologetic argument of the *Commentaries*. As we have tried to show, Garcilaso could not have conveniently supported this thesis without recourse to the known data of a Christian humanism of Platonic and Stoic inspiration.