

**BARTOLOMEU DE LAS CASAS: THE ART OF RHETORIC AND EDUCATION BY  
EXAMPLE**

***BARTOLOMEU DE LAS CASAS: A ARTE DA ORATÓRIA E A EDUCAÇÃO PELO  
EXEMPLO***

***BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS: EL ARTE DE LA ORATORIA Y LA EDUCACIÓN POR  
EL EJEMPLO***

Christina Aparecida SANTOS<sup>1</sup>  
José Joaquim Pereira MELO<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The conquest and colonization of America between the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> have been marked by conflicts between the Old and New World. In the midst of such tensions and with the relevant participation of Bartolomé de las Casas, a type of education had to be found to introduce and catechize the American native into a supposed civilization. The Dominican friar's proposal insisted that the preacher would be the person directly responsible for the process of Christianization/formation and he should have specific features to perform his task well, namely, a good rhetoric, an exemplary life, meekness, love and sweetness. In his book *The Only Way* (c. 1550, 1942), Las Casas prepared a handbook of pedagogical guidelines for the friars of the Order of Preachers, based on the idea that the American native was endowed with reason and could be Christianized in a peaceful way, which was incompatible with the conquistadores' modes and activities. Current paper analyzes how Las Casas understood the task of the preacher and the characteristics he considered necessary to comply with the novel needs, especially Christianization/formation and the submission of the Native American at that specific instance.

**KEYWORDS:** Bartolomeu de las Casas. Preacher. American Native. Education by example.

**RESUMO:** *O processo de conquista e de colonização da América, ocorrido entre os finais do século XV e o início do século XVI, foi marcado por conflitos entre o Velho e o Novo Mundo. Em meio às tensões, com a importante participação de Bartolomeu de Las Casas, buscava-se equalizar um modo educativo para conduzir a suposta civilização do nativo americano e sua catequização. Na proposta desse frei dominicano, o mestre pregador seria o responsável direto pelo processo de cristianização/formação, devendo, para desempenhar sua função, ter características bem específicas: boa oratória, vida exemplar, mansidão, amor e doçura. Em seu livro *Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião* (1942), Las Casas elaborou uma espécie de manual com orientações pedagógicas para os freis da Ordem de São Domingos, fundamentando-se na concepção de que o nativo tinha racionalidade e, portanto, poderia ser cristianizado por meios pacíficos, o que era incompatível com as ações dos*

<sup>1</sup> University of Maringá (UEM), Maringá – PR – Brazil. Professor in the Science Department. Doctorate in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4746-166X>. E-mail: [christinaas20@gmail.com](mailto:christinaas20@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> University of Maringá (UEM), Maringá – PR – Brazil. Professor at the Department of Educational Foundations and the Graduate Program in Education. Doctorate in History. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0743-8000>. E-mail: [pereirameloneto@hotmail.com](mailto:pereirameloneto@hotmail.com)

colonizadores. Neste artigo, o objetivo é analisar o modo como Las Casas entendia o trabalho do mestre pregador e as características que ele considerava necessárias para que este pudesse atender às novas necessidades, sobretudo, as da cristianização/formação e submissão do nativo americano naquele momento.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Bartolomeu de Las Casas. Mestre pregador. Nativo. Educação pelo exemplo.

**RESUMEN:** El proceso de la conquista y de la colonización de América, ocurrido entre el final del siglo XV y el inicio del siglo XVI, fue marcado por conflictos entre el Viejo y el Nuevo Mundo. En medio a las tensiones, con la importante participación de Bartolomé de las Casas, se buscó ecualizar un modo educativo para conducir la supuesta civilización del nativo americano y su catequización. En la propuesta de este fray dominicano, el maestro pregonero sería el responsable directo por el proceso de cristianización/formación, y debiera, para desempeñar su función, tener las características muy específicas: buena oratoria, vida ejemplar, mansedumbre, amor y dulzura. En su libro *El único modo de atraer a todos los pueblos a la verdadera religión* (1550, 1942), Las Casas elaboró una especie de manual de orientaciones pedagógicas para los frailes de la Orden de Santo Domingo, en el que se fundamenta en la concepción de que el nativo tenía la racionalidad y, por lo tanto, podría ser cristianizado por los medios pacíficos, lo que era incompatible con las acciones de los colonizadores. En este artículo, el objetivo es analizar el modo como Las Casas entendía el trabajo del maestro pregonero y las características que él consideraba necesarias para que este pudiera atender a las nuevas necesidades, sobretudo, a las de la cristianización/formación y sumisión del nativo americano en aquel momento.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Bartolomé de las Casas. Maestro pregonero. Nativo. Educación por el ejemplo.

## Introduction

The conquest and colonization of America, which took place between 1492 and 1556, was one of the most important events in modern history. The contact between the Old World and the New World was conflictive and tense, especially because it involved the encounter of very different people in terms of social, cultural, and religious organization.

With the justification of taking the Christian faith to the discovered territories and presenting it as a divine mission, the colonizers, in search of gold and other riches, invaded the lands where the natives lived and subjugated them, using armed violence. The process was not without resistance, but because of the different way of waging war, the rudimentary weapons with which the natives faced firearms and even bacteriological weapons, the result was a true genocide.

Supposing themselves superior, the Spaniards wondered about the nature of the natives, who were often perceived as irrational and uncivilized beings. Were they men? Did they have

the capacity to learn? How to "civilize" them? How to Christianize them? The way they were conceived was the basis of their actions. Thus, to consider the natives irrational beings justified the war unleashed for their submission, Christianization, and obtaining riches, as had occurred during the Reconquista period, between 718 and 1492.

However, others understood the natives as rational beings. On this side, Bartolomeu de Las Casas stands out<sup>3</sup>, a Dominican friar who, since his conversion, has dedicated himself to defend the rationality of the natives and to propose a different way of treating and Christianizing/training these men.

In 1513, after listening to a sermon by the Dominican Antonio de Montesinos (1475-1540), Las Casas started to affirm that the evangelical message was in disagreement with the violence adopted in the process of conquest and colonization, defending since then the rationality of the natives and a peaceful way for their Christianization and submission. With a dissenting voice, he acted in a significant way, writing treatises, letters, and opuses containing appeals to the crown and denunciations of the abuses committed by the colonizers.

In 1542, he elaborated a pedagogical manual for the religious of his order and attributed significant importance to the preaching master, who would be the main responsible for the Christianization and submission of the natives. Besides advising him to use good oratory to attract the natives, he proposed a way of Christianization/training based on love, gentleness, and meekness. At the same time, he warned that the teacher should adopt an "upright life", educating by example.

### **The Christianization/Formation Mode and the Master Preacher**

The way of Christianization/formation proposed by Las Casas was based on the defense of native rationality and divine brotherhood. Being children of the same God as the Europeans, the natives would have rational conditions to assimilate and give their assent to the teachings of the faith. For that, it was necessary to attract their will, give them time, freedom. Because of their natural propensity for the good, they could understand what was proposed as worthy of belief: “[...] that the intelligence of those who have to be instructed in the Christian faith and religion should be convinced with reasons; that, by reflection and investigation, it seems good and useful to acquiesce or assent to this part” (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 67).

---

<sup>3</sup> Born in Sevilla, in 1474. Religious, theologian, bishop of Chiapas, Mexico, he was a defender of the Native Americans. He went to America in 1502 as a cleric, obtaining land and natives. He made numerous trips to Spain, always trying to defend them before the Spanish Court. Disappointed, he returned definitively to Spain in 1547, where he continued to defend the Native Americans. He died in Madrid in 1566.

In his proposal, he considered indispensable the tireless work and commitment of the master preacher, who should have specific attributes to accomplish such a difficult task.

In his reflections, Las Casas based himself on the *Theological Summaries* of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), especially in his discussions on faith and reason and on the process of understanding and assimilation of Christian truths. For Thomas Aquinas, reason and faith were closely related and complemented each other. By natural reason, he understood the capacity by which man raises his spirit to the truths he needs to attain. At the same time, he pondered that, supported only by this capacity, man would not be able to reach his epistemological objectives, that is, to reach the higher truths, the divine truth, and should therefore request the acquiescence of faith. God Himself, in His supreme generosity, would meet man, welcome him and help him in his limitations, creating the conditions for his elevation to the realms of higher truths.

For Thomas Aquinas, the relationship between reason and faith, philosophy and theology, did not refer only to man's journey towards God: it embraced the very construction of knowledge, whose fullness would only be realized when man reached the supreme truths. Even though they were distinct instances, philosophy and theology were indispensable: on the one hand, the conquest of the knowledge of divine truths indicated that the epistemological objective had reached good terms; on the other hand, such objective was not a mere speculative cutout, but corresponded to a religious experience with transcendence.

Considering the affinity between the two knowledges, he emphasized the direction of philosophy towards theology and the mutual relationship between them, but, in the scale of importance, theology would be in a higher position. From this perspective, the acceptance of the truths of faith that went beyond the logic of philosophy claimed the effectiveness of faith. If the wise man were satisfied with natural light alone, which meant the denial of faith, he would hinder his epistemological journey. The knowledge sponsored by theology did not diverge from that which was assimilated through reason, that is, it went towards philosophy. In this dynamic relationship between reason and faith, in this process of interaction, the fullness of knowledge of the truths of the sacred would be realized. Therefore, theology was evidenced as the last scale of the speculative exercise, showing the reach of divine truth, as well as the premises that affirmed philosophical knowledge (MELO, 2019, p. 86-87).

With such a foundation, Las Casas argued that the learning process happened in two ways, one, called the natural way, and the other, the voluntary way (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 70). In the first, knowledge was driven by the object itself, which would be evident by itself or would become evident through demonstration, as it happened with science. In the second, called by him voluntary, the intelligence would give its assent not because it was moved by the object

itself, but because, by choice, it would voluntarily incline towards learning. It is in this second mode that the Dominican places the knowledge of the Christian faith.

As the object of knowledge was not self-evident, the master preacher would have to attract the native's will, which would make the intelligence determine to accept it, even if it did not recognize it as evident. That is why men, including natives, should, according to the Dominican, be considered rational, because they are able to voluntarily and deliberately reason about the truths presented (LAS CASAS, 2005). The master preacher was responsible for activating this will to believe:

Man, therefore, needs someone to activate him, a guide or preacher who leads him to believe from the outside through instruction, through the presentation or development of the truths worthy of faith; and with reasoning based, with examples, with similarities, as if pointing with his finger and almost describing and imprinting in the mind what should be believed (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 87).

To reaffirm the importance of the master preacher, he argued that God could suffice, but preferred to rely on men for the mission of evangelization:

[...] could be enough, if God wanted it; however, by common law, at least in the case of adults, it is necessarily required the external teaching, instruction, narration, exposition, explanation or explanation of what one has to believe, so that every adult receives faith and obtains salvation (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 87).

Having received the instruction and the presentation of the things of faith, the natives would reason and give their assent; they would understand that it was the truth itself, which, according to the Dominican, was God. Because of their natural propensity to goodness, the natives would understand that what was proposed was good and pleasing to them, and therefore desired and acceptable. In this formulation, the conception of the native as a good savage is implicit. That is, Las Casas shared the mythical vision of the American man, disseminated in Europe in the early days of the discoveries. To the people found in these lands was attributed every kind of goodness, ingenuity, purity.

The concept appeared in the travel writings of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), who claimed that the discoverer had found the "earthly paradise". It was supposedly systematized and popularized by the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who, in his book *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, defended a naturally good humanity, which would change/deteriorate with the civilizing process.

In *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, Las Casas also contributed to the propagation of this concept in the European imagination, which provided the opportunity for a wide debate in the Spanish Cortes about the nature of the Native American, in order to justify the conquering/exploring practice of America and define laws that would guide the process.

In the debate, Las Casas came to defend the idea that, if treated with gentleness and meekness, the native would be docile, would accept the new conditions and submit more easily to them.

The master preacher should attract the natives' will, presenting them with the religious teachings in a kind, gentle, and soft manner. That is, among the means adopted by the missionaries to attract the natives, was to captivate their sympathy through affection (BORGES, 1992, p. 574). With this purpose, Las Casas divided the essence of preaching into five parts.

Basing himself on St. John Chrysostom, he explains the first part: "[...] is that the listeners, especially the unbelievers, see that the preachers of the faith have no intention of acquiring dominion over them by preaching" (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 159). In other words, the preachers could not let the listeners perceive the intention of domination, otherwise they would reject the preachers.

The second part consisted in making it evident to the listeners, especially the unbelievers, that the ambition to have did not move the apostles (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 159). Thus, he advised the teachers to renounce the ambition to have, because this would be a hindrance to attract the will of the natives.

The third and fourth parts refer to the treatment to be given by the preaching masters. Contrary to war, he understood that the peaceful way should be adopted to convince the natives and their possible domination.

The third part is that preachers should behave in such a way that they are docile and humble, affable and calm, kind and benevolent when speaking and conversing with their listeners, especially with the faithful (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 160).

The fourth part of the way of preaching, more necessary than the others, at least for the preaching to be fruitful to the preacher, is clearly gathered from all this. It is the love of charity with which Paul welcomed all men of the world so that they could be saved (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 162).

To explain the fifth part, which would be the example, he reiterated that attitudes of meekness, love, gentleness and charity were not enough:

It is already clearly evident that the fifth part of the way of preaching the gospel, namely, an exemplary life resplendent by works of virtue, and without



offense to anyone, is totally correct on all sides. For he who teaches must be an example of his words (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 165).

Arguing that the Spaniards had been chosen by "Divine providence" to bring the Christian faith to those who did not yet know it, since the natives sought various means of resistance, he claimed that the natives would be attracted by the way the religious lived, by their virtues and religious works, and would seek to imitate them:

This fifth part is the righteous, irreproachable, exemplary and holy life with which the one who has received the mission of announcing the Gospel and considers himself sent to enlighten the people should shine. A righteous life, that is, without complaining about anyone, or offending anyone, but simply living with everyone, giving no reason for anyone to complain about the preacher. Holy, like angels among men, and even more, almost like gods descended from heaven, who despise the mundane and the transitory, considering them as dung. They desire to accumulate neither gold, nor silver, nor dominion or primacy over others, nor human glory or wealth. On the contrary, they are all moderate, peaceful, modest, humble, patient, pure, honest, and spiritual, for their primary intention is to deal with heavenly things rather than earthly ones (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 248).

Finally, he considered that the natives needed to be convinced that the religious were not in search of earthly riches, but that, having a life of holiness, their only goal was to bring them the faith and Christian teachings.

For when they see that they reject all things present, that they are prepared for future rewards and adorned with the other actions and virtues, far above all sermonizing, they will believe in their actions and will be attracted to the truth, approaching them with gusto, although they had the ferocity of wild animals (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 248).

By proposing "*una educación primera no con palavras y las doctrinas, sino con el ejemplo de vida, sin ésta sería inútil todo intento pedagógico*" (MORENO, 1976, p. 162), Las Casas evidences that the native needed to differentiate the religious from the colonizers. While the latter invaded and warred for gold, the religious should renounce to wealth and convince by example and gentleness. The Spanish incessant battle for gold, which distanced them from the purpose of Christianizing the natives, hindered the work of the religious, generating numerous conflicts between the two parties. In their actions and their ways of life, the religious had to be contrary to the attitudes of the colonizers, behaving like sheep among wolves:

It is the condition of the sheep to suffer harm, not to cause it; and so, the preachers of the Gospel will not harm anyone. Only with their gentleness, they will tolerate and overcome the weaknesses and persecutions of others, as is exposed (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 134).

As sheep, he declares, I send you out among wolves, which means, I do not send you out with the power of arms to violently submit the nations to your doctrine [...]. I only send you as sheep among wolves; that is, as one who will not harm anyone, and is not capable of harming; I send you in such a way that you can suffer the injury of anyone. And he teaches and preserves meekness sufficiently, by the fact that he adduces the likeness of the sheep and the dove; I, Christ insists, send you out as sheep...and be as simple as doves (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 136).

Living in a conflictive way with the colonizers, disputing with them the native's time, the religious, with "right life", kindness and gentleness, would conquer the natives' spirit, who would accept them and become the new believers, the new Christians (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 95).

Besides the good treatment and the "straight life", it was necessary to foresee a time interval for the Christianization. It was necessary to act without haste, with gradual teachings and not with the speed that usually occurred: it was not enough to sprinkle the water of baptism to consider them converted.

It is necessary, therefore, that he who proposes to attract men to faith and true religion, which are not within the reach of natural forces, should use this art: as often as possible he should propose, explain, distinguish, substantiate, repeat what belongs to faith and religion. Likewise induce, persuade, ask, entreat, invite, attract, guide those whom you must lead to faith and religion until, by the frequency of the presentation, the manifestation, the preaching, the thematization of the doctrine, the explanations of the truths worthy of faith, with entreaties pleas, entreaties, encouragements, invitations, caresses, guidance, with these repeated acts, are generated in the hearts of the listeners, little by little, a certain vigor and disposition or grateful custom or habit, that causes an inclination almost natural (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 98). 98).

Besides the constant repetition, the examples of life, and the gentle and loving actions, in order to convince the natives it was fundamental that the preacher mastered good oratory.

### **The use of rhetoric in the communication of faith**

To show that master preachers needed the art of good oratory, Las Casas based himself on Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and St. Augustine (354-430):

The preacher, whose office it is to teach and to attract men to the true faith and the Christian religion, must cultivate, even more than rhetoricians and orators, the art and rules of oratory in order to make his hearers benevolent, attentive and docile, for what faith teaches is a matter of the greatest excellence that surpasses every faculty of nature. And the rhetorical rule teaches that one must show benevolence, attract the listeners, teach, delight and affection by the softness of the voice, gentleness and placid delicacy of



the words. What it boils down to is to persuade the understanding with reasons and gently attract the will [...] (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 214).

The master preacher also needed to master the native languages. Without ignoring the difficulties, Las Casas considered that this would be fundamental for the process of Christianization to take place. Such concern was justified by the linguistic multiplicity that dotted New Spain (Mexico) in the early days of the conquest and colonization.

To clarify this linguistic problem, it is enough to remember that just in the area that Mexico now occupies, the studies developed by Hermenegildo Zamora indicate that until the 16th century, more than 63 languages were spoken that have now been lost, in addition to another 51 that have been classified by scholars. This adds up to 114 different linguistic manifestations. Add to that the existence of more than 70 dialects developed from these 51 classified languages, and, yet, another imprecise number of languages that disappeared as the families that gave rise to them were disseminated (PEREIRA MELO; FERNANDES GOMES, 2012, p. 93).

The difficulty in the communication-interaction process between religious and natives demanded dedication and persistence. Thus, by learning the natives' language, the missionaries could lead the natives to understand the Christian teachings (BORGES, 1960).

According to Las Casas, who based himself on Cicero's reflections, with these two forms of communication, the religious would achieve the acceptance of the audience. For this reason, he states: "[...] whoever wants to induce or move his listeners to what he has in mind, needs first of all to have their mood in his favor, so that they become all benevolent, attentive and docile" (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 78). In *On the Orator*, Book II, Cicero (2002, p. 238) states: "[...] en efecto, quieren que se comience de tal modo que logremos hacer al auditorio bien dispuesto para nosotros, receptivo y atento".

Thus, to win over the listeners, the master preacher should use truthfulness, simplicity, and brevity in his presentation and argumentation. Such values were essential to engage the audience, touch the hearts and sensibilities of the natives, attracting their sympathy and credibility.

"[...] and it is necessary to make use of seriousness in all thoughts and weight in all expressions. It is also convenient a varied, passionate, full of drive, full of breath, full of passion, full of authentic reality" (BORGES, 1992, p. 574).

Las Casas stated that the American evangelists were aware that the natives could extend to the missionaries their dislike for the colonizers and that they would not pay attention to the teachings if they were not first given affection. It is evident in this statement the influence of

Cicero (2002, p. 254): "probar que es verdad lo que defendemos, conciliar la simpatía de nuestro auditorio y ser capaces de llevarlos a cualquier estado de ánimo que la causa pueda exigir".

From the Roman philosopher's perspective, the qualities of the excellent orator are: dignity, which reflects his own way of living; clear firmness, the result of the struggles fought along his path; and just measure, which does not allow for excesses in personal evaluations, either in terms of dignification or condescension. Dignity is not unrelated to the feeling of passion or love for knowledge. It is up to the speaker to acquire the potential to, in a continuous selection, perfect the qualities that are conferred and desired in his function. Cicero lists, as qualities of the orator, dignity, passion, will, authority, and the reception of that which represents the limits that particularize him.

According to Cicero, both in the elaboration of the speech and in the pronuntiatio, the orator must take into account three objectives: to teach, to move, and to delight. In this peroration, it is evident that, for him, in discursive action, reason and feeling have an affinity. However, he outlines a hierarchical ranking, giving priority to knowledge over emotion and ornament, and states that these three dimensions, whatever the rhetorical frameworks, regardless of this or that option, are part of the dynamic that moves the oratorical art. Should one teach without delighting; should one delight without teaching or moving, rhetorical performance is doomed to failure (FERNÁNDEZ, 1995, 2018, p. 34-41).

These reflections reverberate in Las Casas' argument:

[...] it must be [...] before anything else, appropriate to move the audience to what we want. In this regard, it is convenient that the orator or whoever is at the service of a cause - according to Tulio - should seek: to begin well, to narrate with lucidity, to recapitulate with vigor, to combat with bravery, to develop with depth, to pronounce with clarity and to sustain with firmness. In short, teach, delight and move. The task of the orator encompasses all of this. This is what Cicero teaches (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 79).

They also reverberate in his assertion that, with a pleasant voice, modest countenance, gentleness, tranquility, and delicacy, the master would win the mood of the natives:

One of the first precepts of rhetoric is to win the sympathy of the assembly with the exordium. This is achieved with a pleasant voice, with the expression of a modest countenance, showing meekness, quiet delicacy in the words; all of which greatly attract the benevolence of the listeners [... ..] the preacher of truth and teacher of faith, in setting out to teach those he seeks to induce and stimulate to faith and religion, needs more than any other to win the hearts of his hearers - especially of those who have been invited to faith for the first time, that is, the unbelievers - with softness of voice, with serenity and pleasant expression of countenance, with meekness, with quiet delicacy in words, with kind teaching and persuasion, with pleasant good will, and finally, that it teaches, delights, and moves (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 79). 79).

Las Casas also sought support in *On Christian Doctrine* of Saint Augustine, reflecting on a discursive action that would convince the listeners:

St. Augustine also understands that the teacher or preacher of truth, or whoever is in charge of teaching and attracting men to the faith and Christian religion, must conquer the mood of his listeners, make them well disposed, teach, delight and convince the docile attentive. This shows that the way to teach, invite and attract men to the right faith and true religion must necessarily persuade the understanding with reasons and attract with gentleness and sweetly incite the will (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 80).

In book IV *On Christian Doctrine*, St. Augustine discusses the best way to teach the truths of Christianity, the objectives, purposes and conformities of the sacred orator, and the best way to use the styles of classical rhetoric. Attributing more importance to wisdom than to eloquence, which refers back to the divine *Logos-Verbum*, he states that it is not up to rhetoric any kind of creation of truth, because its function is to transmit the wisdom printed in the sacred texts (PERENCINI, 2014, p. 88-95). He states, referring to Cicero: "A certain orator said - and he spoke the truth - that one must speak 'in such a way as to instruct, please, and convince' - Then he added - 'To instruct is a necessity, to please, a pleasure, to convince, a victory'" (AGOSTINHO, 2002, p. 141).

We cannot disregard the burning change that St. Augustine proposed for Christian oratory. The sacred orator, who should use a simple style, should not teach, demonstrate, prove, because it was not necessary to teach, demonstrate or prove what is constituted as truth. It was up to him, rather, to instruct those who were at fault with the truth, that is, his teachings were meant to instruct. The medium style could be used as long as the ornament was not contrary to the truth that constitutes the word of God. This style, as long as it was in consonance with the truths contained in the sacred texts, should be the speaker's concern: "to please in order to captivate" and to magnify the doctrine. Finally, by means of the sublime style, the sacred orator could sensitize and convert his audience, in case the instruction associated with the beauty of the expression did not achieve its goals (PERENCINI, 2014, p. 92).

The way of catechizing and explaining the things of faith should reach man in his living, in a fraternal way and through good Christian practices:

[...] in such a way that the listeners would clearly perceive what they were being taught, for which purpose they should make use as much as possible of comparisons or similarities taken from the daily life of the Indians. Affirmative, in the sense of asserting with authority and firmness, excluding any sense of insecurity [...] affectionate, in the sense of speaking to the listeners with affection, as parents do to their children (SARANYANA, 1992, p. 568).

The solemnities also corresponded to the objective of gradually generating the authority of Christianity. Promoting a solemn spectacle of convincing through images, postures, and sounds gave sobriety, authority, and power before the natives. Its function was to arouse the natives' appreciation for the new religion. The practice of hand-kissing was common in the solemnities that inaugurated the settlements and in religious celebrations and festivities, including in the catechesis offered to the natives. Using these resources, practicing certain behaviors and avoiding certain acts, the missionaries would gain and keep their prestige among the natives (BORGES, 1992, p. 588).

In his *poblados* projects, the Dominican had proposed physical punishment for the natives who did not accept the new religious customs. However, in his pedagogical manual, he did not maintain this argument and positioned himself against these punishments:

But if the preacher of the Gospel punishes and terrifies his hearers, especially those who for the first time cross the doors of the Church, and resorts to harshness, scourging, imprisonment, and other fears and afflictions in the face of any class of sins, his disciples will logically be filled with anguish, pain, fear, sadness, hatred, anger, and indignation against the one who scourged and punished them, that is, against the preachers (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 298).

Instead of the practice of physical punishment, away from pain, punishments and disturbances, persuasion would be obtained by gentleness, love and meekness (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 92).

Finally, it is noteworthy that, in this appeal to teachers and preachers who proposed to work on the Christianization/training of the natives, he pondered: even if the preachers' work was not recognized or did not bear fruit, "condemnation will not be imputed to the preachers, but to their recalcitrant opponents. Their reward is in a safe place, and hope will always console them" (LAS CASAS, 2005, p. 302).

## Final remarks

Las Casas was a dissenting voice in proposing an alternative for the process of conquest, colonization and Christianization of the natives. This position corresponded to the historical moment of the patronage, when the union of the Church and the Crown was preached. Seeking answers to the conflicts of his time, he defended the rationality of the natives and attributed the task of Christianization/formation to the preaching master, who, unlike what was common and accepted in Spain, should adapt to the new needs and the nature of the natives.

His answer was supported by classics from Antiquity and Medieval times, such as Cicero, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, who, regardless of the differences in time, space and culture or objectives, theorized about the importance of the formation of the master preacher. Thus, he idealized the actions of the master preacher in the Christianization process, assigning him responsibility and social role to the audience. With specific actions, good oratory, exemplary life, he would be the main agent in conducting the process in American lands, presenting himself with a differential in relation to other colonizers.

It is worth considering, therefore, that Las Casas did not break with the colonizing process triggered by the Spanish Crown; on the contrary, in accordance with the spirit of his time, he tried to make possible a new model of submission and, therefore, of exploitation of the natives. The difference was in the method of achieving this subjugation. By conquering the natives, the preacher masters would guarantee not only religious domination, but also political domination, that is, the domination of the Spanish Crown.

## REFERENCES

AGOSTINHO. **Da doutrina cristão**: Manual da exegese e formação cristã. São Paulo: Paulus, 2002.

AQUINO, T. **Suma Contra os Gentios**. Porto Alegre: Escola Superior de Teologia São Lourenço de Brindes; Caxias do Sul: Universidade de Caxias do Sul, 1990.

BORGES, P. Métodos de persuasion. *In*: BORGES, P. (org.). **Historia de la Iglesia en Hispanoamérica y Filipinas (Siglos XV-XIX)**. Madrid: BAC, 1992.

BORGES, P. **Métodos misionales en la cristianización en América – siglo XVI**. Madrid: Missionalia Hispanica, 1960.

FERNÁNDEZ, R. O. **La música secreta del ritmo Cicerón, Quintiliano y J. S. Bach**. 2018. Tesis (Doctoral) - Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Departamento de Musicología, Madrid, 2018.

LAS CASAS, B. **Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião**. Obras Completas. Tradução: Noelia Gigli; Hélio Lucas. São Paulo: Paulus, 2005.

MELO, M. C. S. A complementaridade entre filosofia e teologia no pensamento de Tomás de Aquino. **Revista Ideação**, v. 1, n. 40, p. 73-88, 2019. Available at: <http://periodicos.uefs.br/index.php/revistaideacao/article/view/4419>. Accessed on: 10 Oct. 2021.

MORENO, R-J. Q. **El pensamiento filosófico-político de Bartolomeu de las Casas**. Sevilla: Escuela de estudios hispano-americanos de Sevilla, 1976.

PEREIRA MELO, J. J.; FERNANDES GOMES, R. W. A educação Franciscana na América: o caso mexicano. *In*: TOLEDO, C. A. A.; RIBAS, M. A. A. B.; SKALINSKI JUNIOR, O. (org.). **Origens da educação escolar no Brasil Colonial**. Maringá: Eduem, 2012.

PERENCINI, T. B. Notas sobre a relação eloquência-sabedoria no livro IV do De Doctrina Christiana de Agostinho. **Revista Em Curso**, São Carlos: v. 1, n. 1, p. 88-95, 2014. Available at: <https://www.emcurso.ufscar.br/index.php/emcurso/article/view/8>. Accessed on: 12 Apr. 2021.

SARANYANA, J-I. Métodos de catequización. *In*: BORGES, P. (org.). **Historia de la Iglesia en Hispanoamérica y Filipinas (Siglos XV-XIX)**. Madrid: BAC, 1992. p. 549-572.

### How to reference this article

SANTOS, C. A.; MELO, J. J. P. Bartolomeu de Las Casas: Bartolomeu de Las Casas: The art of rhetoric and education by example. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 7, n. 2, p. 1148-1161, Apr./June. 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17i2.14600>

**Submitted:** 30/12/2020

**Revisions required:** 22/01/2021

**Approved:** 18/02/2022

**Published:** 01/04/2022

Management of translations and versions: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação

Translator: Thiago Faquim Bittencourt

Translation reviewer: Alexander Vinícius Leite da Silva