

Miguel De Benavides, O.P. (1550-1605), Friar, Bishop and University Founder

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1. A man to remember

On July 26, 1605, shortly after having expressed his plan and provided some means for the foundation of a college (the future Colegio and Universidad de Santo Tomas), the Dominican archbishop of Manila, Miguel de Benavides, passed to a better life at the age of fifty-five. Six years after his death, on April 28, 1611, his testamentary executors and the Superiors of the Dominicans in the Philippines carried his plan to effect by drafting and signing the *Foundation Act* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas.

The fourth centennial of his death should not be let pass without recalling to memory a man who deserves a place of honor in Philippine history for what he was and for what he did on behalf of the Filipino people in the crucial first decades of their evangelization. Unfortunately his name and his personality have never won general and universal recognition and popularity, neither in his native country, Spain, nor in his modest native town, which, as far as we know, has never taken the initiative of erecting a monument in his honor. It is surprising that the Spanish encyclopedia ESPASA, the most universal encyclopedia in Spanish, and probably in any language, failed to assign an entry to his name.

Even here in the Philippines, where Benavides labored indefatigably for eighteen years and died occupying the highest office

of the local church, that of archbishop of Manila (the third in that line), he is only remembered in *episcopologia* (chronological lists of bishops) and more prominently in the *Anales Eclesiásticos de Filipinas* (in fact *de Manila*), extant in elegant manuscript in the Manila Archdiocesan Archives. He is remembered also in the history of the archdiocese of Manila and in some scholarly studies about the struggle for justice and human rights in the early stages of the colonization. Probably little is remembered by way of public signs in the towns of Lal-lo and Vigan, places intimately associated with him as first bishop of the diocese of Nueva Segovia. In Manila, one has to resort to a very detailed city street-map to find only an insignificant *Benavides Street* near the Binondo church, making corner with an even much shorter *Salazar Street*.

The only place where the name of Benavides is mentioned with relative familiarity is the University of Santo Tomas, situated today in a modern campus in the district of Sampaloc. In front of the Main Building of the campus there stands the *Benavides Monument*, on which rests a classic, attractive *Benavides Statue*, in bronze, brought there from its former place in Intramuros. The area between the Main Building and the monument is the *Plaza Benavides*. The high school building is identified as *Benavides Building*, with a *Benavides Auditorium* in the third floor. The year-book of the UST Central Seminary is entitled *The Benavides* ever since its first issue in 1935. Among the various student awards given by the university to outstanding students at the end of every school-year, one is the *Benavides Award* conferred on a student (or perhaps students) whose performance in regional, national or international competitions, conferences or congresses symbolizes the university's commitment to excellence. Finally the university has created a *Benavides Foundation*, the purpose of which is to support financially various projects of humanitarian, cultural, religious and educational character.

But these official acts of remembrance and recognition are only an echo of its fame, which does not necessarily go together with a deep knowledge of his personality. The percentage of professors and students who can formulate the main features of the life and achievements of the founder of the university is probably very low, if not extremely low. Partly to blame for this lack of popularity may be the lack of a modern biography of Benavides.

There is a need for a good biography of Benavides in English. Until one finally appears, this article only intends to answer summarily some basic questions about his rather unknown personality: Who was Miguel de Benavides? What was his greatness? What did he do on behalf of the Philippines?

2. From the heart of Old Castile¹

Miguel de Benavides was born in 1550 in the Castilian town of Carrión de los Condes, province of Palencia, Spain, in the heart of the austere, grain-producing *Tierra de Campos*. The origins and importance of Carrion go back to the 10th century, to the age of the secular wars of the Spanish *Reconquista* between Christians and Moors, and to the exploits of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar (*El Cid Campeador*), whom the legendary literature linked to Carrion and its Counts (*Condes*). When Benavides was born there in the 16th century, Carrion had lost much of its historical flavor and relevance, except for the monumental vestiges that have survived down to our modern times, the ruins of its walls, and some of its ancient churches (like that of Santa María de Carrión) and its monasteries (like that of St. Zoilo).

Nothing is known about his family, except what historian Fr. Diego Aduarte, his contemporary, tells us, that he was son "of noble parents, well known in that land for their category and their virtue."²

¹ My sources for this biography are mainly the following: DIEGO ADUARTE, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China*, Manila 1640. Ed. M. Ferrero, Madrid 1961, vol. I, pp. 459-470. This edition will be cited hereafter as AD-H. – Fr. Diego Aduarte was contemporary of Benavides and his fifth successor as Bishop of Nueva Segovia; *Anales Eclesiásticos de Filipinas*, Ms. of the Archives of the Arzobispado de Manila. We quote this work from a microfilm copy of the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas (AUST). The chapter on Benavides was printed in the daily *Libertas*, n. 3650, 16 December 1911; HILARIO OCIO-E. NEIRA, O.P., *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente*, Manila, 2000, I, p. 43; JOSE BLANCO, O.P., *Who was Miguel de Benavides?*, Manila 1946; FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P. "Philip II and the 'Philippine Referendum' of 1599", in *Unitas*, 7,1 (March 2000), pp. 7-50. – All biographers of Benavides, including *Anales Eclesiásticos*, depend, to a very great extent, on the narrative of Aduarte.

² AD-H, I, p. 461.

3. Dominican Friar

At the age of fifteen, in 1565, Benavides felt the vocation to religious life and entered the Dominican Order in the convent of San Pablo, in the city of Valladolid, by the ceremony of the vestition of the black and white habit of St. Dominic. A year of novitiate followed, during which he tested his vocation in order for him to decide whether to join the Order formally by the emission of the religious vows. After completing the novitiate, he formally made the religious profession and started the ecclesiastical studies leading to the priesthood. To that end, he was transferred to the famous College of San Gregorio, situated near the convent of San Pablo, in which he pursued his institutional studies of philosophy and theology from 1566 to 1574.

It is very important for the understanding of the life and thought of Fray Miguel de Benavides to pay a brief historical visit to this glorious center of theological learning. The *Colegio de San Gregorio de Valladolid* was founded in 1487 by the bishop of Palencia Don Alonso de Burgos for the promotion of students from the various convents of the Dominican Province of Spain who were dedicated to a deeper study of the sacred sciences.³ In the 16th century San Gregorio became, with the university of Salamanca, a focus of the great revival of Scholasticism and Thomism, which for a long time had fallen into a state of decline. The new theologians produced a more positive, updated and attractive theology, cast in humanist molds. Its initiator was the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria (+1541), "the Father of International Law", whose theology was a novelty because it tackled the latest moral and juridical problems arising from the discovery of the New World. Vitoria had studied at San Gregorio of Valladolid, as also did a great number of his illustrious Dominican disciples, like Melchor Cano (+1560), "the founder of modern fundamental theology", Bartolomé de las Casas (+1566), "the Protector of the Indians", Fray Luis de Granada (+1566), theologian and mystic, Pedro de Sotomayor (+1564), Bartolomé de Carranza (+1576) and others. Two outstanding theologians who shone at the Council of Trent, Domingo de Soto and

³ The Colegio de San Gregorio became extinct by the exlaustration laws of 1836. In 1933 it was converted into a National Museum of Sculpture.

Pedro de Soto, were also disciples of Vitoria, but not alumni of San Gregorio.

All these theologians, except Carranza, died just a little ahead of Benavides' reception in San Gregorio in 1567, but the impact of Vitoria and of these said disciples must have been felt strongly by the young student Fray Miguel. In a special way, Benavides was directly influenced by perhaps the most outstanding of them all, Domingo Báñez. Báñez was Regent of Studies at San Gregorio from 1573 to 1577, period in which Benavides was studying the career of theology (c. 1571-1575). As a schoolman, lecturer and academic disputant, Báñez stands forth as a figure of unprecedented distinction in scholastic Spain; a clear, direct and vigorous theologian, whose fidelity to St. Thomas was his strongest characteristic. All leading scholars of Thomism referred to him as the "*praeclarissimum jubar*" (the brightest light). Báñez was indeed the flag-carrier of the Dominican-led Thomistic school in their heated controversy with the Jesuit-led Molinistic School over such transcendental questions as God's grace, divine predestination, divine motion and human freedom. Fray Miguel de Benavides was one of his students at San Gregorio, perhaps one of his best students. Historian Aduarte tells us that he was his "favorite student" (*amado discípulo*), and whenever Báñez heard about Benavides' successes he used to remark: *Hic est discipulus ille* (this is that student of mine).⁴ Benavides was to show in his future writings in the Philippines his adherence to these masters and his attitude towards the Jesuits.

After having been ordained priest in 1575, Fr. Miguel spent eleven years as "lecturer of Arts (philosophy) in his convent, and of Theology in many houses of his [Spanish Dominican] Province, finally returning to teach theology in his convent of San Pablo."⁵

4. The call to the oriental missions

It was in this convent and in the year 1586 that the course of Fr. Benavides' life underwent a sharp turn for a change. One day, November 1, 1585, feast of All Saints, a great and zealous Domi-

⁴ AD-H, II, p. 459.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

nican, Fr. Juan Crisóstomo, who had been commissioned to found a new Dominican province in the Philippines, arrived in the convent of San Pablo to recruit volunteers for the projected province. News about those distant Islands in the Pacific were very scarce or practically none, because no Dominican missionaries had settled there yet. There were in those islands a few Augustinians and Franciscans, plus three Jesuits who arrived in 1581 with the first Bishop of Manila, Domingo Salazar, and his secretary Fr. Cristobal de Savatierra, both Dominicans. Now the Dominicans thought of going there with a strong group of missionaries who would serve as foundation of the new province of the Order, the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Philippines. Fr. Crisóstomo obtained from the Spanish Court, from the Pope and from the Central Curia of the Order in Rome the necessary licenses for that foundation and for recruiting volunteers for the Philippines in the convents of Spain.

The arrival of Fr. Crisóstomo to the convent of San Pablo caused a great sensation among the religious. Historian Aduarte tells us that the missionary enthusiasm aroused by his words and by his invitation was such that "it looked as if the whole convent were going to be emptied." In the end, eight religious signed their decision to join the missionary expedition. They were two Lectors actually teaching, the first one being *Fr. Miguel de Benavides*, with other Lectors, two other priests, the deacon Fray Domingo de Nieva, and one brilliant student, Fray Pedro de Soto, the last two being *colegiales* of San Gregorio.⁶ It was a splendid little group ready to become scholarly missionaries.

5. Around half of the world in twelve months

Having joined the rest of the volunteers from many convents totaling 40 Dominicans, with Benavides heading the list after the Superiors Frs. Juan Crisóstomo and Juan de Castro, the missionary *barcada* set sail from the port of Cádiz on July 17, 1586.⁷ Voyages

⁶ Cf. AD-H, I, p. 23.

⁷ For a detailed narrative of their voyage from Spain to the Philippines see MANUEL GONZALEZ POLA, O.P., "Primeros pasos hacia Oriente", in *Cuatro Siglos de Evangelización, (1587-1987), Huellas Dominicanas*, Madrid 1987, pp. 13-36. Also, AD-H, I, pp. 47-63.

to the Philippines were never forgotten for their length, duration and a thousand dangers and incidents along the obligatory Spanish route of Mexico. It took the fleet more than one month across the Atlantic before it anchored at the eastern Mexican port of Veracruz. Benavides and companions were distributed among the convents and missions there, waiting for the spring of next year. The long wait proved very damaging to the group of 40, which was decimated for various causes, some of them falling sick, others desisting from their purpose due to weak-heartedness, by change of mind or discouraged by bad news about China and the Philippines. When they were regrouped in the spring of 1587, only eighteen were ready to embark for the Philippines or China.

Father Benavides with fourteen companions embarked on the Acapulco Galleon that set sail on April 6 of that year 1587 and started the crossing of the immense Pacific Ocean. The voyage lasted for three months and fifteen days, exposed to typhoons, enemy galleons, and a thousand privations and miseries. Luckily the missionaries arrived safely in Cavite on July 21, eve of the feast of St. Mary Magdalene. And four days later, July 25, feast of the apostle St. James, they made their entry into the city of Manila amid affectionate signs of welcome from the religious and civil authorities, the clergy, the religious institutes and a joyful crowd of citizens.⁸

The Dominican group did not have a house where to stay, a serious inconvenience they were prepared to face because, by that time, they had freely and willingly assumed every directive of the *Ordenaciones Generales*, written in Mexico the previous year by their first Vicar General, Fr. Juan de Castro. This document was the fundamental constitution of the new Province of the Rosary and it would remain so for centuries to come. Fr. Castro wanted the Philippine missionaries to live the original spirit of the Dominican Order and strictly to observe its Rule and Constitutions. As the document underlines emphatically, the missionaries must keep uniformity in dress, prayer, teaching and apostolate; they must have choral recitation of the divine office at midnight and submit totally to their Superiors, and avoid familiarity with lay persons;

⁸ See AD-H, II, pp. 57-63.

they must live in poor houses and avoid excessive expenditures; everything they have, including books, must be placed at the disposition of the prelate; they must have two hours of mental prayer daily and practice penitence even by self-flagellation; and they must rest at night on simple mats made of animal skin.⁹

6. A "Theological Act"

Having no place prepared for their lodging, Bishop Salazar managed to have his Dominican brethren living in his own palace, which was obviously inadequate for fifteen guests. There the missionaries stayed for twelve days, until August 5. And the previous day, August 4, feast of their founder St. Dominic, they organized a fitting celebration in the Dominican fashion, that is, with a solemn Mass in the morning and a Theological Act at four o'clock in the afternoon, both held in the Cathedral. That literary act called by the chroniclers an act of "Theological Conclusions" and also "Public Conclusions", was a common practice of the convents and colleges of the Order to solemnize special celebrations. All of them were familiar with this kind of academic acts because they were performed in all their formation houses. Particularly expert on them were those who had been university students or *colegiales* in *colegios mayores*, like Benavides, Soria, Maldonado, Pedro de Soto and several others. Presiding over the Theological Act was Bishop Salazar himself, with the members of the Cathedral Chapter and of the Augustinian and Franciscan communities in attendance. All the Dominicans were there to take part in the lively discussions. In a fitting place of the temple two theologians sat at a table: One was the defendant of the Conclusions, Fray Pedro de Soto, still a young student nicknamed *The Third Soto* by his brethren at the convent of San Pablo, in Valladolid, because he was foreseen to become as brilliant as his two famous namesakes.¹⁰ Sitting by his

⁹ *Ordinationes Generales Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum*, Binondoc 1604. This is the first book printed in the Philippines by the system of typography, or at least the first known to us *de visu*. It has been edited by JESUS GAYO, O.P., Manila 1954.

¹⁰ The two famous namesakes were *Fr. Domingo de Soto* (+1560), who distinguished himself as a theologian in the Council of Trent and authored various masterful theological treatises; and *Fr. Pedro de Soto* (+1563), professor

side was his 37-year old confrere playing the role of *padrino* or adviser of Soto. He was Fr. Miguel de Benavides, who had been for eleven years professor of theology in the convent of San Pablo, Valladolid, and in other houses of studies. He mastered the art of debating, having witnessed the ongoing controversies on the doctrine on grace, led by his professor Fr. Domingo Báñez against the Molinistic school of the Jesuits. Years later, Benavides would return to this setting, the cathedral, as Archbishop of Manila.

Fray Soto brilliantly maintained the various propositions he had chosen, explaining them with great lucidity of arguments and defending equally ably the objections proposed by the attending theologians. Historian Diego de Aduarte observes that this theological disputation was not held for the sake of ostentation of intellectual prowess, but to prove how a solid theology must support all evangelizing work even among simple and uneducated peoples. Bishop Salazar, Aduarte adds, was pleased to authorize this debate and thoroughly enjoyed attending the "conclusions", seeing that his brethren would be a great help to him in his pastoral office.¹¹ But it was far from the minds of the missionaries to think at this time of colleges or universities in that unknown land, even though some of those present would eventually be the founders of the future Colegio de Santo Tomas.

On August 5, the day after the theological act, the fifteen Dominicans left the Episcopal palace, as they accepted the invitation of the Franciscans to transfer temporarily to their convent of St. Francis.¹² A few days later, most of them were dispersed to establish missions in Bataan and Pangasinan. Only four, namely Frs. Miguel de Benavides, Diego de Soria, Juan Maldonado and

at Oxford and Salamanca, also a first class theologian in Trent. – Historian Aduarte says about our missionary Soto: "He was so proficient and subtle of mind that in his career he flew high over his classmates, outdoing them like a golden eagle among other birds of lower flight, in such a way that the brethren who treated him expected from him to become a *third Soto* after the two famous ones of that [Dominican] province [of Spain]" (AD-H, I, p. 373).

¹¹ AD-H, I, p. 58.

¹² The *Custos* (Superior Provincial) of the Franciscans of the Philippines in 1587 was Saint Pedro Bautista, future protomartyr of Japan (See VARIOUS AUTHORS, *San Pedro Bautista, a Saint in the Philippines*, Quezon City, 1982; AD-H, I, 59).

Brother Pedro Rodríguez, remained in Manila. From that moment, Benavides became involved and immersed in a series of activities, ministries and apostolates, each of which can be considered "first" in their category.

The first commitment of the said five friars who remained with him in Manila was the construction of a convent. They started the construction in October of that year 1587. And on the first day of January of the following year 1588 they inaugurated it. That was the Santo Domingo Convent, surely not a splendid residence and not a magnificent temple. Both structures were, in the words of Aduarte, "a very small house and church, made of wood, and very poor." The convent became and would remain for three centuries the only "convent" the Dominicans ever had in the Philippines, the Motherhouse of the newly founded Holy Rosary Province.¹³

7. For the Chinese of the "Parian" and in China

Even while the church and convent of Santo Domingo were being constructed, Bishop Salazar entrusted to his Dominican brethren the evangelization of the thousands of Chinese colonists and traders, immigrants from the province of Fokien in continental China who had settled in Manila for long time past. They were known as *sangleyes*. Their place of settlement was known as the *Parian*, (the "Chinatown" in our modern cities), situated near the city walls, where the *Bastion de San Gabriel* stands today, and near the Santo Domingo convent. Aduarte tells us that the number of Chinese living in the Parian was "from eight to ten thousand, and on occasions they reached fifteen thousand."

The *first* friars assigned to minister to the Chinese in 1587 were Fr. Miguel de Benavides and Fr. Juan Maldonado. By the middle of 1588 Maldonado received another assignment and was substituted by Fr. Juan Cobo. Benavides and Cobo moved to the Parian and built "a very poor church" on the extreme end of the Parian, opposite to Santo Domingo Convent. This was the *first church* built for the Chinese, as Fr. Cobo wrote shortly later from

¹³ The roof of the church collapsed in 1589. A second church was built in 1592 but church and convent were again destroyed by fire in 1603 (See P. FERNANDEZ, *Dominicos donde nace el sol*, Barcelona 1958, p. 27.

the church of San Gabriel of the Parian: "The Superiors sent Fr. Benavides and me to the other side of the Parian, so that between Santo Domingo and San Gabriel (as this church is called) is the Parian of the *sangleyes*. And here we built a very poor (*pobrecita*) church, placed under the advocacy of St. Gabriel, and a poor house in which the two of us live. We entered in it in September of 1588. *This is the first church built for the Chinese* and we believe there is no other parish church except this one."¹⁴

Conversions to Christianity happened in that month of September, 1588, and Fr. Benavides took care to record the *first baptisms* administered by him in a *Libro de Memorias* he opened in the manner of a baptismal registry, kept in his residence: "On the 14th of September, feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the first [Chinese] were baptized to the glory of God.... The *first baptized* on that day was *Diego de la Cruz*, fifteen years of age; his father was pagan, his mother also, both were natives of China... His god-father was Dr. *Diego de Mercado*, Dean of the [cathedral] Church of Manila. I baptized him on that day and signed it with my name in the house of the religious of said church of San Gabriel. [Sgd.] *Fray Miguel [de Benavides] de Santa María*." The second baptismal entry (also signed by Benavides) took place on September 28, and the neophyte received the name of *Miguel*.¹⁵

8. Benavides' *Doctrina Christiana* in Chinese

The personal contact with the Chinese of the Parian and the need to evangelize them gave Fr. Benavides the possibility of learning the Chinese language, *the first* missionary (at least among the Dominicans) to do so. Certainly he spoke it sufficiently to instruct the catechumens and prepare them for baptism. Even more, he was able to learn how to *write* an undetermined number

¹⁴ For a deep study of the first mission established by the Dominicans in the Parian of the Chinese in the first years of their arrival in the Philippines, see J. GAYO, Introduction to *Doctrina Cristiana en lengua y letra china*, pp. 46-57 (see *infra*, footnote 17).

¹⁵ *Libro de Memorias de los que se han bautizado en la iglesia de San Gabriel de los sangleyes que está en el Parian de los sangleyes de esta ciudad de Manila* (cf. GAYO, *ibid.*, pp. 47-48 and 94). – The surname adopted by Benavides in his religious profession was *de Santa María* (*ibid.*, p. 94).

of Chinese characters and to make a translation of the Catechism into Chinese. Whether he wrote it totally by himself or with the help of some Chinese catechumens, we do not know.

What is certain is that he was the first to speak that language and to write the characters. His companion Fr. Juan Cobo tells us: "He preached them in their language before I started studying, and he wrote a catechism in it." Bishop Salazar's testimony is in agreement with Cobos': "Fr. Benavides is the first one who knew the language of the *Sangleyes*." Benavides himself wrote: "I am the author of the first translation of the Christian Doctrine into Chinese language and characters." Aduarte is more elaborate: "Fr. Benavides worked for almost one year, and with no small fruit, in the Chinese language, but since this language is so difficult and there was not an Art [*grammar*] of it, nor a Vocabulary, nor a Teacher, he did not find much help in learning it."¹⁶ It was, therefore, through sheer personal effort that he produced the now famous *Doctrina Cristiana en Lengua y Letra China*, which, perfected somehow by his two companions of the Parian, Frs. Juan Cobo and Domingo Nieva, was printed with two other books in San Gabriel of the Parian in 1593, the first three books ever printed in the Philippines.¹⁷

9. Jailed in China

Benavides's knowledge of the Amoy (Hokkien) dialect was put to a test when in 1590 he had to accompany his Prior Provincial, Fr. Juan de Castro, to continental China. One of the great objectives of the religious institutes that came to Manila in the wake of the

¹⁶ The above testimonies and quotations are taken from J.GAYO, Introduction to *Doctrina Cristiana*, pp. 61-65 (see *infra*, next footnote).

¹⁷ *Doctrina Cristiana en lengua y letra china, compuesta por los religiosos ministros de los Sangleyes, de la Orden de Santo Domingo. Con licencia, por Keng Yong, china, en el Parian de Manila [1593].* – The only copy known to exist today is in the Vatican Library. Fr. Jesús Gayo reprinted it in facsimile, Manila, 1951. – In his exhaustive introductory study on the authorship of the *Doctrina*, Gayo concludes that the first three missionaries among the Chinese in the Parian contributed something to its composition: Fr. Benavides was the translator of text into Chinese, Fr. Juan Cobo corrected it, and Fr. Juan Maldonado slightly amended it (*ibid.*, p. 69).

arrival of Legazpi was to preach the Gospel in the mythical and unknown land of Cathay. And they really attempted it as soon as they could. From their base in Manila the Augustinians landed in China in 1575, but the Chinese authorities rejected them. The Franciscans also tried it in 1579 and they also failed to establish themselves there. The Dominicans had the same dream. Three years after arriving in Manila, the Superior Fr. Juan de Castro decided to go himself to China, taking Fr. Miguel de Benavides as his companion because of his experience among the Chinese of the Parian of Manila and his knowledge of their language, the Hokkien, which was the dialect spoken in the province of Fokien.

They managed to land in the province of Fokien, but they soon realized that the foundation of a mission was practically an impossible task at that time. The Chinese authorities ordered them to be arrested and thrown into a prison suspecting them to be spies. Enduring many inconveniences and privations they were brought to court. At their trial, Benavides succeeded in defending himself and his Superior from that charge by writing down an exposition in Chinese characters proving that the accusations of espionage were false and that they were innocent. But the judges could not believe that a European could have written those Chinese characters. Therefore, they asked Benavides to rewrite the exposition in front of them. Which he did to their great admiration. That show of scholarship freed the two missionaries from jail, even though but it did not prevent them from being expelled from China. They failed in their attempt, and arrived in Manila in March 1891.¹⁸

10. His writings

In the first provincial chapter of the new Dominican province held in Manila in June 1588, Fr. Miguel de Benavides was appointed conventual Lector [of Santo Domingo Convent] and Examiner of candidates to hear confessions. At the same time he was given the title and honor of Preacher General.¹⁹ These offices

¹⁸ See AD-H, I, pp. 189-194.

¹⁹ "*Lector*". In the Dominican Order, a Lector is the professor of Arts, Philosophy or Theology in a convent, college or center of formation. He is required to have the academic degree of *Lectorate* certified by the Order. – "*Preacher General*"

coming in addition of his apostolate among the Chinese of the Parian and his trip to China did not allow him much time for writing. Later in years he was immersed in the organization and pastoral care of the newly created diocese of Nueva Segovia and of the big archdiocese of Manila. Explicably, therefore, he was not an outstanding and prolific writer, but what he wrote and has survived bears the stamp of a profound theologian.

He is said to have written, in his youthful years in Spain, an unknown contribution to the controversy that was raging there among theologians of opposing schools about the doctrine of the interaction between the divine grace and the human freedom. As we have already said, he was the translator into Chinese of the catechism entitled *Doctrina Cristiana*, which was printed in the Parian of Manila in 1593. But practically all his writings were centered on the social and moral problems arising from the conquest and colonization of the Philippines.

What was his literary production? The Dominican Brother Alonso Hidalgo, provincial procurator and archivist of Santo Domingo convent, writing in 1632, that is, twenty-seven years after Benavides' death, made a list of his writings extant in the convent at that time. They include informative reports and treatises on a variety of subjects. Brother Hidalgo copied their titles only, thirteen in all, written between 1590 and 1603, six of them composed in Benavides' period as friar, and seven as bishop. Judging purely by the titles we can guess that the works deal with a variety of matters ranging from the *Sangleys* (local Chinese) to the wars in Mindanao, doctrinal cases sent from the Philippines to the tribunal of the Inquisition in Mexico, the *pallium* of the Archbishop of Manila, the encomiendas of Mindoro, marriage questions, the administration of the Eucharist to the natives, the manner of preaching the Gospel, the Chinese uprising of 1603.²⁰

is the title granted to a Professor for acquired merits, after many years of exercising in excellent manner the ministry of sacred preaching. A given convent had as a rule one preacher general, who enjoyed certain privileges and prerogatives.

²⁰ The list is transcribed by JESUS GAYO, O.P. in his Introduction to MIGUEL DE BENAVIDES, *Tratado Segundo de la Preparación Evangélica*, in *Unitas*, 21 (Enero-Marzo 1948), p. 147.

In other treatises Benavides dealt with the responsibilities of the Governor General of the Islands and the other state officials who were illegally and immorally engaging themselves in personal business with the use of public funds.²¹ In another study he censured the biased way of the public officials who made 'repartimientos', that is, recruitment of labor force for the work in the mines and in agricultural fields from among the natives only, "when some could be recruited from among the Spaniards, the Negroes, the mulattoes and the mestizos".²²

Almost all these writings have been lost. Fortunately, however, the most important ones have been traced and studied thoroughly by two modern scholars, Lewis Hake and Fr. Jesús Gayo, O.P. These writings come under the general title *Instrucción para el gobierno de las Filipinas y de cómo los [sic] han de regir y gobernar aquella gente*.²³ They deal with the burning theological and juridical questions debated in the early period of the conquest. In the first part, he discusses "whether the king of Spain may charge tributes to the non-Christian peoples of the Philippines"; the second part deals with the proper way to preach the Gospel. But they include other side topics related to these central themes.

11. The burning problems: Justice, human rights and national freedom

Like Bishop Domingo Salazar, Benavides used his pen to defend the basic rights of the Filipino natives *vis-à-vis* the abuses

²¹ *Duda resuelta por el Señor Arzobispo Benavides sobre si es lícito a los gobernadores tratar por lo menos en otro reino*. Published by J. GAYO in *Unitas*, 2 (Abril-Junio 1949), pp. 415-433. – Also, *Carta que escribió el Señor Arzobispo Benavides al Provincial de la Compañía [de Jesús] en orden a la obligación que tienen a restituir los vecinos de aquí que tienen encomiendas en México*. Published by GAYO, Introduction to *Doctrina Christiana*, pp. 434-444.

²² *Parecer de Fray Miguel de Benavides... sobre el repartimiento que se hace en las Indias de los Indios para sementeras y minas y otras cosas*. Published by J. GAYO in *Unitas*, 23,3 (Julio-Septiembre 1950), pp. 626-633.

²³ This work of Benavides was published for the first time by Lewis Hake in *Cuerpo de Documentos del siglo XVI sobre los derechos de España en las Indias y Filipinas*, Mexico D.F., 1943, pp. 193-270. The second part was published also by JESUS GAYO in *Unitas*, 21 (Enero-Marzo 1948), pp. 145-189, and *Unitas*, 22 (Enero-Marzo 1949), pp. 167-189. A partial English version is in BLAIR AND ROBERTSON, (hereafter BR) *The Philippine Islands*, X, 277-280.

committed against them by the colonists and *encomenderos*. The struggle over those rights had started much earlier, almost as soon as the Legazpi expedition landed in the Philippines in 1565.

For the first fifteen years of the conquest, that is, from 1565 to 1581, the Augustinian missionaries, companions of Legazpi in his voyage to the Philippines, proved to be imbued with the principles of the theologian Francisco de Vitoria and of the Protector of the Amerindians Bartolomé de Las Casas. For they were quick in denouncing the abuses committed by colonizers and *encomenderos* in their treatment of the natives here. They even went as far as to put into serious doubt the legitimacy of the conquest and, therefore, the legal presence of Spain in these Islands.

Such oppressive conduct of many conquistadors and *encomenderos* towards the native Filipinos injured deeply the Christian sensibilities of the early missionaries. Those priests were moralists, administrators of God's absolution in confession; and in front of injustices and of ill gotten money from tributes, they could not but demand restitution of the money before imparting the sacramental absolution. This confrontation between the missionaries one side, and the colonizers, *encomenderos* and civil officials on the other, could not fail to reach the Court of Madrid and the Royal Council of the Indies.

When the first bishop of Manila Domingo Salazar arrived in Manila 1581, he perceived the existence of a delicate situation where the missionaries were deeply troubled by spiritual anxieties over the morality of the conquest and of the collection of tributes. It did not take long before the new Bishop decided to address the situation by convening a Diocesan Synod that would tackle these problems in depth. The Synod actually opened its sessions the following year 1582 and lasted until 1586.

The synodal Fathers went on record to state in the proceedings of their meeting that "the King of Spain does not possess these Islands neither by inheritance, nor by donation nor by right of a just war." Strong echoes of the theology and jurisprudence of Vitoria seemed to resound in the synodal hall as the Fathers fearlessly asserted that "the captains and soldiers, the governor and the judges have no more right over these islands than the right given to them by the King of Spain; and the king did not give

them more authority than what he received from the Pope; and the Pope could have given the king more than what he received from Christ, that is, the command and the right of going or sending people anywhere in the world for the purpose of preaching the Gospel".²⁴

However, the application of these principles was not an easy matter at that time. The Synod also saw the necessity to calm down the anxieties and qualms of conscience of the missionaries and confessors. And besides, the reality of the conquest was already an accomplished fact for almost twenty years, a *fait accompli*, that might give something like a right of ownership by prescription.

The Synod, therefore, advised that the missionaries would do better stopping to talk about these problems. It would be better for them to devote themselves to their spiritual ministry than to engage themselves in matters that did not pertain to their mission and could only serve to stir criticism, division and scandal, and would be little advantageous to the natives and to the new Christians.

But soon after the synod was closed, a new situation arose when in July of 1587, a *barcada* of Dominican friars arrived in Manila to share in the evangelization work in the Islands. Among the fifteen pioneers, there stood out some theologians of relevant human and spiritual qualities: Fr. Miguel de Benavides, future archbishop of Manila and founder of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Diego de Soria, future Bishop of Nueva Segovia, and, in the following year, Fr. Juan Cobo, future first ambassador of Spain to the Court of the Shogun of Japan, sinologue and author of the one of the first three books printed in the Philippines. Most of these Dominicans had received their theological training in the school of Francisco de Vitoria and in the spirit of Bartolomé de las Casas. Miguel de Benavides, in particular, had been a pupil of Domingo Báñez. And several of the said friars had a great capacity for philosophical and theological reflection and for doctrinal leadership. Their presence in Manila reinvigorated and encouraged

²⁴ *Suma de una Junta que se hizo a manera de Concilio el año de 1582.* – The original Spanish text of the proceedings of the synod are published in JOSE LUIS PORRAS, *Sínodo de Manila de 1582*, Madrid 1988, pp. 299 ff.

Bishop Salazar who had lately softened his stand on some aspects of the morality of the conquest and the methods of evangelization. For instance, he seemed to favor the convenience of using force to open the gates of China to the Gospel, an idea he later regretted with deep sorrow to have sponsored.

But if Salazar rejoiced in the arrival of Benavides and companions, the colonial authorities and in particular Governor Gómez Dasmariñas must have had strong misgivings when the new missionaries begun to manifest their minds, for they were totally determined to fight for the principles of Vitoria to the letter. Writing to King Philip II, Dasmariñas complained about their legalistic language and their return to the strict principles of the early missionaries. "One of them, Dasmariñas reported, is called Diego de Soria, Prior and a youngster, the other is Fray Juan Cobo, who is not so young... The Bishop (Salazar) and the two of them said in their sermons that Your Majesty has nothing here... that it was necessary to see the title by which Your Majesty has occupied these lands, and to see whether Your Majesty has gone too far in conquering them tyrannically as it was done in Mexico and Peru."²⁵

Actually, the newly arrived Dominicans and Bishop Salazar with them expounded on the question of human rights in no unmistakable terms. Going directly to the root of the problem, they starkly asserted that the King of Spain could not be said to have arrived at a state that made him temporal ruler of the Philippines, and, as a consequence of this, the tributes demanded from the natives, especially from the pagans, were illegal. Like Salazar before, Fr. Benavides begun to write extensive expositions to king Philip²⁶, in which various doubts were raised against the legitimacy of the conquest, faithfully adhering to the principles of Vitoria.

Expectedly, the King, Governor Dasmariñas and the colonial authorities had far less doubts about the righteousness of Spain to be here, and they maintained that Spain had, or eventually would

²⁵ Cf. GAYO, *Ideas*, pp. 150-151.

²⁶ Two reports of Salazar to Philip II are published in W. RETANA, *Archivo del Bibliófilo Filipino*, Madrid 1897, vol. III. About the writings of Benavides on the problem of human rights, we mention here *Tratado de la Predicación del Evangelio y del modo de predicar el Santo Evangelio*, published serially in *Unitas*, 1948 and 1849; and *Instrucción para el gobierno de las Islas Filipinas*.

have, perfect sovereignty over the Islands. That was also the attitude of the Council of the Indies. Probably such matters of right and wrong never bothered the rank and file of the Spanish citizens. In this regard, let it be noted that even the Dominicans themselves were desirous that Philip II were to be acknowledged as temporal ruler of the Islands. "All of us", Father Benavides wrote, "seek that the pagan Filipinos give obedience not only to God and to the Pope but also to the King of Castile." But in the first place, he and his fellow Dominicans wanted the legitimacy of the dominion to be established beyond doubt and as soon as possible.

Submission of the natives by attraction and not by force or violence was the only accepted policy for Benavides and his confreres. But for the king and his Council to accept that policy, they had to admit first the illegality of everything done in the conquest and in the treatment of the natives, particularly in the manner of collecting tributes. Such admission of wrong and the correction of errors was a very bold proposal seemingly impossible for the authorities to swallow. But the Dominicans maintained that it could be done without losing face, and Fr. Benavides was quite clear about it: "If we, he wrote, have the ability to do it, let us impress upon the pagan Filipinos so that their leaders and vassals freely and very voluntarily (*voluntarísimamente*) decide to wish, have, choose and swear allegiance to his Majesty and to his successors as their legitimate king and lord, and to pay them tribute".²⁷ It was a matter of winning over their hearts and wills by conviction, not by fears or threats.

12. Salazar and Benavides before the King's Court in Madrid

In the last decade of the century the struggle for human rights in the Philippines reached its climax, events developing in fast motion. In 1590 Bishop Salazar wrote some conclusions about the abuses of the *encomienda* and the injustices made in the collection of tributes from the natives. Although the Bishop had earlier

²⁷ For a fuller text of Benavides, see JESUS GAYO, *Ideas Jurídico-Teológicas de los Religiosos de Filipinas en el siglo XVI sobre la Conquista de las Islas*, Manila 1950, pp. 185-186.

softened his criticism and favored a forceful entry in China, now, after the arrival of his fellow Dominicans, he returned to his firmness against injustices and in favor of a direct preaching of the Gospel. He had the Dominicans on his side, practically the Dominicans alone, because in this renewed conflict they found themselves without the support of the other religious institutes, Augustinians, Franciscans and Jesuits, who had given up the struggle. For Salazar and his brethren the only action to be taken was to present the matters personally to the King. And to him they went.

The Bishop, nearly eighty years old, left Manila for Spain in 1591, undertaking the last voyage of his life across two oceans and the American continent. He was accompanied by Fr. Miguel de Benavides, whom his Superiors appointed Procurator of the Order before the courts of Madrid and Rome. They arrived in Spain in 1593. The Bishop's most successful intervention in the Spanish Court was the approval of his project to have his diocese of Manila elevated to the rank of Metropolitan see with three suffragan dioceses to be created, those of Nueva Segovia, in Northern Luzon, Nueva Caceres, in Southern Luzon, and Cebu, for the regions of Visayas and Mindanao.

But this joy was saddened by a serious setback. A royal *Cédula* was issued on June 11, 1594, addressed to the Philippine Governor Dasmariñas, informing the latter that the Council of the Indies, in the presence of Bishop Salazar and Fr. Benavides, had decided that tributes had to be collected, entirely and without exception, from all pacified Filipinos, even if they were not Christians. Salazar must have felt this defeat very deeply. Wounded in his sensitive soul by this decision of the King's Council and "exhausted by age, burdened by so much work, fatigued by his journeys and filled with virtues," he died in Madrid a few months later, on December 4, 1594, without seeing the end of the other objectives of his struggle on behalf of the Filipinos.

But the death of Bishop Salazar did not mean the end of the campaign he had started. His torch and flag passed on to his companion Fr. Miguel de Benavides. At that precise moment, Philip II, recognizing the human qualities of this Dominican, nominated him for the office of Bishop for one the three recently established new

dioceses, that of Nueva Segovia, with see in the town of Lal-lo, Cagayan. Surely, this move was not intended to silence the Episcopal candidate on nagging questions regarding colonial policies. But if someone in the court ever thought that the new Prelate could be silenced, he was mistaken, because Benavides vowed to carry on the work of Salazar until the end.

Bishop-elect Benavides was granted an audience with Philip, during which he handed to the king two *memoriales* or treatises. One of them entitled *Instrucciones para el gobierno de las Filipinas*²⁸, dealt with the conditions required for levying tributes and for the right of preaching the gospel. Benavides says that he found the king "very old as regards his corporal strength, although his judgment and mind were better than ever." We do not have specific details about the audience, but the result of it could not be more encouraging for the new bishop.

On March 20, 1596, the king wrote to the president of the Council of the Indies transmitting to him the *memoriales* of Benavides, and ordering him to convoke a special *Junta* or meeting to be attended by members of the Council, by the confessor of the king, by Prince Philip (future Philip III) and by the Superior of the Jesuits. The members of the Council were instructed to examine and give their opinion on those papers "in order to dispel all scruples [of conscience] and once and for all to determine what to do with those matters"; "and to do the job with all possible speed, not letting it down until the matter were resolved".²⁹

Things would now go well except for their speed. All Spaniards know the meaning of *las cosas de palacio van despacio*. Bureaucratic procedures delayed the convening of the Junta for seven months, until October 1596, when the Junta met and signed their final decision to be submitted to the King. It took till longer time for the king to arrive at a final decision. It finally came on February 8, 1597, when the king issued a Royal *Cédula* addressed to the

²⁸ On the writings of Benavides, see *supra*, n. 10.

²⁹ See the correspondence between the king and the president of the Council of the Indies in *Unitas*, XXII, 3 (July-September 1949), pp. 605-610.

new Governor of the Philippines Don Francisco Tello, instructing him in severe terms to fulfill the laws of tributes and to provide for the restitution of the ill gotten taxes imposed on the natives. Then came the historic and unprecedented command for him to organize a popular plebiscite in the Islands, by which the natives would express freely and voluntarily their acceptance of the Spanish monarch's rule. This mandatory part of this *Cédula* deserves to be quoted in full:

"The King to Don Francisco Tello....

"Fray Miguel de Benavides of the Order of Saint Dominic, bishop of Nueva Segovia in those said Islands, has given me certain memorials and accounts of affairs, and of measures suitable for their improvement, and for the security of the consciences of the confessors, of the encomenderos and soldiers, and of other persons, particularly in regard to what affects the spiritual good of the Indians, and the obligation which rests upon me to further them....

"And to this end, I have ordered to be sent to you – printed, and on separate sheets – the clauses which treat of the order to be observed in preaching in newly-entered countries, and how the tributes are to be levied; and the care with which, in both matters, you are to proceed – all being directed toward the good and contentment of the Indians, and their best condition, preservation, and civilization.

"And this you shall again cause to be published, adding penalty of death, perpetual banishment, or confiscation of property to any or all transgressors, according to the degree of their guilt. This you will execute inexorably, under penalty that, besides considering you lax in your duty, I shall have you punished with all rigor – and this infallibly, since you know my wish; and in these scrupulous matters the peace of my conscience rests upon your discharge of duty. In order that proper means may be taken in these matters you will meet with the archbishop and the newly appointed bishops, and the superiors of the Orders; and you will consider the measures to be taken to satisfy the injuries inflicted, and whether the tributes collected from the infidels contrary to the said ordinances can conveniently be returned....

"And if this cannot be done without great difficulty you will advise me thereof; and in the interval, while advising me and while I am providing what appears to me to be best, everything shall remain in the same condition, with the peace and propriety with which I hope that you are governing both spiritually and temporally – as I charge you all to do, each in what concerns him.

*"Likewise you will confer with the said superiors and religious, and bring it about that they shall undertake to restore by love all which shall be found to have been done through force and fear; for, according to what the bishop tells me of these Indians, they are well disposed (not only in spiritual but in temporal matters), **freely to render me submission**".*

Done in Madrid, on the eighth day of the month of February in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-seven.

I THE KING³⁰

This transcendental *Cédula* of Philip II was not only a personal success of Miguel de Benavides, but also a triumph of the cause for justice pursued by the Dominicans in accord with the principles of human rights outlined by Vitoria and Las Casas. As far as the King was concerned, the document shows some traces of an internal conflict between holding all the parts of his empire together and the risk of losing a precious jewel in the Pacific through a referendum of unpredictable results. What is more reflective of the King's religious convictions was the fact that he seemed to be burdened by anxieties and scruples of conscience over the righteousness of his policies in the New World. He had a ready ear for the men of God and of the Church, for his confessor and for preachers of the gospel. Perhaps his sickness made him reflect deeply at the thought of finding himself face to face with his Creator. Whatever moved him to act in that direction, this *Cédula* did not diminish his greatness but increased it by respecting the will of most distant and unknown subjects of his empire.

³⁰ Royal Cedula of Philip II addressed to Francisco Tello de Guzman, Governor of the Philippines, Madrid, February 8, 1597. The full text is published by J. Gayo in *Unitas*, XXI, 1 (January-March 1948), pp. 157-159.

13. Benavides and the Philippine Referendum of 1599³¹

With the Royal *Cédula* in his luggage, Bishop-elect Miguel de Benavides undertook the journey back to the Orient, to his mission and his diocese. He traveled on foot "with only one companion, his pilgrim staff and his Breviary" from Madrid to Seville.³² In Seville he embarked for Mexico and the Far East, always keeping his Episcopal nomination in secret. It was in Mexico where he had to reveal his secret at the time of his consecration in 1597. Then he embarked in the Manila galleon, and arrived in the Philippines in May of 1598. Upon arrival in the capital he announced his consecration as he was addressing himself to the people on the occasion of the Rogations procession.

Benavides stayed in Manila for one year. He presented the Royal *Cédula* to the Governor General, Francisco Tello, who convoked a meeting on August 4, 1598, in his palace, participated in by the ecclesiastical authorities of the islands, namely the Vicar General and Governor of the Archdiocese of Manila (*Sede vacante*), the newly nominated Bishops of Nueva Segovia (Miguel de Benavides) and of Cebu (Pedro de Agurto), the Superiors of the Dominicans, Augustinians, Franciscans and Jesuits.

The Royal Cedula was dutifully read in the meeting. Whereupon, it was resolved that the orders of the King had to be fulfilled by exploring the voluntary submission of the inhabitants of the Philippines and by implementing the norms about the proper way to levy the tributes. The following day, August 5, the governor's decree was proclaimed by the public crier "in a loud and clear voice, many persons being present." Here is the concluding part of the meeting's *Acta*.³³

³¹ For the following narrative of the first Philippine Referendum, I follow my own study "Philip II and the 'Philippine Referendum' of 1599", published in *Unitas*, 73, I (March 2000), pp. 7-50. It was reprinted with the slightly changed title of "The Church and the 'Philippine Referendum' of 1599", in *Philippiniana Sacra*, XXXV, 103 (January-April, 2000), pp. 89-128.

³² *Anales Eclesiásticos*, fol. 26a.

³³ Published by BR, *The Philippine Islands*, X, pp. 280-281.

"The said governor having read to them the said royal decree, and certain ordinances treating of discoveries and pacification, exactly as is contained in the said decree, and they having heard what his Majesty orders, and having consulted thereon, a decision was reached in the said meeting as to what the governor and captain-general should command in regard to the ordinances which his Majesty sent him, and which were publicly read, as herein before stated, with the heavy penalties which the aforesaid decree provides against transgressors. For the future they understand that our Lord's service demands that, by peaceful means of love, all the Indians should render voluntary and free submission to his Majesty the king of Castile, our lord; and they offered that by themselves and the religious, and the other ministers under their control, all efforts should be made that this might be accomplished in a short time. As regards restitution for the past, it seems best to them that what can be easily effected by pious works and other means should be done; and as for the rest this means would be taken, that the religious should gain over the Indians by love and gentleness, and that they should grant the natives freedom from tributes, which were levied in times past, while they were infidels.

Therefore the following persons have affixed their signatures.

DON FRANCISCO TELLO, [Governor]

*THE ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA*³⁴

FRAY MIGUEL, Bishop of Nueva Segovia [Lallo-Vigan]

FRAY PEDRO, Bishop of Santísimo Nombre de Jesus [Cebu]

FRAY BERNARDO DE SANTA CATALINA, Provincial. [O.P.]

RAYMUNDO DE PRADO, Vice-provincial [S.J.].

FRAY JOAN DE SAN PEDRO MARTIR [Maldonado, O.P.]

JOAN DE RIVERA [O.S.A.]

On September 13, only forty days after this decree was published, King Philip died in El Escorial. The impact of his death must have been felt immediately in Spain and in Europe. The New World had to wait for the arrival of the galleons. As for the Philip-

³⁴ In fact, the archdiocese of Manila was then *sede vacante* (vacant see) by the death of its second archbishop Ignacio Santibañez, who died on August 14, 1598. And so, the archdiocese had to be represented in the meeting by its Vicar Capitular and Ecclesiastical Governor.

pinos, the news of Philip's death was not known until the following year, by the middle of 1599. But his demise did not affect the implementation of the *Cedula* of February 8, 1598. Before the arrival of the fateful news, the referendum was over in many parts of the Islands.³⁵

It took months before Governor Francisco Tello's orders communicating the Royal *Cédula* and his personal instructions could reach the *Alcaldes Mayores* (provincial governors), and before the latter did the same with the captains of the various *pueblos* and *cabezas de barangay*. The modern reader must exert some effort to mentally visualize the state of things in the Philippines four centuries ago. The archipelago, every island of it, was a thick, virgin tropical forest all throughout. Most communications had to be done by fluvial ways or by sea. Inland, there were no roads to speak of, only difficult trails leading to hidden *pueblos* or big settlements recently created, sometimes baptized with names of saints. Deeper inside the forests, there were little villages or *barangays* composed of a few families.

The same mental effort is needed to understand the absolute absence of any kind of administrative mechanism conducive to the organization of a referendum, the very name of which is given to it rather anachronistically in the present study: None of the natives spoke a word of Spanish. It would be ridiculous to think here in terms of mass media of communications, radio announcement, television or newspapers, of publicity displays, of political campaigns, registration of voters, of ballots or ballot boxes, or of election surveys. There was only one thing to do, and it was done: to ask verbally the representatives of the native population whether they wanted the king of Spain as their sovereign and protector or not. This was asked, and nothing more. The results can be known through various reports sent from the Philippines to the Court of Madrid.

³⁵ On May 17, 1599, Benavides wrote a letter to Philip II, the bishop still ignorant of the death of the monarch, which occurred nine months earlier. Probably the news arrived in the Philippines with the Acapulco galleon, which used to arrive between the months of April and July. Also to be taken into account is the time needed for news to travel from Manila to Lal-lo, Benavides' Episcopal see, in the Cagayan province.

a) The Governor's Report

Luckily two official reports to the King about the implementation of his Royal *Cédula* of February 8, 1597 have been preserved: one from the Public Notary of the Insular Government, Don Gaspar de Acebo, and the other from the Governor General, Don Francisco Tello. The Notary Public certified on July 14, 1599 that the plebiscite had been carried to effect.³⁶

Governor Tello had his report signed on July 12, on time for the impending departure of the Acapulco galleon. Before summarizing the substantial facts of the events, let us note with some perplexity the tone of his exposition. Tello took the great risk of revealing to the king his displeasure at the idea of a plebiscite in the Islands, in spite of the severe terms of the Royal *Cédula* against any opposition to it. He tells the king that tributes levied on the inhabitants were not oppressive, and that the Filipinos had for a long time accepted the domination of the King of Spain, without going through the present "ceremony", as he refers to the present plebiscite rather cynically. He even believed, and he tells the king, that the plebiscite could bring difficulties for the Islands if people have recourse to delays, as it happened presently in the province of La Laguna. To top it all, Tello daringly advises the King to "order a review of the affair."

The governor was not entirely accurate in describing the local political situation, for several cases of resistance and of rebellion had actually happened in some parts of the Islands. But aside from this, what was important about the referendum was not so much what Tello thought but what Philip had decreed. And what is more important for us today is whether the King's wishes were carried to practice in the Philippines, however reluctantly or grudgingly implemented by the governor. Tello did comply with the king's command as his report shows. And he informs the King that the areas covered by the referendum as of the date of his writing, were the Ilocos region, the other provinces of the Bishopric of Nueva Segovia, which included the Cagayan Valley and the district of

³⁶ GASPAR DE ACEBO, "Statement regarding the fulfillment of the decree of His Majesty", cited in clause 31 of the governor's letter of June 12, 1599, published in BR, *The Philippine Islands*, X, p. 290.

Manila, meaning, probably, the provinces of Central Luzon and La Laguna, south of Manila. Here is the most pertinent part of his report dated July 12, 1599:

"From the hand of the bishop of Nueva Segovia I received the royal decree of your Majesty in which you ordered me, by the best and most gentle methods possible, to compel the natives of these islands to render submission to your Majesty (this ceremony having been neglected at first), so that the tributes which they pay may be collected with more justice. I was ordered to join with the archbishop, bishops, and other prelates, the superiors of the orders, in its execution...

In the province of Ylocos, in the diocese of the bishop of Nueva Segovia, this was very well done; and submission was rendered to your Majesty. Likewise the whole district of Manila, a mission of the Augustinian fathers, has rendered submission. La Laguna, in charge of the Franciscan fathers, has not so easily yielded; for the natives there have asked a year's time in which to answer; and I have left La Laguna in this state, until I should give an account of it to your Majesty, as you direct me. The same thing will be done in the other provinces which ask delays. Thus far I am not informed of what has been done.³⁷

b) Benavides' Report

Of all the local reports sent to Spain informing on the details of the referendum, the first and the best was drawn in the town of Magaldan (Mangaldan in the report), in the province of Pangasinan. The province of Pangasinan was one of the first ministries entrusted to the Dominicans after arriving in the Philippines. In 1595 its territory was included inside the limits of the newly created diocese of Nueva Segovia. At the moment of the referendum, therefore, it was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Bishop Miguel de Benavides. The conversions of the natives to the faith were so few in the first years that, according to the *Anales Eclesiásticos de Filipinas*, when Benavides took possession of his diocese he found only "two hundred Christians among innumerable pagans." This means that the Christians in Pangasinan must have

³⁷ Full text published in BR, *The Philippine Islands*, X, pp. 253-255.

been still fewer, and that the majority of the people represented in the referendum were not yet baptized.

The date of the plebiscite was March 21, 1599. Presiding over the act was Bishop Benavides, accompanied by three Dominican missionaries of that province, Frs. Tomás de Castellar, Melchor Pavia and Luis de Luca. These four signed the *acta* or record of the proceedings, which was certified by an Apostolic Notary and Secretary, Don Luis de Herrera, and by an unidentified Spaniard, Pedro de Anaza de Benavides, possibly a public official. Also signing the proceedings were two Filipinos, who wrote their names in the pre-Spanish Filipino alphabet, called *baybayin*.³⁸ Fr. Tomás de Castellar, who, by that time had mastered the Pangasinan dialect, acted as interpreter. The original *Acta* thus drawn up and sent to the King is now preserved in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville.

Five *pueblos* and seven *barangays* had sent people to the assembly in Magaldan, with their leaders. The pueblos mentioned are Magaldan, San Jacinto, Santa Fe, Santo Domingo and Calahuacan. Five *barangays* and villages bear the same name of the main centers, the two others being called Santa Cruz and Binloeh. The chiefs are identified by their names and place of origin. Twenty are said to be Christians and nine pagans. Ten of them are classified as *principales* and *cabezas de barangay*, and the rest are *caylanes* and *vecinos*.³⁹

³⁸ *Baybayin*. This is the name given to the Tagalog alphabet, the writing system used in the pre-Spanish times, which originated from the Asokan alphabet in India (G. Zaide). It consisted of three vowels and fourteen consonants. Only three samples are known to this writer to exist today: One, in printed form, in *Doctrina Cristiana*, the first book printed in the Philippines in 1593 which offers the text in three manners, that is, in Spanish, in romanized Tagalog and in *baybayin* (Tagalog); the second, in the signatures of the text under study (Ms., 1599); and the third, a deed of sale done in Tondo in 1616, whose original Ms. is kept in the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas. On the latter, see ALBERTO SANTA-MARIA, O.P., "El Baybayin en el Archivo de Santo Tomás", in *Unitas*, XVI, February 1938.

³⁹ *Pueblo*: Town, or better, municipality of the Philippines. *Barangay*: kinship unit of 30 families at the coming of the Spaniards, later made a political unit for taxation purposes. *Principales*: Spanish word used in the Philippines to designate the pre-Spanish *datus* or chiefs and their descendants. Their collectivity was called *principalía*. *Cabeza (de barangay)*: Filipino administrator in charge of a

The solemn act took place in the church of Magaldan on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, when all the people of the towns and villages, men and women, assembled. The Royal *Cédula* was read to them, and Fr. Tomás de Castellar translated and explained it to the people in their dialect. Then, as the record of the proceedings states clearly, all those present “of their own free will, without any coercion, rather much to their satisfaction, gave freely and voluntarily, in the name of all the pueblos and barangays, for the present as well as for the future, obedience to the Catholic king of Castile and Leon, whom they were taking and actually took for their king and lord, and they placed themselves under his royal protection.” Then they knelt down and, joining hands with the Bishop, and the pagans with their own swearing signs, the Bishop received them, in the name of the king, under the king’s protection.

The most relevant paragraphs of the *Acta* deserve to be quoted:

“In the pueblo of Magaldan, province of Pangasinan, of the Philippine Islands, in the island called Luzon, on the twenty first day of March of the year fifteen hundred and ninety nine, *before the Most Reverend Lord Don Fray Miguel de Benavides, first Bishop of Nueva Segovia*, of the Council of His Majesty, and before me, apostolic Notary and secretary, here present, there appeared [a long list of *cabezas de barangay* follows]...

“All of them and many others of the said pueblos and barangays, [were assembled] because this act took place in the church, after the high Mass, on that day, which was the fourth Sunday of Lent, when all said pueblos gather in a church, men and women; and all of them being together, they said through the translation of Fr. Tomás de Castellar, of the Order of the glorious Father Saint Dominic, and Vicar of the church of Bolinao, that, of their free will, without any coercion, rather much to their satisfaction, were giving and actually gave

barangay. He formed part of the *principalía*. – *Cailianes*: In Pangasinan, persons who belonged to a *cabecera*, forming part of it, under an *anacbanua* (LORENZO FERNANDEZ COSGAYA, O.P., *Diccionario Pangasinan-Español*, Manila, 1865, word “cailian”).

voluntarily and freely, in the name of all the pueblos and barangays, for the present as well as for the future, obedience to the Catholic King of Castile and Leon, whom they were taking and actually took for their King and lord, and they placed themselves under his royal protection, and being their vassals they would be defended and protected, living in peace and with security of their lives, honor and properties. And above all, they asked his Majesty that he provide them with bishops and religious [missionaries] and all that pertains to the good of the soul. About all this, they all said that they were not moved by said religious or other persons, but by what they saw by experience; and they gave many thanks to God who had deigned to send such king and lord to them. And they considered as well given all the tributes they had paid until then, both to his Majesty and to his representatives.

"But with regard to the offenses that some Alcaldes Mayores and encomenderos and tax collectors and other Spaniards had committed against them, both by collecting more than what was established by his Majesty or the Governor of these Islands to be paid as tribute, or by whatever kinds of injury inflicted on them, they said that they were not pardoning any of such things; rather they wanted to be repaid in full. They understood that, by this act, aside from caring for themselves and their children and properties, they were rendering a service to his Majesty our lord, whose intention has never been, nor is, that they should suffer any injury, rather, his royal will has always been, and is, that fair treatment be given to them and to all, and that those who offend them should be punished. Therefore they want and say that if any of said offenders owe them something they make restitution. And this is what they want...

"Then, the said principales and many of their timanes knelt down in the major chapel of the church, before His Lordship [Bishop Benavides], and the Christians among them placing their hands on those of his Lordship and on a cross he had made with his fingers, and the pagans with their swearing signs, all together swore formally to be faithful vassals of the Catholic King of Castile and Leon, who reigns is now and will reign in the future for ever and ever. And they asked that a public instrument should be made of this act.

[Signatures]

Fr. Miguel, *Bishop of Nueva Segovia*[a signature in *baybayin*][a signature in *baybayin*]

Fr. Tomas de Castellar [OP],

Fr. Melchor de Pavia [OP]

Interpreter and witness

Fr. Luis de Luca [OP]

Pedro de Anaza de Benavides

Shown to me and I certify:

Luis de Herrera,

*Apostolic Notary and**Secretary*⁴⁰

The same procedure was followed in other regions and provinces, like in Laguna and Cagayan provinces as expeditiously as it was possible. The reports on the results coincide with Benavides' wish and hope expressed earlier that the only way to rectify the wrongs of the conquest by force was for the Filipinos "to accept very voluntarily (*voluntarsíamente*) their allegiance to the Majesty the King of Spain." Now the Filipinos did it freely, without being subjected to deceit, moral pressure, coercion or fear. We do not know of any plebiscite like this having taken place anywhere else in the Spanish colonies or in any other European colony at any time in history.

Even though the Philippine Referendum of 1599 did not cause a tidal wave of reaction in the rest of the world, not even in the writings of the future Philippine historians, it was in fact a remarkable event for the Philippines that all promoters of human rights today should recognize and applaud.

14. Bishop of Nueva Segovia⁴¹

Bishop Domingo Salazar died in Madrid in 1594 without achieving some of the objectives of his trip in favor of the inhabi-

⁴⁰ The original text of the document is in the Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Spain (AI, 76; 68-I-34). It was published by GAYO, *Ideas*, pp. 238-240.

⁴¹ On Benavides' nomination for the diocese of Nueva Segovia, his return to the Philippines and his installation in the diocese, see AD-H, I, pp. 462-465, the source for all future historians. The narrative of Aduarte is summarized in *Anales Eclesiásticos de Filipinas*, fols. 26-27.

tants of the Philippines. But he succeeded in having three more dioceses created in the Philippines, with Manila as Metropolitan See and three suffragan dioceses, namely Nueva Segovia, Caceres and Cebu. And besides, king Philip proposed Fr. Benavides as the first Bishop of Nueva Segovia (Lal-lo, Cagayan, later transferred to Vigan).

In 1597 Benavides joined a *barcada* of twenty Dominicans recruited for the Philippines. From Madrid to Seville he traveled with "only one companion, a pilgrim staff and his breviary." He left Spain in 1598 without revealing his nomination for the episcopacy. It was during the sojourn in Mexico that he received the Episcopal consecration. Everyone admired him for his simplicity, dignity, virtue and learning. Then he embarked in the Manila galleon of that year and arrived in the Philippines in 1599. And he stayed in Manila for one year to transact important affairs, especially to discuss with the Governor and the other ecclesiastical authorities the manner of implementing the Royal decree he had brought himself about the "referendum."

Then he started his journeyed north to take possession of his diocese. He went on foot along the thick forests of Northern Luzon. The seat of his See was the town of Nueva Segovia, known locally by the name of Lal-lo, in the geographic province of Cagayan.⁴² The diocese covered an immense territory of mountainous regions of difficult access and of extensive fertile lowlands.⁴³

He found in that territory only 200 Christians among thousands of pagans. He had to gather and instruct the former and convert the latter to the ways of the Gospel. He labored there for five years and visited the entire diocese twice, on foot, at no cost to the pueblos, organizing parishes and providing for their ministry.

⁴² The seat of that diocese remained in Lal-lo for about two hundred years, until 1758, when King Fernando VI issued a royal *Cédula* transferring it to the city of Vigan, today capital of the province of Ilocos Sur.

⁴³ To have an idea of the difficult pastoral work that awaited Benavides, the territory covered the actual provinces and districts of Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Isabela, Cagayan, Calinga, Apayao, Mountain Province; and in Western Luzon, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Abra, Pangasinan, and northern Tarlac, inhabited by dozens of ethnic groups speaking a big number of dialects.

15. Archbishop of Manila⁴⁴

In 1601 Bishop Benavides was promoted to the Metropolitan See of Manila, vacant since August 14, 1598, when Ignacio de Santibañez died. But the nomination of Benavides by the King of Spain was not effective until 1602 when the Holy See confirmed the royal appointment. It took another year before the papal Bull and the *pallium*⁴⁵ arrived in Manila. Then he resigned his see of Nueva Segovia and took possession of the archdiocese on August 15, 1603.

He governed the archdiocese for only two years, during which he left an image of virtuous, pious and zealous Pastor, living in simplicity and poverty, traveling on foot through the forests of the far-flung territories of his jurisdiction, always dressed in his Dominican habit. He personally visited his archdiocese twice, prudently reforming the clergy and correcting abuses. He distributed his modest income among the poor, having special pity on the fishermen, for whom he was a "crying Jeremiah."

All the while, he never gave up his study habits, reading assiduously "the decisions of the councils of the Church and the canonical norms." He was "very well versed in the Holy Scriptures and professed a great devotion to St. Thomas Aquinas." It is said of him that in the middle of discussions over transcendental matters that caused confrontations of views among the priests he used to say "*Veritas liberabit vos*" (the truth will set you free).⁴⁶

On assuming the pastoral care of the archdiocese, one of his main concerns was to create a chair of Theology for the formation of the cathedral clergy, with a class of dogmatic theology to be imparted in morning and another of moral theology in the afternoon. He prevailed upon his Dominican brethren to provide the chairs with lecturers. And his greatest contribution to the education of the people of Manila and through the Islands was the idea of founding a college for the education of the clergy and the youth.

⁴⁴ For his governance of the archdiocese of Manila, see the same sources cited *supra*, footnote 38.

⁴⁵ The *pallium* is the pontifical insignia given by the Pope to archbishops, symbolic of the metropolitan dignity. It is a white band with black crosses that hangs from the shoulders to the chest.

⁴⁶ Jn., 8, 32.

This was actually done after his death, as it will be said shortly (*infra*, n. 17).

He died on August 26, 1605, feast of St. Anne. The Cathedral chapter made for him a very solemn funeral and shouldered its expenses. He was buried in the cathedral, near the main altar, at the Gospel side, under the place of the Episcopal throne.

16. Benavides' relations with the Jesuits

Through the history of the University of Santo Tomas, the Jesuits appear sometimes as collaborating with the Dominicans in sharing common academic concerns or in defending themselves against common educational dangers and attacks; but in other occasions they are seen engaged in academic rivalry and emulation over matters of greater or lesser importance for their respective schools. This emulation was not a novelty here, it had already happened in several countries of Central and South America where two or more religious institutes, and particularly Dominicans and Jesuits, founded colleges or universities. As for their rivalry here, it may be asked whether it started even as early as the times when Benavides was conceiving the idea of founding a college to be run by his confreres.

Let us begin by noting the good side of their relationship. Shortly after the arrival of Bishop Benavides in Manila in 1598 in the company of Archbishop Ignacio de Santibañez of Manila and Bishop Pedro Agurto of Cebu, the Jesuits and the students of their College of Manila staged a program of welcome for them consisting of dialogues and recitations of epigrams and eulogies in Latin.⁴⁷ It is also reported that when the resident students of the Colegio de San Jose organized literary programs, they "were occasionally graced by Archbishop Benavides and the members of the *Audiencia*, whose presence and participation undoubtedly put the scholars on their mettle".⁴⁸ No less happy could Benavides be when he became

⁴⁷ P. PASTELLS, *Historia General de Filipinas*, Tomo IV, p. CCXLV; H. COSTA, *The Jesuits*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ H. COSTA, *The Jesuits in the Philippines 1581-1868*, Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1961, p. 197, quoting the *Annual Letter of 1604* to the Jesuit Superior General.

Archbishop of Manila at seeing the positive contribution of the Jesuits to the formation of young men for the archdiocesan clergy of whom there was great need.

But all these good gracious gestures notwithstanding, Benavides was not so accommodating about some plans of the Jesuits regarding their first schools. In 1595 they had founded a college called *Colegio de Manila* or *Colegio de la Compañía*, which later became *Universidad de San Ignacio*. In this college the Jesuits imparted the institutional courses of the sacred sciences to the candidates of their Society for the priesthood. And in 1601 they founded another school nearby, the *Colegio de San José*, a residential school for sons of Spaniards endowed with scholarship, which served also to train boys for the priesthood. The students of San Jose attended classes of higher studies in the *Colegio de Manila*.

But not satisfied with founding a college of higher studies, the Jesuits aspired to something more prestigious, that is, to obtain from the king of Spain license for the *Colegio de San Ignacio* to confer academic degrees. Towards this end, as early as in 1597, presumably at the request of the Jesuits Fathers, Governor Tello recommended to the King that the College of Manila be allowed to open courses *leading to the university degrees of bachelor, licentiate and master* "for the sake of the students of this land which is so far away from the universities of Europe".⁴⁹

At the same time, Fr. Francisco de Vera, on leaving for Spain to take the post of procurator of the Jesuits before the courts of Madrid and Rome, was "to ask the Superior General of the Society permission to institute courses in Arts and Theology in the College of Manila, both for Jesuits and for extern students, and to *grant degrees* in those faculties in accordance with the Society's privileges. If the Superior General Acquaviva approved of this, then the king's authorization was also to be obtained".⁵⁰

Letters from various high personalities must have been sent from Manila to Madrid asking for such authorization, for in 1598,

⁴⁹ Letter of Governor Tello to Philip II, Manila, June 1587, published by F. COLIN-P. PASTELLS, *Labor Evangélica de los obreros de la Compañía de Jesús en las Islas Filipinas*, Barcelona 1900, II, p. 248; see also COSTA, *The Jesuits*, p. 174.

⁵⁰ Cf. COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

King Philip answered through his Council, not granting the request but demanding clarifications on this matter. What kind of higher studies were there in the Philippines? Where were they given? In what form? To what students? With what results? We do not know whether the desired clarifications were sent to Madrid or not.⁵¹

In whatever case, the lobbying before the Court continued at the instance of the Jesuits. In 1601 the Bishop of Cebu, Pedro de Agurto, warmly endorsed to king Philip III the initiative of Fr. Pedro Chirino, S.J. for the raising of the Colegio de San Ignacio to the rank of "*university*", in which "degrees be granted as they are given in universities".⁵² In June 1602, the Fiscal of the royal *Audiencia*, Don Jeronimo Salvador, also exposed to the king the convenience of having "a university in Manila in the house of the Society of Jesus" for the good education of the sons of the citizens and to cover the need for ordained priests for the archdiocese. The other members of the *Audiencia* also sent similar requests to the court of Madrid.⁵³

But in spite all these endorsements and pleadings, the Jesuits were unable to obtain their objective because of the opposition of the new Archbishop of Manila Miguel de Benavides. For Benavides the services of the college of San Ignacio to the archdiocese were one thing, the privilege to grant academic degrees quite another. The archbishop strongly perceived that there was something wrong in the means the Jesuits were planning to use in order to attain their end. They wanted to divert for their professorial chairs certain funds already set aside for the help of the poor natives, something Benavides was no ready to approve. And so in 1603, one month before he was installed in the metropolitan see of Manila, he wrote to king Philip III, disapproving of the idea of granting such privilege to the Colegio de San Ignacio:

⁵¹ The royal answer, dated July 8, 1598, is published in COLIN-PASTELLS, *op. cit.*, II, p. 248. – H. COSTA (*The Jesuits*, p. 174), calls it a "royal decree" of "Prince Philip" addressed to the Archbishop of Manila Santibañez. Philip II died on September 13, 1598, two months after this correspondence.

⁵² Letter of Bishop Agurto to the king, Manila, July 7, 1601, published in COLIN-PASTELLS, *Labor Evangélica*, II, p. 249.

⁵³ Letter of Don Jeronimo de Salazar to the king, Manila, June 20, 1602, published in COLIN-PASTELLS, *op. cit.*, p. 249; letter of the royal Audiencia to the king, Manila, June 1602 (*Ibid.*).

"The Fathers of the Society, he wrote, want your Majesty to do them the favor of granting them a university for the islands. Your Majesty may as well grant a university to each of the religious orders and the diocesan clergy too; that is how ill-considered such a project is at the present time. If your Majesty sees fit to let me handle this affair, I shall do my best to reduce it to proper proportions. Much less is it advisable – indeed, it would be contrary to conscience – to permit the said Fathers of the Society to divert to their professorships, as their plan is, the income from certain restitutions which a number of veterans left in their wills to be spent on the natives, and which is being well employed either in ransoming poor captives who would otherwise be sold into slavery among Moors and other heathen, or in assisting them in times of illness and scarcity. I cannot for the life of me understand how can anyone in conscience deprive these poor natives of these benefits and put an end to such good works. May God give his light to all of us".⁵⁴

The reaction of the King and his council to the Archbishop's negative letter is unknown to us. Jesuit historian Horacio de la Costa believes that the Philippine Jesuits' intentions were misunderstood by both the Superior General of their Society and by Archbishop Benavides, inasmuch as the local Jesuits were not asking for a full-fledged university (with faculties of Medicine and Law) but only for degrees in the faculties of Arts and Theology. Did Benavides know better? Or did he have some misgivings about the Jesuits' orthodoxy in theological and moral doctrines? In his exposition to king Philip III, dated July 6, 1603, Benavides called the project "ill-considered". For him to endorse it would be contrary to conscience, because the plan entailed to divert to professorships "the income from certain restitutions which a number of veterans left in their will to be spent for the natives."

All the while, Benavides had words of praise for the services of the Society, while not concealing some misapprehensions about their doctrinal opinions. In a letter to the king written in 1599, Benavides had already told king Philip: "We well know that these

⁵⁴ This letter of Benavides is published in COLIN-PASTELLS, *op. cit.*, pp. 250; also, in English, in BLAIR and ROBERTSON, *The Philippine Islands*, XII, pp. 125-126, and in COSTA, *The Jesuits*, p. 200, whose translation we transcribe here.

Fathers are exemplary everywhere and are studious; and here they seem not to have opportunity for *engaging in novelties* (*andar en novedades*), and so we trust that they will do well".⁵⁵

The reader may be left wondering what the word "novelties" in the report of Benavides could mean. The Dominican historian Alberto Santamaría "believes" that the "true reason" why Benavides was opposed to the academic degrees sought by the Jesuits for the College of Manila was not so much the moral problem arising from the "restitutions" of the veterans unjustly applied to professorships, as the "novelties" or unorthodox doctrines maintained by the Jesuits in Europe in the controversies on grace and human freedom. That famous theological dispute, which lasted for thirty years, confronted the best minds of two theological schools, the Dominican-led "Thomistic School" and the Jesuit-led "Molinistic School".⁵⁶

From 1577 to 1594 the arena of the debates was Spain, and in the latter the Pope intervened to impose silence on both sides. During part of that period, Miguel de Benavides was a student of theology, his professor being Fr. Domingo Báñez, the champion of the Thomistic school, as it was said earlier. After finishing his studies Benavides became professor at the university-convent of San Pablo, Valladolid (1567-1586). After five years in the Philippines, Benavides returned to Spain with Bishop Salazar, as we have also seen, and during his sojourn there, the controversy became even more bitter than before. In one of these periods, Benavides is said to have taken part in those disputes by writing a report on matters related with grace and freedom.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ P. PASTELLS, *Historia General de Filipinas*, tomo V, p. CCIII.

⁵⁶ The "Controversies on Grace" tried to combine God's motion in us with man's created freedom. The Thomistic school emphasized God's omnipotent power as first cause of everything; the Molinistic School, for its part, tried to save man's freedom of the will, even under God's motion. Both sides defended their position, but without eliminating the part emphasized by the other side. To combine both extremes was a difficult problem. In the end, the Holy See, in 1607, allowed both sides to continue holding their respective opinion but without censuring the opponent with unorthodox or heretical appellatives. But Molina's book, *Concordia Liberi arbitrii* had a rough sailing in the Roman Commission entrusted with its examination.

⁵⁷ The famous Spanish Dominican scholar Luis Getino, in a prologue to Fr. Juan Cobo's *Libro Chino Ben Sim Po Cam*, Biblioteca Clásica Dominicana, Madrid

It is evident that Benavides was having in mind that passionate controversy when he mentioned the "novelties" in his letter to the king. But to conclude from this premise that the dubious "novelties" of the Jesuits in Europe were behind Benavides' opposition to the Jesuits' quest for academic degrees in their college of Manila seems to be a long jump to a conclusion without evident connection.⁵⁸ Nowhere can an explicit statement of Benavides be found substantiating such conclusion. Neither can it be said that the good archbishop was at that moment foreseeing the foundation of a Dominican college with the exclusive right to grant degrees. That he was thinking of a Dominican college was one thing, that he had in mind a university granting degrees quite another thing, a thing not clear.

17. The last will that made Benavides the UST Founder

At an unspecified date before 1605, archbishop Benavides and Fr. Diego de Soria agreed in the idea of founding a Dominican college in Manila in which "up to thirty *colegiales* could study Theology and Arts."⁵⁹ On July 26, 1605, Benavides passed to the next life. Seeing that the end was approaching, he made a testament on July 24 in the presence of two Dominican Fathers summoned by him to be the executors of his last will, Fr. Domingo de Nieva, Prior of Santo Domingo Convent, and Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina, Commissary of the Holy Office in the Philippines.

1924, p. 16, says that he is in possession of an autograph work of Benavides entitled *Informe sobre materias de Auxiliis* [on the helps of grace] (Cf. A. SANTAMARIA, *Notes on Benavides* (unpublished).

⁵⁸ The possibility of such connection gave to A. Santamaria an occasion for digging to the utmost on the reasons for Benavides's opposition to the Jesuits (AS, unpublished personal notes on Benavides, in the possession of F. Villarroel).

⁵⁹ This is known to us from a communication of king Philip III to Governor General Juan de Silva, dated July 28, 1609, in which he tells the governor that "the Bishop of Nueva Segovia [Diego de Soria, bishop since November 15, 1602] has written to me a letter dated June 20, 1606 saying that he and the archbishop of that city [Manila, i.e. Benavides] treated about the foundation of a college in which up to 20 *colegiales* of theology and Arts could study" (Published by AS-DH, pp. 1-2. The original is in the Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Estante 68, Cajón 1, Legajo 34.).

Although the original text of the testament has been lost, we know the substance of the portions pertinent to the present study through the testimony of one of the said executors, Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina, when he drew up the foundation act of the college six years later. In the words of Fr. Bernardo, the archbishop, in the last depositions, declared that after paying certain obligations, all the residue of his estate was bequeathed "*in a perfect and irrevocable donation inter vivos*" for the foundation and endowment of a seminary-college. These are the words of Fr. Bernardo:

"His Lordship said and declared that, of the entire residue of his estate he made a perfect and irrevocable donation "*inter vivos*" [among the living] for a pious work that he had discussed over with, and committed to, said Fathers Domingo de Nieva, Prior of Santo Domingo, and Bernardo de Santa Catalina, Commissary of the Holy Office, to which college everything should be destined and distributed in the manner and form the two Fathers ordered and thought appropriate..."

The same Foundation Act adds some more details in succeeding paragraphs:

"And in conformity with the clauses of the testament of said Lord Archbishop, I, the aforesaid Commissary of the Holy Office, Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina (since Fr. Domingo de Nieva has died), declare that what the Lord Archbishop communicated to me and to him was that the residue of his estate be spent in helping the foundation and endowment of a college-seminary, where the Religious of this convent [of Santo Domingo] must teach the sciences of Arts and Theology, and that the religious novices and the others who may desire to attend may do so, as may also the sons of the citizens of this City and Islands, and other persons..."⁶⁰

The testimony of Fr. Bernardo says no more about the archbishop's donation. But contemporary historian Aduarte complements the information. "He [Benavides] left for this project," Aduarte says, "his *library* and everything he possessed, which put together, a poor man that he was, was worth *little more than one*

⁶⁰ The original Foundation Act is in AUST, *Libros* 48, fols. 1-10.

thousand pesos; which, however, was much to start a work so pious and necessary and so much useful for his archbishopric".⁶¹

At this point, the reader may inquire whether, with the donation of such a modest sum and his small collection of books, can Benavides be considered as the true founder of the college. The answer is that strictly speaking he was not. In ecclesiastical legislation the term "foundation" (from the Latin "*fundare*" (to lay the foundation of), may refer, in general, to either the granting of a *fundus* (a land lot) or to effecting the material construction of a building (church, school, hospital); more strictly speaking, it means the granting of an endowment of a capital sum, the interests of which are used for the maintenance of the institution.

In the present case, the foundation was not really done within Benavides' life; neither did he bequeath those possessions by way of testament (*mortis causa*, in view of his death), but as a donation "*inter vivos*" (among the living). It was a gift or contribution to the future foundation of a college. And besides, the sum donated was obviously insufficient for the establishment of a college. There were other donors of funds for the projected foundation of the college, like Bishop Diego de Soria, of Nueva Segovia and three laymen, who actually contributed bigger sums and more books. But this particular point belongs to the history of the university rather than to the biography of Benavides.

However, from the very beginning, the Dominicans who drafted the Foundation Act in 1611, six years after the donation *inter vivos*, and who laid down the cornerstone of the first building, had the great consideration of nominating Benavides as *founder* of the College, because he was the "first inventor and author of this work"⁶²; because he "caused the project to be founded"⁶³; and be-

⁶¹ AD-H, II, p. 137. – The sum donated by Benavides is variously reported by different authors: The Augustinian Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga (*Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas*, Filipiniana Book Guild, Manila 1973, p. 187) puts the amount at 1,000 pesos; the Foundation Act of the college, 1,500 pesos (see *infra*); *Anales Eclesiásticos de Filipinas*, 2,000; Fr. Juan Peguero, O.P. (*Historia en compendio de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario*, ms.), 3,000. – The Foundation Act must reflect the true sum (1,500) since it is asserted by the executor of the testament.

⁶² Words of the Foundation Act.

⁶³ Words of historian Aduarte (AD-H, II, p. 137).

cause "he gave the first alms for that purpose".⁶⁴ And along the following centuries, the University of Santo Tomas has always recognized him as its principal founder. Such recognition still holds today, notwithstanding the fact that in strict historical reality the true founders were the juridical persons of the Dominican Order and the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary through the instrumentality of some of their members who drafted and implemented the Foundation Act in 1611.⁶⁵

18. The Benavides Monument in the UST Campus

The best and perhaps the only image of Benavides set in the minds of the academic population of the university comes, not from literary sources, but from the visual impression given by his statue presiding over the campus gardens in front of the Main Building. The statue represents a man standing on a pedestal flanked by four lions and four shields, donning the Dominican habit, with an Episcopal skullcap, his right arm elevated in the act of preaching, and his left resting on his chest and holding a book with the word EVANGELIO on its cover. It is probably one of the most photogenic sites of the campus. But few persons know the story of that monument and statue.⁶⁶

The story begins in 1878 during the rectorship of Fr. Joaquín Fonseca. In December of that year, he conceived the idea of erecting a monument with a statue of the founder in the Plaza de Santo Tomas, in Intramuros. Since the plaza was public property, he obtained permission from the municipal authorities and from the Governor General Domingo Moriones. And to help in the cost of the project, estimated at 30,000 pesos, a big sum at that time, Fonseca approved a fund raising campaign to be made among the students

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ In the foregoing opinion regarding Benavides as founder, I am sharing some views of historian Alberto Santamaría expressed in several unpublished notes on the University of Santo Tomas, which he entitled "*UST, Nombres-Crítica*", pp. 10-15. Copy of F. Villarroel.

⁶⁶ For a good study of the origin of the monument to Benavides, see ALBERTO SANTAMARIA, O.P., "La Estatua del Fundador" in his *Estudios Históricos de la Universidad de Santo Tomás*, Manila 1938, pp. 13-24.

and alumni. The fund-drive was unpopular⁶⁷ and collected only 4,000 pesos. This and the departure of Fr. Fonseca for Spain caused the shelving of the project for ten years.

The following rector, Fr. Gregorio Echeverría, resurrected the plan in 1888 and entrusted to the artist Juan Hervás to design the statue and the pedestal, their total cost estimated at 20,600 pesos. The pedestal was too elaborated and it was accepted only after it was simplified. The statue made in bronze arrived from Paris in 1889. But it was not installed immediately because it took two years more to make the pedestal and to decorate the Plaza de Santo Tomas. Finally, under a new rector, Fr. Matías Gómez, the monument was inaugurated on July 2, 1891. The proceedings of the ceremony were put in official record,⁶⁸ from which the following facts are taken:

The date chosen was July 2, 1891, making it to coincide with the opening of the school year. After the opening rites were over, the guests passed to the site of the monument. Present were Governor General Valeriano Weyler, Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda, the university Rector, the Vice-rector, the deans of the faculties, and a big number of professors and students. The Governor pulled a golden cord to unveil the monument while shouting a "viva" to Benavides, and the orchestra intoned the "Marcha de los Infantes." A pamphlet entitled "His Excellency Miguel de Benavides", authored by Fr. Gabriel Martín Tembleque⁶⁹, was distributed. Two fountains flanked the monument.

⁶⁷ This fund drive gave to Jose Rizal, who in that year 1878 had been student of the preparatory course of Medicine, subject matter for a sarcastic description of it in his novel *El Filibusterismo*, chap. 12. – For a comment on that chapter of Rizal, see F. VILLARROEL, *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas*, Manila, 1984, pp. 240-243.

⁶⁸ The original *acta* is in the Dominican Archives, Avila, Spain (Archivo de la Provincia del Santo Rosario (APSR), Tomo 178, fol 470. It was published in MANUEL ARTIGAS Y CUERVA, *Reseña Histórica de la Real y Pontificia Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila*, Manila, 1911.

⁶⁹ Fr. Martín Tembleque, UST Professor, received the degrees of Licentiate and Doctor of Theology in that year 1891 (Cf. OCIO-NEIRA, *Misioneros Dominicanos en el Extremo Oriente*, Manila, 2000, II, p. 263).

The total cost of the monument, that is, statue, pedestal and fountains was 9,750 pesos. The bronze sculpture had been cast in Paris by the commercial firm "Tony Noel." The monument was four meters high from the basement. The pedestal was made of marble of different colors. In the upper part of it there were four coat-of-arms (of Spain, Manila, the Dominican Order and the Governor General).

In the battle for the liberation of Intramuros of Manila in February of 1945, the old university building was totally destroyed. The bronze Statue of the Founder was a silent witness to the catastrophe and the only silent survivor. The Dominican Fathers, who in 1927 had already the idea of transferring it to the new building in Sampaloc, moved to rescue Benavides from the shambles. A team of workers under Prof. Julio Rocha, official architect of the university, transferred the statue to the present place in front of the Main Building. Set on a new pedestal, the statue was unveiled on November 13, 1946, feast of the Patronage of St. Thomas Aquinas over all Catholic schools.

The program, held in front of the monument, with a big crowd attending, "standing under the beneficent rays of the sun", was animated by music of the UST band. The numbers of the program included the declamation of Claro M. Recto's poem *A Benavides* (written in 1611, third centennial of the university), an eulogy of the Founder by Fr. José Blanco, Regent of the Faculty of Law, and the unveiling of the statute and speech by the Hon. Manuel V. Gallegos, Secretary of Instruction. There followed a floral offering to Benavides done by fourteen lady students of the different faculties and colleges of the university. It ended with the blessing of the Monument by the Most. Rev. Michael O'Doherty, Archbishop of Manila.⁷⁰ □

⁷⁰ See the program printed for the occasion entitled *Ceremonies for the Unveiling of the Monument to Fr. Miguel de Benavides* (Wednesday, November 13, 1946) AUST, Programs, 1946. The words quoted above are from Fr. Pablo Fernández, who was present in the ceremony – The poem of Claro M. Recto, law student, was composed by him for a contest of poetry organized by the university on the occasion of the celebration of the Third Centennial of the foundation of the University of Santo Tomas, in 1911. The poem won the first prize. It was published in *El Tricentenario de la Universidad de Santo Tomas*, Manila, 1912, pp. 369-374.