

LIGHT OF SPAIN

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IN 1582 ROME, CITY OF PETER, lay in shambles, burnt out, gutted, strewn with rotting corpses—abandoned by her Bishop, the Vicar of Christ. The barbarous forces of Charles V, Emperor and King of Spain, had descended upon the Eternal City, slain and misused its hapless defenders and citizens, dishonored and driven out the Pope and set afire what they could not carry off in loot. Over the Alps, in the Electorate of Saxony, the apostate Augustinian Friar, Martin Luther, was busy translating the Bible into German—interpreting phrases to suit himself or rejecting them completely when they displeased him. Henry the Eighth's divorce suit was proceeding at what seemed like a snail's pace to that ill-starred monarch, and so he was fulminating for Rome to decide it once and for all—in his favor of course. Europe as a whole was still comparatively quiet; but the storm clouds were already beginning to gather, and the forces of disruption, falsehood, and hate, ever seething against the light and love of God in His Church, were massing and coming together from many strange and distant realms.

That same year a child was born in the ancient, colorful town of Valladolid, gay, rock-like fortress of the Province of Old Castile. The blood of two strong and sunny cultures coursed through the child's veins; for his father, Juan de Bañez de Mondragón was genuine Basque, while his mother, Francisca Lopez Paldon was a native of the Royal Province, Castile itself. The young lad was taught his three R's such as they were then constituted, at the parish school. When he was but seven years old a great Dominican theologian and Prince of the Church, Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, died in Rome. But there were outstanding theologians and philosophers in his own native Spain, and especially at the renowned University of Salamanca. With an eye to a life dedicated to God in holy Religion, the youth of fifteen, (whose family had some time previously moved to Medina del Campo, to the north of Salamanca), went up to this remarkable seat of learning, and it is here that we find and recognize him, student in arts, in 1543. He is in the classroom, and there he remains, as he tells us himself, as student and professor, for more than half a century. This man is to be a doctor in the Church of God, that is to say, a champion of

the faith, defender and propagator of Truth, throughout his entire life.

MASTER IN ISRAEL

Dominic Bañez (or Bañes, as he sometimes signed himself, in Basque fashion) entered the Order of Preachers at the splendid convent of San Esteban, Salamanca, in 1546. This was a glorious era for the sons of St. Dominic in Spain, and particularly at this convent of the Order. It was the age of St. Pius V, John of Cologne, Louis Bertrand, Catherine de Ricci, and, later on, St. Rose of Lima and Martin de Porres. At his own convent the novice had as confrere Bartholomé de Medina, who was to share with him one day the laurel of fame as commentator on the Ia-IIae and IIIa Pars of the *Summa*. Many of the most eminent professors and preachers, such as Dominic Soto, Ambrose Catharinus, Bartholome Carranza (who came to a sorry end), Melchior Cano, Diego de Chaves, and others, were away for periods of time, at the Council of Trent. In 1547 Dominic was professed at St. Stephen's and began at once a review of the arts and of philosophy for two years. There was at that time at the University an Academy of select students called the "Collegiates of Cajetan," established in Cajetan's day and patronized by him. Bañez was elected to this group in 1549, at which time he also began his studies in Theology. These were to be the decisive and formative years of his intellectual life. The "Christian Socrates," Francisco de Vitoria, O.P., who had died the same year that Bañez entered the Order of St. Dominic, had led the divine sciences from the hopeless speculations of a decadent scholasticism to their bed-rock sources, the classical theological *loci*. From that day forward the University of Paris, which had been the center of Theological learning since the 13th century, yielded pride of place to Salamanca.

Bañez himself paid tribute to the inspired genius of Vitoria: "We know," he wrote "from what all our masters have told us, that sixty years ago, in this University of Salamanca, or rather, in the whole of Spain, the professors of scholastic theology were of no great worth; and thus it was, until an illustrious man, an eminent Master of the Order, Francisco de Vitoria, by the sole influence of his lectures, restored, like another Socrates, all their former splendor to the doctrines of the ancient school."¹ The redoubtable Melchior Cano, foe of heretics, relentless pursuer of false mystics, and, unfortunately, nuisance to the lately arrived Society of Jesus, succeeded Vitoria in the Prime Chair

¹ *In II-II*, q. 1, a. 7.

of Theology (the Dominicans held this post, which was open to competition, for more than two centuries without interruption). Bañez sat under him, and studied as well under the no less luminous Diego de Cheves and Pedro de Sotomayor.

Dominic de Soto, who in turn occupied the Prime Chair after Cano, 1552-60, never had Bañez as a student, for in the first year of his incumbency the latter was assigned to the arts—trivium and quadrivium—in the three years course, under Soto as Regent. In 1555 Bañez was named Master of Studies at St. Stephen's and began to teach Theology in public lectures. At the General Chapter of the Order, held at this same convent four years earlier, the Capitular Fathers declared the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas to be the official text for lectures in Theology within the Order. Vitoria had anticipated this definitive and official decision, having been the first to substitute the great work of Aquinas for the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard in his public classes. For more than five years Bañez labored earnestly, interpreting the *Summa* daily for his own brethren with scholastic commentaries. From 1559-1560 he taught exegesis to a large number of students, among them the famous Master Luis de León. During these early teaching years the young professor took regular examinations for higher degrees, at which he carried all the honors. We are told that no one ever surpassed him in these periodic tests. Early in 1561 Bañez was admitted to the degree of *Praesentado* in Sacred Theology, and this promotion by the Chapter of his Province was confirmed the following year at the General Chapter in Avignon.

Dominic Bañez was now thirty-three years old, with eight years or more of teaching behind him. His genius as doctor in Theology had found widespread acclaim. Hence when, in 1561, the Master General approved of the erection of a General Studium at Avila, Bañez was sent to inaugurate the lectures there on the *Sentences, pro gradu et forma Magisterii*. Students flocked to the Dominican convent of St. Thomas to hear his lucid and profound exposition of sacred doctrine and to occupy his time with countless administrative and academic duties. But the stay at holy Avila was to embrace more than the heretofore-unbroken round of scholastic chores and enterprises. For there was a wonderful and terribly persistent woman in this small town, and she was to have much business to do with the Praesentado of Santo Tomas.

ST. TERESA AND BANEZ

The relations between the glorious mystic and foundress of the new Carmel, and the "Master Fray Domingo Banes" form a fascin-

ating and thoroughly edifying series of incidents in the life of our subject. In this brief paper we can do no more than sketch their general outlines, adding a few details by way of information and interest. Teresa de Ahumada was a mature woman of forty-seven when she first met Bañez. The city fathers or *Junta* of Avila were determined to oppose the establishment there by Teresa of her reformed monastery of San José. Dominic studied the case and—before he had ever laid eyes on Mother Teresa—expressed his disagreement with the town's leading citizens. The merits of the case alone convinced this keen theologian that it would be an injustice, and more than this, a tragedy, to oppose the work of this courageous and dedicated woman. Now Bañez was already known in his Order as an acute and profound thinker, humble, discreet, amiable, and much given to prayer and mortification. The weight of his person and his arguments won over all opposition. Ever afterwards St. Teresa declared that he alone had saved her first foundation at Avila from destruction. For the next six years Bañez was her confessor and director (although not alone in these functions). It was at his command that she wrote her *Book of Revelations*, III, and she asks leave of him to write the *Way of Perfection*. Bañez read, annotated with corrections or deletions, and approved of the *Conceptions of the Love of God* (and Peers recognizes that "this is a great recommendation") and the *Book of Foundations*. In fact the autographs or first copies of many of these works come down to us as emended, annotated, and restored by her faithful friend, Dominic Bañez.

Let us examine a few places where Teresa refers to the Dominican theologian. In the *Life*, her autobiography, she speaks of great visions of holy things she had concerning him (chap. 34). "He is a learned man and servant of God" (chap. 39). She is anxious that he should have a good opinion of her, for he is a virtuous and holy man (chap. 40). There is a marvellously informative passage in the *Spiritual Relations* (IV), wherein the mystic relates her discussions and consultations with "Fathers of the Order of St. Dominic, to whom, before having these experiences, she has often made her confessions." Among these Dominicans was "The Master Fray Domingo Bañez, now Consultor of the Holy Office at Valladolid, (who) was my confessor for six years, and whenever I have had any new experience I always correspond with him still." She entrusts these *Relations* to Bañez, "for it is with him that she has held and still holds the most frequent communication." So whole-hearted was Teresa's confidence in her friend that she desired him always to take charge of her writings and to present them to the Holy Office for examination. In 1567 the Mother

Foundress moved her foundation from Avila to Medina del Campo—her confessor's home town. She mentions the help she received in this venture from Bañez, and, in customary Teresian fashion, interrupts her narrative to praise the man she regarded so highly: "Having reached our lodging, I found that there was a Dominican Friar in the place, a very great servant of God, who during the time I was at St. Joseph's had been my confessor. As I said a great deal about his virtue when I was speaking of that foundation (*Life*, chap. 39), I will do no more now that give his name: Maestro Fray Domingo Bañez. He is a man of great learning and discretion, and I allowed myself to be entirely guided by his opinion, which was that the work that I had planned was not so difficult; for the more one gets to know of God the easier His work becomes, and it all seemed to him quite practicable because of certain favors which he knew His Majesty was granting me and because of what he had seen at the time of the foundation of St. Joseph's. It was a great comfort to me to see him; for, once I had his opinion, I thought, everything would go well. So, when he arrived, I told him in the strictest confidence what was happening."²

One is constantly struck by the firm practicality and, at the same time, theological exactness of Bañez' advice to Teresa in various matters. A great moderation, that prudence which supernatural wisdom and knowledge enlighten and direct, pervades his remarks and emendations in the texts of the writings submitted by her for his judgment. Bañez is, it is well known, traditionally condemned by those adversaries who in truth are ignorant of the man and his views (which are none other than those of his beloved preceptor, Thomas Aquinas), as an enemy and destroyer of man's free will. This controversy itself belongs to a later period of his life, but consider for a moment the following incident: In her *Life*, speaking of the sublime ascent of the soul to God, Teresa had written that "The soul has no desire to seek or possess any free will, even if it so wished, and it is for this that it prays to the Lord, giving Him the keys of its will."³ This is the statement of a mystic, and certainly allows of a perfectly orthodox interpretation, once the correct doctrine and distinctions are known. Nevertheless, Bañez will not allow the bald expression: "no desire to seek or possess any free will." Man must not and in fact never does relinquish this most precious gift of God. The phrase was altered by the zealous censor to read: "It has no desire to seek or possess any will

² *Book of the Foundations*, chap. 3. Translated by E. Allison Peers, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1949. Vol. III, p. 10. All quotations from St. Teresa are taken from this English edition.

³ Chap. 20. Peers, Vol. I, p. 127. cf. n. 2.

save that of God." Man's will freely submits to the Divine Will; with perfect liberty, under the intrinsically efficacious movement of grace, man embraces the highest good proposed to it in this ineffable divine intimacy. Let the Molinists consider this text well!

Master Bañez was not unaware of the extraordinary sanctity of this splendid woman. In 1575 he made a report to the Holy Office on the spirit of St. Teresa and on the autograph narrative of her life, originally entrusted to him. His language in this document is the clear and sober language of a scrupulously honest theologian; yet the unflinching enthusiasm of the man manifests itself in various subtle ways, beneath the surface of dry, factual reporting. Besides this, the apprehensions felt by Bañez (as by all the reputable Dominican theologians of his day) at the *Life's* frequent allusions to visions and revelations import a sage judgment in this matter, arrived at from solid and carefully weighed reasonings, and stated bluntly, without passion or wild imaginings. Caution and fairness, doctrinal precision and prudent deduction characterize this report which concludes: "Of one thing I am quite certain, as far as certainty is humanly possible—that she is not a deceiver; and, it is only right, in view of the clarity with which she has written, that everyone should help her in her good purposes and works."⁴

Finally, we have his testimony at the preparatory process of her beatification, in 1591. Bañez stated that no one had been more incredulous than he of her visions and revelations. Yet in the end he proved to be her stalwart champion, protector, and tireless adviser. In his attitude, during all of their relations, his mastery of the spiritual life is shown to be as scientific as it was wholesome and practical. The biographers of St. Teresa have not failed to discern and insist upon Franciscan and Jesuit influence in her life and writings. Yet they appear, as it were, almost embarrassed to allude to the direction and formation she received from the members of the Order of Preachers—especially from the chief among them, Dominic Bañez. Such vagueness and even taciturnity is all the more incomprehensible in the light of the many references of Teresa herself to this staunch ally and guide of her reform and her soul.

SALAMANCA AND ELSEWHERE

In January of 1565 Bañez went down to Salamanca to fulfill the requirements for the degrees of Licentiate, Doctor, and Master in Sacred Theology. Two brief years more were spent at Avila, which he left for good in 1567, to take up the duties of professor at the Col-

⁴ Appendix, Peers, Vol. III, p. 336.

lege of Saint Thomas at Alcala. The next two years were uneventful, so far as we know. Once again Bañez left one post to fill another, this time at his old Alma Mater, the University of Salamanca. There he commented on the beautiful *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa*. In 1571 the Provincial Chapter proposed his name among the candidates for the Master's degree, which was granted him by the General Chapter at Rome that same year. The University of Salamanca was widely under the direction and influence of the Dominican Masters like himself. Melchior Cano had relinquished the Prime Chair in Theology a decade earlier to Bañez' former teacher, Pedro de Sotomoyor, who was in turn succeeded by John Mancio of Corpus Christi, O.P., renowned professor from Alcalá, in whose classroom sat young Fray Juan of St. Mathias, Carmelite—later to be known as the great Doctor of Light, St. John of the Cross. Four years earlier, on April 11, 1567, Pope Pius V, O.P., had declared St. Thomas Aquinas the fifth Doctor of the Church and there was rejoicing and new inspiration among the brethren of the Order throughout the world. Thomism was triumphant in the Spanish schools, while the stolid Catholicity of Philip II kept the Protestant tide from engulfing the Spanish people as it had so many other peoples. These were troublesome times for Christ's Church and His faithful. England was all but lost—Elizabeth had been excommunicated in 1570. The Calvinists were ready to rise in the Netherlands, and in the following year would murder St. John of Cologne, O.P., and his companions. On the other hand, in August of 1572 Catherine de Medici engineered the destruction of two thousand Huguenots in Paris. The Turks were crushed at Lepanto in 1571, but would return again time after time to ravage and plague the kingdoms of Christendom, henceforward torn and divided into bitter national and religious factions.

These world-shaking events seem to have little affected the academic career of Master Bañez, who continued as lecturer at the University of Salamanca, of which he was elected Vice-rector in 1572. The following year he was again re-assigned, this time to the post of Regent at the Dominican College of St. Gregory in Valladolid. Saint Gregory's was a school of higher studies established for carefully chosen students who were one day to be professors of the sacred sciences. Besides his office of Regent, Bañez acted also in the difficult post of Qualifier of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. At this same time Francisco Suarez, S.J., was expounding the *Summa* of St. Thomas at Valladolid. We have no record however of the meetings or relations which these two men must surely have had during these brief years.

In April of 1577 Bañez won the Durandus Chair at Salamanca, against the competition of Fray Pedro de Uceda, capable Augustinian theologian of the University. He worked on the correction of the Gregorian Calendar until July, 1578. Three years later, on February 21, 1581, a week before his fifty-sixth birthday. Dominic overcame the vigorous opposition of several outstanding professors to capture the Prime Chair in Theology, recently vacated by the death of his former classmate, Bartholomé de Medina, O.P. Bañez had now reached the top of the professorial ladder at Salamanca (which meant: in all of Spain). His theological lectures were the best in the Order and attracted universal attention. This was to be a momentous decade in his life and in that of the whole of Europe. A few months after Bañez ascended the Prime Chair, St. Louis Bertrand, O.P., Apostle of New Granada, went to his eternal reward. The next year St. Teresa died. In England the era of intense persecution began, when Parliament passed an act making it high treason to return to the old religion and felony to say or hear Mass, to go to Confession, or to harbor a priest. It was in this year that the heroic Jesuit, Blessed Edmund Campion, was put to death.

On July 6, 1582 the Master General ordered Bañez to publish his theological works, "*in virtute Spiritus Sancti, et sub formali praecepto.*" Obviously, the Spaniard was held in high estimation at the General Curia. When Bañez' first works appeared in 1584 they were enthusiastically received throughout the Order and quickly ran through several editions. It is interesting to note the great pains Bañez took to insure the finest printing and most carefully corrected and revised text of his writings. He had a printing press set up in the Convent of St. Stephen, Salamanca, at considerable expense. The close and tedious work of reading the sheets as they came off the presses he undertook himself, insisting that errors be obliterated from every page on which they were to be found. The first work to appear was his *Commentarium in Primam Partem Summae Theologiae*. This work was hailed by eminent theologians as a masterpiece of profundity and clear, forceful exposition. There followed in succession Commentaries on the *Secunda Secundae: De fide, spe, et caritate; De jure et justitia; Relectio de merito et augmento caritatis;* and on the *Dialectics* and the *De Generatione et Corruptione of Aristotle*. Bañez was completely and above all the great, dedicated commentator of St. Thomas, for whom his admiration was boundless. If it be true that the best way to understand is to love, then Master Bañez, understood fully the doctrine of Aquinas, for he loved it immensely. His style reveals his spirit

and the vigor of his race: Cantabrian sobriety and simplicity (although his Latin is strange at times and not easy to read), Castilian clarity, energy, and strength. He tells us that elegant and ornate language is the enemy of forceful argumentation. Yet he had a fecund imagination, developed but disciplined, which offered a wealth of apt and pleasing metaphors with which to illustrate his arguments and aid his readers.

Bañez is not yet ready to die. He has only begun a career as Primary Theologian at Salamanca which will last for twenty years. Yet we must leave him here, for the present. For now the great controversies on grace, predestination, and free will begin. Molina is lecturing in Theology at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. This Jesuit will soon receive the first edition of Bañez commentaries on the *Summa* and he will listen intently to the stories of controversy, denouncings, and condemnation which are stirring in Spain. The great Bañez, "most illustrious warrior of Spain," as he was to be called, has not yet begun to fight. We shall meet him again in these pages.