

Colonial Latin America

Mills, Taylor &

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Graham

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Booke
Wilmington
DE

≈ 50

Brazilian Slaves Who Marry

(1811)

When in 1563 the Council of Trent concluded nearly twenty years of deliberations, the Church had (among its many reforms) elevated marriage to the status of a holy sacrament capable of bestowing grace on those who "worthily receive it." Those who wanted to marry should not only have confessed and been absolved of their sins, but they also must marry freely by their own consent and without impediments.

The Brazilian Church also urged marriage as a remedy for mundane ills such as desire among those who found abstinence impossible, although chastity remained a more holy state than matrimony. A settled married life, said the Church, offered the way to spread order through a scattered, inherently disorderly and unruly population. It accused vagabonds who roamed from place to place of living "licentiously in the vice of lust and concubinage," feigning marriage with women whom they brought with them and many times leaving behind their legitimate wives (or husbands). Speaking through the *Constituições primeiras* of 1707, a codified version of the diocesan laws as they were to govern the Brazil archdiocese, the Church instructed priests to notify all vagabonds living in their parishes that within a month they must certify that they were legitimately mar-

ried and in what place. To stop all the comings and goings from parish to parish, the Church directed their congregants to live a married life in a fixed place, or at the very least to take their spouses with them and live in decency.

Church authorities worried, too, about slaves, warning that they could marry either with free persons or other captives and that their masters could not deny them marriage or their practice of it. Masters, although they might decide what was "an appropriate time and place," were cautioned against putting obstacles in the way of their slaves or against selling a slave husband to a faraway place where his wife could not follow. As encouragement to owners, the Church reminded them that married slaves remained slaves still fully obligated to their masters' service.

The following selection offers a glimpse into the making of marriage patterns that followed from the Church's prescriptions, drawing somewhat closer to the slaves' points of view. This small story shows how courtship proceeded between one young slave woman and her partner. It records a slave mother's change in preference of a husband for her daughter and, taking the petitioner at his word, the daughter's defiant response. The outcome of the petition remains a mystery.

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And we know next to nothing about the protagonists—only that the mother came from the Mina coast of Africa or at least was transported from there, and that they all lived in the parish of São Pedro do Rio Fundo in Bahia.

Status as a slave or freed person, ethnic identity, and place of birth all counted here. West African Yorubas, or Nagôs as they were called in Bahia, figured increasingly among African Blacks in Bahia from the end of the eighteenth century into the early decades of the nineteenth. Among slaves buried by the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (assuming the buried dead were roughly representative of the living), Mina Blacks outnumbered both Fon-speaking Gêges and Nagôs, but all these were in turn outnumbered by Bantu-speaking Angolans. By the 1830s, Nagôs dominated among African slaves, a reflection of where the slave trading was most lucrative, and their numbers more or less equaled the often Muslim Hausas among freed Africans. Although Nagôs, Hausas, Gêges, and Angolans each sought to preserve their ethnic differences, for example, by maintaining separate religious brotherhoods, at times they found compelling reasons to form alliances. A rebellion in 1809 and, later, the 1835 Malê revolt by freed and slave Africans against Whites demonstrated how ethnic differences could be subordinated to strategic requirements. The far more insurmountable split was between Africans and Creoles. Regardless of whether they were slaves or freed persons, Creoles were excluded from participating in

the revolt; in 1835, Africans had even killed two Creoles in the one long night of fighting.

In this situation of competing ethnic origins and African religions, the Catholic Church might insist on a couple's consent to validate their marriage, but a Nagô mother acted according to different understandings. And if the daughter had not yet reached majority, as seems to be the case here, then civil law further directed that the mother could disinherit her daughter if she married without permission.

The proposed marriage of Joaquina Maria do Sacramento was not unusual among plantation slaves. As more and more research accumulates from various regions of Brazil, evidence shows that it was not uncommon for at least one-third or more of all adult slaves on a coffee or sugar plantation to be married, especially on substantial holdings where the pool of eligible slaves was larger and they might marry without having to choose partners from other plantations, a practice seen by owners as disruptive and which they tried to prevent. Sometimes two or three generations of a family survived intact, in extended families of brothers, sisters, aunts, or uncles and their children. But continuity was rare. Even when slaves were not sold, sooner or later the death of the owners required that the property be divided and distributed among the heirs, breaking apart whatever slave families were established there. On most of the prosperous colonial plantations, new Africans were regularly purchased and the cycle of forming families began again.

~ A Slave Mother Opposes Her Daughter's Choice of a Husband (Bahia, 1811)

Alexandre Francisco, a freed Creole, resident on the Jacuipe do Brito Sugar Mill, says that on the same lands lives a Black slave woman by the name of Ana, who has a Creole daughter, Joaquina Maria do Sacramento, of whom the petitioner is fond. He asked the mother [for permission] to marry and she did not hesitate, expressing appreciation for the favor he did her. And the alliance they planned thus being agreed upon and contracted, the petitioner frequently visited her house where she fed him and washed his clothes, as well as other things. The banns

having been ordered, the mother then raised an impediment. Being of the Nagô Nation, she allowed herself to be persuaded by those of her Nation; she now wants her daughter to marry a Nagô Black slave, arguing that the petitioner is a slave and married, which is entirely false because he is a freed man and a widower as the two attached documents reveal [attached in the original but since lost], and with which all the mother's suspicions are dispelled. [He says], moreover, that the said daughter wants to marry only the petitioner, and is together with him in that she has left her mother's house; she sought and was given shelter at the house of Dona Joaquina, owner of the Mill where the petitioner is supplying her necessities, such that (with all due respect) he has deprived her of her honor. For all these reasons the petitioner, received at the benign feet of Your Most Reverend Excellency, comes to beseech you through the depths of your mercy, that, if the impediment be as related, you order that they may be received in matrimony and (if) there be another cause it may be sent to the Archiepiscopal Chamber quickly without a loss of time and there its terms be dealt with, because the daughter of the petitioned says publicly that she wants to marry only the petitioner and not the other one, a Black Nagô slave. Hence he [the petitioner] asks that Your Most Reverend Excellency should deign to aid the petitioner in his intention in view of the related [facts].

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(1793, 1823)

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Two Slaveries—The Sermons of Padre Antônio Vieira, Salvador, Bahia (CA. 1633) and São Luís do Maranhão (1653)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz began her unbending critique of one of Padre Antônio Vieira's Maundy Thursday sermons, available to her in published form in Mexico, with soaring praise: "if God were to allow me to choose my talents, I would choose no other than [Vieira's] genius." This Portuguese priest who achieved so exalted a reputation in his own time began life more humbly. Born in Portugal in 1608, he went to Brazil as a six-year-old boy when his father took up a post as clerk at the High Court in Bahia. Although later detractors incorrectly liked to insinuate that he had Jewish ancestry, his paternal grandmother was a *Mulata*, indicating his relation to an African slave in Portugal, something Vieira preferred not to reveal. Having entered the Jesuit college at Bahia at the age of only fifteen, three years later he was given the high honor for one so young of being asked to write the annual letter to the Society's General in Portugal, which became a famous account of the Dutch occupation of Bahia at that time. Before being ordained in 1635, he not only had learned Tupi by living in an *aldeia*, a Jesuit-organized Indian village, but also had preached powerful sermons in Bahia on sugar estates and at

aldeias. His fame as a preacher was fully established by 1640.

His talents found new expression when during the 1640s he returned to Portugal to become adviser and court preacher to João IV, the Bragança king restored to the throne after sixty years of Spanish Hapsburg domination. Sent on important diplomatic missions to other parts of Europe, Vieira extended his own reputation and gained a more cosmopolitan understanding of imperial Portugal. In 1653 he returned to Brazil as Superior of the Jesuit missions in the Amazon. Although he was later to be silenced, confined, and denied paper and ink by the Inquisition for messianic writing the Holy Office judged contrary to the teaching of the Church—charges he finally saw removed after a long struggle in Rome to vindicate himself and where he became once again a celebrated and sought-after preacher—the Amazon years remained the defining ones of his life.

Except for a journey to Portugal in 1654 to argue passionately at court for reform in legislation that regulated relations between Indians and settlers, which he got, Vieira remained a missionary priest in Maranhão and Pará until hostile settlers expelled the Jesuits from the

The Sermons of F

colony in 1661. He sought, resistant Indians, whose reason to trust European missionaries, which took him to into unknown and general regions of the Amazon, settlers' urgent need for sugar and tobacco plantations the colony and produce for Portugal. If it is tempting to this context as merely missionaries and settlers' over competing and irrelevant. Vieira, the missionary and representative, acted from standing. To his acceptance of aims he joined his universal Church and an convert non-Christians to did he commit himself to trust—and that meant recent experiences with the tions with their indigenous resources and strategies—the job of persuading settlers humane treatment of the them immediately and more.

While Indian tribes were "descended" from distant basin, congregated at Belém island, and sold to settlers, allegations of taking them or redeeming them from enslavement than letting them be eaten. Through endless letters urged the granting of compensation over the Indians which finally ignited the settlers'.

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Salvador, Bahia

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colony in 1661. He sought contact with reluctant, resistant Indians, who by then had little reason to trust Europeans, to baptize and instruct them. But alongside his apostolic mission, which took him to Indian villages upriver into unknown and generally inaccessible regions of the Amazon, he recognized the settlers' urgent need for Indian labor if the sugar and tobacco plantations were to sustain the colony and produce essential wealth for Portugal. If it is tempting to see Christianity in this context as merely imperialist and to see missionaries and settlers locked in grim battle over competing and irreconcilable interests, Vieira, the missionary and ever the Crown's representative, acted from a different understanding. To his acceptance of Portugal's colonial aims he joined his own vision of a universal Church and an apostolic mission to convert non-Christians to the faith. Not only did he commit himself to enlisting Indian trust—and that meant recognizing their different experiences with the Whites, their relations with their indigenous enemies, and their resources and strategies—but he also took on the job of persuading settlers that fair and humane treatment of the Indians benefited them immediately and materially.

While Indian tribes were captured and "descended" from distant reaches of the river basin, congregated at Belém and on Marajó island, and sold to settlers, the pro forma stipulations of taking them only in a just war or redeeming them from enemy captors rather than letting them be eaten became unenforceable. Through endless letters to the king, Vieira urged the granting of complete Jesuit jurisdiction over the Indians which, when authorized, finally ignited the settlers' already seething

anger. And Indians continued to die in appalling numbers, diseased from smallpox and brutalized by those who depended on their labor. Colonial policy during these years tacked back and forth between Jesuit jurisdiction and enslavement in deadly ambivalence.

There were two slaveries in Brazil, two peoples enslaved: one Indian, the other African. While African slaves were imported in significant numbers to the Amazon only after the mideighteenth century, they outnumbered, without fully replacing, Indian slaves on Bahian sugar estates by the late sixteenth century. Vieira knew them both. And in these two sermons he insists on two additional slaveries, that of body and soul. These sermons mark the early and middle periods in Vieira's preaching in Brazil: the first, in the series of sermons called "Mary, Mystic Rose," is from the early 1630s; the second was delivered upon his arrival in São Luís do Maranhão in 1653.

Flattened into print, the compelling force of a sermon as a dramatic spoken performance by a master orator is lost. We can only imagine Vieira's words filling the church and making Biblical images vivid to his congregations of listeners who, in Bahia at the church of the Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary, included African slaves. Also missing on the printed page are the breath caught, the tightening of jaws, the hush as settlers heard this priest warn them of eternal damnation if they persisted in the abuse of their slaves. Here is the power of erudition thundered out to listeners, most illiterate, who could know the Bible only through hearing. The immediacy and intensity of Vieira's words must have been stunning.

"Twenty-seventh Sermon, with the Most Holy Sacrament Present," *Salvador, Bahia, [ca. 1633]*

One of the most important things we see today in the world, which no longer surprises us because it is an everyday and ordinary occurrence, is the immense transmigration of Black peoples and nations that continually pass from Africa to America. . . . Of the ships that from trans-Atlantic ports are steadily entering ours

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we may say that they bring Africa to Brazil. A ship comes from Angola and in one day disgorges five hundred, six hundred, and perhaps one thousand slaves. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea and passed from Africa to Asia, fleeing slavery; these cross the wider Ocean Sea and pass from that same Africa to America to live and die as slaves. . . . The others are born to live, these to serve. . . . Oh, what an inhuman business in which the merchandise is men! Oh, what a diabolical business! . . .

There is no slave in Brazil who is not for me a subject of deep meditation, and all the more so when I see the most miserable ones. I compare the present with the future, time with eternity, what I see with what I believe, and I cannot accept that God who created these men as much in His image and similitude as He did others, predestined these to two Hells, one in this life, one in the next. But when I see them today so devout and festive before the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary, all brothers together as children of the same Lady, then I am persuaded without a doubt that the slavery of the first transmigration is ordained, by her mercy, as a liberty for the second one.

Our Gospel mentions two transmigrations: one in which the sons of Israel were taken from their own land "to captivity in Babylon"; and another, in which they were brought "from the captivity of Babylon to their land" (Matthew 1:11 & 12). The first transmigration and its slavery lasted seventy years; the second, that to liberty, had no end because it lasted until Christ. . . .

And how did God link the first transmigration to the second one? By ordaining that from Josiah should be born Jechonias: "And Josiah begat Jechonias and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon" (Matthew 1:11). In all this Gospel [of St. Matthew] when it says one patriarch "begat" another it means mystically, that from the meaning of the father's name emerges the meaning of the son's: . . . Josias means "God's fire" and Jechonias means "God's preparation." The text says, in effect, that in the Babylonian transmigration God's fire engendered God's preparation. . . .

Here, Black Brothers and Sisters of Rosário, here is your present state and the hope that God gives you for the future. Josiah begat Jechonias and his brothers. You are siblings in God's preparation and the children of God's fire. Children of God's fire in the present transmigration into slavery, for God's fire marked you as captives; but although it is an oppression, like a fire it has also enlightened you because it brought you the light of Faith and the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, those that you recite in the rosary. In this very state of the first transmigration, which is this temporal captivity, God and His Most Holy Mother are preparing you and making you ready for the second transmigration, which is to eternal freedom.

That is what I shall preach to you today for your consolation. And reduced to a few words, this will be my subject: that your Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary promises you a letter of manumission through which you will not only enjoy eternal freedom in a second transmigration, one to another life, but also that you will free yourselves from the worst form of slavery [even] in the first one. Rather than the rejoicing that I might ask from you because of this good news, I ask instead that you help me to reach sufficient grace to be able to persuade you of its truth. Hail Mary, etc.

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All we children of Eve are exiled and await a universal transmigration from Babylon to Jerusalem, from the exile in this world to our repatriation in Heaven. You, however, who came or were brought from your homelands to this exile, besides the second and universal transmigration, you face this other exile in Babylon's continued slavery, whether very harsh or not. And so that you will know how to behave in it and not increase your slavery by your own actions, I wish, first of all, to explain what it is and in what it consists. But even if you do not understand it (because the subject may require more understanding than everyone has), at least, as Saint Augustine said in your Africa, at least I will be content if your masters and mistresses understand me, so that they may more slowly teach it to you, for it is very important that you and also they should know it.

Know, all those of you who are called slaves, that not everything that you are is enslaved. Every person consists of a body and a soul; but that which is a slave and is called "slave" is not the entire person, but only one half. Even the pagans, who had little understanding of souls, knew this truth and made this distinction. . . . Saint Paul, speaking with slaves about slaves, says, "Slaves, be obedient to them who are your masters according to the flesh" (Ephesians 6:5). And who are these masters? All interpreters declare that they are temporal masters like yours whom you serve during all your life. The apostle called them "masters according to the flesh" because the slave, like any other person, is composed of flesh and spirit. The dominion of the master over the slave extends over the flesh, that is, the body, and does not extend over the spirit, that is, the soul.

That is why among the Greeks, slaves were called bodies. So says Saint Epiphanius who added that the usual way of speaking among them was not to say that such-and-such a master had so many slaves, but that he had so many bodies. . . . But we need not go as far as Rome or Greece. I ask you: In this your Brazil, when you want to say that so-and-so has many or few slaves, why do you say he has such-and-such a number of *pieces*? Because the first who called them such wanted to signify, wisely and in a Christian way, that the subjection of the slave to his or her master and the dominion that the master has over the slave, extended only to the body. Men are not made of only one piece as are angels and animals. The angels and animals are entirely of a piece (to put it clearly); the angel because an angel is entirely spirit and an animal because it is entirely body. Not so human beings. A human being has two pieces: soul and body. Because the master of the slave is master over only one of these pieces and can exercise dominion over only it, and that part is the body, therefore you call your slaves *pieces*. And if you do not agree with that derivation, then we could say that you call your slaves *pieces* as we would refer to a *piece* of gold, a *piece* of silver, or a *piece* of silk or of anything else that does not have a soul. And in this way it is even more clearly proven that the word *piece* does not include the soul of the slave but is understood to extend merely to the body. Only this part is captive, only this part is bought and sold, only this part is placed within the jurisdiction of wealth. Finally, only this part was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon in the transmigration of the children of Israel, and only this part is brought from Africa to Brazil in the transmigration of those who are here called slaves and who continue in captivity.

Therefore, Black brothers, the captivity that you suffer, no matter how hard and rough it may be or seem, is not a total captivity of everything that you are, but only half a captivity. You are enslaved in that exterior and less noble part of you, which is the body; but the other, interior, and most noble part of you, which is the soul, and in everything that belongs to it, you are not enslaved but free.

And given this first point, it follows that you should know the second and much more important one and that I should state it: whether this part, the free half which is the soul, can also in some way be enslaved and who may enslave it. For I say that your soul, like anyone's, may also be enslaved. And who may enslave it is not your master, not even the King, nor any other human power, but you yourselves and by your own free will. Blessed are you who so come to terms with your half-enslaved lot as to make use of your very servitude and learn how to take advantage of what, through it and by it, you may come to deserve. But the evil and the misfortune that will make you totally miserable is that, while chance has made you captive only in your body, you very much by your own will may enslave your soul as well. . . .

The first sale and the first auction of souls in this world was in the terrestrial Paradise. On one side was God ordering that the forbidden fruit should not be eaten; on the other side was the serpent urging that it be eaten. And what happened? Eve, who represents the flesh, tended toward the Devil. And Adam, who filled the part of arbiter, instead of obeying the commands of God, followed the appetites of the flesh. Thus were the two first souls sold to the Devil and from it came the sale of the rest.

Tell me, Blacks and Whites: Do we not all condemn Adam and Eve? Do we not know that they were ignorant and more than ignorant, crazy and more than crazy, blind and more than blind? Are we not the very ones who curse and damn them for what they did? So why do we do the same thing, selling our souls as they sold theirs?

Let the Whites hear an example first that will show them their deformity, and then I shall show the Blacks another in which they can see theirs. The Bible tells us that Ahab was the worst king Israel ever had. . . . And Elias said to his face: "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord" (I Kings 21:20). . . . And what were these sins by which Ahab sold himself? . . . He consented that Naboth should be falsely accused and condemned to death in order to confiscate and take his vineyard. See if this is not a good example for these little kings of the Recôncavo. Is it possible that to add one acre of land to your cane field and half a load more of cane to your mill you will sell your soul to the Devil?

Well, it is your soul, so sell it off if you wish. But as to your slaves' souls, how could you also sell them, placing the golden idols of your cursed and always faulty interests ahead of their salvation? That is why your slaves do not know Christian doctrine. That is why they live and die without the sacraments. That is why, although you do not forbid them the Church, with a greediness that only the Devil could invent, you do not want them near the door of the church. You consent that male and female slaves live in sin and do not allow them to marry, because, you say, if married they will serve you less well. I wish your thinking were as worthy of your Christianity as it is of your logic: "Let service to me prevail over service to God. As long as my slaves serve me better, let them live and die in the service of the Devil!"

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I pray to God that He shall have mercy toward your miserableness and your souls; but I have nothing on which to base such a favorable hope, judging by the quality of your souls and from what is for you too a misery.

Now let us turn to an example appropriate for slaves, who should definitely not sell their souls, even if it costs them their lives. When King Antioch came with a powerful army and dominated Jerusalem . . . (for one can be enslaved in one's own land). . . he ordered all Judeah to abandon God's Law, and obey only his, and that sacrifices be offered only to the pagan gods that he worshipped. . . . Some, weak and vile, obeyed him and "made themselves pagans, selling their souls." (Macabbeus 1:16) But others, strong, faithful, and glorious, lost their lives because they would not sell their souls. . . . Those masters were so tyrannical that they cut off their fingers and toes, pulled out their eyes and tongues, fried and roasted them in hot frying pans, and with other weird torments took away their innocent lives. But they would rather suffer and die than sell their souls. Judge for yourselves, you who are likewise enslaved, which ones acted better: those who sold their souls to please their masters, or those who preferred to lose their lives than to enslave their souls? . . .

If a master orders his male slave to do something or desires from his female slave something that gravely offends the soul and conscience—just as he should not so wish or order, just so the slave is obliged not to obey. Say constantly that you must not offend God; and if because of this, they threaten and punish you, suffer it bravely and as a Christian, even if it be for your entire life, for these punishments are a martyrdom.

We have seen that just as human beings consist of two parts or two halves—the body and the soul—just so slavery is divided into two slaveries—one, the enslavement of the body in which bodies are involuntarily captives and slaves of men; another, the slavery of the soul, in which through one's own will souls are sold and become the captives and slaves of the Devil.

And because I promised you that the Virgin, Our Lady of the Rosary, shall free you from the worst enslavement, and for you to know how much you should welcome this freedom, it is first important for you to know and understand which of these two slaveries is the worse one. The soul is better than the body; the Devil is a worse master than any man, no matter how tyrannical he may be; the slavery of men is temporary, that of the Devil is eternal; thus there can be no mind, no matter how rustic or blind, that does not know that the worse slavery is that of the soul. But since the soul, the Devil, and this slavery itself are things that are not seen with one's eyes, how will I find a way within your grasp that will make this argument visible to you? Only by basing it on your enslavement itself, something that is most immediate to you. I ask: If God at this very moment were to free all of you from the slavery in which you are placed and you suddenly discovered yourselves all free and freed, would this not be an extraordinary and amazing grace that God would have given you? Well, even greater and of much greater and higher value will be the grace that Our Lady of the Rosary will give you in freeing your souls from enslavement to the Devil and to sin. . . .

And if we search for the fundamental principle because of which Christ, being the Redeemer of humankind, only came to redeem and free people from the

enslavement of souls and not from the servitude of bodies, the clear and manifest basis is that, to end enslavement to men, men will do; but to end enslavement to the Devil and to sin, all God's power is needed. . . . For to free them from the slavery of souls and from the yoke of the Devil and of sin, only God Himself has the strength and the power, and even then only with both arms extended on a cross.

The Apostle exhorts all those who seek the salvation of their souls to keep them in a state of grace. And for this he says, "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:18, 19) In these words it is worth noting that Saint Peter not only urges us to ponder the price by which we are redeemed but also the price for which we were not redeemed. . . . His principal purpose in having us think about these two prices was that, by focusing on the difference of ransoms, we should know the difference of slaveries. To become free from the slavery of the body one must only give as much gold or silver as the slave costs. But to become free from the slavery of the soul, how much gold or silver would do? Would one million be enough? Would two million? Would all the gold of Sofala and all the silver of Potosi be enough? Oh, how crude and ignorant is human perception! If all the seas became silver and all the land became gold; if God created another world or a thousand worlds of materials more precious than gold and with more carats than diamonds, all this would not be enough to free a single soul for one moment from the enslavement of the Devil and of our sin. For this reason it was necessary for the Son of God to become man and die on a cross so that for this infinite price of His Blood he could redeem souls from the enslavement of the Devil and of sin. And it is from this enslavement, so difficult, so fearful, so immense, that I promise you a letter of manumission through your devotion to the rosary of the Mother of that very God.

Freed of the greatest and weightiest slavery, which is that of souls, you remain slaves in the second way, which is that of bodies. But do not imagine that because of this the mercy given you by Our Lady of the Rosary is diminished. That Our Lady of the Rosary is powerful enough to free you from the slavery of the body is proven by innumerable examples whereby those captive in the land of infidels found themselves freed through their devotion to the rosary; they then offered their broken chains and shackles as trophies of her power and mercifulness at the altar of the said Our Lady and hung them up in the churches. When God deigned to free His people from captivity in Egypt, why do you think He appeared to Moses in the burning bush? Because the bush, as all saints have declared, prefigured the Virgin, Our Lady. And God wished even then to make manifest to the world that that same Most Holy Virgin was not only the best suited and most efficacious instrument of Divine Omnipotence for freeing men from the enslavement of souls (and so chose her for His Mother when He came to redeem humankind), but also for freeing them from the enslavement of the body, like the one suffered by His people in Egypt under the yoke of the Pharaoh. Oh, how powerful is the Redeemer's Mother to free you also from this second and lesser captivity!

But it is by God's particular providence that you live at present as slaves and captives, so that, by means of this very slavery, a temporal one, you will very easily reach eternal freedom.

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Now we get to the second part of being freed that I promised you. The only thing lacking is the knowledge and good use of your state for you to be, through it, the most fortunate people of the world. On this subject I will only refer to the two Apostolic princes, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, who dealt with this subject at various points, speaking with slaves as seriously as if they were speaking to Roman emperors and as profoundly and exaltedly as if they were speaking to the wise men of Greece. . . .

The Apostle Saint Paul spoke to slaves saying in two places: "Slaves, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:22-24). . . . Two things does God promise slaves for the service they provide their masters, both of which are not only uncommon but unique: "pay" and "inheritance." Note this carefully. When you serve your masters you are not their heirs nor do they pay you for your work. You are not their heirs because the inheritance belongs to their children, not to their slaves. And they do not pay you for your work, because slaves work because they are obliged to and not for a stipend. How sad and miserable a state, to serve without hope of a reward in all one's life and to work without hope of rest, except in the grave! But there is a remedy, says the Apostle (and this is Catholic doctrine). The remedy is that when you serve your masters you do not serve as one who serves men, but as one who serves God. Thus you do not work as slaves but as free men, nor do you obey as slaves but as sons. You do not work as slaves but as free men because God will pay you for your work, and you do not obey as slaves but as sons and daughters, because God . . . will make you His heirs. Tell me: if you worked for your master for a wage and if you would inherit his plantation, would you not work with a will? Well, serve this same man whom you call your master, work for him as if you worked for God, and in this very work, which you must do, all you need is a voluntary decision to make it "as for God" and God will pay you as if you were free and make you heirs as if His children.

That is what Saint Paul says. And what does Saint Peter say? He makes the point even more emphatically. After addressing Christians of all states in general, he says even more to slaves and encourages them to bear their misfortune, giving them the best of reasons: "Slaves, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle, but also to the overbearing," that is, to the bad and unjust ones. That is the summary of the rule and counsel that the Prince of Apostles gives you. And then he adds reasons worthy of the most noble spirits. First, because the glory of patience is "suffering unjustly." Second, because this is the grace through which men become more acceptable to God: "When you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval." Third, and this is truly stupendous: because in this condition into which God placed you it is your vocation to be similar to the Son, who suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should imitate: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps" (I Peter 2:18, 20-21).

Most justly have I called this reason stupendous. For who is there who is not amazed to see the lowly state of those to whom Saint Peter speaks and the height to

which he raises them for comparison? He does not compare the calling of slaves to another step or status within the Church, but to Christ himself. And more: The Apostle does not stop here but adds a new and still greater prerogative of slaves when he declares for whom and why Christ suffered: "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example."

I have often noted the difference between this "you" and that "us." The passion of Christ had two purposes: the remedy and the example. The remedy was universal for all of us, but the example, Saint Peter clearly says, was particularly for the slaves to whom he was speaking. And why? Because there is no condition among all that more clearly imitates the patience of Christ or is better suited to follow his example.

Oh, fortunate you, if God, as He gave you the grace of your [slave] condition, gives you also the wisdom and knowledge to use it well! Do you know what is the status of your captivity if you make good use of the means it itself provides you, without adding any other? It is the status not only of a religious order, but of one of the most austere religious orders of the entire Church. It is a religious Rule according to a divine and apostolic institution, because, if you fulfill your obligations, you will serve not men but God, with the specific title of Servants of Christ: "Servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:6-7). Note well these words—"from the heart." If you serve only because forced to and with ill will you renounce your religious order; but if you serve with willingness, conforming your will to the divine will, you are truly Servants of Christ. Just as in the Church there are two religious orders dedicated to ransoming captives, yours is one made up of captives—captives without ransom, so that to you shall not lack perpetuity—which is the very perfection of this status. Some orders are of barefoot ones, others of the shod; yours is that of the barefoot and naked. Your habit is your very color, for you are not clothed in sheepskin nor camelshair, as was Elijah, but in the very clothes with which nature covered you or uncovered you, exposed to the hot sun and cold rain. Your poverty is poorer than that of the most lowly order and your obedience is more subjected than that of what we call the Minim [mendicant] Order [of Saint Francis of Paula]. Your abstinence is rather hunger than fasting, and your vigils are not one hour at midnight, but the entire night without a break. Your Rule is both one and many because it is the will of your masters. You are bound to them, because you cannot leave your captivity, but they are not bound to you because they may sell you to another whenever they wish; in only this religious order is there this contract, so that in this also yours is singular. I will not even say the mode of your address, because it is not of "Reverence," nor of "Charity," but of contempt and insult. Finally, as every religious order has a particular goal, vocation, and divine grace, your divine grace consists of flogging and punishment; your vocation is the imitation of Christ's patience; your goal is the reward of eternal inheritance. Without any other harshness or penitence beyond that which your status or order, as captives, already has within it, you have the reward of the blessed as well as the inheritance of sons. A very special favor and a providence of the Virgin Mary is that you remain in the same status with its great value, so that,

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Tell me: If, just as you in this life serve your masters, they would in the other life serve you, would that not be a most notable change and a glory you have never imagined? Well, it will not be that way, because that would be very little. Does God not say that when you serve your masters, you do not serve as those who serve men but as those who serve God? So this great change of fortune will not be, I say, between you and them, but between you and God. Who will serve you in Heaven will not be your masters, who likely will not go there, but God Himself in person. God will serve you in Heaven because you served Him on Earth. . . . In this way you will be twice manumitted and freed: freed from enslavement to the Devil and freed from this temporary slavery to enjoy eternal freedom. . . .

What you have to do is to console yourself much with these examples; suffer the work of your condition with much patience; give many thanks to God for the moderation of the captivity to which He brought you; and most of all take advantage of it in order to exchange it for the freedom and happiness of another life, one that does not end like this one, but lasts for ever.

And will masters also have some benefit from this Babylonian captivity? Apparently not. "I," each one of you is saying, "I, thanks to God, am White and not Black, free and not captive, master and not slave; in fact, I own many of them." And those who were captive in Babylon, were they Black or White? Had they been captive or free? Had they been slaves or masters? Neither in color, nor in liberty, nor in seigneurialship were they inferior to you. Yet if they found themselves lowered to slavery, going down so many degrees, why do you not fear the danger, you who with a minor slip may find yourselves in the same condition as they? If you are young, you may have many years to experience the change, and if old, very few. . . .

Masters, who today call yourself such, consider that to pass from liberty to slavery no transmigration to Babylon may be necessary: It could happen right in your own land. And there is no land on Earth that more deserves it and is calling for it from Divine Justice. "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 8:8). . . . And we have examples in our own conquests. For having enslaved Africa, God captured [from us] Mina, São Tomé, Angola, and Benguela; for having enslaved Asia, God captured Malaca, Ceylon, Ormuz, Mascate, and Cochin; for having enslaved America, God captured Bahia, Maranhão, and, for twenty-four years, Pernambuco and four hundred leagues of coastline. And because our enslavements began in Africa, God permitted there the capture of our King Sebastião and then the capture of the kingdom [of Portugal] itself for sixty years.

I know some enslavements [of Blacks] are just, which are the only ones permitted by law, and that we suppose that these are the slaves who in Brazil are bought and sold, not the natives, but those brought from other places. But what theology can there be that would justify the inhumanity and cruelty of the extreme punishments with which these slaves are mistreated? Mistreated indeed, but that is a very short word to cover the meaning that it conceals and hides. Tyrannized, we should say, or martyred. For this is more like martyrdom than punishment for the miserable injured ones, squeezed, sealed with hot wax, slashed, ground up, and

victims of even worse excesses about which I will be silent. . . . And you can be certain that you should fear the injustice of these oppressions no less than unjust enslavement itself. Indeed, I say, you should fear them much more because God feels them even more. God tolerated enslavement of the sons of Israel in Egypt as long as it was merely enslavement; but finally His Divine Justice could not countenance it any longer. . . . Why not? God said it: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmaster, for I know their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7).

Note two things: First, God does not object to Pharaoh, but to his overseers, because overseers are often those who most cruelly oppress the slaves. And, second, He does not give slavery as His reason for justice, but the oppressions and rigors afflicting the slaves. And He adds that He heard their cries. . . . They are cruelly flogging a miserable slave and he is crying at each stroke, "Jesus! Mary! Jesus! Mary!" It does not even take reverence for these two names to provoke pity in a man who calls himself Christian. And how can you [masters] hope that they will hear you when you cry out to these two names at the time of your death? You can be certain that God hears these cries that you do not hear. As they do not move your heart, they will doubtless be ineffective to lessen your punishment.

Oh, how I fear that the Ocean will be for you like the Red Sea, your houses like those of the Pharaoh, and all Brazil like Egypt! . . . If your hearts, like those of the Pharaoh, are hardened, that is tragic, because you will suffer the ultimate punishment. May God grant that I am wrong in this sad thought.

~ *"Sermon on the First Sunday of Lent," preached in the city of São Luís do Maranhão, 1653*

"All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."
(Matthew 4: 9)

The Devil takes Christ by the hand and takes him to a mountain higher than the clouds and shows him from there the kingdoms, the cities, the courts of the entire world and their grandeur, and says to him: "All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Can there be such a proposal? Come now, Devil: do you know what you say or what you do? Is it possible that the Devil promises the world for only one act of adoration? Is it possible that the Devil offers the world for only one sin? Is it possible that it does not seem much to the Devil to give the world for only one soul? . . .

At what a different price does the Devil buy souls today than he offered for them previously! And in our land, I say to you! The Devil has no other market in the world where they go more cheaply. In the Gospel he offered all the kingdoms of the world for one soul; in Maranhão the Devil need not offer such a purse for all souls. It is not necessary to offer worlds, nor kingdoms; it is not necessary to offer cities, nor towns, nor villages. All he has to do is wave toward a thatched hut and two Tapuya Indians and at once he is adored on both knees. Oh, what a cheap market! An Indian for a soul! And even better a female Indian than a male! This

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Indian will be your slave for the few days that he lives; and your soul will be the Devil's for all eternity, as long as God is God. This is the contract the Devil makes with you. And not only do you accept it, but you give him your money on top of it!

My Senhores, impelled by the Gospel we have entered into the most serious and useful subject this State has. A subject from which comes either the salvation of the soul or life's remedy—see if it is serious and if it is useful. It is the most serious, the most important, and the most intricate subject. And being the most useful, it is the least pleasing. For this last reason of its being least pleasing I had determined never to speak of it, and thus also not to climb up into the pulpit. To mount the pulpit in order to give displeasure is not my purpose, and even less to people to whom I wish all that is pleasing and good. On the other hand, to climb into the pulpit and not to say the truth is against office, obligation, and conscience. . . . I ask you: Which is the better friend, he who warns you of danger, or he who, not wanting to cause you pain, leaves you to perish? Which doctor is more Christian: he who warns you of death, or he who, not wanting to upset you, lets you die without the sacraments? I had all these reasons but I had not finished deliberating. I went Friday morning to say Mass with this purpose, that God would enlighten and inspire me in what would be to His greater glory. On reading the Epistle, God told me what He wanted me to do, with His own words. They are from Isaiah: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression." (Isaiah 58:1)

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6)

Do you know, Christians, do you know, nobles and people of Maranhão, what fast God wants of you during this Lent? That you loosen the bonds of injustice and let go free those whom you have [held] captive and oppressed. These are the sins of Maranhão; these are what God commands me to make known to you: "Declare to my people their transgressions." (Isaiah 58:1) Christians, God commands me to disillusion you, and I disillusion you on God's behalf. You are all in mortal sin; you all live and die in a state of condemnation, and you all will go directly to Hell. Many are already there and you will soon be there too if you do not change your life.

God help me! An entire people in sin? An entire people to Hell? Whoever is surprised by this knows nothing of unjust captivity. The sons of Israel went down into Egypt and, after the death of Joseph, the Pharaoh captured them and used them as slaves. Wanting to liberate this miserable people, God sent Moses there and gave him no other escort than a stick. God thought that to free the captives a stick was enough, even though he would free them from a king as tyrannical as the Pharaoh and from a people as barbarous as the Egyptians. When the Pharaoh refused to free the captives, plagues began to rain down on him. The land was filled with frogs, the air with mosquitoes; the rivers ran with blood, and the clouds were changed into thunder and lightning. All Egypt was awestruck and perishing. Do you know who brings plagues to Earth? Unjustly taken captives. Who brought the

Dutch plague to Maranhão? Who brought the plague of smallpox? Who brought hunger and scarcity? These captives.

Moses insisted and urged the Pharaoh to release the people. And what did the Pharaoh respond? He said one thing and did another. What he said was: "[Who is the Lord, that I should heed his voice and let Israel go?] I do not know the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2) Now that seems clear to me; let us say it now. Do you know why you do not give liberty to your ill-gotten slaves? Because you do not know God. Lack of faith is the cause of everything. If you had true faith, if you truly believed in the immortality of the soul, if you believed in Hell for all eternity, it would make me laugh that you would want to go there for having a Tapuya slave. With what confidence does the Devil say to you today: "if you fall down and adore me"? With the confidence of having offered you the world. The Devil made this speech: "I offer to this man everything; if he is greedy and avaricious, he must accept. If he accepts it, without doubt he worships me, committing idolatry, because greed and avarice are the same as idolatry." It is a saying expressed by Saint Paul: "... covetousness which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5) Such was the avarice of the Pharaoh in wanting to retain and not give freedom to the captive sons of Israel, and at the same time confessing that he did not know God: "I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go." This is what he said.

What he did, the same Pharaoh, was to go after the fleeing Israelites with all the power of his kingdom in order to return them to captivity. And what happened? The Red Sea opened that the captives might pass on dry footing (God knows how to make miracles in order to liberate captives). Do not think that the Hebrews merited this by their virtues, because they were worse than these Tapuyas. A few days later they worshipped a [golden] calf, and of all six hundred thousand men only two entered the Promised Land, but God so favors liberty that he frees even those who do not deserve it if they are unjustly enslaved.

The Hebrews having passed to the other side, the Pharaoh entered along the same road which was still open, the sea separated like walls, then the waters fell over him and his army and drowned them all. What I notice here is the way in which Moses tells this in his song: "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters. . . . Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them." (The Song of Moses, Exodus 15:10 & 12) That the sea fell over them and drowned them and the earth swallowed them. Now if the sea drowned them, how could the earth devour them? Those men, like us, had both body and soul. The water drowned the bodies because they were at the bottom of the sea; the earth devoured the souls because they descended into Hell. All went to Hell, without anyone excepted because where all pursue and all capture, all are condemned. Is this not a good example? Now, consider the reasoning.

Any man who receives services and deprives others of their freedom and, being able to restore it, does not do so, is certainly condemned. All, or nearly all, men of Maranhão receive services and deprive others of their freedom and, being able to restore it, do not restore it. Therefore, all or nearly all are condemned. You will say to me that even if this were so, they did not think about it or know it, and their

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good faith will save them. I deny this. Yes, they did think about it, and, yes, they did know it, just as you also think about it and know it. And if they did not think of it or know it, they ought to have thought of it and known it. Some are condemned by their knowledge, others by their doubt, others by their ignorance. Those who have knowledge condemn themselves by not restoring it; those who doubt condemn themselves by not examining it; those who are ignorant condemn themselves by not knowing when they have the obligation to know. Ah, if graves would open now and some of those who died in this unhappy state would appear here in their burning flames, you would clearly read this truth! But do you know why God does not permit them to appear before you? It is as Abraham said to the rich miser when he asked him to send Lazarus to this world: "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'" (Luke 16:29) It is not necessary for someone to come here from Hell to tell you the truth. You already have Moses and the law, you have the prophets and learned men. My brothers, if you doubt this, here are the laws, here are the learned men, question them. You have three religious orders in this State with so many members of such virtue and learning. Ask, examine, inform yourselves. But it is not necessary to go to the religious, go to Turkey, go to Hell, because there is no Turk so Turkish in Turkey, nor a Devil so devilish in Hell who will tell you that a free man can be a slave. Is there any among you with natural intelligence who denies it? Then why do you doubt?

I see what you tell me: "This is all very well, if we had another solution. . . . This people, this republic, this State cannot be sustained without Indians. Who will go in search of a bucket of water for us or a bundle of firewood? Who will plant our manioc? Will our wives have to do it? Will our sons?" First, these are not the straits in which I put you, as you will soon see. But when necessity and conscience require such a thing, I say yes, and yes again: you, your wives, your sons, we all should sustain ourselves by our own labor. It is better to live from our own sweat than from the blood of others.

You will say that your slaves are your feet and hands. You will be able to say that you love them greatly because you raised them as children, as your own. And so it is, but Christ has already responded to this reply: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; . . . And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." (Matthew 5:29; Mark 9:42 & 44) Christ does not mean to say that we should gouge out our eyes or cut off our feet. He means to say that if that which we love as our eyes and that which is as necessary as our feet and hands causes us injury, cast it from us even though it hurts us as if we had cut it. Who is there who does not love his arm or his hand but, if it suddenly became diseased, would not permit its amputation in order to save his life? . . . If in order to calm your conscience and save your soul it were necessary to lose everything and become like Job, lose everything.

But take heart, my Senhores, it is not necessary to arrive at such a point, nor even close to it. I have studied the matter with all care and purpose; and following the most liberal and favorable opinions, I have narrowed things down such that with very little worldly loss, and with very great benefits, all the residents of this State can improve their prospects for the future. Give me your attention.

All the Indians of this State are either those who serve you as slaves or those who live in the King's villages as free persons, or those who live in the wilderness in their natural and even greater liberty. These latter are the ones you go upriver to buy or to "rescue" (as they say), giving the pious name of rescue to a sale so forced and violent that sometimes it is done with a pistol at the chest. Regarding those who serve you, all in this land are inherited, gotten, and possessed in bad faith, and therefore they will be doing no small thing (even if they do it easily) if they forgive [what you owe for] their past service. However, once you have declared their freedom, if they, having been raised in your house and with your children, more or less domesticated, spontaneously and voluntarily want to remain there, no one can separate them from your service. And what will be done with those who do not wish to continue in such submission? These will be obliged to go and live in the King's villages where they also will serve you, as we will soon see. Every year you will be able to make your expeditions into the wilderness truly to rescue those who are (as it is said) tied up ready to be eaten, and this cruelty will be commuted to perpetual captivity. So, too, all those who, without violence, were sold as slaves by their enemies or taken in a just war will be [your] captives. The judges in this will be the Governor of the State, the Magistrate General, the Vicar of Maranhão or Pará, and the Prelates of the four religious orders: Carmelites, Franciscans, Mercedarians, and the Society of Jesus. All of those judged to be true captives will be distributed among the colonists at the same price for which they were bought. And those who were not taken in a just war, what will happen to them? All will be divided into new villages or divided among the villages that exist today. These along with all the other village Indians will be distributed among the colonists to serve them for six months of the year, alternating every two months, so that for the other six months they will attend to their own fields and families. In this way all the Indians of the State will serve the Portuguese either as properly and fully slaves—those tied up or taken in a just war—or those who freely and voluntarily wish to serve or, as half-captives, all those from the former and new villages who, being free, will submit themselves to serve half the time of their lives for the good and conservation of the State.

It only remains to know the wage for those called "half captives" or "half free" with which their labor and service will be paid. It is a matter that would make any other nation of the world laugh, and only in this land is it not surprising. The currency of this land is cotton cloth, and the usual price for which Indians serve and will serve each month are two lengths of this cloth, worth a few cents. From which it follows that an Indian will serve for less than a few copper coins a day! An amount not worth mentioning, and much less worthy of men of reason and Christian faith who, for not paying such a small price, condemn their souls to Hell.

Could there be anything more prudent than this? Could there be anything more reasonable than this? Whoever is not content or not satisfied with this is either not Christian or lacks reason. Otherwise, let us press the point and weigh the benefits and costs of this proposal.

The cost is only one, that there will be some private individuals who lose a few Indians, and I promise you they will be very few. But to those who seek

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compensation, I ask: Do not some of your Indians die? Do not some of your Indians flee? Many. Then does death do what reason will not? Does chance do what an uneasy conscience will not? If smallpox comes and carries off all your Indians, what will you do? You will have to have patience. Is it not better to lose them to the service of God than to lose them by a punishment of God? This has no reply.

Let us go to the benefits of which four are the most important. The first is that you will acquire a clear conscience. You see what a great good this is. You will be removed from a state of mortal sin. You will live as Christians, confess yourselves as Christians, die as Christians, you will bequeath your goods as Christians. Finally, you will go to Heaven, not to Hell which, at the least, would certainly be a sad thing.

The second benefit is that you will remove this curse from your houses. There is no greater curse on a house or a family than to be unjustly served with the blood and sweat of others. Everything is undone; nothing is gained. The Devil takes everything. The bread thus earned is like that today offered by the Devil to Christ: bread of stones which, if it does not stick in your throat, cannot be digested. See that in this much bread is taken from Maranhão, see if any is digested, see if anything is gained. . . .

The third benefit is that in this way there will be more rescues by which more Indians will be removed [from cannibalistic practices], which by any other way there will not be. Do you not say that this State cannot sustain itself without Indians? Well, if the wilderness is closed and the rescues completely prohibited and the few remaining Indians dead, what solution do you have? It is important that Indians be rescued and only by this means can the rescues be permitted.

The fourth and last benefit is that a proposal made in this way will be worthy of going to the hands of His Majesty for approval and confirmation. Whoever asks for the illegal and unjust deserves to have the legal and just denied him; and whoever petitions with conscience, justice, and reason deserves to have his request fulfilled. You know the proposal that you made here? It was a proposal that vassals could not make in conscience, nor ministers deliberate in conscience, nor a king grant in conscience. And even if it were possible that the King would permit such a thing, how would this serve you? If the King allows me to swear falsely, does the false oath cease to be a sin? If the King allows me to steal, will the theft cease to be a sin? The same applies to Indians. The King can order that the captives be freed, but his jurisdiction does not extend to making the free captives. If such a request went to the Crown, the very stones of the street would cry out against the men of Maranhão. But if the request were legal, just, and Christian, those same stones would line up with you.