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‘Guided By God’ Beyond the Chilean Frontier: The Travelling Early Modern European Conscience

La consciencia es fuerte muro / de aquel que la tiene sana / con imitación cristiana / y espíritu limpio y puro / éste vivirá seguro.¹

This brief verse about conscience came in the closing pages of an epic account of Spanish interaction with the indigenous Mapuche of Chile. It was a citation of a passage from Horace by Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, who, as a Spanish officer and son of a renowned Field Marshal stationed on the Chilean frontier, was both enemy and friend of the Mapuche who resisted Spanish domination. This frontier war was a bitter struggle that lasted the best part of the seventeenth century and was one which cost many lives on both sides but, as Francisco’s account shows, it was also one in which surprising accommodations were possible. Aged only twenty-one², he was taken captive after a well-planned ambush by a much larger force of Mapuche warriors. Clubbed to the ground in the fight, Francisco narrowly avoided being sacrificed and became a ‘slave’ to his captor the *cacique* Maulicán.³ Written many years after he was ransomed, the narrative is a remarkable account,

¹ ‘Conscience is a strong [defensive] wall / for the person who keeps it well / through Christian acts / and spirit pure / he or she will live safe and sure’; first stanza of a poem on conscience by Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán, in *Cautiverio Feliz* [1675], 2 vols, ed., by Mario Fereccio Podestá y Raïsa Kordić Riquelme (Santiago: Ril editors, 2001), II, p. 968. Unless otherwise stated all translations are my own. I am indebted to Mauro Mattei, Ana María Yévenes, Peter Downes and Amalia Castro San Carlos, with whom conversations first led me to study this fascinating text.

² In the published version this reads ‘aged only sixteen’. This was a mistake generated by an early misreading of the text and then working from erroneous notes. Francisco Núñez de Bascuñán began life as a soldier when he was sixteen when his father insisted he work his way up through the ranks. He was given his Captain’s commission when he was in his early twenties and the disastrous battle (for the Spaniards) that led to his capture occurred when he was twenty-one—not quite as young as sixteen but still a youth in both modern and contemporary Spanish terms. Despite this mistake, the central argument is not affected and does not change.

³ *Cacique* was a Carib term for indigenous leader, noble or chief and entered the Spanish language shortly after their conquest of the Caribbean islands. It was used universally by Spaniards throughout the Hispanic Americas alongside local terms such as *curaca* for the Andes and *ilmin* for the Mapuche. Núñez mostly used the term *cacique* but at one point in the text cited an indigenous leader who said: ‘Friend-*ilmines*, which means “*cacique* magnates” and “principal men” [...]’, *ibid.*, p. 630. With regard to his enslavement, after his capture Francisco considered himself to be Maulicán’s slave who did in fact hold the power of life and death over him (and saved him on numerous occasions from Mapuche enemies who wanted to sacrifice him). For the duration of his captivity, however, he was treated more as an honoured guest while negotiations for his ransom were made. Francisco was captured in the mid-1620s.

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rich in ethnographic details remembered from his observations at the time and over his many subsequent years of interaction with the Mapuche. At the same time, it was also intended to join the already substantial genre of chronicles written to advise the king of the best way to govern his American kingdoms.⁴ As a mixture of his early memories of captivity and an exposé of later personal and public grievances, the narrative serves as an invaluable ethnohistorical and socio-political record. For the purposes of this essay, however, the account functions as a journey of conscience; it is a narrative that describes the moral struggles of a young Spaniard as he travelled deep into Mapuche territory, learned to live amongst the Mapuche, to speak their language fluently, made many close friends and, to a point, shared their lives and customs whilst still endeavouring to remain Spanish and Christian. At the same time, the narrative is also the testament of an aging governor of Valdivia whose conscience obliged him to fulfil his promise to his Mapuche friends not to forget them and to inform the Spaniards that, ‘we [the Mapuche] are not as bad nor our inclinations so perverse as they pretend [...] that the noble men, principal caciques and leaders, are all peaceable, polite, pious, and uphold justice and reason as you [Francisco] will have experienced’.⁵ This is a journey in which Francisco awakens both to himself and to the new world around him. Indeed, early on in the account he described his situation as ‘this miserable captivity’ which God’s mercy had reduced him to, his perceived isolation allowing him to reason beyond the vanities of the world and turn to Christ who, caught up in the passion of youth, he had previously ignored.⁶ If cause for happiness could be found in the personal awakening of his Christian conscience, *Happy Captivity*, the very title that Francisco chose to give his account, also belied his initial description of misery during his time beyond the Spanish frontier. As the time of his ransom drew near Francisco described the tears shed at his parting from his Mapuche friends whose laments ‘obliged [him] to cry with them’.

⁴ Many of these superb socio-political treatises were written futilely, being censored or archived long before they reached eyes of the king or his Council. Perhaps one of the most well-known chronicles of this type was that written by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* [1615]. See the edition by John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno, trans. by Jorge L. Urioste (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1992). Like *Cautiverio Feliz*, the *Nueva corónica* also failed to reach the king.

⁵ *Cautiverio Feliz*, II, p. 912.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 380.

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He asserted he was ‘rendered utterly speechless [as he] attempted to enliven [his] wounded heart’.⁷

In essence, this is a tale of a conscience that grew and accompanied Francisco as he travelled around the indigenous Chilean landscape but also as he progressed through life and witnessed injustice and bad government causing continued strife and suffering to those who lived near to the frontier. As such, the narrative is almost unique in its importance to the study of early modern conscience at the borders of the European world for it provides an extraordinary chronicle of a Catholic and European conscience active beyond European frontiers and, furthermore, an account that was experienced and written by a soldier rather than a member of the clergy. Because Francisco was Jesuit-educated from an early age, *Cautiverio Feliz* provides a rare account of how early modern Catholic (and, more specifically, Jesuit-formed) consciences could work on the boundaries of European society through the eyes of someone other than the clergy. The following essay will therefore seek to analyse and place into historical context particular manifestations of conscience as they appear in Francisco’s account of his travels into Mapuche lands and lives.

Perhaps the most crucial element to help us understand the early modern European conscience is a realisation of how distinct it was to the subjective notion of conscience in the modern secular world around us.⁸ This is something borne out by the struggles of conscience documented in *Cautiverio Feliz*; left to one’s own devices, a fall into sin was almost inevitable and Núñez de Pineda cited the words of Isidore of Seville in order to underline the point: ‘flee from the cave or pit in which your presence saw the other fallen and laid low; *fear the foreign dangers within*

⁷ Ibid., II, p. 914.

⁸ The distinction between modern and early modern conscience was ably summarised by Camille Wells Slights, who wrote that ‘to the Renaissance mind the conscience was less the still small voice which disturbs the sleep of the sinful than the intellectual activity of judging past action and legislating future action’, see ‘Ingenious Piety: Anglican Casuistry of the Seventeenth Century’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 63 (1970), 409-33, 411. For ideas developing this theme see Harald Braun and Edward Vallance eds., *Contexts of Conscience in Early Modern Europe 1500-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. xvi and passim.

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yourself [my italics].⁹ Alone, one's subjective judgement was not sufficient to be able to discern the right course of action as: 'our faults and sins blind our senses and disturb our understanding; which, although they [our senses and understanding] warn us of what would be most beneficial [...] we never give them credit'.¹⁰ An unaided or misguided conscience could leave a person vulnerable to falling prey to the devil's snares, which Francisco felt he could only avoid by fervent prayer during his long isolation from the Catholic community.¹¹

Worse still, misguided or erring consciences belonging to those in power could have catastrophic consequences for the many people under their authority. It is unsurprising that, as a life-long soldier, Francisco further interpreted Horace's rhyming imagery of a good conscience as a defensive wall by rephrasing it to read that, 'there is no *stronger* wall or fortress than a good conscience and a pure soul'.¹² In the case of those who governed Chile, however, he admitted that consciences failed to act as protective bastions, not so much because the analogy fell apart, but rather because these fortresses crumbled as a result of Spanish consciences being 'stained and disturbed by infernal greed': 'Against God, against reason and justice they enslave these poor barbarian pagans [the Mapuche] without the right to do so, raiding and robbing their houses, wives and children while under treaties of peace and friendship'. As a result, their enemies find little resistance when they attack their 'haciendas, houses and lives'.¹³

It is at this point that Francisco demonstrated added depth to his understanding of conscience, which for our purposes further highlights the difference between conscience in the early modern world and subjective and relativist notions of

⁹ *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, p. 248.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 264.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 899. Of course questions do arise as to how many of these struggles of conscience the aged Francisco is projecting back onto his memories of captivity and how many are deliberately inserted as a rhetorical presentation in order to appear to have a clear conscience thereby underlining the contrast between himself and the 'bad governors' he is criticising. Even if we cannot entirely separate the conscience of the teenager from that of the man, the narrative still gives us remarkable insight into the educated Catholic Hispano-American conscience during the seventeenth century.

¹² *Ibid.*, II, p. 968.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 969.

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conscience of today’s society. Interestingly he writes, ‘it is when we judge ourselves to be freest and most secure [...] that we find ourselves at most risk and in most danger’.¹⁴ The point Francisco was making was not merely a comment on strategic risk aversion on the frontier (although it might plausibly be read that way).¹⁵ Rather, the complacency, excesses and moral laxity brought on by freedom led to both substantial physical and spiritual danger—these two factors had to be considered and guarded against together: the alternative was anarchy and all the suffering this entailed. In this respect, Francisco’s position differs little from that of the early modern Catholic hierarchy. A century earlier, Pope Paul IV urged the Venetian government to ‘flee from the freedom of conscience [...] which [...] kills the soul’.¹⁶ And, as Nicholas Davidson has noted, Cardinal Pole argued that ‘people are simply unable make the right choice of religious belief; liberty of conscience leads to chaos and ultimately self-destruction’.¹⁷ While in these cases both clergymen were warning primarily of the spiritual dangers of ‘free’ (and, as such, unguided) consciences, there was a widespread feeling among Catholic authorities that liberty of conscience could cause social disorder, as people disputed with each other the rights and wrongs of particular religious doctrines. This, it was believed, could in turn ‘lead directly to governmental collapse’.¹⁸ In the same manner, throughout his text Francisco was nothing if not emphatic in his attribution of the woes of the kingdom of Chile to the failure of its governors and counsellors to apply their informed consciences and govern in accordance with the demands of true Christian virtue. As just two of many examples he wrote:

The princes who govern do not hear the cries and laments of the population, nor do those who have the authority to change the situation correct and remedy the excesses and tyrannies that kingdoms as remote as Chile experience.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ By provoking the Mapuche the Spanish ran the risk of persistent uprisings.

¹⁶ C.f. Nicholas S. Davidson, ‘ “Fuggir la libertà della coscienza”: Conscience and the Inquisition in Sixteenth-Century Italy’ in, *Contexts of Conscience*, op. cit., pp. 49-55, p.49.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, pp. 254-5.

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The avaricious princes and covetous ministers do not seek peace and tranquillity for the kingdom, because they are followers and ministers of the prince of discord who governs them [...] using the enslavement of this wretched nation as his instrument; how can this war be anything but perpetual? How will it not end by consuming Chile if we lack the ministers of Christ Our Lord and legal executors of the orders of his royal majesty, that with Christian methods they seek the necessary peace [...]?²⁰

An apparent difficulty regarding early modern notions of conscience presents itself, however, when we compare Núñez de Pineda’s various literary intentions against this sustained vitriol directed against the failure of good conscience of those who governed Chile and their ministers. As we have seen, his main promise to his indigenous captors and friends as he left their company to return to Spanish territory was to inform the Spaniards that the Mapuche were not barbarian as they were made out to be but rather tended to behave much more humanely and more nobly than their Spanish counterparts—and this is a point that Francisco conscientiously laboured throughout his discourse. Yet, at first glance it seems this Francisco’s *apologia* for the Mapuche might be undermined by the early modern Catholic insistence that consciences must be guided by correct authority (the Church) and that without this guidance society ran the risk of degenerating into anarchy. How could the Mapuche ‘uphold justice and reason’, as he states, when their consciences were not ‘guided’ by the proper authority of the Church? Worse still, in the great uprising of 1599, Mapuche warriors deliberately destroyed churches, convents and Catholic religious symbols. Francisco’s subsequent defence of the Mapuche against charges of apostasy levied after the uprising sidestepped this apparent paradox: their rejection of Christianity, he argued, was intimately linked to a rejection of Spanish dominion rather than an expression of hatred of the faith. What they had violently expelled from their territory was not Christianity but rather a rightful extirpation of an abhorrent blasphemy caused by the Spanish failure to set the correct Christian example.²¹ Even with this justification, the apparent problem of authority and conscience still remained unresolved—the Mapuche’s consciences still remained

²⁰ Ibid., p. 366.

²¹ Ibid., II, p. 690.

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‘free’ and unguided and hence, their society, like that of the frontier Spaniards, would be surely in great physical and spiritual peril. Yet, as we read in Francisco’s account, this did not appear to be the case.

The key to understanding Francisco’s lack of concern about this issue lies in another fundamental aspect of the Catholic notion of conscience, and this is the fact that each individual’s conscience was considered to have a twofold nature. Scholastic definitions of conscience used the artificial divisions of *synderesis* and *conscientia*. *Synderesis* was considered to be a God-given system of values that transcended cultures and was inherent in each and every human being and *conscientia* was the recognition and application of these values to everyday life.²² While Francisco did not explicitly name these divisions or even their intellectual separation, his narrative demonstrates a growing consciousness of and ultimate belief in the universality of these moral principles that sprang from a fundamental and divine natural law.²³ As Francisco came to realise (and as the following examples will show), the Mapuche appeared more conscious of this natural law than the Spaniards who oppressed and abused them.

Immediately after his capture, he and the other Spanish captives were taken south away from the conflict zone so that the tables could not be turned on the victorious Mapuche by a punitive Spanish force. After a hazardous river crossing after which Francisco revived his half-drowned master Maulicán for fear of otherwise facing certain death, the allied *caciques* held a summit meeting or ‘parliament’ [lit. *parlamento*]. During the summit, the *caciques* discovered that Francisco was the son of a renowned Spanish Field Marshall, and a number of them expressed their desire to buy him from Maulicán for sacrifice. Much to Francisco’s horror, Maulicán, expressed consent to the deal after sacrificing another Spanish youth, apparently

²² See Braun and Vallance, *Contexts of Conscience*, p. xvi.

²³ This twofold conscience is still considered intrinsic to Catholic understanding of conscience. In an essay on the subject, Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) states a preference for the Platonic term *anamnesis* rather than the Aristotelian (and scholastic) *synderesis* but the essence of the concepts are the same, that humankind is imprinted with ‘a spark of divine love that is innate in us’. Joseph Ratzinger, ‘If You Want Peace ... Conscience and Truth’, in *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2006), pp. 75-99, p. 91.

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under pressure from his peers. After the boy was dispatched with a blow to the head, his heart was cut into small pieces and eaten by the assembled warriors.²⁴ Francisco's initially calm acceptance of impending death turned into an agony of fear after having been forced to watch this gruesome spectacle, and he confessed to the reader that while he took consolation from having experienced something similar to Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, he still broke down in tears before his master.²⁵ Maulicán reassured the distraught Francisco that he would rather die than hand him over to be sacrificed and that his consent to the parliament was merely a ploy to prevent him being seized by force.²⁶ Francisco, marvelled as he continued his narration at the 'pity shown by this barbarian, who could put us to shame by leaving aside all our [past] actions and teaching us to imitate our Redeemer, for he had compassion for my affliction and was afflicted to see me so distraught'.²⁷ This was the first inkling for Francisco that the Mapuche shared with the Spaniards (and even better recognised) an innate sense of what was right and wrong.

Francisco's awakening continued as they journeyed towards Maulicán's lands. His rapport with the Mapuche youths quickly grew to the point where they ceased to be enemies and instead became his companions and, on one occasion, they took him downriver to visit a 'beautiful cultivated valley', a picture of rural domesticity which greatly cheered him. Francisco tells the reader he gave thanks to God for allowing him to see such 'great marvels' but also that he gave 'infinite thanks that among those pagan barbarians he could receive so many favours, finding among our enemies hospitality, love and courtesy'.²⁸ The longer he lived amongst the Mapuche the more he became convinced that it was the Spanish rather than his indigenous captors and hosts who failed to recognise that innate sense of divine love which called them to goodness.

²⁴ *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, pp. 288-98. Francisco tried to excuse Maulicán's sacrifice of the youth to the reader implying that it was done with great reluctance and under duress.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

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As the narrative progressed, Francisco’s tirades against Spanish cruelty turned into mini-treatises on just-war theory as he determined that the war waged against the Mapuche was definitively unjust. ‘The faith’, he reasoned citing Saints John Chrysostom and Thomas Aquinas, ‘cannot be spread by compulsion or force of arms but rather it comes from the interior, inspired by God or through the ministry of his angels, [...] and is made understandable through reason and efficacious explanations’.²⁹ He continues by quoting Augustine who wrote of the, ‘blessed and happy necessity that obliges one to seek out what is best’.³⁰ Aside from proving the unjust nature of the Spanish war and the blasphemous way in which they taught and lived Christianity in the early settlements, Francisco’s deeper underlying point was to support his assertion that if the Mapuche had been taught Christianity as it should have been taught and practiced rather than them having been subjected and enslaved, they would never have risen up and destroyed the Churches and sacred images along with the Spanish cities.³¹ Rather, they had the innate sense, as Augustine wrote, ‘to seek out what was best’.

This belief of Francisco’s was carefully constructed throughout his narrative and appeared to grow correspondingly during his captivity. But one episode in particular epitomises this realisation of the existence of the universal conscience, a realisation which deeply troubled his own. After receiving hospitality from a long-term enemy of the Spanish, the aged *cacique* Quilalebo, Francisco, in conversation, pressed him to describe the events that led to initial indigenous uprising in the south and centre of the kingdom.³² Francisco was astounded by the weight of the accusations against his fellow countrymen and rendered speechless by the questions directed to him by the *cacique*: ‘how can our people give credence to your [Spanish] reasoning or have faith

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 689.

³⁰ *Ibid.* It is unclear exactly where the quotation is taken from.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

³² Between 1599 and 1604 six out of thirteen of the cities founded by the Spanish in Chile were destroyed and the surviving populations enslaved in the frontier wars. The cities were Valdivia, La Imperial, Angol, Santa Cruz, Chillán and La Concepción. See Alonso de Ovalle, *Histórica relación del Reino de Chile y de las misiones y ministerios que ejercita en él la Compañía de Jesús* [1646] (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2003), pp. 365-9. Ovalle’s source here is primarily the *Comentarios Reales* by Garcilaso de la Vega, book 7, chapter 25.

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or confidence in the word of the king, which, according to you, cannot be broken?'. He described how the Spanish had proposed peace terms and how, under the truce, they had raided the Mapuche settlements killing and taking them captive. Quilalebo then asked, 'is this the word of the king that you say cannot be broken? Is this the Christianity and justification of your God?'³³ At this, Francisco had to confess he did not know how to respond: 'truly' he tells the reader, 'his clear and certain arguments left me feeling confused and troubled'.³⁴ This was a watershed moment for Francisco as he came to realise that the Mapuche, his friends and enemies of the Spanish, were more receptive to divine natural law than his own countrymen, even without proper guidance from the Church. Their lack of hostility to Catholicism as he practiced it and understood it, and more to the point, their natural curiosity about Christianity, their desire for baptism and their wish to be taught prayers translated into their language seemed even to belie the standard belief that 'freedom of conscience' as described above was a dangerous thing.³⁵ If this were true for Europeans, Francisco's own experiences among the Mapuche were instead proof to him that the indigenous people of Chile were more naturally inclined towards Christianity when they were not subjected to cruel treatment and, most importantly, when they could exercise their own free will.

Not surprisingly, there were occasions when the actions of his indigenous companions could arguably be said to undermine this *apologia* that set the Mapuche higher in moral virtue than the Spanish.³⁶ Francisco's presence and even willing participation on the other hand saved his comrades from falling prey once again to stereotypical accusations of pagan barbarism, even if he was left with moral quandary of justifying these actions to his own conscience and the consciences of his readership.

³³ *Cautiverio Feliz*, II, p. 704.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For examples of Francisco being asked to teach prayers and Christian doctrine see pp. 386-90, 433, 447, 462-88.

³⁶ Notwithstanding the initial sacrifice of the Spanish boy and continued attempts by his enemies to seize him and kill him.

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A reasonable period of time into his captivity, an invitation arrived from the *caciques* of the district of La Imperial to the south of Maulicán's territory. They had heard that Maulicán held the son of Field Marshal Alvaro in captivity and wished to hold a feast in order to meet him.³⁷ As the party of warriors from Maulicán's kinship group journeyed south, they passed numerous ranches deserted but for old women and children, as all the other inhabitants had left for the feast. They camped in sight of one particular ranch in which only an old woman and a young boy were left to look after the livestock, and the youths of the group determined to raid the enclosure. Francisco readily agreed to take part: 'let's go then friends' [he] said, 'I'll also bring my share back to old Llancaréu, my grandfather'.³⁸ As they entered the sheep pen the alarmed bleating of the animals alerted the shepherd boy who rushed out to see what was happening, only to be faced with a group of young warriors determined to steal his sheep. One of the warriors scared him back into the ranch with a feint and, at this, the old woman came out yelling and screaming at their shameless lack of respect for her son the local *cacique* and owner of the ranch and livestock. As if to prove her point, one of the young warriors twice punched her sharply on the nose. She wisely retreated and, 'grumbling', returned to the ranch and barred the door leaving the sheep for the taking. The warriors carried one animal each back to the camp.³⁹

Francisco, now in the role of observant narrator rather than active participator, mused that, 'at that time I judged the frontier Indians to be just like the soldiers of our army when they descend on the districts around the city of Santiago and take all they want'.⁴⁰ Given his persistent criticisms of Spanish rapaciousness a reader might be forgiven for expecting this small sentence to lead on to an expression of regret for his participation in the raid but, instead, Francisco continues with a description of how

³⁷ At that time La Imperial was firmly in the hands of anti-Spanish Mapuche and the original Spanish city had been destroyed.

³⁸ *Cautiverio Feliz*, II, pp. 520-1. Llancaréu was Maulicán's father and accompanied them to the feast. Francisco called him 'grandfather' as a term of respect but also endearment. By this time Maulicán had already insisted that he looked on Francisco as a son rather than a captive or hostage.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 521-2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

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they built the fires up, ate their fill and slept well contented before moving on the next morning.⁴¹

Had Francisco not so vigorously and continually condemned such acts when committed by others, and had he not taken such care to describe his struggles to obey his Christian conscience in such detail throughout the account, this single incident might be passed off as just another example of how well, as a young frontiersman, he was able to assimilate himself to Mapuche society.⁴² The fact that he does persistently draw the reader's attention to matters of conscience, however, makes his relative silence about the moral implications of this raid seem to pale in comparison. To be fair to Francisco (the youth), as the raid was being discussed, he apparently stated that for the size of the party surely four head of sheep would be enough.⁴³ To this, some young warriors in the group responded that each person there could eat more than two whole sheep each and this simple and seemingly rather absurd answer, surprisingly, seemed enough to satisfy Francisco who enthusiastically agreed to participate in the raid.⁴⁴

Admittedly, there would have been little scope for him to refuse to participate. However well he was being treated and however profound the friendships he had made within Maulicán's kinship group, he was still a captive and needed to be on constant guard against giving offence to those in power over him. Also adding to any pressure he felt not to give offence, as a young soldier he would also have been subject to warrior codes of honour and valour that, in this case at least, conflicted with his moral duty to protect the weak and vulnerable—he could not appear

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Although this assimilation did not take place without Francisco suffering severe pangs of conscience, as we shall see below.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 521.

⁴⁴ The response at first glance appears somewhat absurd because the Mapuche did not travel with many provisions. Further on in the text Francisco lauded the indigenous practice of training their warriors in the practice of abstinence so they could travel fast and light (ibid., p. 738). This meant they would have to eat the meat that night. However, the comment seems less absurd when Francisco described how, when he awoke the next morning, some of his comrades were still eating. He compared them to 'voracious ostriches [...] because unless they had stomachs the size of those huge bellies, it would have been impossible to finish so much meat'. Francisco whimsically mentions that just before they moved off, he fancied a piece of meat for lunch but there was none left. Ibid., p. 522.

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cowardly in front of the young Mapuche warriors. That said, his moral sensibilities did (apparently) cause him to refuse marriage offers and gifts of women on numerous occasions during his captivity, sometimes at the risk of causing great offence to his hosts.⁴⁵ At the same time, if he did experience subsequent remorse for the raid and the violence done to the old woman he might also have expressed this to his readers using the discursive mechanism of the wiser and more pious veteran confessing the moral failings of his heady days of youth. Indeed, earlier in the narrative he meditates on the tendency of youths to ignore what is really important. Citing Lactantius, Cicero and Saint Paul, he wrote that a youth believed himself to be eternal and so gave ‘free reign to his licentious appetites that conquer his spirit’. This was something he says he came to realise while in captivity, allowing him to ‘lift the eyes of his soul to Our Creator and Lord’.⁴⁶ This was a confessional mechanism quite familiar to Catholic tradition having been most famously employed by Augustine of Hippo.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, rather than confessing his faults as a youth, in the case of the sheep-rustling Francisco preferred to use what appears to be casuistry in order to justify his and his companions’ subsequent actions. He wrote: ‘and it is true that although they know how to tolerate fasting and hunger when it is necessary, when the occasion arises to satisfy their hunger, even though it comes at a cost to others, they eat to such an extreme that it causes admiration in those who watch’.⁴⁸ By this brief consideration of Mapuche appetites, Francisco at once was able to excuse the subsequent theft of the sheep whilst at the same time highlighting the virtuous ability of indigenous warriors to fast for long periods of time—even their apparent gluttony was excused once it was placed into the context of the normal asceticism of

⁴⁵ On one such occasion he was being hosted by the *cacique* Quilalebo (mentioned above) who was renowned for his hatred of Spaniards. After a tale of Francisco’s mercy as a boy to an enemy warrior won Quilalebo’s favour, the *cacique* offered him his daughter in marriage and betrothed him before the invited guests. Despite the risk of giving extreme offence, Francisco’s moral qualms caused him to refuse the betrothal. *Ibid.*, pp. 639-48.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 379-80. Even if he came to realise this whilst in captivity as he says, Francisco’s continual citation of Classical and neo-Classical masters of rhetoric such as Cicero, Seneca, Livy, Horace and Lactantius and the Doctors of the Church such as Saints Augustine, Aquinas, and Jerome do betray his Jesuit education.

⁴⁷ See *Saint Augustine Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II, p. 521 See also note 43 above.

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Mapuche warriors. The theft itself could be excused on the grounds of necessity, and, under those circumstances might even cease to be considered theft.⁴⁹ The excuse of necessity was made all the more valid by the fact that by the time they broke camp there was not a morsel of meat left.⁵⁰

In seventeenth-century Chilean frontier society, small-scale sheep-rustling was perhaps less surprising than the fact that casuistry was used to justify it.⁵¹ On this militarised frontier, however, problems of early modern conscience were not merely limited to casuistic justifications of theft of property. In this violent world, dissimulation in order to deceive one’s enemies and preserve oneself was at worst necessary and at best laudable practice. As a reader might gather from Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, deception was considered an inherent part of statecraft and, whilst *The Prince* was itself vilified by members of the early modern clergy as impious and immoral, its brutal pragmatism provided a sad reflection of (if not a model for) societies in conflict.⁵² The complaint mentioned above by Quilalebo against the Spanish breaking truces given under the word of their king was, in effect, a complaint against Machiavellian practices in warfare. But arguably Machiavelli merely codified and lauded practices that had always existed and would always continue to exist; deception and dissimulation were by no means limited to his readership. While Catholic theologians condemned Machiavelli’s writings, Jesuit casuists such as

⁴⁹ According to Harro Höpfl, the Jesuit Valentia ‘took exception to the common axiom that “theft is legitimate in extreme necessity”’; in these circumstances there was no “theft”. See, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 299. Here Höpfl charts the development of Jesuit casuistry that undermined the right to private property in the case of others in need (pp. 296-301).

⁵⁰ See above, note 43.

⁵¹ Of course we must bear in mind that Francisco was writing to an external readership and had to appear a morally upstanding individual, especially as he was so highly critical of the moral failings of other Spaniards.

⁵² On deception, Machiavelli writes: ‘contemporary experience has shown that princes who have achieved great things have been those who have given their word lightly, who have known how to trick men with their cunning and who, in the end, have overcome those abiding by honest principles’. To justify this, he continues, ‘one must be a fox in order to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who simply act like lions are stupid. So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and should not honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage [...] If all men were good, this precept would not be good; but because men are wretched creatures who would not keep their word to you, you need not keep your word to them’. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. by George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1964), chap. XVIII, pp. 99-100.

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Botero and Ribadeneira meanwhile developed their own justifications for deception and dissimulation. If lying directly was considered inherently sinful, deception, per se, was not.⁵³ Botero considered that dissimulation helped princes keep their plans secret—an essential part of governance, while Ribadeneira differed from Machiavelli only in that justification for a prince’s deception must depend on his ultimate good intentions.⁵⁴ With regard to ordinary members of society, no-one, as Höpfl notes, was obliged ‘to tell “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” in all circumstances’ and ‘priests and lay-people were under no moral obligation to present themselves voluntarily for butchery, torture or financial ruin’.⁵⁵

Not surprisingly, Francisco agreed with these sentiments, as is evidenced by his initial attempt to deceive his captors to the truth of his origins and parentage. When asked who he was and where he was from he told them that he had only just arrived from the Kingdom of Peru, knowing that his father’s renown put him in great danger. Rather than worry in the narrative about casuistic equivocation or mental reservation in order to avoid lying directly, he instead cited Horace who argued that it was ‘greatly prudent to pretend to be ignorant’.⁵⁶ This same sense of self-preservation caused Francisco to politely dissimulate grateful contentment when he and his master were later offered hospitality by one of the most vociferous proponents of his sacrificial death. Inwardly, he admitted, he was suffering from a tremendous state of fear and turmoil.⁵⁷

Towards the end of the narrative Francisco expounded further on the right of enemies to dissimulate and deceive each other in times of war. He described how shortly after hearing that he was going to be ransomed, emissaries from his original enemies arrived at the ranch of the *cacique* Quilalebo to inform him that their masters had ceased to be enemies and that now they wished to make their peace with him

⁵³ Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought*, p. 143.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁶ *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, p. 266. For the justification of equivocation see Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought*, pp. 142-5.

⁵⁷ *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, p. 348.

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and escort him back to the frontier.⁵⁸ It is reasonable to assume that at the time Francisco simply thought that the story did not ring true and wished to avoid falling into a trap which amounted to little more than a last-ditch attempt to prise him away from his friends and kill him before he could return to Spanish territory. But writing the account gave him time to reflect on these events and even develop a justification for his own enemies’ attempt to fatally deceive him. He described pragmatically how common a custom it was for enemies to use fraud and trickery to gain advantage in warfare. But this was no mere Machiavellianism, for he stated that this is even permitted ‘among us, the Christians, who have the true light and knowledge of God, our Lord’. He explained further, citing a somewhat surprising statement from el Abulense who apparently argued that ‘enemies can licitly seek by any means to deprive each other of life’.⁵⁹

The fundamental problem with dissimulation and deception in the early modern world was that it obscured the truth and made people and things seem to be what they were not. In a world where relative values are normative, this would not seem necessarily problematic, especially in a frontier world where people cross boundaries and experienced and lived other cultures. However, (outside of the practical necessities demanded by warfare, conflict and statecraft in general) in the Catholic world, where conscience was envisaged as a way to perceive the divine truth, which ‘is present in man in a manner that cannot be rejected’, to obscure or deny the truth was a particularly serious matter.⁶⁰ Given the wealth of detail in *Cautiverio Feliz* it would not be hard to find a number of examples to illustrate the point but I would like to bring the discussion to a close by highlighting one case that reads particularly strangely to a modern audience.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 832-9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 834.

⁶⁰ Ratzinger, ‘Conscience and Truth’, pp. 78, 82.

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A while into Francisco's captivity, Maulicán and Francisco received a summons from Ancanamón, a powerful *cacique* who Francisco describes as governor of the region.⁶¹ By the time his summons arrived, Francisco's once rich Spanish clothes were rotten and lice-infested. Both Maulicán and Francisco knew that they had to make a good impression were he to survive, especially given the power of the *cacique* and his extreme dislike of Spaniards. To this effect, Maulicán told Francisco to change out of his Spanish clothes and to travel to see Ancanamón in indigenous clothing that he would provide. On hearing this, and realising that he had no choice, Francisco sank into a profound depression. He tried to reason with himself that as the slave of Maulicán, his master had the right to take all of his clothes and leave him naked. He reasoned that he should be happy and grateful that his master instead wished to clothe him with clothes of his own. Nevertheless, he described how taking off his Spanish clothes caused his heart to feel 'as if it were being crushed between two stones'.⁶² In order not to appear ungrateful, he feigned happiness at his new clothes but subsequently asked if he could leave the ranch for a while, ostensibly to go to the river to refresh himself but, in reality, in order to be alone in his misery. Significantly, he stated: 'I left his [Maulicán's] presence now changed into [an] Indian, desirous of allowing the tears I was holding back to flow freely'. He walked off into the forest and 'from the depths of my soul cried out with such dreadful lament that the mountains were moved to imitate me and responded as if [they too were] in pain'.⁶³

⁶¹ Ancanamón had been a bitter enemy of the Spaniards since a Spanish peace envoy sent by the Jesuit Luis de Valdivia committed adultery with one of his wives before fleeing with her and two others back to the Spanish lines. After allowing the Spanish emissary into his territory Ancanamón had been gravely humiliated before his family and peers. Ancanamón was so livid that he and his war party descended on three Jesuits who had recently entered the region and 'killed them furiously'. He told the story to Francisco on request as the story was infamous along the frontier and he wished to hear the truth from Ancanamón's mouth. Francisco was so shocked by what he heard that he informed the reader that he could not believe it until he investigated the affair on his return to Spanish territory. Taking the story on face value he told Ancanamón that he had acted justly and that he would have done the same in his place. *Cautiverio Feliz*, I, pp. 415-23. For the Jesuit perspective, see Ovalle, *Histórica relación*, pp. 397-405. [erratum: the published version reads 'two Jesuits'. There were two Jesuit priests killed in the attack that occurred in 1612 (Horacio Vecchi and Martín de Aranda) and one Jesuit novice (Diego de Montalbán) along with a number of indigenous people from Elicura who had accepted the peace treaty and requested that the Jesuits accompany them].

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 382.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

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He then threw himself on his knees and, he said, gave thanks to the Creator for the trials and tribulations he had been sent.⁶⁴

Francisco’s pain at being told to change clothes was in fact one of his most powerful expressions of anguish in the entire work.⁶⁵ Admittedly, this could have been the ‘proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back’ after suffering a great deal of psychological trauma from the events since his captivity. Nevertheless, there was something deeper at work in his psyche when he ‘changed into an Indian’. In something so apparently superficial as clothing was subsumed his entire identity as he perceived it.⁶⁶ Changing into an Indian was, for Francisco, another watershed moment, and one that weighed heavily on his conscience. After he had done this and released his anguish to the mountains and to God he was able to assimilate much better with his Mapuche hosts and participate much more fully in Mapuche life. Yet after all the time he spent with them, eating their food, drinking, conversing, playing, dancing, sleeping, becoming intimate friends, on returning to the Spanish fort where he was ransomed, the first two things that he said he did were to hear mass and then to change out of the ‘vile [indigenous] clothes that I was wearing and I came out changed into the person I used to be’.⁶⁷ Despite the apparent fluidity of Colonial frontiers and also the pragmatic casuistry with which conscientious decisions were made, in this case, Francisco, or rather, his conscience, could not bear continuing to pretend to be who he was not.

⁶⁴ Interestingly he cites Aquinas and Augustine to justify his tears as a mechanism to release the anguish he was feeling.

⁶⁵ Comparable feelings of anguish appear to be; shortly after he was taken captive and had to witness the sacrifice of a comrade and fear for his own life (*ibid.*, I, pp. 295-300); on the death of a close Mapuche friend from sickness (*Ibid.*, pp. 478-98); on talking himself into having to cure another friend’s wife of a potentially life-threatening pustule when he knew very little about herbs and healing—once again, in this case, he had to pretend to be someone he was not (*ibid.*, II, pp. 549-52, 586-624).

⁶⁶ The question of clothing and identity needs much fuller treatment than can be given here. Of course, intermixed with the notion of cultural identity (Christian/Pagan, Spanish/Mapuche) is social identity from rich to poor. Another important possibility is that his clothes represented his last contact with the world he had lost and might never be a part of again.

⁶⁷ A Spaniard – these were not his own clothes but rather ones that had been lent to him. *Ibid.*, II, p. 929.

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By way of a conclusion, it can be said that Francisco’s tale is one that confirms to himself and the contemporary reader the validity of Catholic notions of conscience—especially that of the innate knowledge of goodness—across cultural frontiers and ultimately, throughout humanity. That the account is an *apologia* for indigenous American people based on theories of natural law is not, of itself, extraordinary. The most famous Hispanic apologist for indigenous peoples, Bartolomé de las Casas, for example, told a story of native goodness—even to the point of defending indigenous human sacrifice as the ultimate albeit erroneous expression of the natural desire to worship the divinity.⁶⁸ Yet unlike Francisco Núñez de Pineda, Las Casas did not do so through the prism of the individual conscience cast beyond the pale of Spanish civilisation.⁶⁹ And it is that fundamental difference which makes Francisco’s account so important to understanding early modern conscience as viewed and experienced across cultural frontiers. The account preserves him as a Catholic and Spaniard even without the authoritative guidance of the Church (or even other Catholics) that was normally required. Furthermore, as far as conscience was concerned, his experience of Mapuche morality, right reason and justice in direct contrast to the immoral behaviour of Spaniards on the Mapuche frontier demonstrated to Francisco that there was no human ‘other’. At the same time, however, the moral struggles described in *Happy Captivity* show the many difficulties he encountered as he realised the Mapuche’s humanity whilst still trying to preserve his own individual Spanish identity. Once through the terrible anguish of stripping away his Spanish layers he was able to reach a much deeper understanding of his indigenous hosts and, in a much broader sense, what it meant to be truly human. This understanding took Francisco to the point where his conscience, in many respects brought him to change sides or at least transcend his own culture. In other words, what was perceived as the universality of the innate principles of the Christian conscience could, in fact, have invited the crossing and dissolution of seemingly insoluble boundaries.

⁶⁸ As such, he argued that human sacrifice was in fact in accordance with the fundamental precepts of reason and natural law. Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans and ed by Stafford Poole (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), chapters 35-8, pp. 226-48. In the previous chapter (34) he uses probabilistic casuistry to excuse the practise (ibid., pp. 221-5).

⁶⁹ Or barbarism as both Las Casas and Francisco would have their readers believe.

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