

= Bartolomé de las Casas =

Bartolomé de las Casas (c . 1484 ? 18 July 1566) was a 16th @-@ century Spanish historian , social reformer and Dominican friar . He became the first resident Bishop of Chiapas , and the first officially appointed " Protector of the Indians " . His extensive writings , the most famous being A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies and Historia de Las Indias , chronicle the first decades of colonization of the West Indies and focus particularly on the atrocities committed by the colonizers against the indigenous peoples .

Arriving as one of the first European settlers in the Americas , he initially participated in , but eventually felt compelled to oppose , the atrocities committed against the Native Americans by the Spanish colonists . In 1515 , he reformed his views , gave up his Indian slaves and encomienda , and advocated , before King Charles V , Holy Roman Emperor , on behalf of rights for the natives . In his early writings , he advocated the use of African slaves instead of Natives in the West @-@ Indian colonies ; consequently , criticisms have been leveled at him as being partly responsible for the beginning of the Transatlantic slave trade . Later in life , he retracted those early views as he came to see all forms of slavery as equally wrong . In 1522 , he attempted to launch a new kind of peaceful colonialism on the coast of Venezuela , but this venture failed , causing Las Casas to enter the Dominican Order and become a friar , leaving the public scene for a decade . He then traveled to Central America undertaking peaceful evangelization among the Maya of Guatemala and participated in debates among the Mexican churchmen about how best to bring the natives to the Christian faith . Traveling back to Spain to recruit more missionaries , he continued lobbying for the abolition of the encomienda , gaining an important victory by the passing of the New Laws in 1542 . He was appointed Bishop of Chiapas , but served only for a short time before he was forced to return to Spain because of resistance to the New Laws by the encomenderos , and conflicts with Spanish settlers because of his pro @-@ Indian policies and activist religious stances . The remainder of his life was spent at the Spanish court where he held great influence over Indies @-@ related issues . In 1550 , he participated in the Valladolid debate in which Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda argued that the Indians were less than human and required Spanish masters in order to become civilized . Las Casas maintained that they were fully human and that forcefully subjugating them was unjustifiable .

Bartolomé de las Casas spent 50 years of his life actively fighting slavery and the violent colonial abuse of indigenous peoples , especially by trying to convince the Spanish court to adopt a more humane policy of colonization . And although he failed to save the indigenous peoples of the Western Indies , his efforts resulted in several improvements in the legal status of the natives , and in an increased colonial focus on the ethics of colonialism . Las Casas is often seen as one of the first advocates for universal human rights .

= = Life and times = =

= = Background and arrival in the New World = =

Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Seville in 1484 , on 11 November . For centuries , Las Casas 's birthdate was believed to be 1474 ; however , in the 1970s , scholars conducting archival work demonstrated this to be an error , after uncovering in the Archivo General de Indias records of a contemporary lawsuit that demonstrated he was born a decade later than had been supposed . Subsequent biographers and authors have generally accepted and reflected this revision . His father , Pedro de las Casas , a merchant , descended from one of the families that had migrated from France to found the town of Seville ; his family also spelled the name Casaus . According to one biographer , his family were of converso heritage , although others refer to them as ancient Christians who migrated from France . Following the testimony of Las Casas 's biographer Antonio de Remesal , tradition has it that Las Casas studied a licentiate at Salamanca , but this is never mentioned in Las Casas 's own writings . As a young man , in 1507 , he journeyed to Rome where

he observed the Festival of Flutes .

With his father , Las Casas immigrated to the island of Hispaniola in 1502 on the expedition of Nicolás de Ovando . Las Casas became a hacendado and slave owner , receiving a piece of land in the province of Cibao . He participated in slave raids and military expeditions against the native Taíno population of Hispaniola . In 1510 , he was ordained a priest , the first one to be ordained in the Americas .

In September 1510 , a group of Dominican friars arrived in Santo Domingo led by Pedro de Córdoba ; appalled by the injustices they saw committed by the slaveowners against the Indians , they decided to deny slave owners the right to confession . Las Casas was among those denied confession for this reason . In December 1511 , a Dominican preacher Fray Antonio de Montesinos preached a fiery sermon that implicated the colonists in the genocide of the native peoples . He is said to have preached , " Tell me by what right of justice do you hold these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude ? On what authority have you waged such detestable wars against these people who dealt quietly and peacefully on their own lands ? Wars in which you have destroyed such an infinite number of them by homicides and slaughters never heard of before . Why do you keep them so oppressed and exhausted , without giving them enough to eat or curing them of the sicknesses they incur from the excessive labor you give them , and they die , or rather you kill them , in order to extract and acquire gold every day . " Las Casas himself argued against the Dominicans in favour of the justice of the encomienda . The colonists , led by Diego Columbus , dispatched a complaint against the Dominicans to the King , and the Dominicans were recalled from Hispaniola .

= = = Conquest of Cuba and change of heart = = =

In 1513 , as a chaplain , Las Casas participated in Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar 's and Pánfilo de Narváez ' conquest of Cuba . He participated in campaigns in Bayamo and Camagüey and in the massacre of Hatuey . He witnessed many atrocities committed by Spaniards against the native Ciboney and Guanahatabey peoples . He later wrote : " I saw here cruelty on a scale no living being has ever seen or expects to see . " Las Casas and his friend Pablo de la Rentería were awarded a joint encomienda which was rich in gold and slaves , located on the Arimao River close to Cienfuegos . During the next years , he divided his time between being a colonist and his duties as an ordained priest .

In 1514 , Las Casas was studying a passage in the book Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 34 : 18 ? 22 for a Pentecost sermon and pondering its meaning . Las Casas was finally convinced that all the actions of the Spanish in the New World had been illegal and that they constituted a great injustice . He made up his mind to give up his slaves and encomienda , and started to preach that other colonists should do the same . When his preaching met with resistance , he realized that he would have to go to Spain to fight there against the enslavement and abuse of the native people . Aided by Pedro de Córdoba and accompanied by Antonio de Montesinos , he left for Spain in September 1515 , arriving in Seville in November .

= = = Las Casas and King Ferdinand = = =

Las Casas arrived in Spain with the plan of convincing the King to end the encomienda system . This was easier thought than done , as most of the people who were in positions of power were themselves either encomenderos or otherwise profiting from the influx of wealth from the Indies . In the winter of 1515 , King Ferdinand lay ill in Plasencia , but Las Casas was able to get a letter of introduction to the Majesty from the Archbishop of Seville , Diego de Deza . On Christmas Eve of 1515 , Las Casas met the Monarch and discussed the situation in the Indies with him ; the King agreed to hear him out in more detail at a later date . While waiting Las Casas produced a report that he presented to the Bishop of Burgos Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca and secretary Lope Conchillos , who were functionaries in complete charge of the Royal policies regarding the Indies ; both were encomenderos . They were not impressed by his account , and Las Casas had to find a different avenue of change . He put his faith in his coming audience with the King , but it never came

, for King Ferdinand died on January 25 , 1516 . The regency of Castile passed on to Ximenez Cisneros and Adrian of Utrecht who were guardians for the under @-@ age Prince Charles . Las Casas was resolved to see Prince Charles who resided in Flanders , but on his way there he passed Madrid and delivered to the regents a written account of the situation in the Indies and his proposed remedies . This was his " Memorial de Remedios para Las Indias " of 1516 . In this early work , Las Casas advocated importing Black slaves from Africa to relieve the suffering Indians , a stance he later retracted , becoming an advocate for the Africans in the colonies as well . This shows that Las Casas 's first concern was not to end slavery as an institution , but to end the physical abuse and suffering of the Indians . In keeping with the legal and moral doctrine of the time Las Casas believed that slavery could be justified if it was the result of Just War , and at the time he assumed that the enslavement of Africans was justified . Worried by the visions that Las Casas had drawn up of the situation in the Indies , Cardenal Cisneros decided to send a group of Hieronymite friars to take over the government of the islands .

= = = Protector of the Indians = = =

Three Hieronymite friars , Luis de Figueroa , Bernardino de Manzanedo and Alonso de Santo Domingo , were selected as commissioners to take over the authority of the Indies . Las Casas had a considerable part in selecting them and writing the instructions under which their new government would be instated , largely based on Las Casas 's memorial . Las Casas himself was granted the official title of Protector of the Indians , and given a yearly salary of one hundred pesos . In this new office Las Casas was expected to serve as an advisor to the new governors with regards to Indian issues , to speak the case of the Indians in court and send reports back to Spain . Las Casas and the commissioners traveled to Santo Domingo on separate ships , and Las Casas arrived two weeks later than the Hieronymytes . During this time the Hieronymytes had time to form a more pragmatic view of the situation than the one advocated by Las Casas ; their position was precarious as every encomendero on the Islands was fiercely against any attempts to curtail their use of native labour . Consequently , the commissioners were unable to take any radical steps towards improving the situation of the natives . They did revoke some encomiendas from Spaniards , especially those who were living in Spain and not on the islands themselves ; they even repossessed the encomienda of Fonseca , the Bishop of Burgos . They also carried out an inquiry into the Indian question at which all the encomenderos asserted that the Indians were quite incapable of living freely without their supervision . Las Casas was disappointed and infuriated . When he accused the Hieronymites of being complicit in kidnapping Indians , the relationship between Las Casas and the commissioners broke down . Las Casas had become a hated figure by Spaniards all over the Islands , and he had to seek refuge in the Dominican monastery . The Dominicans had been the first to indict the encomenderos , and they continued to chastise them and refuse the absolution of confession to slave owners , and even stated that priests who took their confession were committing a mortal sin . In May 1517 , Las Casas was forced to travel back to Spain to denounce to the regent the failure of the Hieronymite reforms . Only after Las Casas had left did the Hieronymites begin to congregate Indians into towns similar to what Las Casas had wanted .

= = = Las Casas and King Charles V : The peasant colonization scheme = = =

When he arrived in Spain , his former protector , regent and Cardinal Ximenez Cisneros , was ill and had become tired of Las Casas 's tenacity . Las Casas resolved to meet instead with the young King Carlos I. Ximenez died on November 8 , and the young King arrived in Valladolid on November 25 , 1517 . Las Casas managed to secure the support of the King 's Flemish courtiers , including the powerful Chancellor Jean de la Sauvage . Las Casas 's influence turned the favor of the court against Secretary Conchillos and Bishop Fonseca . Sauvage spoke highly of Las Casas to the King , who appointed Las Casas and Sauvage to write a new plan for reforming the governmental system of the Indies .

Las Casas suggested a plan where the encomienda would be abolished and Indians would be

congregated into self @-@ governing townships to become tribute @-@ paying vassals of the King . He still suggested that the loss of Indian labor for the colonists could be replaced by allowing importation of African slaves . Another important part of the plan was to introduce a new kind of sustainable colonization , and Las Casas advocated supporting the migration of Spanish peasants to the Indies where they would introduce small @-@ scale farming and agriculture , a kind of colonization that didn 't rely on resource depletion and Indian labor . Las Casas worked to recruit a large number of peasants who would want to travel to the Islands , where they would be given lands to farm , cash advances , and the tools and resources they needed to establish themselves there . The recruitment drive was difficult , and during the process the power relation shifted at court when Chancellor Sauvage , Las Casas 's main supporter , unexpectedly died . In the end a much smaller number of peasant families were sent than originally planned , and they were supplied with insufficient provisions and no support secured for their arrival . Those who survived the journey were ill @-@ received , and had to work hard even to survive in the hostile colonies . Las Casas was devastated by the tragic result of his peasant migration scheme , which he felt had been thwarted by his enemies . He decided instead to undertake a personal venture which would not rely on the support of others , and fought to win a land grant on the American mainland which was in its earliest stage of colonization .

= = = The Cumaná venture = = =

Following a suggestion by his friend and mentor Pedro de Córdoba , Las Casas petitioned a land grant to be allowed to establish a settlement in northern Venezuela at Cumaná . Founded in 1515 , there was already a small Franciscan monastery in Cumaná and a Dominican one at Chiribichi , but the monks there were being harassed by Spaniards operating slave raids from the nearby Island of Cubagua . In order to make the proposal palatable to the King , Las Casas had to incorporate the prospect of profits for the royal treasury . He suggested fortifying the northern coast of Venezuela , establishing ten royal forts to protect the Indians and starting up a system of trade in gold and pearls . All the Indian slaves of the New World should be brought to live in these towns and become tribute paying subjects to the King . In order to secure the grant Las Casas had to go through a long fight in court against Bishop Fonseca and his supporters Gonzalo de Oviedo and Bishop Quevedo of Tierra Firme . Las Casas 's supporters were Diego Columbus and the new chancellor Gattinara . Las Casas 's enemies slandered him to the King , accusing him of planning to escape with the money to Genoa or Rome . In 1520 Las Casas 's concession was finally granted , but it was a much smaller grant than he had initially proposed ; he was also denied the possibilities of extracting gold and pearls , which made it difficult for him to find investors for the venture . Las Casas committed himself to producing 15 @,@ 000 ducats of annual revenue , increasing to 60 @,@ 000 after ten years , and to erecting three Christian towns of at least 40 settlers each . Some privileges were also granted to the initial 50 shareholders in Las Casas 's scheme . The King also promised not to give any encomienda grants in Las Casas 's area . That said , finding fifty men willing to invest 200 ducats each and three years of unpaid work proved impossible for Las Casas . In the end , he ended up leaving in November 1520 with just a small group of peasants , paying for the venture with money borrowed from his brother in @-@ law .

Arriving in Puerto Rico , in January 1521 , he received the terrible news that the Dominican convent at Chiribichi had been sacked by Indians , and that the Spaniards of the islands had launched a punitive expedition , led by Gonzalo de Ocampo , into the very heart of the territory that Las Casas wanted to colonize peacefully . The Indians had been provoked to attack the settlement of the monks because of the repeated slave raids by Spaniards operating from Cubagua . As Ocampo 's ships began returning with slaves from the land Las Casas had been granted , he went to Hispaniola to complain to the Audiencia . After several months of negotiations Las Casas set sail alone ; the peasants he had brought had deserted , and he arrived in his colony already ravaged by Spaniards .

Las Casas worked there in adverse conditions for the following months , being constantly harassed by the Spanish pearl fishers of Cubagua island who traded slaves for alcohol with the natives . Early

in 1522 Las Casas left the settlement to complain to the authorities . While he was gone the native Caribs attacked the settlement of Cumaná , burned it to the ground and killed four of Las Casas 's men . He returned to Hispaniola in January 1522 , and heard the news of the massacre . The rumours even included him among the dead . To make matters worse , his detractors used the event as evidence of the need to pacify the Indians using military means . The tragic outcome of Las Casas 's great mainland adventure made him turn his life in a new direction .

= = = A Dominican friar = = =

Devastated , Las Casas reacted by entering the Dominican monastery of Santa Cruz in Santo Domingo as a novice in 1522 and finally taking holy vows as a Dominican friar in 1523 . There he continued his theological studies , being particularly attracted to Thomist philosophy , and there is little information about his activities in the following ten years . He oversaw the construction of a monastery in Puerto Plata on the north coast of Hispaniola , subsequently serving as prior of the convent . In 1527 he began working on his History of the Indies in order to report many of the experiences he had witnessed at first hand in the conquest and colonization of New Spain . In 1531 he wrote a letter to Garcia Manrique , Count of Osorno , protesting again the mistreatment of the Indians and advocating a return to his original reform plan of 1516 . In 1531 a complaint was sent by the encomenderos of Hispaniola that Las Casas was again accusing them of mortal sins from the pulpit . In 1533 he contributed to the establishment of a peace treaty between the Spanish and the rebel Taíno band of chief Enriquillo . In 1534 Las Casas made an attempt to travel to Peru to observe the first stages of conquest of that region by Francisco Pizarro . His party made it as far as Panama , but had to turn back to Nicaragua due to adverse weather . Lingerin g for a while in the Dominican convent of Granada , he got into conflict with Rodrigo de Contreras , Governor of Nicaragua , when Las Casas vehemently opposed slaving expeditions by the Governor . In 1536 Las Casas followed a number of friars to Guatemala , where they began to prepare to undertake a mission among the Maya Indians . They stayed in the convent founded some years earlier by Fray Domingo Betanzos and studied the K 'iche ' language with Bishop Francisco Marroquín , before traveling into the interior region called Tuzulutlan , " The Land of War " , in 1537 .

Also in 1536 , before venturing into Tuzulutlan , Las Casas went to Oaxaca , Mexico , to participate in a series of discussions and debates among the bishops of the Dominican and Franciscan orders . The two orders had very different approaches to the conversion of the Indians . The Franciscans used a method of mass conversion , sometimes baptizing many thousands of Indians in a day . This method was championed by prominent Franciscans such as Toribio de Benavente , known as " Motolinia " , and Las Casas made many enemies among the Franciscans for arguing that conversions made without adequate understanding were invalid . Las Casas wrote a treatise called " De unico vocationis modo " (On the Only Way of Conversion) based on the missionary principles he had used in Guatemala . Motolinia would later be a fierce critic of Las Casas , accusing him of being all talk and no action when it came to converting the Indians . As a direct result of the debates between the Dominicans and Franciscans and spurred on by Las Casas 's treatise , Pope Paul III promulgated the Bull " Sublimus Dei , " which stated that the Indians were rational beings and should be brought peacefully to the faith as such .

Las Casas returned to Guatemala in 1537 wanting to employ his new method of conversion based on two principles : 1) to preach the Gospel to all men and treat them as equals , and 2) to assert that conversion must be voluntary and based on knowledge and understanding of the Faith . It was important for Las Casas that this method be tested without meddling from secular colonists , so he chose a territory in the heart of Guatemala where there were no previous colonies and where the natives were considered fierce and war @-@ like . Because of the fact that the land had not been possible to conquer by military means , the governor of Guatemala , Alonso de Maldonado , agreed to sign a contract promising that if the venture was successful he would not establish any new encomiendas in the area . Las Casas 's group of friars established a Dominican presence in Rabinal , Sacapulas and Cobán . Through the efforts of Las Casas 's missionaries the so @-@ called " Land of War " came to be called " Verapaz " , " True Peace " . Las Casas 's strategy was to teach

Christian songs to merchant Indian Christians who then ventured into the area . In this way he was successful in converting several native chiefs , among them those of Atitlán and Chichicastenango , and in building several churches in the territory named Alta Verapaz . These congregated a group of Christian Indians in the location of what is now the town of Rabinal . In 1538 Las Casas was recalled from his mission by Bishop Marroquín who wanted him to go to Mexico and then on to Spain in order to seek more Dominicans to assist in the mission . Las Casas left Guatemala for Mexico , where he stayed for more than a year before setting out for Spain in 1540 .

= = = The New Laws = = =

In Spain , Las Casas started securing official support for the Guatemalan mission , and he managed to get a royal decree forbidding secular intrusion into the Verapaces for the following five years . He also informed the Theologians of Salamanca , led by Francisco de Vitoria , of the mass baptism practiced by the Franciscans , resulting in a dictum condemning the practice as sacrilegious .

But apart from the clerical business , Las Casas had also traveled to Spain for his own purpose : to continue the struggle against the colonists ' mistreatment of the Indians . The encomienda had , in fact , legally been abolished in 1523 , but it had been reinstituted in 1526 , and in 1530 a general ordinance against slavery was reversed by the Crown . For this reason it was a pressing matter for Bartolomé de las Casas to plead once again for the Indians with Charles V who was by now Holy Roman Emperor and no longer a boy . He wrote a letter asking for permission to stay in Spain a little longer in order to argue for the Emperor that conversion and colonization were best achieved by peaceful means .

When the hearings started in 1542 , Las Casas presented a narrative of atrocities against the natives of the Indies that would later be published in 1552 as " Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias " . Before a council consisting of Cardinal García de Loaysa , the Count of Osorno , Bishop Fuenleal and several members of the Council of the Indies , Las Casas argued that the only solution to the problem was to remove all Indians from the care of secular Spaniards , by abolishing the encomienda system and putting them instead directly under the Crown as royal tribute @-@ paying subjects . On November 20 , 1542 , the Emperor signed the New Laws abolishing the encomiendas and removing certain officials from the Council of the Indies . The New Laws made it illegal to use Indians as carriers , except where no other transport was available , it prohibited all taking of Indians as slaves , and it instated a gradual abolition of the encomienda system , with each encomienda reverting to the Crown at the death of its holders . It also exempted the few surviving Indians of Hispaniola , Cuba , Puerto Rico and Jamaica from tribute and all requirements of personal service . However , the reforms were so unpopular back in the New World that riots broke out and threats were made against Las Casas 's life . The Viceroy of New Spain , himself an encomendero , decided not to implement the laws in his domain , and instead sent a party to Spain to argue against the laws on behalf of the encomenderos . Las Casas himself was also not satisfied with the laws , as they were not drastic enough and the encomienda system was going to function for many years still under the gradual abolition plan . He drafted a suggestion for an amendment arguing that the laws against slavery were formulated in such a way that it presupposed that violent conquest would still be carried out , and he encouraged once again beginning a phase of peaceful colonization by peasants instead of soldiers .

= = = Bishop of Chiapas = = =

Before Las Casas returned to Spain , he was also appointed as Bishop of Chiapas , a newly established diocese of which he took possession in 1545 upon his return to the New World . He was consecrated in the Dominican Church of San Pablo on March 30 , 1544 . As Archbishop Loaysa strongly disliked Las Casas , the ceremony was officiated by Loaysa 's nephew , Diego de Loaysa , Bishop of Modru? , with Pedro Torres , Titular Bishop of Arbanum , and Cristóbal de Pedraza , Bishop of Comayagua , as co @-@ consecrators . As a bishop Las Casas was involved in frequent

conflicts with the encomenderos and secular laity of his diocese : among the landowners there was the conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo . In a pastoral letter issued on March 20 , 1545 , Las Casas refused absolution to slave owners and encomenderos even on their death bed , unless all their slaves had been set free and their property returned to them . Las Casas furthermore threatened that anyone who mistreated Indians within his jurisdiction would be excommunicated . He also came into conflict with the Bishop of Guatemala Francisco Marroquín , to whose jurisdiction the diocese had previously belonged . To Las Casas 's dismay Bishop Marroquín openly defied the New Laws . While bishop , Las Casas was the principal consecrator of Antonio de Valdivieso , Bishop of Nicaragua (1544) .

The New Laws were finally repealed on October 20 , 1545 , and riots broke out against Las Casas , with shots being fired against him by angry colonists . After a year he had made himself so unpopular among the Spaniards of the area that he had to leave . Having been summoned to a meeting among the bishops of New Spain to be held in Mexico City on January 12 , 1546 , he left his diocese , never to return . At the meeting , probably after lengthy reflection , and realizing that the New LAWS were lost in Mexico , Las Casas presented a moderated view on the problems of confession and restitution of property , Archbishop Juan de Zumárraga of Mexico and Bishop Julián Garcés of Puebla agreed completely with his new moderate stance , Bishop Vasco de Quiroga of Michoacán had minor reservations , and Bishops Francisco Marroquín of Guatemala and Juan Lopez de Zárate of Oaxaca did not object . This resulted in a new resolution to be presented to viceroy Mendoza . His last act as Bishop of Chiapas was writing a *confesionario* , a manual for the administration of the sacrament of confession in his diocese , still refusing absolution to unrepentant encomenderos . Las Casas appointed a vicar for his diocese and set out for Europe in December 1546 , arriving in Lisbon in April 1547 and in Spain on November 1547 .

= = = The Valladolid debate = = =

Las Casas returned to Spain , leaving behind many conflicts and unresolved issues . Arriving in Spain he was met by a barrage of accusations , many of them based on his *Confesionario* and its 12 rules , which many of his opponents found to be in essence a denial of the legitimacy of Spanish rule of its colonies , and hence a form of treason . The Crown had for example received a fifth of the large number of slaves taken in the recent Mixtón War , and so could not be held clean of guilt under Las Casas 's strict rules . In 1548 the Crown decreed that all copies of Las Casas 's *Confesionario* be burnt , and his Franciscan adversary , Motolinia , happily obliged , sending back a report to Spain . Las Casas defended himself by writing two treatises on the " Just Title " ? arguing that the only legality with which the Spaniards could claim titles over realms in the New World was through peaceful proselytizing . All warfare was illegal and unjust and only through the papal mandate of peacefully bringing Christianity to heathen peoples could " Just Titles " be acquired .

As a part of Las Casas 's defense by offense , he had to argue against Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda . Sepúlveda was a doctor of theology and law who , in his book *Democrates Alter* , sive de justis causis apud Indios (*Democrates Alter* , or on the just causes of War against the Indians) had argued that the native people were naturally inferior and should be pacified forcefully , and were destined to perpetual servitude to Christian Europeans . The book was deemed unsound for publication by the theologians of Salamanca and Alcalá for containing unsound doctrine , but the pro @-@ encomendero faction seized on Sepúlveda as their intellectual champion .

In order to settle the issues , a formal debate was organized , the famous Valladolid debate , which took place in 1550 ? 51 with Sepúlveda and Las Casas each presenting their arguments in front of a council of jurists and theologians . First Sepúlveda read the conclusions of his *Democrates Alter* , and then the council listened to Las Casas reading his counterarguments in the form of an " *Apología* " . Sepúlveda argued that the subjugation of the Indians was warranted because of their sins as pagans ; that their low level of civilization required civilized masters to maintain social order ; that they required Christianity and that this in turn required them to be pacified ; and that only the Spanish could defend the weak Indians against the abuses of the stronger ones . Las Casas countered that the scriptures did not in fact support war against all heathens , only against certain

Canaanite tribes ; that the Indians were not at all uncivilized nor lacked social order ; that peaceful mission was the only true way of converting the natives ; and finally that some weak Indians suffering at the hands of stronger ones was preferable to all Indians suffering at the hands of Spaniards .

Then the judge , Fray Domingo de Soto , summarised the arguments . Sepúlveda addressed Las Casas 's arguments with twelve refutations , which were again countered by Las Casas . The judges then deliberated on the arguments presented for several months before coming to a verdict . The verdict was inconclusive , and both debaters claimed that they had won .

In 1552 , Las Casas published A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies . This book , written a decade earlier and sent to the attention of then @-@ prince Philip II of Spain , contained accounts of the abuses committed by some Spaniards against Native Americans during the early stages of colonization . In 1555 his old Franciscan adversary Toribio de Benavente Motolinia wrote a letter in which he described Las Casas as an ignorant , arrogant troublemaker . Benavente described indignantly how Las Casas had once denied baptism to an aging Indian who had walked many leagues to receive it , only on the grounds that he did not believe that the man had received sufficient doctrinal instruction . This letter , which reinvoked the old conflict over the requirements for the sacrament of baptism between the two orders , was intended to bring Las Casas in disfavour . However , it did not succeed .

= = = Later years and death = = =

Having resigned the Bishopric of Chiapas , Las Casas spent the rest of his life working closely with the imperial court in matters relating to the Indies . In 1551 he rented a cell at the College of San Gregorio , where he lived with his assistant and friend Fray Rodrigo de Ladrada . He continued working as a kind of procurator for the natives of the Indies , many of whom directed petitions to him to speak to the Emperor on their behalf . Sometimes indigenous nobility even related their cases to him in Spain , for example , the Nahua noble Francisco Tenamaztle from Nochistlán . His influence at court was so great that some even considered that he had the final word in choosing the members of the Council of the Indies .

One matter in which he invested much effort was the political situation of the Viceroyalty of Peru . In Peru , power struggles between conquistadors and the viceroy became an open civil war in which the conquistadors led by Gonzalo Pizarro rebelled against the New Laws and defeated and executed the viceroy Blasco Núñez Vela in 1546 . The Emperor sent Pedro de la Gasca , a friend of Las Casas , to reinstate the rule of law , and he in turn defeated Pizarro . In order to restabilize the political situation the encomenderos started pushing not only for the repeal of the New Laws , but for turning the encomiendas into perpetual patrimony of the encomenderos ? the worst possible outcome from Las Casas 's point of view . The encomenderos offered to buy the rights to the encomiendas from the crown , and Charles V was inclined to accept since his wars had left him in deep economic troubles . Las Casas worked hard to convince the king that it would be a bad economic decision , that it would return the viceroyalty to the brink of open rebellion , and could result in the crown losing the colony entirely . The Emperor , probably because of the doubts caused by Las Casas 's arguments , never took a final decision on the issue of the encomiendas .

In 1561 , he finished his *Historia General de las Indias* and signed it over to the College of San Gregorio , stipulating that it could not be published until after forty years . In fact it was not published for 314 years , finally being done so in 1875 . He also had to repeatedly defend himself against accusations of treason : someone , possibly Sepúlveda , denounced him to the Spanish Inquisition , but nothing came from the case . Las Casas also appeared as a witness in the case of the Inquisition against his friend Archbishop Bartolomé Carranza de Miranda , who had been falsely accused of heresy . In 1565 he wrote his last will , signing over his immense library to the college . Bartolomé de Las Casas died on July 18 , 1566 , in Madrid .

= = Works = =

== Memorial de Remedios para las Indias ==

The text, written 1516, starts by describing its purpose: to present "The remedies that seem necessary in order that the evil and harm that exists in the Indies cease, and that God and our Lord the Prince may draw greater benefits than hitherto, and that the republic may be better preserved and consoled."

Las Casas's first proposed remedy was a complete moratorium on the use of Indian labor in the Indies until such time as better regulations of it were set in place. This was meant simply to halt the decimation of the Indian population and to give the surviving Indians time to reconstitute themselves. Las Casas feared that at the rate the exploitation was proceeding it would be too late to hinder their annihilation unless action were taken rapidly. The second was a change in the labor policy so that instead of a colonist owning the labor of specific Indians, he would have a right to man @-@ hours, to be carried out by no specific persons. This required the establishment of self @-@ governing Indian communities on the land of colonists? who would themselves organize to provide the labor for their patron. The colonist would only have rights to a certain portion of the total labor, so that a part of the Indians were always resting and taking care of the sick. He proposed 12 other remedies, all having the specific aim of improving the situation for the Indians and limiting the powers that colonists were able to exercise over them.

The second part of the Memorial described suggestions for the social and political organization of Indian communities relative to colonial ones. Las Casas advocated the dismantlement of the city of Asunción and the subsequent gathering of Indians into communities of about 1 @, @ 000 Indians to be situated as satellites of Spanish towns or mining areas. Here, Las Casas argued, Indians could be better governed, better taught and indoctrinated in the Christian faith, and would be easier to protect from abuse than if they were in scattered settlements. Each town would have a royal hospital built with four wings in the shape of a cross, where up to 200 sick Indians could be cared for at a time. He described in detail social arrangements, distribution of work, how provisions would be divided and even how table manners were to be introduced. Regarding expenses, he argued that "this should not seem expensive or difficult, because after all, everything comes from them [the Indians] and they work for it and it is theirs." He even drew up a budget of each pueblo's expenses to cover wages for administrators, clerics, Bachelors of Latin, doctors, surgeons, pharmacists, advocates, ranchers, miners, muleteers, hospitalers, pig herders, fishermen, etc. He showed that this arrangement could easily be maintained and gold still be extracted at a profit.

== A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies ==

A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (Spanish: Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias) is an account written in 1542 (published in Seville in 1552) about the mistreatment of the indigenous peoples of the Americas in colonial times and sent to then @-@ Prince Philip II of Spain.

One of the stated purposes for writing the account was Las Casas's fear of Spain coming under divine punishment and his concern for the souls of the native peoples. The account was one of the first attempts by a Spanish writer of the colonial era to depict the unfair treatment that the indigenous people endured during the early stages of the Spanish conquest of the Greater Antilles, particularly the island of Hispaniola. Las Casas's point of view can be described as being heavily against some of the Spanish methods of colonization, which, as he described them, inflicted great losses on the indigenous occupants of the islands. His account was largely responsible for the adoption of the New Laws of 1542, which abolished native slavery for the first time in European colonial history and led to the Valladolid debate.

The book became an important element in the creation and propagation of the so @-@ called Black Legend? the tradition of describing the Spanish empire as exceptionally morally corrupt and violent. It was republished several times by groups that were critical of the Spanish realm for political or religious reasons. The first edition in translation was published in Dutch in 1578, during the

religious persecution of Dutch Protestants by the Spanish crown , followed by editions in French (1578) , English (1583) , and German (1599) ? all countries where religious wars were raging . The first edition published in Spain after Las Casas 's death appeared in Barcelona during the Catalan Revolt of 1646 . The book was banned by the Aragonese inquisition in 1659 .

The images described by Las Casas were later depicted by Theodore de Bry in copper plate engravings that helped expand the Black Legend against Spain .

Las Casas , Bartolomé de (1999) . Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies . Nigel Griffin . London : Penguin . ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 14 @-@ 044562 @-@ 6 .

= = = Apologetic History of the Indies = = =

The Apologetic Summary History of the People of These Indies (Spanish Apologética historia sumaria de las gentes destas Indias) was first written as the 68th chapter of the General History of the Indies , but Las Casas changed it into a volume of its own , recognizing that the material was not historical . The material contained in the Apologetic History is primarily ethnographic accounts of the indigenous cultures of the Indies ? the Taíno , the Ciboney , and the Guanahatabey , but it also contains descriptions of many of the other indigenous cultures that Las Casas learned about through his travels and readings . The history is apologetic because it is written as a defense of the cultural level of the Indians , arguing throughout that indigenous peoples of the Americas were just as civilized as the Roman , Greek and Egyptian civilizations ? and more civilized than some European civilizations . It was in essence a comparative ethnography comparing practices and customs of European and American cultures and evaluating them according to whether they were good or bad , seen from a Christian viewpoint .

He wrote : " I have declared and demonstrated openly and concluded , from chapter 22 to the end of this whole book , that all people of these our Indies are human , so far as is possible by the natural and human way and without the light of faith ? had their republics , places , towns , and cities most abundant and well provided for , and did not lack anything to live politically and socially , and attain and enjoy civil happiness And they equaled many nations of this world that are renowned and considered civilized , and they surpassed many others , and to none were they inferior . Among those they equaled were the Greeks and the Romans , and they surpassed them by many good and better customs . They surpassed also the English and the French and some of the people of our own Spain ; and they were incomparably superior to countless others , in having good customs and lacking many evil ones . " This work in which Las Casas combined his own ethnographic observations with those of other writers , and compared customs and cultures between different peoples , has been characterized as an early beginning of the discipline of anthropology .

= = = History of the Indies = = =

The History of the Indies is a three @-@ volume work begun in 1527 while Las Casas was in the Convent of Puerto de Plata . It found its final form in 1561 , when he was working in the Colegio de San Gregorio . Originally planned as a six @-@ volume work , each volume describes a decade of the history of the Indies from the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 to 1520 , and most of it is an eye @-@ witness account . It was in the History of the Indies that Las Casas finally regretted his advocacy for African slavery , and included a sincere apology , writing , " I soon repented and judged myself guilty of ignorance . I came to realize that black slavery was as unjust as Indian slavery ... and I was not sure that my ignorance and good faith would secure me in the eyes of God . " (Vol II , p . 257)

= = Las Casas in posterity = =

Las Casas 's legacy has been highly controversial . In the years following his death his ideas became taboo in the Spanish realm , and he was seen as a nearly heretical extremist ; the accounts written by his enemies Lopez de Gómara and Oviedo were widely read and published . As the

British empire rose to power and hostilities between the British and Spanish began , the British used Las Casas 's accounts of Spanish cruelty as a political tool making it part of the foundation of what Spanish nationalists have called the Black Legend , the tendency of historians to slander Spain for its imperial past , while looking mildly at the same undertakings by others such as the British .

Anti @-@ Las Casas history @-@ writing reached its climax with Spanish right @-@ wing , nationalist historians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries constructing a pro @-@ Spanish White Legend , arguing that the Spanish empire was benevolent and just , and denying any adverse consequences of Spanish colonialism . Spanish pro @-@ imperial historians such as Menéndez y Pelayo , Menéndez Pidal , and J. Pérez de Barrada depicted Las Casas as a madman , describing him as a " paranoic " and a monomaniac given to exaggeration , and as a traitor towards his own nation . Menéndez Pelayo also accused Las Casas of having been instrumental in suppressing the publication of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda 's " Democrates Alter " (also called Democrates Secundus) out of spite , but other historians find this unlikely since it was rejected by the theologians of both Alcalá and Salamanca who were unlikely to be influenced by Las Casas .

= = = Critiques = = =

Las Casas has also often been accused of exaggerating the atrocities he described in the Indies , some scholars holding that the initial population figures given by him were too high , making the population decline look worse than it actually was , and that epidemics of European disease were the prime cause of the population decline , not violence and exploitation . Demographic studies such as those of colonial Mexico by Sherburne F. Cook in the mid @-@ 20th century suggested that the decline in the first years of the conquest was indeed drastic ? ranging between 80 and 90 % , due of course to many different causes , but all ultimately traceable to the arrival of the Europeans . The overwhelming main cause was disease introduced by the Europeans . It has also been noted that exaggeration of numbers was the norm in writing in 16th @-@ century accounts , and both contemporary detractors and supporters of Las Casas were guilty of similar exaggerations .

It has also been suggested that the atrocities that Las Casas described were exaggerated or even invented , but this is not generally considered likely as Las Casas was far from the only person to be deeply worried about abuse and mistreatment of the Indians . The Dominican friars Antonio de Montesinos and Pedro de Córdoba had reported extensive violence already in the first decade of the conquest of the Indies , and throughout the conquest of the Americas there were reports of abuse of the natives by friars and priests and ordinary citizens , and many massacres of indigenous people were reported in full by those who perpetrated them . Even some of Las Casas 's enemies , such as Toribio de Benavente Motolinia , reported many gruesome atrocities committed against the Indians by the colonizers . All in all , modern historians tend to disregard the numerical figures given by Las Casas , but maintain that the general picture he presented of an intensely violent and abusive conquest did represent reality .

One persistent point of criticism has been Las Casas 's repeated suggestions of replacing Indian with African slave labor . Even though he regretted this position towards the end of his life and included an apology in his History of the Indies , some later criticism held him responsible for the institution of the Atlantic slave trade . One detractor , the abolitionist David Walker , called Las Casas a " wretch ... stimulated by sordid avarice only , " holding him responsible for the enslavement of thousands of Africans . Other historians , such as John Fiske writing in 1900 , denied that Las Casas 's suggestions affected the development of the slave trade . Benjamin Keen likewise did not consider Las Casas to have had any substantial impact on the slave trade , which was well in place before he began writing . This view is contradicted by Sylvia Wynter , who argued that Las Casas 's 1516 Memorial was the direct cause of Charles V granting permission in 1518 to transport the first 4 @, @ 000 African slaves to Jamaica .

Revisionist histories of the late 20th century have argued in favor of a more nuanced image of Las Casas , suggesting that he was neither a saint nor a fanatic , but a person with exceptional willpower and a sense of justice , which sometimes led him into arrogance , stubbornness and hypocrisy . Some historians such as (Castro 2007) argue that he was more of a politician than a

humanitarian , and that his liberation policies were always combined with schemes to make colonial extraction of resources from the natives more efficient . He also argues that Las Casas failed to realize that by seeking to replace indigenous spirituality with Christianity , he was undertaking a religious colonialism that was more intrusive than the physical one . This critique has been rejected by other historians as facile and anachronistic .

= = = Cultural legacy = = =

In 1848 , Ciudad de San Cristóbal , the capital of the Mexican state of Chiapas , was renamed San Cristóbal de Las Casas , in honor of its first bishop . His work is a particular inspiration behind the work of the Las Casas Institute at Blackfriars Hall , Oxford . He is also often cited as a predecessor of the liberation theology movement . He is commemorated by the Church of England in the Calendar of Saints on July 20 and at the Evangelical Lutheran Church on July 17 . In the Catholic Church , the Dominicans introduced his cause for canonization in 1976 . In 2000 the Church began the process for his beatification .

Bartolomé de Las Casas has also come to be seen as an early advocate for a concept of universal human rights . He was among the first to develop a view of unity among humankind , stating that " All people of the world are humans , " and that they had a natural right to liberty ? a combination of Thomist rights philosophy with Augustinian political theology . In this capacity , an ecumenical human rights institute located in San Cristóbal de las Casas , the Centro Fray Bartolomé de las Casas de Derechos Humanos , was established by Bishop Samuel Ruiz in 1989 .

He is also featured in the Guatemalan quetzal one cent (Q0.01) coins .

The small town of Lascassas , Tennessee , in the United States has also been named after him .

He is a central character in the H.R. Hays historical novel The Takers of the City , published in 1946 .