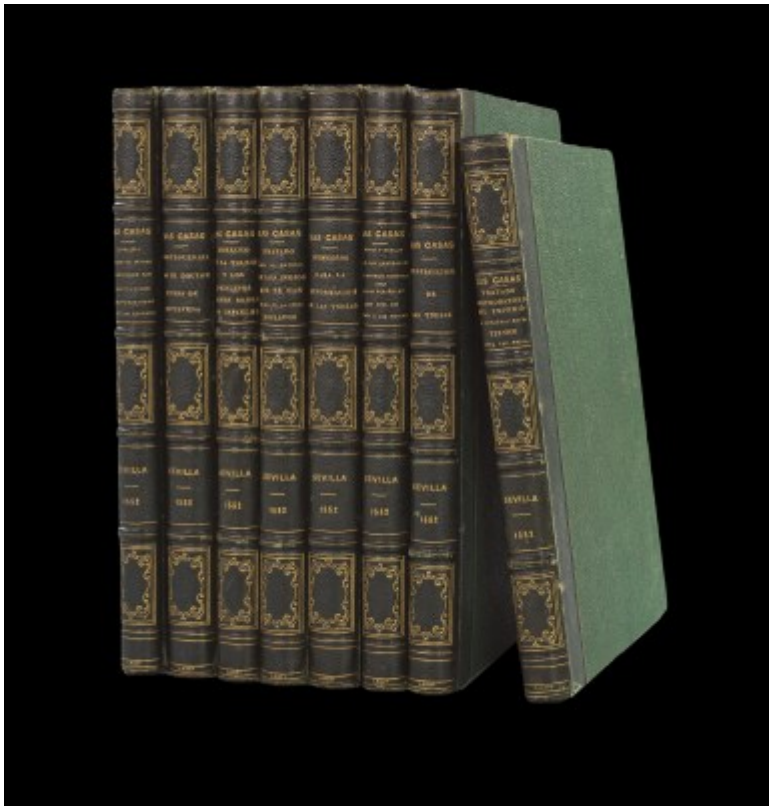


9 parts in 8 volumes. Octavo (210 by 410mm). Some title-pages printed in red and black; nineteenth century green morocco backed green cloth, gilt.

AN INDICTMENT OF THE BRUTAL SPANISH CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD

Brevissima relacion de la destruycion de las Indias.

Author
LAS CASAS, Bartolomé de

Publication date
1552-1553.

Publisher
Sebastián Trujillo et Jácome Cromberger,

Publication place
Seville,

Physical description
9 parts in 8 volumes. Octavo (210 by 410mm). Some title-pages printed in red and black; nineteenth century green morocco backed green cloth, gilt.

Dimensions

Notes
An extremely rare complete set of first editions of the tracts collectively known as the “Brevissima…”, with the additional 4-leaf appendix to the first part, counted here as a separate treatise.

Bartolomé de Las Casas (c.1474 – 1566) was a Dominican missionary, based in Hispaniola, who exposed to the world the oppression of indigenous peoples there, and throughout Latin America, by the Spanish, and called for the abolition of their enslavement. He is also the first person to be ordained in the Americas, in about 1512.

Initially a soldier, in 1502 Las Casas voyaged to Hispaniola with the governor of the island, Nicolas de Ovando, on his mission to conquer the Caribbean. In 1513 he participated in the violent conquest of Cuba, for which he was rewarded some land, and the native Americans who lived on it, as "encomienda". He set about evangelising them, and along the way, recognised their humanity. In August of 1514, he renounced his "ownership" of the people, and returned to Spain, the better to advocate for them. He attracted influential support: first in the person of Francisco Jimenez de Cisnero, the archbishop of Toledo, and future co-regent of Spain; and then of Charles I (V) himself. In denouncing the "encomienda", Las Casas recommended a more peaceful approach to conquest by recruiting farmers as colonists, and founding a joint settlement of free native Americans, and colonists. The venture, based in Venezuela, was an abject failure.

Greatly dispirited, Las Casas returned to Hispaniola in 1522, determined to dedicate himself completely to his religious vocation. He became a Dominican monk there in 1523. By 1527, he was prior of the convent of Puerto de Plata in northern Santo Domingo, and began to dedicate himself to writing down all that he had witnessed since arriving in America, aiming to expose the "sin" of domination, oppression and injustice, that the Spanish were inflicting on the peoples of the New World. The resulting work, 'Historia de las Indias', was published posthumously, at Las Casas's request, but not in its entirety until the late nineteenth century. However, his 'Brevissima,…' – "A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies" – which he wrote in 1542, while awaiting an audience with Charles I (V), was published ten years later, as Part one here. By writing it, Las Casas hoped to show that the "reason why the Christians have killed and destroyed such an infinite number of souls is that they have been moved by their wish for gold and their desire to enrich themselves in a very short time".

Charles I (V), responded by introducing the "Leyes Nuevas" – New Laws – by which the "encomienda" was no longer considered an hereditary grant, and the enslaved native Americans to be set free within a generation. On his orders, Las Casas was ordained Bishop of Chiapas in Guatemala, and returned, with 44 Dominicans to America in 1545. Once there he issued a proclamation forbidding absolution to be granted to those colonists who held native Americans in "encomienda", which he enforced rigorously, in the face of much opposition. In 1547, Las Casas returned once more to Spain.

But he did not give up hope, even when he came into direct confrontation with Juan Gines de Sepulveda – see Part 5. Sepulveda had written a polemic, 'Democrates segundo; o, de las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios' – "Concerning the Just Cause of the War Against the Indians", in which he stated that the native Americans "are inferior to the Spaniards just as children are to adults, women to men, and, indeed, one might even say, as apes are to men". This incensed Las Casas, who confronted him in 1550 at the Council of Valladolid, to no avail, and the rights of the indigenous peoples of America, as inferior to those of Europeans, was irreversibly established.

The parts:
1 & 2: 'Brevissima relacion de la destruycion de las Indias'. Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1552. Title-page printed in red and black. First edition of Las Casas's first and most celebrated tract, which relates the cruelties of the Spaniards towards the native Americans. With the four supplementary leaves containing the "carta y relacion que escrivio cierlo hombre", acknowledged as the second treatise.

3: ‘Entre los remedios que don fray Bartolome de Las Casas, obispo de la ciudad real de Chiapa, refirio por mandado del Emperador rey nuestro senor en los ayuntamientos que mando hazer su magestad de pertados y lestrados y personas grandes en Valladoid el ano de mil e quientos y quarenta y dos, para reformacion de las Indias’. Seville, Jácome Cromberger, 1552. Title-page printed in red and black. First edition.
In which Las Casas offers recommendations for the “reformation” of the Native Americans.

4: ‘Aqui se cotiene unos auisos y reglas para los confessores q oyeren confessiones delos Espano les que son, o han sido en cargo a los Indios de las Indias del mare Oceano: colegidas por el obispo de Chiapa don fray Bartholome a las casas o casaus dela orden de Sancto Domingo’. Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1552. Title-page printed in black. First edition. Outlining the 12 rules by which those hearing confessions were to be governed in giving absolution, as set out by Las Casas in his diocese of Chiapa.

5: ‘Aqui se contiene una disputa, o controversoa; entre el Obispo do fray Bartholome de las Casa o Casaus obispo q wue dela ciudad Real di Chiapa que es en las Indias, parti de la nueva Espana, y el doctor Gines ne Sepulneda Coronista del Emperador nuestro Senor sobre q el doctor contendia: q las congistas delas Indias contra affirmo auer si do y fer ipossible no serio: tirancicas injustas & iniquas’. Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1552. Title-page printed in red and black. First edition. Containing three sections: first, a summary of the motives which have led to differences of opinion between Las Casas and Sepulveda, prepared by Domingo de Soto; second, the objections Dr. Sepulveda raised to Las Casas’s reasoning; third, entitled ‘Relicas’, contains Las Casas’s response to Sepulveda.

6: ‘Este es un tratado qel obispo dela Real de Chiapa dofray Bartholome de los Casas, o Causas compuso por commission del Consejo Real delas Indias’. Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1552. Title-page printed in red and black. First edition. Addressing the question of slavery, and restitution.

7: ‘Aqui se cotiene treynta proposiciones muy juridicas: en las quales sumaria y succintamente se toca muchas cosas pertenecietes al de recho q la yfilesia y los principes christianos tienen, o puede tener sobre los infieles de qual aquier especie que sean’ Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1552. Title-page printed in red and black. First edition. Containing 30 propositions regarding the work entitled ‘Confessionario’, related to treatise 4 above. Firmly addressing complaints regarding the 12 rules outlined in that treatise.

8: ‘Principia que da ex quibus procedendum est diputantione ad manifestan dam et defendendam insticiam Yndorum: Per Episcopu. F. Bartholomeu a Casaus ordinis predicatou., collecta’. Impressum Hispali in ineb., Sebastián Trujillo, [n.d.] Title-page printed in red and black. First edition. An address directed to members of the clergy intended to clarify Las Casas’s principles regarding the rights of the native Americans to person and property.

9: ‘Tratudo copra batorio del Imperio soberano y principado universal que los Reyes de Castella y Leon tienan sobre las indias; compusto por el obispo don gray Bartholome d las Casas, o Casaus de la orden a Sancto Domingo. Ano 1552’. Seville, Sebastián Trujillo, 1553.Titl-page printed in red and black. First edition, with 80 leaves. Attempting to prove the sovereignty and universal dominion, of the Kings of Castella and Leon over the native Americans.

Full runs of Las Casas’s Indian tracts are of the greatest rarity. “Most valuable for the particulars it contains of the cruelties committed by the
Spaniards in Peru, Mexico, and adjacent kingdoms of South America, from the year 1493, when the Spaniards first commenced to inhabit the continent… carried on for such a length of time and with a pertinacity so remarkable as to call forth even in those times a remonstrance against such inhuman

barbarity” (Church).

Bibliography

Provenance
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