

***BARTOLOMÉ
DE LAS CASAS***



***A BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF THE DESTRUCTION
OF THE INDIES***

Bartolomé de las Casas

A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies

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POPERY
Truly Display'd in its
Bloody Colours:
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NARRATIVE
OF THE

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Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all manner of Cruelties, that Hell and Malice could invent, committed by the Popish

Spanish Party on the inhabitants of *West-India*

TOGETHER

With the Devastations of several Kingdoms in *America* by Fire and

Sword, for the space of Forty and Two Years, from the time of its first

Discovery by them.

————— *Composed first in Spanish by Bartholomew de las Casas, a Bishop there, and Eye-Witness of most of these Barbarous Cruelties; afterward Translated by him into Latin, then by other hands, into High-Dutch, Low-Dutch, French, and now Taught to Speak Modern English.*

————— *London, Printed for R. Hewson at the Crown in*

Cornhil, near the Stocks-Market. 1689.

**THE
ARGUMENT
OF THIS NARRATIVE
By way of
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.**

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The Reverend Author of this Compendious Summary was Bartholomaeus de las Casas alias Casaus, a Pious and Religeous person, (as appears by his zealous Transports in this Narrative for promotion of the Christian Faith) elevated from a Frier of the Dominican Order to sit in the Episcopal Chair, who was frequently importuned by Good and Learned Men, particularly Historians, to Publish this Summary, who so prevailed with him, that he Collected out of that copious History which might and ought to be written on this subject, the contents of this concise Treatise with intention to display unto the World the Enormities, &c. the Spaniards committed in America during their residence there, to their eternal ignominy; and for the author finding that no Admonitions or Reprehensions, how mild soever could operate upon or sink

into the rocky-hearted Tyrants in those Occidental parts; he therefore took up a firm resolution, being then about 50 years of age (as he himself declares) to run the Hazards and Dangers by Sea, and the Risque of a long voyage into Spain there to acquaint and Certifie the most Illustrious Prince Phillip the Son and Heir of his Imperial Majesty Charles the Fifth of Blessed Memory, with the Horrid crimes, &c. perpetrated in those countries, part whereof he had seen, and part heard from such as boasted of their Wickedness. Whereupon his Caeserean Majesty moved with a tender and Christian compassion towards these Inhabitants of the Countries of America, languishing for want of redress, he called a Council at Valedolid, Anno Dom. 1542. consisting of Learned and Able Men, in order to the reformation of the West-Indian government, and took such a course, that from that time their Tyranny and cruelty against those Barbarians was somewhat repressed, and those Nations in some measure delivered from that intolerable and more then Aegyptian Bondage, or at least the Spaniards ill usage and treatment of the Americans was alleviated and abated. This Book mostly Historical, part Typographical, was Published first by the Author in Spanish at Sevil, after that Translated into Latin by himself; and in process of time into High Dutch, Low Dutch, French and now English; which is the Sixth Language it has been taught to speak, that anyone of what Nation soever might in this Narrative contemplate and see as in a mirror the dismal and pernicious fruits, that lacquey and attend unlimited and close fisted Avarice, and thereby Learn to abhor and detest it, Cane pejus & angue: it being the predominant and chiefest motive to the comission of

such inexpressible Outrages, as here in part are faintly, not fully represented. Which sin the Pagan Indians themselves did exprobate in the Spaniards with all Detestation, Ignominy and Disgrace: for when they had taken some of them Prisoners (which was rarely) they bound them hand and foot, laid them on the ground, and then pouring melted Gold down their Throats, cried out and called to them aloud in derision, yield, throw up thy Gold O Christian! Vomit and spew out the Mettal which hath so inqinated and invenom'd both Body and Soul, that hath stain'd and infected they mind with desires and contrivances, and thy hands with Commission of such matchless Enormities. I will then shut up all this, being but an Extract of what is in the Prefatory part of the Original. I earnestly beg and desire all Men to be perswaded, that this summary was not published upon any private Design, sinister ends or affection in favor or prejudice of any particular Nation; but for the publick Emolument and Advantage of all true Christians and moral Men throughout the whole World.

Farewell

THE CRUELTIES OF THE Spaniards

Committed in AMERICA.

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America was discovered and found out *Ann. Dom.* 1492, and the Year insuing inhabited by the *Spaniards*, and afterward a multitude of them travelled thither from *Spain* for the space of Nine and Forty Years. Their first attempt was on the *Spanish* Island, which indeed is a most fertile soil, and at present in great reputation for its Spaciousness and Length, containing in Circumference Six Hundred Miles: Nay it is on all sides surrounded with an almost innumerable number of Islands, which we found so well peopled with Natives and Forreigners, that there is scarce any Region in the Universe fortified with so many Inhabitants: But the main Land or Continent, distant from this Island Two Hundred and Fifty Miles and upwards, extends it self above Ten Thousand Miles in Length near the sea-shore, which Lands are some of them already discover'd, and more may be found out in process of time: And such a multitude of People inhabits these Countries, that it seems as if the Omnipotent God has Assembled and Convocated the major part of Mankind in this part of the World.

Now this infinite multitude of Men are by the Creation of God innocently simple, altogether void of and averse to all manner of Craft, Subtlety and Malice, and most Obedient and Loyal Subjects to their Native Sovereigns; and behave themselves very patiently, summissively and quietly towards the *Spaniards*, to whom they are subservient and subject; so

that finally they live without the least thirst after revenge, laying aside all litigiousness, Commotion and hatred.

This is a most tender and effeminate people, and so imbecile and unequal-balanced temper, that they are altogether incapable of hard labour, and in few years, by one Distemper or other soon expire, so that the very issue of Lords and Princes, who among us live with great affluence, and fard deliciously, are not more effminate and tender than the Children of their Husbandmen or Labourers: This Nation is very Necessitous and Indigent, Masters of very slender Possessions, and consequently, neither Haughty, nor Ambitious. They are parsimonious in their Diet, as the Holy Fathers were in their frugal life in the Desert, known by the name of *Eremites*. They go naked, having no other Covering but what conceals their Pudends from publick sight. An hairy Plad, or loose Coat, about an Ell, or a coarse woven Cloth at most Two Ells long serves them for the warmest Winter Garment. They lye on a coarse Rug or Matt, and those that have the most plentiful Estate or Fortunes, the better sort, use Net-work, knotted at the four corners in lieu of Beds, which the Inhabitants of the Island of *Hispaniola*, in their own proper Idiom, term *Hammacks*. The Men are pregnant and docible. The natives tractable, and capable of Morality or Goodness, very apt to receive the instill'd principles of Catholick Religion; nor are they averse to Civility and good Manners, being not so much discompos'd by variety of Obstructions, as the rest of Mankind; insomuch, that having suckt in (if I may so express my self) the the very first Rudiments of the Christian Faith, they are so transported with Zeal and Furov in the exercise

of Ecclesiastical Sacraments, and Divine Service, that the very Religioso's themselves, stand in need of the greatest and most signal patience to undergo such extream Transports. And to conclude, I my self have heard the *Spaniards* themselves (who dare not assume the Confidence to deny the good Nature praedominant in them) declare, that there was nothing wanting in them for the acquisition of Eternal Beatitude, but the sole Knowledge and Understanding of the Deity.

The *Spaniards* first assaulted the innocent Sheep, so qualified by the Almighty, as is premention'd, like most cruel Tygers, Wolves and Lions hunger-starv'd, studying nothing, for the space of Forty Years, after their first landing, but the Massacre of these Wretches, whom they have so inhumanely and barbarously butcher'd and harass'd with several kinds of Torments, never before known, or heard (of which you shall have some account in the following Discourse) that of Three Millions of Persons, which lived in *Hispaniola* itself, there is at present but the inconsiderable remnant of scarce Three Hundred. Nay the Isle of *Cuba*, which extends as far, as *Valledolid* in *Spain* is distant from *Rome*, lies now uncultivated, like a Desert, and intomb'd in its own Ruins. You may also find the Isles of *St. John*, and *Jamaica*, both large and fruitful places, unpeopled and desolate. The *Lucayan* Islands on the North Side, adjacent to *Hispaniola* and *Cuba*, which are Sixty in number, or thereabout, together with with those, vulgarly known by the name of the Gigantic Isles, and others, the most infertile whereof, exceeds the Royal Garden of *Sevil* in fruitfulness, a most Healthful and pleasant Climat, is now laid waste and

uninhabited; and whereas, when the *Spaniards* first arriv'd here, about Five Hundred Thousand Men dwelt in it, they are now cut off, some by slaughter, and others ravished away by Force and Violence, to work in the Mines of *Hispaniola*, which was destitute of Native Inhabitants: For a certain Vessel, sailing to this Isle, to the end, that the Harvest being over (some good Christian, moved with Piety and Pity, undertook this dangerous Voyage, to convert Souls to Christianity) the remaining gleanings might be gathered up, there were only found Eleven Persons, which I saw with my own Eyes. There are other Islands Thirty in number, and upward bordering upon the Isle of *St. John*, totally unpeopled; all which are above Two Thousand miles in Length, and yet remain without Inhabitants, Native, or People.

As to the firm land, we are certainly satisfied, and assur'd, that the *Spaniards* by their barbarous and execrable Actions have absolutely depopulated Ten Kingdoms, of greater extent than all *Spain*, together with the Kingdoms of *Arragon* and *Portugal*, that is to say, above One Thousand Miles, which now lye wast and desolate, and are absolutely ruined, when as formerly no other Country whatsoever was more populous. Nay we dare boldly affirm, that during the Forty Years space, wherein they exercised their sanguinary and detestable Tyranny in these Regions, above Twelve Millions (computing Men, Women, and Children) have undeservedly perished; nor do I conceive that I should deviate from the Truth by saying that above Fifty Millions in all paid their last Debt to Nature.