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Fray bartolome de las casas y sus obras

Nació en Sevilla, en 1484, y murió en Madrid, en 1566. De formación autodidacta, marchó a las Indias en 1502, diez años después de su descubrimiento. En 1512, en la isla de La Española (hoy Santo Domingo), se ordenó sacerdote. Fue capellán en la expedición que conquistó Cuba (1513). A pesar de sus críticas, que se han usado para construir la "leyenda negra" de los Habsburgo, participó activamente en la colonización de América. Carlos I fue permeable a sus argumentos y, en 1520, la Corona le encargó un plan de colonización en tierra firme, que fracasó por la oposición de los indígenas. Entre 1537 y 1538 dirigió otra empresa de colonización en Guatemala, esta vez con más éxito; obtuvo el control del territorio por medios pacíficos y destierro de allí la práctica de la encomienda, por la cual una persona podía recibir un tributo de un grupo de indígenas a cambio de costear su instrucción cristiana. Obras imprescindibles
Bartolomé de las Casas crea uno de los grandes precedentes de los derechos humanos en esta apología de los nativos del 'Nuevo Mundo'. Más info
Extracto de un resumen del primer viaje de Cristóbal Colón. Salíó a la luz en 1825 y fue ampliamente traducido y reproducido.Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid) Más info
Spanish clergyman, writer and activist (1474–1566)
"Las Casas" and "de las Casas" redirect here. For other uses, see Las Casas (disambiguation).
Servant of GodBartolomé de las CasasOFBishop of ChiapasProvinceTuxtla GutierrezSeeChiapasInstalled13 March 1544Term ended11 September 1550Other post(s)Protector of the IndiansOrdersOrdination1510Consecration30 March 1554By Bishop Diego de Loaysa, O.R.S.A.Personal detailsBornBartolomé de las Casas11 November 1484Seville, Crown of CastileDied19 July 1566 (aged 81)Madrid, Crown of CastileBuriedBasilica of Our Lady of Atocha, Madrid, SpainNationalitySpanishDenominationRoman CatholicOccupationHacienda owner, priest, missionary, bishop, writerSignuureBartolomé de las Casas, OP (US, /lɒs ˈkɑːsəs/ lɒs KAH-səs, Spanish: [bartolomé de las ˈkasas] (listen); 11 November 1484[1] – 18 July 1566) was a Spanish clergyman, writer and activist best known for his work as a historian and social reformer. He arrived in Hispaniola as a layman then became a Dominican friar. He was appointed as 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. He described the atrocities committed by the colonizers against the indigenous peoples.[2] Arriving as one of the first Spanish settlers in the Americas, Las Casas initially participated in, but eventually felt compelled to oppose the abuses committed by European colonists against the indigenous peoples of the Americas.[3] As a result, in 1515 he gave up his Native American slaves and encomienda, and advocated, before Charles V, on behalf of rights for the natives. In his early writings, he advocated the use of African and white slaves instead of Natives in the West Indian colonies but did so without knowing that the Portuguese were carrying out "brutal and unjust wars in the name of spreading the faith".[4] Later in life, he retracted this position, as he regarded both forms of slavery as equally wrong.[5] In 1522, he tried to launch a new kind of peaceful colonialism on the coast of Venezuela, but this venture failed. Las Casas entered the Dominican Order and became a friar, leaving public life for a decade. He traveled to Central America, acting as a missionary among the Maya of Guatemala and participating in debates among colonial churchmen about how best to bring the natives to the Christian faith. Travelling back to Spain to recruit more missionaries, he continued lobbying for the abolition of the encomienda, gaining an important victory by the passage 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 stance.



He served in the Spanish court for the remainder of his life; there 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 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 colonial abuse of indigenous peoples, especially by trying to convince the Spanish court to adopt a more humane policy of colonization. Unlike some other priests who sought to destroy the indigenous peoples' native books and writings, he strictly opposed this action.[6] Although he did not completely succeed in changing Spanish views on colonization, his efforts did result in improvement of the legal status of the natives, and in an increased colonial focus on the ethics of colonialism. Life and time
Background and arrival in the New World Depiction of Spanish atrocities committed in the conquest of Cuba in Las Casas's "Brevisima relación de la destrucción de las Indias". The print was made by two Flemish artists who had fled the Southern Netherlands because of their Protestant faith: Joos van Winghe was the designer and Theodor de Bry the engraver. Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Seville in 1484, on 11 November.[7] 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.[8] Subsequent biographers and authors have generally accepted and reflected this revision.[9] His father, Pedro de las Casas, a merchant, descended from one of the families that had migrated from France to found the Christian Seville; his family also spelled the name Casaus.[10] According to one biographer, his family was of converso heritage,[11] although others refer to them as ancient Christians who migrated from France.[10] 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.[12] Las Casas's first encounter with Indigenous peoples happened before he even sailed to the Americas. In his Historia general de las Indias, he wrote of Christopher Columbus' return to Seville, in 1493.[13] Las Casas recorded having seen "seven Indians" in the entourage of Christopher Columbus, being exhibited in the vicinity of the Iglesia de San Nicolás de Bari, along "beautiful green parrots, vibrant in color" and Indigenous artifacts.[14] Pedro de las Casas, Bartolomé's merchant father, left in Christopher Columbus' second expedition. Upon his return, in 1499, Pedro de las Casas brought to his son 'a young Amerindian'.[15] Three years later, in 1502, Las Casas immigrated with his father to the island of Hispaniola, 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.[16] He participated in slave raids and military expeditions against the native Taíno population of Hispaniola.[17] In 1506 he returned to Spain and completed his studies of canon law at Salamanca. That same year he was ordained a deacon and then traveled to Rome where he was ordained a secular priest in 1507.[18] 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.[19] In December 1511, a Dominican preacher Fray Antonio de Montesino 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 as ancient Christians and exhausted, without giving them enough to eat, curing them of their illnesses if 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. "[20] 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.[21][22] Conquest of Cuba and change of heart Reconstruction of a Taíno village from Las Casas's times in contemporary Cuba 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 at Bayamo and Camagüey and in the massacre of Hatuey.[23] 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." [24] Las Casas and his friend Pedro 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 few years, he divided his time between his duties as an ordained priest. In 1514, Las Casas was studying a passage in the book Ecclesiastics (Sirach)[25] 34:18–22[a] 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.[26] Aided by Pedro de Córdoba and accompanied by Antonio de Montesinos, he left for Spain in September 1515, arriving in Seville in November.[27][28] Las Casas and King Ferdinand A contemporary painting of King Ferdinand "The Catholic" 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.[29] In the winter of 1515, King Ferdinand lay ill in Plasencia, but Las Casas was able to get a letter of introduction to the king 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 25 January 1516.[30] 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.[31] 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.[32][33][34][b] 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.[35] 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.[36] Worried by Las Casas' descriptions of the situation in the Indies, Cardinal Cisneros decided to send a group of Hieronymite monks to take over the government of the islands.[37] Protector of the Indians Three Hieronymite monks, 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 presented 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 regard 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 Hieronymytes 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.[38] Only after Las Casas had left did the Hieronymytes begin to congregare Indians into towns similar to what Las Casas had wanted.[39] Las Casas and Emperor Charles V. The peasant colonization scheme Contemporary portrait of the young Emperor Charles V 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 Charles I. Ximenez died on 8 November, and the young King arrived in Valladolid on 25 November 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.[40] 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.[41] The Cumana venture View over the landscape of Mochima National Park in Venezuela, close to the original location of Las Casas's colony at Cumana The Natives of Cumana attack the mission after Gonzalo de Ocampo's slaving raid. Colored copperplate by Theodor de Bry, published in the "Relación brevisima" 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 Cumana. Founded in 1515, there was already a small Franciscan monastery in Cumana, and a Dominican one at Chiribichi, but the monks there were being harassed by Spaniards operating slave raids from the nearby Island of Cubagua. To make the proposal palatable to the king, Las Casas had to incorporate the prospect of profits for the royal treasury.[42] 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. To secure the grant, Las Casas had to go through a long court fight 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 150,000 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. 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.[43] 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.[44] 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 Cumana, burned it to the ground, and killed four of Las Casas's men.[45] He returned to Hispaniola in January 1522, and heard the news of the massacre. The rumours even included him among the dead.[46] To make matters worse, his detractors used the event as evidence of the need to pacify the Indians using military means. Las Casas as 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.[47] There he continued his theological studies, being particularly attracted to Thomist philosophy. 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 which he reported much of what he had witnessed first hand in the conquest and colonization of New Spain. In 1531, he wrote a letter to Garcia Manrique,

Count of Osorno, protesting against 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.[48] 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.

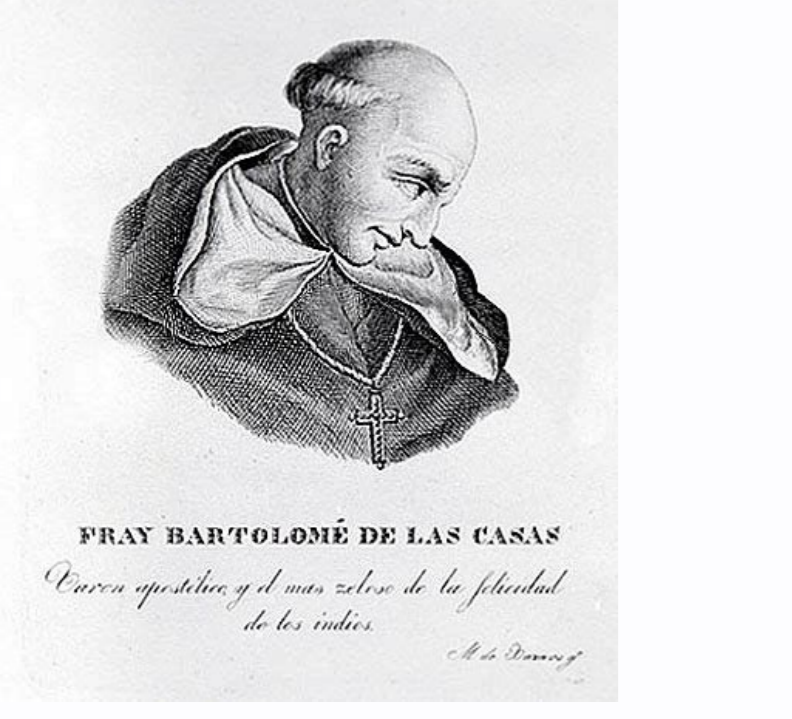
Lingering for a while in the Dominican convent of Granada, he got into conflict with Rodrigo de Contreras, Governor of Nicaragua, when Las Casas vehemently opposed slaving expeditions by the Governor.[49] In 1536 Las Casas followed a number of friars to Guatemala, where they began to prepare to undertake 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.[50] Toribio de Benavente "Motolinia", Las Casas's Franciscan adversary. 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 vocacionis 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.[51] 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 "Sublimis Deus," which stated that the Indians were rational beings and should be brought peacefully to the faith as such.[52] 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 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.[53] In 1538 Las Casas was recalled from his mission by Bishop Marroquín who wanted him to go to Mexico and then on to Spain to seek more Dominicans to assist in the mission.[54] Las Casas left Guatemala for Mexico, where he stayed for more than a year before setting out for Spain in 1540. The New Laws Cover of the New Laws of 1542 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.[55] 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.[56] The encomienda had, in fact, legally been abolished in 1523, but it had been reinstated 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 to argue for the emperor that conversion and colonization were best achieved by peaceful means.[57] 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 A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies. 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.[58] On 20 November 1542, the emperor signed the New Laws abolishing the encomiendas and removing certain officials from the Council of the Indies.[59] 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 in the New World that riots broke out and threats were made against Las Casas's life. The Viceroxy 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.[60] 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.

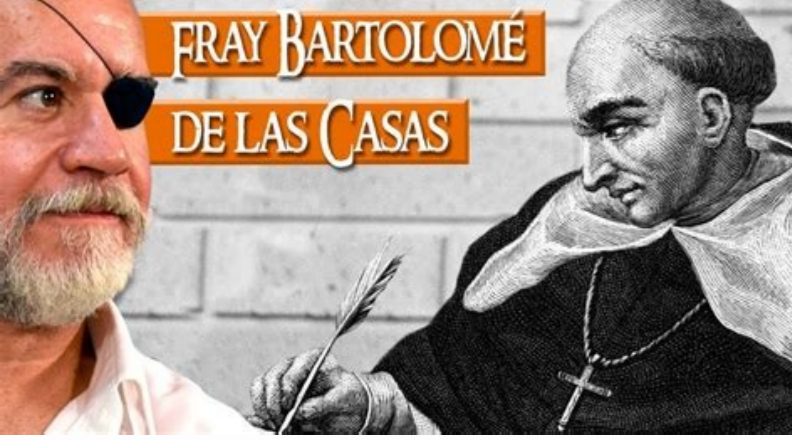
He drafted a suggestion for an amendment arguing that the laws against slavery were formulated in such a way that it presupposed that violent conquest would still be carried out, and he encouraged once again beginning a phase of peaceful colonization by peasants instead of soldiers.[61] Bishop of Chiapas The Church of the Dominican Convent of San Pablo in Valladolid where Bartolomé de Las Casas was consecrated as Bishop on March 30, 1544. 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 30 March 1544. As Archbishop Loaysa strongly disliked Las Casas,[62] the ceremony was officiated by Diago de Loaysa, Bishop of Modruš,[63] with Pedro Torres, Titular Bishop of Arbanum, and Cristóbal de Pedraza, Bishop of Comayagua, as co-consecrators.[64] 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 20 March 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.[65] 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).[64] The New Laws were finally repealed on 20 October 1545, and riots broke out against Las Casas, with shots being fired against him by angry colonists.[65] 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 12 January 1546, he left his diocese, never to return.[65][66] 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.[67] 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.[68] The Valladolid debate
Main article: Valladolid debate
Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Las Casas's opponent in 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, obliged and sent 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.[69] 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 Indos (Another Democrates, or the Just Causes of War against the Indians) had argued that some native peoples were incapable of ruling themselves and should be pacified forcefully. 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.[70] 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 read his counterarguments in the form of an "Apología". Sepúlveda argued that the subjugation of the Indians was warranted because of their sins against Nature Law; that their low level of civilization required civilized masters to maintain social order; that they should be made Christians; and that this in turn required them to be pacified; and that only the Spanish could defend weak Indians against the abuses of the stronger ones.[71] 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 lacking 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 were preferable to all Indians suffering at the hands of Spaniards.[72] 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.[73] The verdict was inconclusive, and both debaters claimed that they had won.[74] In 1552, Las Casas published A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies.

