



Bartolomé de las Casas and the defense of Amerindian rights : a brief history with documents

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Monografía

"This is a reader devoted to the life and writings of Bartolome de las Casas (1485-1566), and the effects of his legacy on the age of the Encounter when Europeans-principally but not exclusively Spaniards-conquered the Americas. Las Casas is arguably the most important figure of the Encounter Age after Christopher Columbus, and Las Casas is well known to those who teach Western civilization, various survey histories of Spain and Latin America, and Atlantic history. He is known principally as the author of the "Black Legend," as well as the "protector" of American Indians. He was one of the pioneers of the human rights movement, and a Christian activist who invoked Biblical scripture to interpret what was right and wrong in the great age of the Encounter. He was also one of the first and most thorough chroniclers of the conquest, and a biographer who saved the diary of Columbus's first voyage for posterity through his History of the Indies, for the journal of that voyage was lost. He was also an innovator in political theory and a proto-ethnographer, and his contributions in geography, philosophy, and literature are no less significant. That he was also crusty, self-righteous, judgmental, given to gross exaggerations, and not a very loving Christian adds the very human dimension of failure to his character. This reader provides the most wide-ranging, and concise anthology of Las Casas' writings, in translation, ever made available. It contains not only excerpts from his most well-known texts, but also his writings on political philosophy and law, which are largely unavailable. Many of these selections have never been translated into English and they mostly address these under-appreciated aspects of his thought. As such, this volume presents Las Casas as a more comprehensive and systematic philosophical and legal thinker than he is given credit. The introduction puts these writings into a synthetic whole by biographically tracing his indigenous advocacy throughout his career"--

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