

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS ON BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS

Here are texts on the figure of the greatest protagonist of the New World controversy: the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas.

Four texts are dedicated to Las Casas' treatise *De Imperatoria vel Regia Potestate*, the only treatise written *more scholastically*, in the manner of the Salamanca scholastics.

I commented on the treatise in 1999, the year I completed my doctorate, publishing my paper in the *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Galileiana delle Scienze, Lettere ed Arti in Venezia*, presented by Prof Enrico Berti .

Below is the English version of this paper, realised with the help of AI.

Another text shows the cover of the book, published in 2007 by Laterza: this is the critical edition of the bilingual text, Latin and Italian, with an extensive introduction justifying the authenticity of the treatise and its historical relevance and a preface by Prof Danilo Zolo.

The other text is a review by Prof Domenico Taranto from the University of Salerno, who has a deep knowledge of the debate.

Another text is a profile of Bartolomé de Las Casas published in JURA GENTIUM, a *journal of international law and global politics* founded by Danilo Zolo.

The last text is an article on Bartolomé de Las Casas, who I consider to be the First Philosopher of Latin American Liberation!

The figure of Bartolomé de Las Casas does not enjoy unanimity in Spain, although in recent times he has been rehabilitated. He is considered responsible for spreading the famous '*black legend*', which denounces the atrocities committed by the conquistadors in '*Brevísima Relación de la Destruction de las Índias*', a pamphlet that was a real bestseller in the 16th century, translated into several languages, including Latin, and which had a huge repercussion, driven by anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish protestants and competing powers. That's why the cause for the beatification of the defender of the Indians didn't progress and was only recently revived in 2019.

In response to the *Leyenda Negra* de Ls Casas, another *black legend* was created, this time against Las Casas, for having suggested at the beginning of his preaching that the indigenous people who died in forced labour should be replaced by black slaves. This episode was, however, overrated and Father Isacio Perez Fernandez, Las Casas' greatest biographer, collected several texts from Las Casas' works in which he denounced slavery and which he entitled *Brevísima Relación de la Destruccion de África*.

In short, the debate continues after more than 500 years!