

# **BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS' *BREVÍSIMA RELACIÓN*: PROTESTANT ENGLISH SUPERIORITY AND CATHOLIC SPANISH WICKEDNESS**

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## **Introduction**

While an analysis of colonial processes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries shows that cruelty was carried out by all European countries engaging in colonialism, Spain is still often held up as the epitome of colonial cruelty. This negative image was exacerbated by English interpretations of the writings of Spanish Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas. Las Casas published *Brevísima Relación* in 1552, in order to advocate a change in Spanish policies towards the Native population. In it, he described the horrendous and gruesome actions the Spanish perpetuated against the Natives. However, this text has been used as evidence for the Black Legend, an anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic body of literature that demonizes both Spain and Catholicism. Las Casas' work was used, particularly by the English, to provide textual evidence of Spanish cruelty, packaged within one short text, for their own national and colonial benefit. Interpretations of Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación* fueled anti-Spanish sentiment in England at a time when tensions were strained between Protestants and Catholics.

For English Protestants to use Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación* for their own purposes, they had to translate it first. Beyond translating the work, English editors were able to frame the way the text was read with the prologue. Each prologue for the translated editions starting in 1583 reflect contemporary Protestant English positions towards Catholic Spaniards as well as reveal their motives and intentions *vis-à-vis* Catholic Spain. The major editions of the *Brevísima Relación* that still exist in modern times are from 1583, 1656, 1689, 1699, and 1745. This paper will examine the prologues of each of these translations to shed light on the way English Protestants used Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación* to vilify the Spanish, justify the notion of English superiority, and provide justification for English actions against both Spaniards and Catholics in general. English Protestants took the arguments of Las Casas

out of context and twisted them into anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic rhetoric, contrary to Las Casas' original objectives. The English used Las Casas to pit Protestantism against Catholicism, turning the Protestant and Catholic religious divide into a political and diplomatic issue. They also leveraged Las Casas in the construction and justification of the Black Legend.

### **Bartolomé de las Casas and *Brevísima Relación***

Bartolomé de las Casas is best known for championing the Natives of the New World, but he started his career by taking part in the conquest of what is now Cuba in 1502. He received an *encomienda* in return, using Natives as slaves to maintain it. Though a priest by 1510, he did not start to fight for Natives' rights and proper Catholic methods of colonization until 1514, and continued to do so until his death in 1566.<sup>1</sup> Las Casas wanted to "protect the Indians from cruel treatment and exploitation by his fellow countrymen, and [he insisted] that the newly discovered natives were human beings who should be Christianized by peaceful means alone."<sup>2</sup> This is an important part of Las Casas' work, but it is often forgotten by later English Protestants, who simply focused on his descriptions of Spanish cruelties. Las Casas' own emphasis on the cruelties of his people provided justification for his message, which was that colonization should take place within the parameters of Catholicism. Las Casas came from a strongly Christian background, and believed that Catholicism should be at the heart of conquest and that colonization and treatment of the Natives should be carried out in a humane way.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent English Protestants often focused on the evils of Catholicism, twisting the original message of Las Casas. They used Las Casas' descriptions of Spanish cruelties to show how terrible Catholic methods were, when what Las Casas was describing in *Brevísima Relación* was not Catholic methodology at all. The text of Las Casas is deeply rooted in Catholicism and a plea to God to save the souls of the Natives.<sup>4</sup> He was always firm in the fact that the Natives could easily be converted to Catholicism and that they were actually open to it.<sup>5</sup> In light of Protestant translations, this aspect of Las Casas is nearly all but forgotten, resulting in the vilification of Catholicism instead. Las Casas focused on Spanish cruelties in such detail not only to plead for his Catholic methods of

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<sup>1</sup> Hanke, Lewis. "Bartolomé De Las Casas and the Spanish Empire in America: Four Centuries of Misunderstanding," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 97, no. 1 (1953): 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Hanke, "Bartolomé De Las Casas and the Spanish Empire in America: Four Centuries of Misunderstanding," 29.

<sup>4</sup> H.C. Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian 1500-1600* (London: Duckworth, 1979), 154.

<sup>5</sup> Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian 1500-1600*, 156.

colonization, but also to shock Spanish officials in order to change the policies.<sup>6</sup> As such, Las Casas' figures concerning how many Natives were killed were grossly exaggerated, and in actuality represented the number of Natives as a whole, not how many were killed.<sup>7</sup> These numbers, and Las Casas' text as a whole, are described by E. Shaskan Bumás as being a "misrepresentation."<sup>8</sup> Basically, the English Protestants based their accusations upon exaggerations written by a Spanish priest interested in catalyzing policy change in Spanish colonial practices. They misunderstood and misinterpreted *Brevísima Relación* for their own political agendas.

### **Spanish and English Relations: Virtuous Protestantism and Cruel Catholicism**

Spain and England had very tempestuous relations for most of their common history. The Age of Discovery simply served to escalate tensions further; both Spain and England became colonial powers and the Spanish exerted a strong influence on the creation of England's Empire.<sup>9</sup> The English turned colonization into a competition with the Spanish, and branded their Empire as "pure and insular" in contrast to the Spanish Empire.<sup>10</sup> They found 'hard' evidence of this in Las Casas' *Brevísima Relación*. English Protestants used the descriptions of Las Casas of Spanish atrocities to reinterpret English colonization as spiritually righteous in comparison.<sup>11</sup> A constructed image of Catholic Spain contributed to an inherently Protestant English colonial identity.<sup>12</sup> Spain was presented as profoundly evil because of its connections to the Papacy. Therefore, England and English colonization could be seen to exist in response to "the papal Antichrist and his Spanish legions."<sup>13</sup> In fact, "Protestants would paint the Spaniards as accomplices to cannibals—running a butcher shop selling choice cuts of human meat—or as the cannibals themselves."<sup>14</sup> Such a statement painted the Spanish as absolutely and

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<sup>6</sup> William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the Development of Anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the Development of Anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> E. Shaskan Bumás. "The Cannibal Butcher Shop: Protestant Uses of las Casas' "Brevísima relación" in Europe and the American Colonies." *Early American Literature* 35, no. 2 (2000): 108.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from Las Casas to Milton," *Mediterranean Studies* 8 (1999): 176.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Bumás. "The Cannibal Butcher Shop" 108.

<sup>13</sup> Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from Las Casas to Milton," 177.

<sup>14</sup> Bumás, "The Cannibal Butcher Shop", 107.

inherently evil. The Protestants English might have taken this kind of rhetoric from Las Casas' descriptions of Spanish cruelties, and simply expanded them to suit their own purposes, as if to say that if the "Spaniards spoke so ill of another, the English could scarcely be blamed for doing likewise!"<sup>15</sup>

Though Las Casas was in fact promoting Christianity, that did not stop the Protestant English from completely manipulating his words to their advantage: "Christians became Spaniards and then Catholics."<sup>16</sup> The significance of this is that the Protestant English only saw in Las Casas what they wanted to see. England saw Protestantism as the one true faith, especially in opposition to the evils of Spanish Catholicism.<sup>17</sup> The opposition of Catholicism and Protestantism influenced the way England and Spain approached colonization and their state policies. At the center of this opposition were anti-Spanish sentiments that could not be separated from Protestant identity.<sup>18</sup> For the English, Spain represented religious oppression and all-around cruelty, a perception they saw grounded in such examples as *Brevísima Relación*.<sup>19</sup> It was believed that Spain was an existential threat to English Protestantism, both on the domestic and international, or colonial, levels.<sup>20</sup> Not only did the prevalent religious and national tensions between Spain and England motivate some the Protestant English to create an image of Spanish Catholicism based on the atrocities depicted in *Brevísima Relación*, the tensions also resulted in the interpretation of Las Casas' descriptions of Spanish cruelties as applicable to all Spaniards. In this way, "the cruelest conquistadors [were] no longer breaking rules of Spanish character but defining those rules."<sup>21</sup>

### **English Editions of *Brevísima Relación*: 1583**

The first English translation of Las Casas' work was published in England in 1583, entitled *The Spanish Colonie, or Briefe Chronicle of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniardes in the West Indies*, by M.M.S. By this time, the perception of Spanish cruelty already existed in England, but it was strengthened

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<sup>15</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the Development of anti-Spanish sentiment*, 1558-1660, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Bumás, "The Cannibal Butcher Shop", 112.

<sup>17</sup> Margaret R. Greer, *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empire*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 99.

<sup>18</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the Development of anti-Spanish sentiment*, 1558-1660, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>20</sup> Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from Las Casas to Milton," 176.

<sup>21</sup> Bumás, "The Cannibal Butcher Shop", 113.

by the translation of *Las Casas*.<sup>22</sup> In 1583, the position of Protestantism within England was stronger, but the road to that position had not been easy. After the reign of Henry VIII, creator of the Anglican Church, and the early death of his only son, his Catholic daughter Mary gained the throne in 1553, and brought Catholicism back to prominence in Britain until 1558. Mary, who was married to the Catholic Spanish King Philip, ordered the burning of three hundred Protestants at the stake, earning herself the title of Bloody Mary. Queen Elizabeth I's reign from 1558-1603 cemented England as a Protestant power and saw the persecution of many Catholics.<sup>23</sup> It is within this context that the first edition of the *Brevísima Relación* was published. Religious tensions were quite high across Europe as well, as evidenced by the Protestant Dutch Revolts against Catholic Spain and the tacit support Elizabeth and her nobles provided them.<sup>24</sup> Anti-Spanish sentiment was very strong in both England and in the Dutch Countries at this time.<sup>25</sup> The divide between Protestants and Catholic became deeper.

The prologue of the 1583 edition was targeted at the Dutch Countries: "I do dedicate to all the prouinces of the Lowe countreys," wrote the translator.<sup>26</sup> This showed that there was a common anti-Spanish sentiment between separate Protestant countries. The dedication of the translation may indicate that the author was aiming his argument at an audience for whom the tension between Protestants and Catholics was greater.

The prologue criticized Spain and Spanish colonization. The author of the prologue began with a reference to God's judgment, claiming that God would punish the Spanish for their cruelties.<sup>27</sup> This theme is revisited throughout the entire prologue. The author emphasizes the fact that God would punish the wicked and uphold the right; "In as much as God is iust, he will graunt victorie to the right, and will ouerthrowe the wicked."<sup>28</sup> It is possible that

<sup>22</sup> Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from *Las Casas* to Milton," 179.

<sup>23</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 444-5.

<sup>24</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 444-5.

<sup>25</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: the Development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Casas, Bartolomé De Las, and M. S. M. *The Spanish Colonie, or Briefe Chronicle of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniardes in the West Indies, Called the Newe World, for the Space of XI. Yeeres: Written in the Castilian Tongue by the Reuerend Bishop Bartholomew De Las Cases or Casaus, a Friar of the Order of S. Dominicke. And Nowe First Translated into English, by M.M.S.* (London: By Thomas Dawson for William Brome, 1583)

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

the author intended to foretell eventual English superiority over the Spanish. The author presents a negative opinion of Spain, confessing that “I neuer loued that nation generally, by reason of their intollerable pride.”<sup>29</sup>

The author continued with his critique of Spain, mentioning the Sarazin conquest of Spain in the eighth century, noting that “they might soone haue caught hold vpon France, & so vpon the rest of christe~dom, had not God raised vp that mightie Duke of Brubant, Charles Martel.”<sup>30</sup> There seems to have been a subtle sort of warning here to Spain about the coming end of their colonization practices, with England replacing Charles Martel in saving Christendom. The author eventually got to the heart of the matter, asking “For I pray you what right had the Spaniards ouer the Indians: sauing that the Pope and giuen them the said land, and I leaue to your iudement [judgment] what right hee had therein.”<sup>31</sup> At first glance, he seemed to have argued against Spanish possession of the lands, but at a deeper glance, it can be said that his argument was against Catholic possession of the lands and Catholic authority. Consequently, this prologue reveals more about the tensions between Protestantism and Catholicism than the anti-Spanish rhetoric that was apparent in subsequent versions.

This particular prologue differed from the others by its appeal to English morality, even as it engaged in harsh criticism of Spain and Catholicism: “It is certaine that wee are not thereby to iudge that our selues shall haue the victorie ouer our enemies, because our cause is the better, for we are replenished with vice enough, whereby to leaue vnto god sufficient matter to punishe vs.”<sup>32</sup> The author warns the English to be careful in their endeavors, and not to be so caught up in their perceived superiority over the Spanish that they themselves commit the same crimes they accuse the Catholic Spaniards of committing.

### **English Editions of *Brevísima Relación*: 1656**

The 1656 English edition of *Brevísima Relación* is the most historically significant of the English edition because of its application in English public policy at the time. The *Brevísima Relación* figured prominently in Oliver Cromwell’s justification for his anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic policies and actions.

The years from 1642 to 1660 were highly turbulent ones for England. The major issue was the tension between the throne and parliament, which came to the forefront when Charles I tried to assert monarchical authority over Parliament. At the time, problems with the Puritans surfaced, resulting in a four-

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Casas, Bartolomé De Las, and M. S. M. *The Spanish Colonie*.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

year long civil conflict, after which the Puritans united under Oliver Cromwell.<sup>33</sup> Following the execution of King Charles I in 1649, Cromwell nominated himself Lord Protector in 1653.<sup>34</sup>

The Cromwellian era edition of the *Brevísima Relación*, entitled *Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and True Account of the Massacres and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of Innocent People: Committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As Also, in the Continent of Mexico, Peru, & Other Places of the West-Indies, To the Total Destruction of Those Countries*, was published a short three years later, in 1656. While possibly coincidental, it is more probable that Cromwell leveraged the text to establish his legitimacy as a moral and just actor in the face of such Catholic Spanish cruelty.

Anti-Spanish sentiments were quite strong in England in the early 17th century. Under Cromwell, these sentiments became policy. In 1654, Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector launched what was intended to be a simple attack against Spain's colonies in the West Indies, followed by a call to what could be called a religious crusade in 1655 to "liberate all of Spanish America."<sup>35</sup> Previously in 1654, Cromwell and England joined with other countries to form a Protestant crusade against Catholicism.<sup>36</sup> This in turn strengthened the call to liberate Spanish America and proselytize for Protestantism instead.<sup>37</sup> Cromwell was in fact advised to not attack the Spanish Indies in order to take them for England, but he dismissed this advice. In the end, the attack was a complete disaster.<sup>38</sup> Robert Segwick considered it a sign that "God is angry", and Cromwell himself believed that it was a divine punishment for England.<sup>39</sup>

The translated text of *Las Casas*, now called *Tears of the Indians*, may have influenced Cromwell's justification of his anti-Spanish colonial rhetoric.<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, while Cromwell used this anti-Spanish and pro-liberation of the Native Americans rhetoric, he was pursuing extremely cruel policies in Ireland and Scotland to subject the population there. In fact, historian E. Shaskan Bumaz argues that "Oliver Cromwell was at war with Ireland and Scotland and

<sup>33</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 498-9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 500-2.

<sup>35</sup> Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from *Las Casas* to Milton", 183.

<sup>36</sup> Jon Latimer. *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: how piracy forged an empire*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 100-1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660*, 118.

<sup>39</sup> Latimer, *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How piracy forged an empire*, 118.

<sup>40</sup> Hodgkins, "The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from *Las Casas* to Milton", 183.

could use some excuses for his own cruelty against Catholics.”<sup>41</sup> These excuses were mainly pulled from Las Casas’ *Brevísima Relación*, especially as in the Protestant English imagination, Spaniards had become synonymous with Catholics.<sup>42</sup> In fact, Cromwell leveraged rhetoric calling for revenge; these actions and crimes against Catholics were to avenge the crimes said Catholics perpetuated against the Indians.<sup>43</sup> Oliver Cromwell’s “deep and abiding hatred of Spain” had found itself an outlet and the perfect justification.<sup>44</sup>

Oliver Cromwell’s hatred of Spain also extended to a hatred of Catholicism. Initially focused on France, Cromwell changed his focus to Spain, despite a tendency of the time to emphasize tensions between the French and English.<sup>45</sup> One of the reasons why Cromwell decided to turn to Spain was because Spain “was more anti-Protestant.”<sup>46</sup>

The 1656 prologue was actually divided into two--the first part was written to the Lord Protector, the second written to all Englishmen. It reveals a great deal about the Cromwellian era and detailed how Las Casas’ *Brevísima Relación* was being manipulated. One of the first lines of the prologue noted that “The cry of Blood ceasing at the noise of Your great transactions, while You arm for their Revenge.”<sup>47</sup> Cromwell leveraged these existing sentiments of to justify his policy of avenging the Natives. In such an interpretation of Las Casas, Spaniards were equated with Catholics, and the acts depicted in *Brevísima Relación* were representative of all Spaniards.

Further, the entire opening of the prologue cast Cromwell in the best possible light. This was not surprising, as the author of the prologue was the nephew of John Milton, who was Cromwell’s Latin Secretary at the time.<sup>48</sup> Milton’s nephew emphasized in the prologue that Oliver Cromwell was divinely motivated, writing in the section addressed to him that “while the Divine Deitie bequeathes You back again immediate Recompences; crowning You, like his

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<sup>41</sup> Bumaz, “The Cannibal Butcher Shop: Protestant Uses of las Casas’ “*Brevísima relación*” in Europe and the American Colonies”, 123.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>44</sup> Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660*, 116.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Bartolomé De Las Casas. *Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and True Account of the Massacres and Slaughters of Above Twenty Millions of Innocent People: Committed by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As Also, in the Continent of Mexico, Peru, & Other Places of the West-Indies, To the Total Destruction of Those Countries.* (London, England: J.C. for Nath. Brook, 1656).

<sup>48</sup> Hodgkins, “The Uses of Atrocity: Satanic Spaniards and Hispanic Satans from Las Casas to Milton,” 183.

holy Warriour David, with the highest degree of earthly Fame.”<sup>49</sup> This high level of religiosity attributed to Cromwell went beyond oppositional forces between Protestantism and Catholicism. Here, Oliver Cromwell was recognized as having Divine Right, and given divine powers to “extol Your just Anger against the Bloody and Popish Nation of the Spaniards.”<sup>50</sup> Such sentiments expressed in the prologue revealed some of the true motivation behind Cromwell’s foreign policy and how Las Casas’ text was used to feed deep hatred towards Catholic Spain.

The second part of the prologue was dedicated to “all true Englishmen,” implying that to be true meant to be Protestant, nationalistic, and strongly anti-Spanish.<sup>51</sup> The first part devoted to the Lord Protector did not mention Las Casas at all, and he was only briefly mentioned in the second section.<sup>52</sup> This is indicative of the translator’s intention to use the translation of Las Casas’ *Brevísima Relación* for a political agenda that almost completely ignored Las Casas himself and his own motives for writing the text. The highly emotional and descriptive language of the prologue, with phrases such as “the intention of these men was Murder”<sup>53</sup> and “Drown’d in a Deluge of Blood,”<sup>54</sup> were intended to strike an emotional chord in the reader. This appeal was reinforced in the following section:

We read of old, of the Ten Persecutions wherein the Primitive Christians were destroy’d by the Cruelties of the Heathen Emperous: but we now read of Christians, the Professors of a Religion grounded upon Love and Charity, massacring, where there was no cause of Antipathy, but their own obstinate Barbarism; as if because their Wickedness had so far transform’d them in Devils, they were resolved to deface the image of God.<sup>55</sup>

In this vivid description of the barbarous and devilish atrocities committed by the Spanish, the author equates Spain with Catholicism and reinforces the idea of Protestant superiority, contributing to the justification of anti-Catholic policies. The statement effectively damned Catholicism – and Spain along with it.

The prologue concluded with the warning that “you are not uow to fight against your Country-men, but against your Old and Constant Enemies, the Spaniards, a Proud, Deceitful, Cruel, and Treacherous Nation, whose chiefest Aim hath been the Conquest of this Land, and to enslave the People of this

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<sup>49</sup> Casas, Tears of the Indians.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Casas, Tears of the Indians.

Nation.”<sup>56</sup> This statement was a clear call to nationalism. It must be noted that all of this accompanied a text which described Spanish Cruelties in the New World, in a very specific situation far removed from England and the English. Taken out of context and twisted beyond recognition of the original intent, Las Casas’ *Brevísima Relación* was a mere excuse for the promoting a hateful anti-Spanish agenda.

### **English Editions of *Brevísima Relación*: 1689 and 1699**

The next two available English editions of the *Brevísima Relación* were published in 1689 and 1699. From 1685 to 1688, the Catholic King James II held the English throne, a drastic change from the Protestant political leadership that had previously ruled England.<sup>57</sup> James II’s main goal while on the throne was to bring tolerance and equality to Catholics, and reinstitute Catholicism as England’s religion.<sup>58</sup> This did not sit well with the English Protestants, however, who strongly believed in England as a Protestant nation and who continued to hold strongly anti-Catholic sentiments. In 1688, the English Parliament invited the Dutch Protestant William, and his English wife Mary, to assume the crown, which led to the Glorious Revolution and the reestablishment of a Protestant England.<sup>59</sup>

The 1689 English edition of the *Brevísima Relación*, entitled *Popery Truly Display’d in Its Bloody Colours, Or, A Faithful Narrative of the 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*, was published during this period of transition between Catholic and Protestant rule. Consequently, it is quite different from any other prologues, which were usually staunchly Protestant and anti-Catholic.

The author of this prologue started with an acknowledgment of Las Casas being a religious person; “The Reverend Author of this Compendious summary was Bartolomaeus de las Casas alias Casaus, a Pious and Religions person.”<sup>60</sup> This was not something that the other authors had mentioned, as they

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 503.

<sup>58</sup> William E. Burns, *A Brief History of Great Britain*. (New York: Checkmark Books, 2010), 121.

<sup>59</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 503.

<sup>60</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Popery Truly Display’d in Its Bloody Colours, Or, A Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and All*

did not want to point out that the author of the work upon which they were relying was actually Catholic himself. The author of the 1689 edition continues with the observation that Las Casas used the *Brevísima Relación* for the “promotion of the Christian faith.”<sup>61</sup> This is unusual considering the motivations of many English Protestants using Las Casas to support their argument about the inferiority of Catholicism. The other prologues ignored the Catholic nature of the account, and certainly did not acknowledge that a Catholic priest could be Christian in his purpose.

The author of the prologue then went into an in-depth discussion of Las Casas’ personal history, and what motivated him to write this work.<sup>62</sup> To a certain extent, it glorified Las Casas. This was not unusual, as he had become a familiar reference to the English reader. While the 1689 author extolled Las Casas’ virtues, previous editions focused on his descriptions of Spanish cruelties. What is more, the prologue paid homage to Prince Philip, the son of Charles V and a Spaniard, “the most Illustrious Prince Philip the Son and Heir of his Imperial Majesty Charles the Fifth.”<sup>63</sup> Such an introduction for the prince of Spain was completely out of place in an English edition printed in England, whose foreign policy had been consistently anti-Spanish. It seemed a bit at odds with the title as well, which included the phrase: “Popery truly displayed in all its bloody colors.” Further, the author emphasizes “unlimited and close fistid Avarice”<sup>64</sup> as the cause of the Spaniards’ actions in the New World. Nowhere is Catholicism or Popish foolery cited as being the root of this evil, which was rare considering previous editions and general Protestant sentiment at the time. It is likely that the author was sympathetic to the cause of King James II given the year and political climate in England when this edition was published.

The English edition of *Brevísima Relación* published in 1699 was entitled *An account of the first voyages and discoveries made by the Spaniards in America: containing the most exact relation hitherto publish’d, of the unparallel’d cruelties on the Indians, in the destruction of above forty millions of people: with the propositions offer’d to the King of Spain to prevent the further ruin of the West-Indies, to which is added The Art of Travelling, shewing how a Man may dispose his Travels to the best advantage*. By 1699, England was

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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. (London: Printed for R. Hewson, 1689)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Casas, Popery Truly Display'd in Its Bloody Colours.

back under Protestant rule, and consequently, the prologue reverted back to the norm.

The prologue opens with the observation that the Natives showed kindness to the Europeans, viewing them as gods, who responded with cruelty.<sup>65</sup> The author then asserts that the cruelties described by Las Casas must be true, as they were “attested by the Spaniards themselves.”<sup>66</sup> The author uses the credibility of Las Casas’ account coming from a Spaniard to strengthen his anti-Spanish arguments. He highlights that the author “writes with such an Air of Honesty, Sincerity, and Charity, as would very well have become one of a better Religion than that in which he had the unhappiness to be educated.”<sup>67</sup> Tensions between Catholics and Protestants were still strong, and this statement showed yet another attempt by the Protestant English to distance Las Casas from his Christian context.

The prologue continued its attack on Catholicism by denouncing the entreaties of Las Casas for a more Catholic approach to colonization, proclaiming that “what the Bishop says here and there in favor of his own Religion, is so weak, and has been so often exploded here and everywhere else where the Reformation has obtain’d, that ‘twould be unnecessary to confute any of those Popish Fancies in this Preface.”<sup>68</sup> Underlying this statement is the contention that Catholicism had no importance in Protestant countries. Finally, the author concludes by quoting from Revelations, saying that it was “no difficult matter to discern to what Church that Prophetick Character agrees, that in her was found not only the Blood of Prophets and of Saints, but of all that were slain upon the Earth. Rev. 18. 23.”<sup>69</sup> Spain was equated completely with Catholicism, while other countries, such as France, were not. More moderate in its attack against Spain and Catholicism, the prologue may have reflected the fact that the shock value from these assertions was lessened as the sentiments were not new. Nevertheless, the 1699 prologue framed *Brevísima Relación* in an anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish light, and distanced Las Casas from Catholicism and Catholicism from Christianity.

### **English Editions of *Brevísima Relación*: 1745**

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<sup>65</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, An account of the first voyages and discoveries made by the Spaniards in America: containing the most exact relation hitherto publish’d, of the unparallel’d cruelties on the Indians, in the destruction of above forty millions of people: with the propositions offer’d to the King of Spain to prevent the further ruin of the West-Indies, to which is added The Art of Travelling, shewing how a Man may dispose his Travels to the best advantage. (London: Printed by J. Darby for D. Brown, J. Harris, and Andr. Bell, 1699).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

This 1745 edition of *Brevísima Relación* was very different from the others. In fact, it did not seem to even be an edition of *Brevísima Relación*. The title is attributed to Bartolomé de las Casas, but nowhere in the 68 page text is there any hint of it being his work.<sup>70</sup> Entitled *Liberty and Property, and No Pretender, or The Miserable Case of Protestants in Great Britain Under a Popish Prince, If any shall happen to wear the Imperial Crown of that Nation, In which it is provided, That a Popish Prince and a Protestant Nation cannot subsist together*, the 1745 edition was misattributed to Las Casas. The “popish prince” seemed to be a reference to England’s last Catholic monarch, King James II. However, he reigned sixty years before this edition was published.

William and Mary were followed by another Protestant ruler appointed by Parliament: Anne, Mary’s sister. Catholicism and Catholic rulers were out of the question, which frustrated and upset the mostly Catholic Scots and Irish, who wanted the Catholic King James II’s lineage to return to the throne, leading to Jacobite uprisings that continued into the 1740s.<sup>71</sup> As such, this 1745 edition of anti-Catholic text attributed to Las Casas fits perfectly in context. It is particularly significant that this text was credited to Las Casas, even though he was not the author. This misattribution demonstrates how closely Las Casas became linked with anti-Catholic discourse in the English consciousness.

### Conclusion

Bartolomé de las Casas’ *Brevísima Relación* underwent major transformations in Protestant England. The text was translated and presented in various English editions in a way that undermined Las Casas’ original intention: to persuade the Spanish to use more Catholic methods to colonize. It became a text to showcase Catholic cruelties and to justify anti-Catholic policies and actions in Protestant England. The prologues to each edition reflect strong religious tensions, but also reveal how desperately some English Protestants were to provide justification for their ideologies and policies. This desperation was at its strongest in 1656, when *Tears of the Indians* was published. The other prologues from 1583, 1699, and 1745 were more moderate in tone, while the prologue from 1689 was an anomaly. Nevertheless, the prologues of these editions of *Brevísima Relación* played an important role in England’s formulation of propaganda for their own colonial methods and project, in opposition to that of the Spanish.

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<sup>70</sup> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Liberty and Property, and No Pretender, or The Miserable Case of Protestants in Great Britain Under a Popish Prince, If any shall happen to wear the Imperial Crown of that Nation, In which it is provided, That a Popish Prince and a Protestant Nation cannot subsist together*. (London: Printed for Jacob Robinson, at the Golden Lion in Ludgate Street, 1745)

<sup>71</sup> Hunt, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. A Concise History*, vol. 1: To 1740, 544.