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Translating the Histories: The Spanish accounts of the New World conquests adapted into English

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Translating the Histories:

The Spanish accounts of the New World
conquests
adapted into English

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Honor Scholar Program
4/10/17

The motivation for this project

Something that has driven me to complete this project as my Honor Scholar thesis has been my love for the Spanish language. I began studying it at the start of high school, where I excelled in the largely unchallenging coursework and decided to continue studying in college. When I arrived at DePauw I realized how little I knew of the language, but also how much I could do with it. In my four years at DePauw University I've had the opportunity to learn from fantastic professors here, many of whom have helped me in my current project, and all of whom have given me the skills and confidence to work with the language.

And of course, the primary motivation for this project has been my interest in translation. As much as I've developed academically and in my abilities with the Spanish language, I have not been given many opportunities through coursework in the university to attempt translation. During the spare time that I had during my junior year, I tried translating as a minor hobby, always carrying with me a copy of *Cuanto sé de mi* by José Hierro and a notebook with stanzas I had scrawled in poor handwriting. Having this brief taste of this showed me some of the challenges of translating, the joy of engaging in something so mentally stimulating and demanding, and the satisfaction of reading the finished product. Each line that I put to English was a way of vindicating my decision to stay dedicated to studying Spanish and taking it seriously. I had the beginnings of a skill that I wanted to develop more. And so I decided upon my capstone project for the Honor Scholar program while abroad in Quito: I wanted to translate much larger, more complicated works, writings that were interesting and significant while perhaps overlooked by most people.

I initially considered looking for works of poetry, but couldn't think of a way to tie together pieces that I found worthwhile; I later settled on major historical writings on the Spanish colonization of America after encountering in a bookstore what would be one of my translated works: Francisco López de Gómara's *Historia General de las Indias*. Following this I immediately knew that I also wanted to translate works from Bartholome de las Casas- a figure that I had written on before and whose life and ideals were inspirational to me. I found a collection of his works compiled by Juan Antonio Llorente, which contained a missive to his liege that I had not previously heard of and could not find much information about online: *Remedio contra la despoblacion de las Indias-Occidentales*. I had also considered translating passages from Alonso de Ercilla's poetic epic *La Araucana* and letters from Christopher Columbus, but later turned these down as it came to be overly ambitious; I do not regret working with just two works however, as I came to find them very rich in their content and worth the additional time spent on analysis.

And so, I have here two texts translated from Spanish into English: chapters from

Gómara's *Historia General* that detail the early events and culture of the New World following its discovery, and Las Casas' missive on how to reform Spain's colonization scheme and dominion over the Native Americans. I've also included an overview of the translation process, the time period in which both of these works deal, and the authors and their respective works.

Why translation matters

An issue that has been noted in publishing circles is that a very small share of works in English are works originally from other languages. While only 2-3% of published works in the United States and Great Britain are translations of foreign works, over a quarter of published works in France and Spain are translations, and 70% of works in Slovenia have origins in foreign languages.¹ This disparity means that, while other countries have some exposure to different cultures and ideas, native English readers may tend to be more isolated and unfamiliar with them. Literary translators bridge the gap created by language barriers, and can offer readers an opportunity to connect to other cultures and their points of view.

It is particularly important to reanalyze texts that serve as historical sources, and to make them presentable for modern audiences. A good translator of historical works can make the antiquated language of old texts easier to understand, provide historical background and annotations necessary for a reader to use the translation, and note the nuances in tone and word choice to expose an author's viewpoints or biases- an important part of analyzing Spanish writers' attitudes towards Native Americans. Retranslating history also provides another perspective through which to examine the past. Different translators can produce numerous finished products given their interpretation of the original text, which can use words and phrases with various possible translations, or simply unclear or ambiguous language.

The translation process

In the introductory sections to his work, Lopez de Gómara asks the future translators of his writings the following requests: "*that they guard carefully their wording... that they do not leave out nor add to this work.*" This is an important reminder to the translator that their job is to portray the words and thoughts of the selected author, and not their own. This means examining the intent of the author, and portraying this intent and voice in the target language. Along with this obligation to the original author, the translator has the obligation of making the work legible and understood to the target audience. For instance, Spanish and English often follow different rules regarding

¹ Anderson, Hephzibah. *Why won't English speakers read books in translation?* BBC Culture. 21 October 2014. Web.

word order (particularly in the works which I have translated), and preserving the syntax of a sentence translated from Spanish into English can often produce sentences that are either difficult to understand or different in meaning. Another example is that Spanish adjectives can often be used alone with the assumption that it refers to a type of person or a previously mentioned thing; it could make more sense to translate these with that assumed noun explicitly stated in English. These two rules are among the most important in translating a work, though they can often conflict with each other, and I frequently questioned whether my decisions in how to write a sentence into English required some change to make its intent clearer, or whether a decision that I had made constituted over-clarification or the addition of unnecessary parts.

Physically, translating requires a great deal of time and effort. Among modern professional translators, computer assisted translation is widely used, in which help translators use specialized programs that can offer dictionaries, grammar checkers, document-specific word banks, and other useful functions; some programs automatically translate works and leave the translator to merely edit what the program has produced. For this project, no such programs were used; I utilized my own understanding of the Spanish language, Spanish dictionaries including the *Diccionario de Autoridades* for words whose meaning might have changed over time, reference materials to identify certain places, people, and things of the era, and assistance from DePauw's Spanish faculty when I encountered phrases that were difficult to translate, particularly from my advisor Paul Johnson.

In my first run-through of a section, I would translate what I could easily identify, and bracketed more difficult portions to revisit- typically confusing or idiomatic phrases, and words that could not be identified in my dictionaries- adding any relevant notes for consideration. In a second run-through, these bracketed portions would be reviewed, problematic terms and phrases would be more thoroughly reviewed, any background information that I thought was necessary for the reader would be researched (eg. the value of certain currencies, the location of certain places mentioned, etc), and my advisor was consulted if any terms and phrases could not be resolved using my own knowledge or specialized sources. In later run-throughs, the portions translated into English would be reviewed and edited, with changes made to punctuation and phrasing for a clearer reading.

In this project, the age of the texts presented several additional challenges when translating, as several differences exist between modern Spanish and 16th century Spanish. Even significant differences appeared between the two works, as the result of the writers' personal preferences for words and phrases, and the lack of a standard Spanish in this time period (the *Real Academia Espanola* was formed later during the 18th century to create standard rules for the

language). One notable element in these works is the presence of spellings that are different from standard modern Spanish; Las Casas' writing perhaps featured the most examples of this, with changes between the letters "b" and "v", "g" and "j", and "i" and "y", frequently appearing in the text (all of which sound similar in certain contexts).

Historical overview: Spain's rise to imperialism

The texts that I have dealt with for this project were written in the mid-16th century, with Las Casas' work published in 1542 and De Gómaras' in 1553, around a period of immense growth for Spain before it reached the height of its power. This was during the reign of Charles V, a member of the powerful Hapsburg dynasty and an heir to both the Trastámara and Valois-Burgundy dynasties, which combined with Spain's new colonial ventures led to a massive consolidation of land during his reign; his domain came to include Spain (of which he was the first to rule as a united country), Sicily, Naples, Burgundy, and the Netherlands (of which he was a native, raised in Flanders), along with hegemony over many of the minor German and Italian states as Holy Roman Emperor; during this time period, the Spanish had colonized much of the Caribbean, the northern coasts of South America, and Central America. His successor, Phillip II, would continue colonizing the New World and inherit Portugal, taking Spain to its highest heights and making it the original empire on which the sun never sets.

Understanding the mentality of the Spanish conquistadors requires us to look at the Iberian Peninsula about seven centuries before this time, during the conquest of the peninsula by the Moors of the Umayyad caliphate. The former Visigothic kingdom that arose after the fall of Rome and which had spanned the entirety of the peninsula had been largely conquered by the Umayyads, leaving much smaller Christian territories of Asturias and Catalonia in the northwest and northeast. It was a low point in history for the Christian Europeans, who looked poised to lose Iberia and face incursions into the Frankish lands.

And yet, the Muslim advance came to a halt in 722, after the Umayyad forces crossed into Asturias after facing a catastrophic defeat in the Battle of Toulouse. An Asturian band of 300 led by the nobleman Don Pelayo successfully defended against and repelled the Umayyads, estimated to have had 1,400 (though many medieval accounts, adding a sensationalist spin to the tale, use estimates ranging over a hundred thousand), using the mountainous terrain to their advantage. Further losses were incurred by the Umayyads when villagers from nearby conquered settlements, inspired by the events of the battle, took up arms and killed most of the retreating Muslim troops; and then again, when the Asturians under Pelayo defeated Moorish reinforcements sent in to retaliate. This pushback would pave the way for future wars between

the Muslims and Christians in Iberia. And so, while other European powers fought the Crusades in the East, the Spanish in Iberia fought the *Reconquista* - a series of holy wars over seven centuries that pushed the boundaries of Christendom further south into the peninsula.

The Reconquista was a major force that developed the Spanish identity. The campaigns led in this era represented the Spanish reclaiming what belonged to them, their very *home*; it represented their dedication to Christ and the faith, by struggling against the Muslim invaders and reclaiming the land for Christendom; it represented the sheer might of the Spanish. Spaniards of renown in this period were often men who took part in the campaigns: Catholic monarchs who gained immense territories or significant locations, such as Alfonso VI who reclaimed the imperial city of Toledo, or soldiers such as Rodrigo Diaz-"El Cid"- who became legendary as a result of their heroism during this era.

Spanish culture also became defined by its piety. This in part can be attributed to the Reconquista and the polarizing struggle between the Catholics and the Moors, which promoted less infighting among Christians. The association between religiosity and participation in the reclamation of Christendom was important in this, and the link became stronger later in the Reconquista. Muslims and non-believers in the targeted lands of conquest were often forced to convert. The Inquisition also constitutes an easy explanation for the religious unity of the Spanish; the Spanish monarchs tended to have high degrees of loyalty to the pope, and towards the end of the 15th century began enacting policies to root out heresy. With a population that was already highly Catholic, the Inquisition further strengthened the religious unity of Spain, which didn't see the Protestant backlash experienced in France or the German states.

Thus, at the end of the 15th century, the area we recognize as Spain came to be held by four powers: Castile, in the center of the peninsula; Aragon, on the east coast bordering the Mediterranean; Navarre, encompassing the small Basque lands to the north near France; and Granada to the south, as the last Muslim territory in the peninsula. The rulers of Castile and Aragon - respectively Isabel I and Ferdinand V - had been joined in marriage and ruled a united Spain (although many of the institutions of their respective kingdoms would remain separate and influential during their rule). Both rulers were very religious, maintaining good relations with the Pope, and were eventually given the title of The Catholic Monarchs for their work in promoting the faith. It was during their reign that the Reconquista ended, with a series of military campaigns led against Granada from 1482 to 1492 that saw their territories absorbed into Spain. Their reign in Iberia was also marked by the formation of the Spanish Inquisition and the religious persecution of Jews and Muslims in the country; the Alhambra Decree in 1492 in fact expelled the Jews that would not convert to Christianity.

It was towards the end of 1492, after the wars against Granada had concluded, that the Catholic Monarchs decided to sponsor Christopher Columbus' expedition which resulted in the European discovery of the Americas. Columbus is an interesting figure because he is possibly one of the most studied people in history, and simultaneously the least understood. Many reasons have been postulated for his decision to sail through the Atlantic, a common one being that he was attempting to find new trade routes to the Orient; López de Gómara claims as the principal reason in his *Historia* that Columbus had received news of a new continent from sailors that had visited it by accident, along with other possibilities that circulated at his time. Whatever the reasoning, the result was the discovery of Hispaniola and the New World. Upon Columbus' successful return, the Catholic Monarchs sent emissaries to the pope, who granted them rights to the New World with the intent to civilize the natives and bring them to the Christian faith; the Spanish would later negotiate with Portugal on what areas each nation could colonize.

Once news of the discovery had become common knowledge, several people in the upper classes made requests to conquer and explore other parts of the New World, recognizing the potential profits to be made from the resources there. While permanent titles of nobility were typically not granted in the Americas, conquistadors and explorers in this era could be made governors or given *encomiendas*- a form of temporary vassalage where Spaniards would be given natives as servants and laborers. Clearly, the colonization of the Americas was attractive for the economic opportunities that it presented. It was a source of crops like sugar, new spices, an abundance of precious metals and stones, and an entire population that could be subjugated to help exploit it all.

More than this though, many found themselves motivated by a need to promote the Catholic faith and Spanish culture to the idolatrous, "uncivilized" people of the New World; after all, this was the nominal reason for it all. Early on, parallels were drawn between the new conquests and the Reconquista, which had only just ended in the peninsula and which many saw as living on through the conquests in the Indies. The righteous Spaniard of this age did not fight against the Moor, but against the Aztecs, the Incas, the Borinquen or any of the other various natives there.

The Native Americans suffered greatly as a result of the colonizers and conquistadors, who with only a few exceptions easily conquered the cultures of the New World. These people who were subjugated were often forced into hard labor, particularly in mines and on plantations; they often had few days of rest, almost no compensation if any, and many times died from exhaustion or sickness; and they were controlled through fear and violence perpetrated by overseers. The harsh conditions imposed by the Spanish, and the new communicable diseases

that natives were exposed to resulted in massive decreases in the population of the Americas. While laws were nominally in place to protect them, they often went unenforced as they conflicted with the interests of the American nobility. In the works that I have dealt with, both Las Casas and Gómara address these issues from opposite sides of the fence- with Las Casas seeking to reform the system of governance in the New World, and Gómara as a supporter of the status quo.

López de Gómara: *A General History of the Indies*

Born around the year 1510, Francisco López de Gómara was a priest and historian who came to be employed as a chaplain in 1540 by Hernan Cortes, the conquistador who had defeated the Aztecs. While Gómara himself never visited the New World, he had access to accounts from his benefactor and other conquistadors, along with reports and news that came to Spain, with which he wrote his *Historia General de las Indias*. This work is divided into two volumes, with the first covering general details of the New World and some of its conquests, while the second focuses on Hernan Cortes and his conquest of Mexico. His contemporaries held mixed views on the work, with some relying on it in their own histories, while other significant figures- notably Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a conquistador- criticized its reporting of events and extreme glorification of Cortes. The Spanish crown banned its publication a few years after it was initially printed, and remained out of print in Spain for almost two centuries; it did manage to be published in other countries during this time period. His work is today regarded as an important (albeit not authoritative) source of events in the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

While he attempts in some respects to tell about events “as they happened”, Gómara often takes strong stances towards the people and politics of this time. A clear instance is his support for Cortes, his benefactor, who he covers closely in the second volume of his work; in his first volume, among the passages that I have translated is at least one brief chapter briefly dedicated to him. Christopher Columbus is another figure that Gómara admires for his accomplishment of discovering the Indies, and who he comes to defend when reporting about complaint from his mistreated men. He says of him in an epitaph:

“He ventured to navigate by seas and lands that he did not know, going only on the words of a pilot, and if it all went to his head, as many pretend, it merits much more praise. However it was proposed, he accomplished something of grandiose glory, such that never will his name be forgotten, nor Spain ever cease to give him the thanks and praise that he deserves.”

Perhaps most significant are Gómara’s stances towards the Native Americans, whom he often portrays as sinners, adulterers, and idolaters among other things. He saw the new conquests in the Americas as an extension of the Reconquista in Spain, implying that it was

providence that led the Spanish discovery, “so that the Spanish might always fight against the infidels and enemies of the holy faith of Jesus Christ.” Even when describing rather grotesque scenes of violence or cruelty against the natives, Gómara only rarely describes the Spaniards as being too extreme, while implying that the natives largely deserved whatever cruelties they received because of their nature. He was an imperialist, who supported the wars led to subjugate the natives, and the Spaniards’ enrichment from their colonial ventures through the system of *encomiendas* (though he does comment that their practices caused the deaths of many in the New World).

One thing that initially struck me about Gómara’s work was a certain sense of wonder with which he seemed to write. I was constantly reminded that the work I was reading was not a textbook, but the actual account of someone who lived during this time period, and who heard constantly throughout his adult life about the extraordinary news coming from this new exotic land, “being so grand, and almost as large as the old... being in all of its contents different from those of the old.” Reading the first few pages, I was again taken a bit aback to read him discuss ancient philosophers and religious texts, in what appeared to be an attempt to prove the potential existence of a new world to his readers who likely would never visit it, followed by a description of the boundary of the lands discovered which read like verbal instructions to complete a connect-the-dots puzzle; all this before even hearing his descriptions of native life in the Americas, and the strangeness it evoked to a European at that time.

In this project, I chose to focus on portions of his first volume that detail Columbus’ discovery and events that occurred in the Caribbean and *Tierra Firme*, a province of the time comprising the northern portions of South America. When translating his work, some common difficulties were the language, diction, and syntax used, which frequently differed from the modern language. In several instances, I changed punctuation- most often the use of colons and semicolons- which if unchanged would have led to unclear meanings or nonsensical usage in English. The copy of the text which I used for the base of the translation was published in 1985 by Ediciones Orbis, an edition with the text modernized by Pilar Guibelalde; this edition featured orthography that more closely resembles modern Spanish.

Working with the terminology in this text was a challenge, and identifying certain terms (such as nautical terms, classes of boats, the titles of administrators and magistrates, etc) required resources other than a simple Spanish dictionary. Similarly, Gómara writes about many locations and things in the New World using names and words that are not used today. In many cases I had to consult different resources to find the modern locations of towns and provinces mentioned in the text under different names; when referring to certain titles specific to the Spanish

bureaucracy or without clear equivalent terms in English, or when naming items that I could not identify (which tended to be fruits, plants, and animals), I used italics with the given Spanish term and added footnotes for clarity when applicable.

Bartolomé de Las Casas: “*Remedio*”

Born in 1484, Bartolomé de Las Casas came to the Indies initially as part of the wave of explorers and conquistadors looking to make their fortunes in the New World. Participating in the campaign of 1513 to conquer Cuba and receiving an encomienda there, Las Casas witnessed firsthand the Spaniards’ violence, cruelties, and atrocities against the Indians, and became critical of the Spanish mode of subjugating the natives. He came to abandon his encomienda, became a Dominican friar, and dedicated much of his life to campaigning for the rights of the Native Americans; he travelled frequently between the New World where he preached to the natives, and Spain where he would attempt to gain support at the royal court for policies to help the natives. While his efforts were heavily opposed by encomenderos in the Americas, he found support among other religious figures and- at various times- members of the royal court; he came to earn the titles of *Protector of the Indians* and Bishop of Chiapas.

Las Casas’ missive *Remedio contra la despoblacion de las Indias-Occidentales* (in English, *A Remedy for the Depopulation of the West Indies*) was written to be presented to Charles V in 1542, at a gathering of theologians, magistrates, and members of the Council of the Indies, to discuss the status of the Native Americans and policies to better protect them. Las Casas proposed at this meeting that the system of encomiendas should be abolished, that the Spaniards should be denied the use of natives as slaves, servants, or vassals of any kind, and that the natives should be treated as free Spaniards, subject only to the King of Spain. He listed twenty arguments, based on his personal experiences in the Americas and certain legal precedents, to prove that the encomiendas system was not legally permissible, moral, or beneficial. At the end of the gathering, the emperor signed the “New Laws”, which gave the Native Americans more rights, regulated the abilities of the encomenderos, and called for a gradual phasing out of the encomiendas system. However, the laws faced a great deal of resistance in the New World, and many encomenderos refused to comply with the laws; revolts occurred in areas where governors attempted to fully enforce the regulations against the will of the encomenderos, such as Peru.

Remedio constitutes a relatively brief text in comparison to Gómara’s *Historia General*, or even that of Las Casas’ *Historia de las Indias* (a text which I originally wanted to work with, before discovering how rare and lengthy it was), as it was intended to be read in a royal audience to the

king; I was able to translate this fully for my project. The text used was featured in the *Coleccion de las obras del venerable Obispo de Chiapa*, edited by the historian Juan Antonio Llorente and originally published by the Casa de Rosa in Paris, 1822.

Similarly to the *Historia General*, the antiquity of the language presented difficulties in understanding and translating its content, and punctuation was often changed when put into English. The orthography in this edition better resembled that of Las Casas' time, and so certain words used spellings that are not used in modern Spanish (eg. *enagenacion* rather than *enajenación*, *reynos* rather than *reinos*); acute accent marks were sometimes absent in words that would require them in modern Spanish, such as those that use the suffix *-ion*, while they were often added to single-letter conjunctions and prepositions. Certain spelling errors appeared in this edition, likely the result of the publisher, with the most common error being that *cuidado* (the noun "care") was consistently spelled *ciudado*. The most foreign terms used in Las Casas' writing consist of titles in the Spanish bureaucracy, which I have attempted to define in the footnotes.

Resources used in this project

Again, the works used in this project were the 1985 Ediciones Orbis publication of Gómara's *Historia General de las Indias*, and Juan Antonio Llorente's compilation of Las Casas' works, published by the Casa de Rosa in 1822 (and made available in our own Roy O. West library). Numerous online and physical sources were used to translate individual words, among them WordReference, Wiktionary, a physical copy of Webster's Spanish-English Dictionary, and the online Diccionario de Autoridades- an 18th century dictionary which contains a more antiquated roster of words and definitions that proved useful for defining some terms encountered. For the overview of Spanish history and each author listed here, I used Pereira-Muro's *Culturas de España*², Simpson's *The Encomienda in New Spain*³, and Zavala's *New Viewpoints on the Spanish Colonization of America*⁴, supplemented by my own knowledge and previous writings that touch on these topics.

² Pereira-Muro, Carmen. *Las Culturas de España*. Houghton-Mifflin: Boston. 2003. Print

³ Simpson, Leslie Byrd. *The Encomienda in New Spain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950. Print

⁴ Zavala, Silvio Arturo; Coyne, Joan. *New Viewpoints on the Spanish Colonization of America*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press; London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1943. Print

Selections from
A General History of the
Indies
Volume I: Hispania Victrix

Francisco López de Gómara

To the Readers

All of history, although it may not be well written, is delightful. Therefore I do not have to recommend my own work, but advise how it is so agreeable for the amount of new various things, and so notable as delightful for its many oddities. The romance brought forth is straightforward and which contains, in an agreeable and equal order, short chapters by saving words, and clear yet brief sentences. I have worked by telling events as they happened. If there should be any error or fault, supply it as a courtesy, and if there should be roughness or blandness, ignore it, considering the rules of history; which I attest to you to not be out of malice. The telling of when, where and who did something, is well addressed; nevertheless, to say how is difficult; and so, there tends to be this difference. Thus, it should satisfy whomever reads history knowing what they desire in total and in truth, taking for certain that to explain these things is deceptive and even very hateful; that which is general offends little if it is public, although it touches on anything; brevity is pleasing to all; it only discontents the curious, who are few, and the hateful, who are annoying. To that end I have included in this work two styles; that I am brief in the history and particular in the conquest of Mexico. Taking into account the arrivals and conquests that many have made at great costs, and that I do not write on these, I will say that I have decided to ignore some for being of little importance; others because the majority of them are of the same manner; others for not knowing of them, and that had I known I might not have excluded them. Finally, no other human historian satisfies everyone; because if one merits some praise, he is not contented with any of it and pays it with ingratitude; and he who says what he would not want to hear, then criticizes all, with what really is condemned.

To the Translators

Some, for venture, will want to translate this history to another language, so that those of his nation will understand the marvels and greatness of the Indies, and know that these works equal, and even surpass, the fame that from them travels through all the world. I greatly request from these people, for the love that they have for history, that they guard carefully their wording, watching carefully the propriety of my romance, that many times replace greater explanations with few words. And I hope that they do not leave out nor add to this work, nor change the letters of the proper names of the Indians, nor of the given names of the Spanish, if they want to fill the occupation of faithful translators; that in any other manner it is most certain that they will corrupt

the surnames of the lineages. I also advise them how I comport these histories in Latin, so that they do not take hardship in it.

**To Lord Charles, Emperor of the Romans,
King of Spain, Lord of the Indies and the New World**

Most sovereign lord: the greatest thing aside from the creation of the world, excluding the incarnation and death it raised, is the discovery of the Indies; and so, they call it The New World. And they call it new not so much for being newly found, but much so for being so grand, and almost as large as the old, which contains Europe, Africa and Asia. It can also be called new for being in all of its contents different from those of the old. The animals in general, although they are few in specie, are of another manner; the fish of the water, the birds of the air, the trees, fruits, brush, and grains of earth, which is not a small consideration of the Creator, these elements being the same thing there and here. However, the men are like us, aside from their color; that in another manner they would be animals and monsters, and would not come, as they do, from Adam. They also do not have writing, nor money, nor beasts of burden: things that are very principle for good order and the mode of living of man; that they go nude, the earth being hot and lacking in wool and linen, is not a novelty. And as they do not know the true Lord our God, they are great in the sins of idolatry, the sacrifice of living humans, the eating of human flesh, speaking in tongues, sodomy, the multitude of women, and other such sins. Although all of the Indians, which are your subjects, are now Christians by the mercy and goodness of God, and by our mercy and that of our fathers and grandfathers, that you have procured their conversion and Christianity. The work and danger, your Spaniards take it happily, as in preaching and converting as in discovering and conquering. Never has any nation like the Spanish one so far extended its customs, its language and arms, nor traveled so far by sea and land with arms raised. And yet much more would have been discovered, subjugated and converted, if your majesty had not been so occupied in other wars; although for the conquest of the Indies your presence is not a necessity, but your word. God wished to uncover the Indies in your time to your vassals so that you would convert them to your holy law, as many wise and Christian men say. They began to conquer the Indies having just finished that of the Moors, because the Spanish must always wage war against infidels; the Pope authorized the conquest and conversion; you took by the letter *plus ultra*, giving to understand the lordship of the New World. It is just, thus, that your majesty favors the conquest and cares greatly for the conquerors. And it is also the reason that all aid and ennoble the Indies, some with holy predication, others with good counsel, others with profitable granaries, others with

laudable customs and policy. It is for this which I have written this history: a work, I acknowledge, requiring a better mind and tongue than my own; but I wished to see it as it is. I have published it so soon, because in not treating the king, it need not await. I dedicate it to your majesty, not because you do not know the things of the Indies better than I, but rather because you see them together, with some particularities so peaceable as new and true. And even because I see it more secure and authoritative under the aid of your imperial name; I hope that the grace and perpetuity of the same history may be given or left. I make it this moment in Castilian so that all the Spanish might enjoy it first. I am currently making it into Latin more slowly, and will finish it soon, god willing, if your majesty orders and favors this. And in it I will say many things which here are unmentioned, as the language suffers it and requires it; which here I make in the naval wars of our time, what I compose; where your majesty, to whom the Lord our God may give a long life and victory over his enemies, has a grand part.

The first passages from Lopez de Gómara's work include an argument for the existence of the New World, and a description of its geography; I have decided to skip these passages so that my translated work will focus on the actual events that Lopez de Gómara describes, which begins with the origins of Christopher Columbus' travels and his discovery of the New World.

The first discovery of the Indies

A caravel navigating through our Ocean sea faced such a strong wind from the east, and so continuous, that it went to stop in land unknown and unmarked on any map or sailing charter. It returned from there in many more days than when it left; and when it arrived here it did not carry anyone other than the pilot¹ and three or four mariners, who, as they became sick from hunger and hard work, died after a little time in port. I have here how the Indies were discovered by the ill luck of the first person to see them, as his life ended without enjoying the discovery and without leaving, or at least without recounting, what the lands were called nor from where they were, nor in what year they found them. Although it was not his own fault, but the malice of others or the envy of what is called fortune. And I do not marvel at the antique histories that boast of great deeds based on small and obscure origins, as we do not know who as of a short time ago discovered the Indies, what an important and new thing it is. If only we had been left at least the name of that pilot, since all that knowledge died with his death. Some took him for an Andalusian,

¹ The overseer of the mariners on a ship.

who traded in the Canaries and Madera when he undertook that great and mortal navigation; others say he was a Vizcayan, who worked in England and France; and others say that he was a Portuguese who went and came from la Mina or India, which adds up well with the name that these new lands took and now have. There are also those who say that the caravel arrived at Portugal, and those who say it was at Madera, or others who say that it was to one of the islands of the Azores; nonetheless, none of these affirm anything. All they agree upon is that the pilot passed away in the house of Christopher Columbus, in whose power the records and the relation of all that large voyage was left, with the markings and latitude of the newly seen and found lands.²

Who Christopher Columbus was

Christopher Columbus was a native of Cuguero, or as some believe, of Nervi, a village of Genoa, a well-known city of Italy. He was descended, as some say, from the Pelestreles of Plasencia in Lombardy. He was brought up from a young age to be a sailor, a very common office among those on the banks of Genoa; and so, he traveled for many years in Syria and in other parts of the Levant. Afterwards he was a teacher in the making of navigational charts, for which he was born to do well. He came to Portugal to take note of the meridional coast of Africa, and of other places where the Portuguese had navigated, to improve upon and sell his maps. He was married in that kingdom, or as many say, in the on the island of Madera, where I think he resided in the season when the ill-fortuned caravel arrived. He housed the patron in his home, who recounted to him the journey that had befallen him and the new lands that he had seen, so that they could be noted in a navigation chart that he bought. The pilot passed away in this interval and left him the relation, the tracing and latitude of the new lands, and thus Christopher Columbus had news of the Indies. As others would have it, so that I might tell all, Christopher Columbus was a good Latin student³ and cosmographer, and that he set himself to find the antipodes, and the rich land Cipango⁴ described by Marco Polo, having read Plato's *Timaeus* and *Criticas*, where it is spoken of a the great island of Atlantis and of a hidden land larger than Asia and Africa; and having read

² Christopher Columbus has been both a well-studied and poorly understood figure in history, as evidenced by this section and the following. While some scholars have proposed that Columbus went in search for new trade routes to the Orient (which is mentioned in the following chapter), Gómara's proposal that Columbus was following a lead from sailors that had already reached the New World by accident is novel. I have not read any other account that would seem to support this, and I also find it odd that where the sailors landed in Europe is unknown when this should be relatively clear if it was the same location as Columbus' residence.

³ *Latino* is not qualified in the text, though it seems reasonable to say "student" or someone with an education since the implication is that Columbus can read and is using this skill to find navigation routes.

⁴ A poetic term for Japan.

Aristotle or Theophrastus, in the "Book of Marvels", which says how certain Carthaginian merchants, navigating from the Strait of Gibraltar towards the west, discovered, at the end of many days, a huge island unpopulated, but abundant and with navigable rivers; and that he read some of the authors accosted by me previously. Christopher Columbus was not erudite, but he was well read. And when he had news of these new lands by the relation of the deceased pilot, he sought out men instructed in what the writers of antiquity said on the matter of other lands and worlds. With whom he consulted most in this was a friar by the name of Juan Pérez de Marchena, who resided in the monastery of la Rábida; and so, he believed to be very true that which the pilot who died in his home had spoken and written. It appears to me that Columbus came to this study to know where the Indies were, already long before then, and without coming to Spain, sought it among the Genoese, who travel all the world to make money, in order to go and discover them. However, he never thought of such a thing until he stumbled upon that Spanish pilot who by the fortune of the sea discovered them.

The work Columbus did to go to the Indies

Once the pilot and the mariners from the Spanish caravel that discovered the Indies, Christopher Columbus proposed that he go in search of them. Nevertheless, as much as he desired it, he had far less with which to do it; because along with not having the funds to supply a navy, he lacked the favor of the king so that if he found the riches that he imagined nobody would deprive him of it. And seeing the King of Portugal occupied in the conquest of Africa and the navigation to the Orient, and the throne of Castile at war with Granada, he sent his brother Bartholomew, who also knew the secret, to negotiate with the King of England Henry VII, who was very rich and without wars, that he give use of his navies and favor in order to discover the Indies, promising to bring him very great treasures from it in little time. And as he brought back a poor dispatch, he began to attempt negotiations with the King of Portugal, Don Alfonso V⁵, in whom he also found no favor nor money in order to go for the riches that he promised, as it contradicted the esteemed scholar⁶ Calzadillo, bishop of Viseo, and one such magister Rodrigo, men of credit in cosmography, who insisted that there wasn't nor couldn't be gold nor other riches in the west, as Columbus affirmed; with which he left very sad and pensive, though for this he did not lose his spirit or hope in his grand venture that he would later have. And so, he embarked in Lisbon and came to Palos de Moguer, where he spoke with Martín Alonso Pinzón, a very skillful pilot, who offered him his

⁵ *Don* and *doña* are terms frequently used in these texts to indicate an individual of any noble status.

⁶ *Licenciado*, a term indicating that the individual has a university degree.

services, and who he had heard say that navigating after the sun by a well-tempered route the vast and rich lands would be found; and with friar Juan Pérez de Marchena, a Franciscan in la Rábida, a cosmographer and humanist, to whom he openly unveiled his heart. This friar encouraged him greatly in his demand and business, and counseled him to try his negotiation with the duke of Medina-Sidonia, Don Enrique de Guzmán, a great and rich lord, and then with Don Luis de la Cerda, Duke of Medinaceli, who had very good equipment in his Puerto de Santa Maria in order to give him the necessary navies and men. And as both dukes took that negotiation and navigation as a dream and things of Italian trickery, as he had done with the kings of England and Portugal, he was inspired to go to the court of the Catholic Monarchs, who enjoyed similar requests, and wrote with the friar Fernando de Talavera, confessor of the queen Doña Isabel. He entered, thus, into the court of Castile in the year 1486. He gave petition of his desire and business to the Catholic Monarchs Don Fernando and Doña Isabel, who were little preoccupied by this, because they had their thoughts placed in expelling the Moors from the Kingdom of Granada, He talked with those who told him to restrain himself and be well with the rulers in the negotiations; but as he was a foreigner and walked poorly dressed, and without any other credit to him than the that of a minor friar, they neither believed him nor listened to him; from which he felt grand torment in his imagination. Only Alonso de Quintanilla, a senior accountant, who gave him food from his pantry, and listened to him with great interest the things that he promised from the lands never before seen, which served him as amusement to not lose hope of one day successfully negotiating with the Catholic Monarchs. Thus, by means of Alonso de Quntanilla, Columbus had entry and an audience with the cardinal Don Pedro González de Mendoza, archbishop of Toledo, who had great respect and authority with the queen and king, who brought him in the presence of both after having examined him well and listened to his proposal. The monarchs listened to Columbus by this method, and read his memorials; and although at the start they took it to be vain and false what he promised, they gave him hope of being well-dispatched in ending the war with Granada, which they were working to accomplish. With this response Christopher Columbus began to rise in esteem much more than before then, and to be honored and graciously heard by the courtiers, who before had mocked him; and he did not neglect himself a bit in his business when he found occasion. And so, the meeting ended thus, at the seizure of Granada, that they gave him that which he asked, to go to the new lands that he spoke of, to bring gold, silver, pearls, stones, species, and other rich things. The Catholic Monarchs similarly gave him a tenth of the incomes and royal rights to in all of the lands that he discovered and won without detriment from the king of Portugal, as it was certified. The chapters of this concert took place in Santa Fe, and the privilege of mercy in Granada and on the 30th of April of the same year that they won the city.

And as the monarchs had no money to dispatch Columbus, they were loaned by Luis de Sant Angel, their comptroller, six million maravedis, which is in a more gross count sixteen million ducats.⁷

Two things we will note here: one, that with such little funds they have increased the incomes of the royal crown of Castile in as much as the Indies are worth; second, that at the end of the conquest of the Moors, which had lasted more than eight hundred years, that of the Indies began, so that the Spanish might always fight against the infidels and enemies of the holy faith of Jesus Christ.

The discovery of the Indies, which Columbus made

Christopher Columbus armed three caravels in Palos de Moguer at the cost of the Catholic Monarchs, by virtue of the provisions that were included in the negotiations. He divided among them a hundred and twenty men, mariners and soldiers. In one of them he made Martín Alonso Pinzón pilot; in another Francisco Martín Pinzón, with his brother Vicente Yáñez Pinzón; and Columbus served as pilot and captain of the fleet, in the largest and best ship, and placed with himself his brother Bartholomew Columbus, who was also a skilled mariner. He departed from there Friday, the third of August; he passed by Gomera, one of the islands of the Canaries, where he took rest. From there he continued on the route that he had in his mind, and at the end of many days he came across so much brush, that appeared to be a meadow, and which frightened him, although it was not dangerous; and they say that they had turned, by not being by a set of clouds that they saw nearby, taking them for a certain sign that there was land nearby. He proceeded in his journey, and later a mariner by name of Lepe and another such Salcedo saw a fire. On the following day, which was the eleventh of October of 1492, Rodrigo de Triana said: "Land, land!", and to such a sweet word everyone rushed to see if he spoke the truth, and as they saw, they began to sing "Te Deum laudamos", kneeling and crying tears of joy. They made a signal to their other companions so that they might rejoice and give thanks to God, who had shown them that which they so dearly desired. There you would have seen the extremes of jubilation that the

⁷ This section likely would have been riveting to readers at the time, knowing how much had been gained by the exploitation of the Americas; we have read here how Columbus venture was turned down by numerous rulers, and how this venture that would change the course of world history almost didn't occur but for the whim of the Catholic Monarchs, who apparently entertained other "strange" notions. Possibly the most surprising part of this passage is that the Catholic Monarchs- who likely did not expect Columbus to return with anything- promised him a tenth of the profits from this venture. The imprisonment of Columbus and the revocation of his titles was likely motivated by this deal that had turned out to be so disadvantageous, since the Crown of Spain would have come to lose large sums of income from the Americas to Columbus and his descendants.

mariners took to making: some kissed the hands of Columbus, others offered themselves to him as servants, and others asked him his mercies. The land that they saw first was Guanahaní, one of the islands of Lucayas, which fall between Florida and Cuba, on which they then took to land, and claimed possession of the Indies and the New World, which Christopher Columbus discovered, for the Monarchs of Castile.

From Guanahani they went to Baruoca, a port of Cuba, where they took a handful of Indians; and returning to the island of Haiti, dropped anchor in the port that Columbus called Puerto Real. They left very hastily for land, because the captain hit a large rock that opened a hole in the ship, from which nobody died. The natives, when they saw the explorers head for land with arms and in such a hurry, fled from the coast to the hills thinking that they were like the Caribs who were coming to eat them. Our own host ran towards them and reached only one woman. They gave her bread, wine, confits, a shirt and other pieces of clothing, as she came nude, and sent her to call for the others. She went and told her people such things of the men recently arrived, who then proceeded to come to the marina and talk with our men, without understanding nor being understood by more than signals and gestures, like mutes. They brought birds, bread, fruit, gold and other things, in exchange for bells, beads of glass, needles, bags, and other such trinkets, which was not a small joy to Columbus. Guacanagarí, the king or (as they say there) cacique of that land, and Columbus greeted each other. They gave to one another presents as a sign of friendship. The Indians brought boats to take the clothing and gifts from the flagship caravel, which was damaged. They walked so humbly, so well behaved and helpfully as if they were slaves of the Spanish. They adored the cross, they beat themselves on the chest, and threw themselves to their knees saying Ave Maria, like the Christians. They asked the natives about Cipango; they knew of Cibao, where there was much gold: Christopher Columbus could not contain his joy hearing them name Cibao and seeing great signs of gold there, and being sensible and sociable people; nor could he wait for the time to return to Spain to give the good news and show all of his labors to the Catholic Monarchs. And so, he then made a fortress of land and wood, with the permission of the cacique and with the help of his vassals, in which he left thirty-eight Spaniards with the captain Rodrigo de Arana, a native of Córdoba, so that they might learn the language, and the secrets of the land, and the people, while he left and returned. This was the first house or settlement that the Spanish made in the Indies. He took ten Indians, forty parrots, many turkeys, rabbits (which they called hutías), sweet potatoes, chili peppers, maize, with which they make bread, and other things strange and different from our own, as testimony to that which he had discovered. He measured similarly all the gold that he had stowed away in the caravels, and after saying his farewells to the thirty-eight companions that he left there, and to the Guacanagarí, who cried, he parted with two

caravels and with all the remaining Spaniards from this Puerto Real; and with the prosperous wind that he had he arrived in Palos in fifty days, in the same manner, as I have said, that he discovered the Indies.

The Honors and Mercies that the Catholic Monarchs bestowed upon Columbus for having discovered the Indies

The Catholic Monarchs were in Barcelona when Columbus disembarked in Palos, and left from there. Although the route was long, and inconvenient from the many things which he brought, he was famous and highly honored, as they left to see him by the road for the honor of having discovered another world and bringing with him grand riches and men of new form, color and dress. Some said that he had found the route that the obstructed; others, that he found that which Plato in his *Criticas* places as lost with the waves and the great silt that grew in the sea; and others, that he had fulfilled that which Seneca divined in the tragedy *Medea*, where he says: "There will come a time many years from now, in which new worlds will be discovered, in which Thile will not be the end of the earth." Finally, he entered the royal court, with much desire and discourse among everyone, on the third of April, a year after leaving from there. He presented to the Monarchs the gold and things which he brought from the other world; and they, and however many were present, were marveled seeing that all the things present, excluding the gold, were as new as the land from where they came. They praised the parrots, coming in many beautiful colors: some very green, others in a variety of color, others yellow, all in all with thirty strains of diverse colors; and few of them seemed similar to the others brought. The hutías (or rabbits) were tiny, with the ears and tail of a rat, and of a gray color. The courtiers tried the peppers, a specie of the Indies, that burned their tongues, and the potatoes, which were sweet roots, and the turkeys, which are better than our own fowls and hens. They were amazed that there was no wheat in the New World, but that the inhabitants ate pan made of corn. That which they looked at most were the men, who brought tendrils of gold in the ear and nose, and who were neither white, nor black, nor brown, but more like those jaundiced or cooked pear. Six of the Indians were baptized, as the others were not in court; and the King, the Queen, and the prince Don Juan, their son, were the godparents, to authorize in person the holy baptism of Christ upon these first Christians of the Indies and the New World.⁸ The Monarchs were very attentive to the relation that Christopher

⁸ Las Casas portrays this scene as much more tense. Columbus, according to him, had initially brought the natives to Spain to serve certain courtiers as servants; Isabel took great offense to this and berated Columbus in front of the courtiers, demanding that the Indians be freed.

Columbus gave by word, marveled to hear the news that the Indians had no clothes, nor letters, nor money, nor iron, nor wheat, nor wine, nor any animal greater than the dog; nor great navies, but rather canoes, which are a specie craft made from one piece. They could not resist hearing that there, on those islands and new lands, some men ate each other, and that all were idolatrous; and the Monarchs promised, if God gave them life, to end that abominable inhumanity, and to eradicate idolatry in all of the lands of the Indies that might come into their hands; I support their Christianity, and that they kept their word. They bestowed many honors upon Christopher Columbus, having him sit beside them, which was a great favor and love, as it is a custom of Antiquity in our Spain for the vassals and royal servants to always be standing at the side of the King, in observance of royal authority. They confirmed him his tenth of the royal rights: they gave him the title and office of Almirante of the Indies, and to Bartholomew Columbus an office as governor. Christopher Columbus put, around the coat of arms that they conceded to him, these words:

For Castile and for León

The New World was found by Colón

From this I suspect that the Queen favored the discovery of the New World more than the King; and also because none were permitted to travel to it other than the Castilians; and if any Aragonese went there, it was with his own license and decision. Many of those who had accompanied Columbus in this discovery asked for mercies, though the Monarchs didn't do so for all. And so, the mariner de Lepe left for the Barbary coast, and there renounced his faith, because neither Columbus gave him reward nor the King any mercies, for having seen before anybody else in the fleet the fire on the Indies.

Why they call it The Indies

Before we proceed any further, I want to tell my opinion on this name of "Indies", because some have believed that they call it so as the men in these new Indies are of the same color as the Oriental Indians. Although it appears to me that they very much differ in color and in factions. It is true that they call India the Indies as well. India is the proper name of that large province in Asia where Alexander the Great waged war, which took its name from the river Indus, and is divided into comarcas in many kingdoms. From this great India, which is also named Oriental, large companies of men left, and came (according to Herodotus) to populate Ethiopia, which is between

the Red Sea and the Nile, and which is now possessed by the Prester John. So many of them prevailed there, that they changed their customs and the names that they brought with them; and so, Ethiopia was called India, and for this many say, between Aristotle and Seneca, that India is close to Spain. From this India, thus, of Prester John, where the Portuguese have already traded, they are called our Indies, because the caravel either went or came from there, that with forced time arrived at them; and as the pilot saw these new lands, he called them the Indies, and so Christopher Columbus always named them so. Those who take Christopher Columbus for a great cosmographer think that he called them the Indies after that of the Orient, believing that when he discovered the Indies he went looking for the island Cipango, which falls at the latitude of China or Cathay, and that he decided to go towards the sun as it was easier than going away from it, although many believe that there is no such island. In the end, one way or the other, the islands were called the Indies.

The donation of the Indies, which the Pope made to the Catholic Monarchs

As the monarchs were listening to Christopher Columbus, they dispatched a courier to Rome with the relation of the lands recently discovered, which they call the Indies; and their ambassadors, who a few months ago, had gone to give their congratulations and obedience to the Pope Alexander VI, according to the custom of all Christian princes, they spoke with him and gave him a letter from the King and Queen, with the relation of Columbus. The news, for certain, produced much happiness from the Holy Father, the cardinals, the court and the Roman people, all marveling to hear of things from such a faraway land, and of which the Romans, lords of the world, had never known of before. And because it was the Spanish that found them, the Pope made, of his own will and motive, and in accordance with the cardinals, a donation and mercy to the Monarchs of Castile and Leon, of all the isles and lands that they discovered in the west, so long as that, in their conquest, they sent preachers there to convert the idolatrous Indians. I insert here the papal bull, so that all might read it, and know that the conquest and conversion of the Indies, which we Spanish are performing, is with the authority of the vicar of Christ.

This section is followed by the aforementioned papal bull in its original Latin text.

The return of Christopher Columbus to the Indies

As the Catholic Monarchs had such a good response from the Pope, they agreed the Columbus could return with many men in order to populate those new lands, and to begin the conversion of the idolaters, in accord with the will and mandate of His Holiness. And so, they ordered Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, dean of Seville⁹, to assemble and supply a good fleet of ships for the Indies, in which they might be able to bring up to 1,500 people. The dean then prepared sixteen or seventeen *naos*¹⁰ and caravels, and from there then engaged forever in negotiations from the Indies, and came to be president of them. They searched for twelve clergymen trained in science and conscience, that they might preach and convert, alongside the friar Buil, a Catalan of the order of Saint Benedict, who went as a vicar of the pope with a papal brief. Given the fame of the riches of the Indies, being well armed, and feeling such pride in their rulers, there were many knights and servants of the royal house that were disposed to travel there; and many official craftsmen, such as silversmiths, carpenters, tailors, laborers and other such men. At the cost of the monarchs, they bought many mares, cows, sheep, goats, swine and donkeys, as there were no such animals in the New World. In the same manner, much wheat, barley and legumes were bought for planting; grape vines, sugar cane and other sweet and tangy fruits; bricks and lime for building, and, finally, many other things necessary to found and maintain a town or towns that they might make. The monarchs spent a great deal in these things and in the salaries of close to 1,500 men that were in this armada, which Christopher Columbus took from Cadiz the 25th of September of 1493; which, bringing his route closer to the equinox than the first time, went to survey land on the island that he named Deseada; and without stopping he came to Puerto de Plata on the island of Hispaniola, and then to Puerto Real, where the thirty-eight men had stayed behind; and when he learned that the Indians had killed them all, because they forced themselves upon their women and committed other excesses, or because they did not leave nor would they leave, he turned then to populate Isabela, a city named in memory of the queen; and constructed a fortress on the mines of Cibao, where he put in charge the priest Pedro Margarite as commander. He then dispatched to Antonio de Torres, who brought the news of the death of the captain Arana and of his companions, several grains of gold with the twelve *naos*, among them one of eight ounces which Alonso de Hojeda encountered, so that they would not get lost, along with some very lovely parrots, and some Carib Indians, who eat other men, natives of Aiay, an island called Santa Cruz; and Columbus himself went with three caravels to discover land, as the Monarchs mandated, and discovered Cuba on the southern side, Jamaica and other smaller islands. When he returned he found many Spaniards dead from hunger and ailments, and others

⁹ A generic title given to an important figure in the church.

¹⁰ A vessel similar to a carrack, but smaller in size.

very sick and discolored. He took harsh measures with those who had scorned his brothers Bartholomew and Diego Columbus, and who had acted poorly to the Indians. He hung Gaspar Ferriz, an Aragonese, along with others. He flogged those who blasphemed of him excessively; and as he appeared intransigent and bad, although this was justice, the vicar friar Buil put a ban on the practices to stop the deaths and affronts to the Spanish. Christopher Columbus withheld from him and the other clergymen their rations. And so, things went very poorly, and one another wrote to the monarchs about this, who sent their herald Juan de Aguado there, who made them return to Spain as prisoners, to give reason of their actions before their highnesses, although some say that the friar came first and others complaining and quarreling, who poorly informed the King and Queen. Christopher Columbus came to Medina del Campo, where the court resided¹¹; he brought to the Monarchs many nuggets of gold, some of almost twenty-five ounces; giant pieces of gelled amber, infinite brazilwood, and mother of pearl, feathers and cotton cloaks, in which the Indians dressed. He told them of the discovery that he had made; he grandiosely praised the islands to them as rich and marvelous, that in December, while it is winter in Spain, the birds were raising their young in the trees in the field; that in March, the wild grapes matured; that wheat produced grains in sixty days, seeded in January; that melons matured in forty days; that the radishes and lettuces did the same in less than twenty, and that he smelled the musk of pigeons, and that of crocodiles, of which there were many in each river; that in the sea giant fishes were caught with smaller ones that the natives called *guaican*, and the Spanish *reversos*; and that he thought that there was cinnamon, cloves and other such species, given the odor that came from many valleys. And to this point, he gave them an account of the trials of the Spanish that had been executed, to explain himself better. The Monarchs thanked him for his services and work, reprimanded him for the punishments that he made, and advised him that, in the future, he conduct himself peaceably with the Spanish that went to serve them in those far off lands, and equipped him with eight navies, with which he would return to discover more, bringing men, arms, cloths, and other necessary items.

The Third Voyage that Columbus made to the Indies

Of the eight naos that Christopher Columbus prepared at the cost of the Monarchs, he sent two ahead with supplies and arms for his brother Bartholomew, and he parted along with the other six from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, at the end of May of the year 1497. And as the fame of the riches

¹¹ It was a common practice in the era of the Catholic Monarchs to constantly move the royal court throughout the country, as a way of promoting loyalty among different vassals.

of the Indies came to be known, and French corsairs patrolled the route, he went to Madeira. He dispatched from there three of the navies to Hispaniola, in a direct route, with three hundred men exiled to there. And he left with the other three to the islands of Cabo Verde, to make his journey closer to the Equator. They passed through many dangers with the stillness and the heat. At last they arrived on the firm ground of the Indies, to what they called Paria. It took him three hundred thirty leagues to go the distance between there to the cape of Vela, after which he crossed the sea and arrived at Santo Domingo, a city that his brother Bartholomew Columbus had founded on the banks of the river Ozama, where he was received as a governor, in accord with the provisions that he brought, although with great rumors on the part of many that his brother had made discontent and angry the adelantado¹² and Diego Columbus, who administered the peace and war in his absence.

The hunger, pains, wars and victories that the Spanish had in defending their people and settlements

The land tested the Spanish with numerous classes of pains, of which two were perpetual: the pox, which up to now they did not realize how bad it was, and the change of their skin color to shades of yellow, up to the point of appearing saffron. They believed that this color came to them from eating snakes, lizards and many other bad things to which they were not accustomed, that they ate having no other sources. And even among the Indians more than fifty thousand died of hunger, thus they did not plant corn, thinking that the Spanish would leave having nothing to eat, although later they would realize their damage and perdition, when they saw the fortifications in Isabela and Santo Tomé on Cibao. From that fortress, they left to take food provisions, and captured the women, who would hit their pox blisters. The ciguayos (which is how they call the people of those lands) encircled the fortress to avenge the injuries of their women and children, believing themselves able to kill the Spanish, as the men had done with Captain Arana at Goacanagari. They ended the siege a month later, as Christopher Columbus came to the aid of the colonists. Alonso de Hojeda, who was the commander there after the priest Margarite, went after the besiegers and killed many of them. Columbus then sent the same Hojeda to sue for peace with the cacique Caonabo, to whom that land belonged, and he negotiated in this so well, that he brought him to the fortress, although with him were numerous ambassadors from other caciques offering him men and supplies to help kill and eradicate the Spanish from the island.

¹² A title frequently given to the conquistadors, which gave them the ability to become governors and justices.

Columbus put him in prison, because he had killed more than twenty Christians. As Caonabo was imprisoned, a brother of his gathered five thousand men, the majority of them archers, in order to liberate him. He passed along the way Alonso de Hojeda with five hundred Spaniards and some horsemen that Columbus had given him; and although he came in elegant concert, and fought as a valiant captain, he was routed and captured along with many other archers. By this victory the Spanish were feared and sworn fealty in that province. Some say that in this war that Hojeda took against Caonabo, Columbus was absent and Bartholomew was present; who after this defeated Guarionex and some fourteen other caciques together, who had more than fifteen thousand men in the field, near the village of Bonaó. He attacked them in the night, a time in which they were not accustomed to fighting, and killing many, he captured the fifteen caciques including Guarionex, all of whom he released under oath that they agree to serve him as allies and tributaries of the Catholic Monarchs. With this victory and the release of the caciques, the Spanish were held in high esteem, and began to rule over the Indians and enjoy their land.

The Imprisonment of Christopher Columbus

Bartholomew Columbus became arrogant with the victory over Guarionex, and with the prosperous route that was already bringing the riches of his brother and himself to Spain, and he did not comport himself the same as he did before with the Spaniards, which very much aggravated Roldán Jiménez, the *alcalde mayor*¹³, and he did not stop his use of absolute power, as he wished, against his position and office. In the end, they quarreled, and even said that Bartholomew Columbus threatened him.

And so, Roldán left with some seventy companions who also felt similarly and complained of the Columbus brothers; however, all of them made protest that they did not leave refusing to serve their kings, but to not suffer the wrath of the Genoese; and with this they left for Jaragua, where they resided for many years. And later when he called for Christopher Columbus, he did not want to go; and for this, he accused him of being disobedient, disloyal and mutinous, in the letters that he wrote about him to the Catholic Monarchs, saying that he had stolen from the Indians, forced himself upon the women, cut them open alive and did many other horrid things, and also that he taken two caravels destined to go to Spain, and detained the men aboard with lies. Roldán and his companions wrote to their Highnesses another thousand ill-deeds of Christopher Columbus and of his brothers, ensuring them that they wanted to steal away with the land; that they did not

¹³ A local magistrate presiding over a town, also titled *corregidores*.

let any know of the mines nor take out gold but for their own servants and friends; that they mistreated the Spanish without any cause, and that they administered justice by their whims rather than by rights, and that the Admiral had covered up and kept quiet about the discovery of some pearls that he found on the island of Cubagua, and that they were all appropriated by him and given to nobody else, although they were very sick or acted very bravely. It angered the King greatly that they toured the coast of the Indies in such a manner, and the Queen much more so; and thus they dispatched to the New World Francisco de Bobadilla, a knight of the Order of Calatrava, as governor of those places, and with the authority to punish and send the guilty to prison. This knight went to Hispaniola with four caravels in the year 1499. He made inquiries in Santo Domingo on the commission that was there, and arrested Christopher Columbus and his brothers Bartholomew and Diego. He put them in shackles and sent them in caravels destined for Spain. When they arrived in Cadiz, and the Monarchs heard of it, they sent a letter demanding that they be released and that they come to court. They listened piously to the pardons that Christopher Columbus asked of them, mixed with tears; and as punishment of some fault that he must have had or to get rid of a similar clamor, or perhaps because they did not think that they should leave him with the governance of their lands forever, they removed from him the post of Governor, a thing which he regretted dearly; that they permitted him to return was enough, as his dealings were unfavorable and inflammatory.

The fourth voyage to the Indies that Columbus made

For three years Columbus was in Spain on this deed, at the end of which, in 1502, he took at the cost of the Monarchs four caravels, in which he made for Hispaniola; and when he was close to the river Ozama, he was not allowed to enter Santo Domingo by Nicolás de Ovando, who at the time governed the island. This struck him gravely, and he wrote to say that since the governor did not want him to enter the very city that he had made, he would have to look for a port where he was safe; and thus he left for Puerto-Escondido, and from there, wanting to look for a passage by which to cross the Equator, as he had given the impression to the Monarchs, he went right to the west until he reached the cape of Higueras. He continued along the meridional coast and ran it until reaching Nobre de Dios, from which he returned to Cuba, and then Jamaica, and there lost two of the four caravels that were left to him from the discovery, and was left without boats capable of bringing him to Santo Domingo. There the ill luck grew on him, as many of the Spaniards became sick, the healthy waged war, and the Indians refused them food. Francisco de Porras,

captain of one caravel, and his brother Diego de Porras, the Contador¹⁴ of the armada, incited a revolt among the men, and they took as many canoes as they could from the Indians to escape into Hispaniola. When the islanders saw Columbus come, they did not want to give food to them, but rather schemed to kill them. Christopher Columbus then called to some of them, reprimanding them for their scant charity, begged them to send some supplies, and threatened that, if they did not, they would die of pestilence; and as a sign that it would be true, he told them that on some day they would see a bloody moon. The islanders, who saw that the moon was eclipsed in the same hour and day as he said, believed him, as they knew nothing of astrology. They begged forgiveness with many tears, and begging that Columbus not be angry with them, they brought to him what he asked, so that they would be put in good graces with the moon. With the good provisions and service of the islanders, the sick recovered, and were well disposed to fight against the Porras who, as they were unable to cross the sea with such small boats, turned to try to overtake Columbus' ship if he were to come. Bartholomew left to meet with them, and they fought. he killed some, injured many and imprisoned both Diego and Francisco de Porras. This was the first battle between Spaniards in the Indies, and in memory of the victory, Christopher Columbus called this this port Santa Gloria, which lies in the province of Seville of Jamaica, where he was stationed for a year, until he had that by which to go to Santo Domingo.

The death of Christopher Columbus

After this conflict Christopher Columbus returned to Spain, so that nobody would accuse him of anything, as it occurred the other times, and to give an account of the new things he discovered. And as he did not find the strait to the west, he came to Valladolid, and there died in May of 1506. They brought his corpse to rest at the Catacombs of Seville, a monastery of Carthusians. He was a man of good stature, robust, *cariluengo*¹⁵, a redhead, freckled, and irritable, crude, and who resisted much the hardships. He went four times to the Indies, and returned other such occasions; he discovered much of the continental coast, he conquered and settled a good portion of the Indies, although at the cost of the Catholic Monarchs; he spent many years in search of support to go there. He ventured to navigate by seas and lands that he did not know, going only on the words of a pilot, and if it all went to his head, as many pretend, it merits much more praise.

¹⁴ A titled position similar to an accountant.

¹⁵ This term has been immensely problematic to me, as I can find no definition or any other work in which it appears. It's possible that it is a fusion of words, as *luengo* showed up in dictionaries as an outdated word for "long"; *cari-* is similar to the word *cara* (face), though ultimately I'm uncertain if such a translation as "long-faced" would be valid.

However it was proposed, he accomplished something of grandiose glory, such that never will his name be forgotten, nor Spain ever cease to give him the thanks and praise that he deserves. The Catholic Monarchs, **don** Fernando and **doña** Isabel, in whose venture, name and business he made the discovery, gave him the title and office of Perpetual Governor of the Indies, and the profits that came to such an estate and to such service as he had done, and to the honor that he had won. Christopher Columbus had, for certain, some adversaries among such good deeds, thus he was arrested two times, once in shackles. He was unliked by his soldiers and mariners, and so, he was faced with revolts by Roldán Jimenez and the Porrás, and Martín Alonso Pinzón in the first voyage that he made; he fought with Spaniards, his own soldiers, and killed some in the battle that took place against Francisco and Diego de Porrás. He was in a plight with the financier of the King, for his sake, and if it had not been for the three Pinzones brothers, he would have left without seeing the land of the Indies. He left behind two sons: don Diego Columbus, who married doña María de Toledo, son of Fernando de Toledo, mayor commander of León, and don Fernando Columbus, who never married and who amassed a library of twelve to thirteen thousand books, which are now owned by the friars of San Pablo, in Seville; a dignified deed from the son of such a father.

The site of the island Hispaniola, and other particularities

In the language of the natives on that island, it is called Haiti and Quizqueia. Haiti is a way of saying "roughness," and Quizqueia "great land." Christopher Columbus called the island Hispaniola; now, many have taken to calling it Santo Domingo, after the most important city it has. The island has, on its longest side, a hundred and fifty leagues, and on its short side, forty, and in circumference measures more than four hundred leagues. It lies north of the Equator between eighteen and twenty degrees; it has on its eastern border the island Boriquén¹⁶, which they call Sant Joan, and on the western border lie Cuba and Jamaica; to the north are the islands of the cannibals, and to the south the cape of Vela, which is part of Tierra Firme¹⁷. On the island there are many good ports, large and bountiful rivers, like the Hatibanico, Yuna, Ozama, Neiva, Nizao, Nigua, Hayna, and Yaques, which enter the sea; there are other smaller rivers, like the Macórix, Cibao, and Cotuy. From these, the first is rich with fish, and the others in gold. There are two notable lakes, one for its bounty and the other for its rarity. That which is in the sierras where the river Nizao starts, is useful to nobody and amazing to everybody, and few come to it. That of

¹⁶ Puerto Rico

¹⁷ The northern portions of South America, which at the time was treated as one province.

Xaragua is salty, although it receives many streams and freshwater rivers, by which it feeds infinite fish, and among them giant tortoises and sharks; it lies close to the sea and runs eighteen leagues. Its banks were highly populated; apart from the salt marsh of Puerto-Hermoso and of the river Yaques, there is a salt flat in Hainoa, which they penetrate into like in Cardona of Catalonia. It is a deep blue color and a very fine, infinite brazil and much cotton and amber; gold mines which are very rich, and even traces which they find in lakes and by rivers. There is also silver and other metals. It is a fertile land, such that it had in it a million men and either all or the majority walked in leather, and if they put on any clothing, it was of cotton. These islanders are of a clear chestnut-brown color, appearing like something jaundiced, of medium stature, strong and robust; they have eyes of *ruines*¹⁸, poor teeth, very open nasal passages, and faces that are too wide, thus they are intentionally left by their midwives for kindness and strength, thus if they give them wounds, they break the spade before the casket. The men and women have hairless bodies, and some even say by art¹⁹; but all the natives have full heads of hair, straight and black.

The religion of the island Hispaniola

The principal deity that those of the island have is the devil, which they paint on each cape so that he appears to them, and he appears many times and even speaks to them. There have infinitely many idols, which they adore indistinctively, and they call to each one by name and offer them their home. One is water, another corn, another health and another victory. They make gods of clay, wood, stone, and of padded cotton; they would go as in pilgrimage to Loaboina, a cave where they reverently honor two wooden statues, named Marobo and Bintael, and offer to them as much as they could bring up the slope. The devil had persuaded them with such lies, that he believed whatever he said, which was to walk among the women as lechers or as incubi; and in touching the navel it would disappear, and they even said it was eaten. They tell that an idol called Corocoto, which the cacique Guamarero adored, left an oratory where he was bound, to eat and lie with the women in the village and of the comarca²⁰, who then gave birth to sons with two crowns each as a sign that their god had fathered them, and that the same Corocoto left above the fire, burning the house of that cacique. They say similarly that another idol of Guamarero, who they call Epilguanita, who has four feet, like a dog, went to the mountains where the inhabitants angered him, and brought him on their shoulders in procession to their temple. They had as a

¹⁸ A type of dark precious stone.

¹⁹ That is to say, that the natives likely did this for cultural purposes, intentionally.

²⁰ An administrative region, like a county.

relic a gourd from which they said the sea and all its fishes had come; they believed that the Sun and the Moon came from a cave, and that from another the first man and woman. It would take a long time to recount similar deceptions, and I would not write on them if not to give some insight on their grand superstitions and blindness, and to awaken the senses to the cruel and endeavored religion of the Indians on the continent, especially of the Mexicans²¹. You can already guess how such priests of the devil were, those who they called bohitis; they were also married to many women, like those earlier, except that they go about dressed in another distinctive form. They possess over all a large degree of authority, being doctors and diviners, although they give no responses nor cures but to the most important classes and to lords. When they must divine and answer to those that ask them, they consume an herb that they call cahoba, pre-ground or ground at the spot, or intake the incense from it through the nose, and with this lose sensation and are presented a thousand visions. At the end of the fury and virtue of the herb, their senses return. They tell of that which they have seen and heard in the counsel of the gods, and say that which the gods want them to say; nevertheless, they respond to the pleasure of the requestor, or by terms that they could not put into words, as is the style of the father of lies. To cure something, they also take this cahoba herb which is not in Europe: they seclude themselves with the sick, circle them three or four times, foam at the mouth, make a thousand contortions with the face and then whisper to the patient sucking at the neck²², saying that they have taken from them through this all the bad. They thoroughly pass their hands over their body from the head to their toes, and then go to cast the illness out of their house, and many times show a rock, bone, or meat that they hold in the mouth, and say then that they are healed, as they have taken out that which causes the ill; the women guard these stones like holy relics, so that they can give birth well. If the sick dies, they lack no excuses, which our own do equally, as there is no death without sickness, as the elders say; but if they find that one did not fast nor guard the ceremonies which is required in such a case, the bohiti are punished. Many of the elders were doctors, and would spit medicines with the mouth by tubes. All, both men and women, are very devoted, and guard their ceremonies well. When the cacique celebrated a festivity of his devoted and most principal idol, all came to the affair. They adorned their god beautifully, the priests put themselves in a ring,

²¹ This offers us a lot of insight into the Spanish mentality entering the conquests of the New World. Religion was perhaps the principal *casus belli* for the conquests, and the papal bulls issued to the Catholic Monarchs urged them to convert the natives of the New World to the Christian faith. Gómara's particular aversion to the inhabitants of Mexico is probably due to the former patronage of Hernan Cortes.

²² *Tozuelo* in text. This is a significant word choice because, in its normal usage *tozuelo* describes the nape of the neck for animals, not humans; thus we could interpret this as an example of the racial prejudices of early colonial Spain, in which the Native Americans are lesser beings to the Spanish conquistadors.

next to their king, and the cacique stood at the entrance of the temple with a drum at his side. The men came painted in black, red, blue and other colors, or covered in branches and garlands of flowers or feathers, and snail shells and conches on their arms and legs by bells; the women also came with similar rattles, more naked if they were virgins, and without any paint; if they were married, they came only with a type of underpants. They entered dancing and singing to the tune of conches. The cacique would greet them with the drum upon coming. Upon entering the temple, they vomited inserting a stick into their throats, to show to the idol that they did not have anything bad in their stomachs. They sat down in squats and prayed, such that they resembled bumblebees, and like so, they produced a strange noise. Many other women would then come with sacks of cakes on their heads, and many roses, flowers and odorous herbs on top. They surrounded those praying, and began to sing a type of old romance in praise of their god. They would all rise to respond. At the end of the romance, they changed the tone and told another in praise of the cacique, and so they offered bread to the idol, kneeling before it. The priests took the bread, blessed it, and shared it as we do the holy wafers, and after this, the feast ended. They saved that bread for the entire year, and took for misfortune the house that was without it, and thus subject to many dangers.

Customs

I have already mentioned that the natives go about nude because of the heat and good temperance of the land, although it can be cold in the sierra. The men marry with as many women as they want or are able, and the cacique Behecio himself had thirty wives. However, one is the main and legitimate wife when determining inheritances; all sleep with the husband, as will many hens with a cock in a pen; more than even their kin, they guard well the mother, daughter and sister, out of fear, as they take it for certain that whoever touches them would die of a horrible death. They wash their children in cold water so that their skin will harden, and they even wash newborns in cold water, and it does them no ill. It is a sin to sleep with a woman who is pregnant or child-rearing. Those women who have no children care for their nephews and nieces, the children of their sister, saying that they are more truly their parents. One should have little confidence and chastity in the women, given what they say and do. They easily join with the women, even like crows or vipers, and worse; putting aside that they are so largely sodomites, loafers, liars, ingrates, manipulable and heartless. Of all their laws, this is the most notable: that for whatever theft that occurs the thief is impaled. They also greatly abhor those with avarice. They bury with their men, especially for their lords, some of their dearest wives, or the most

beautiful, as it is a great honor and favor; others wish to be buried with them out of love. The burial of such people is pompous. They would sit at the burial, and place bread, water, salt, fruit, and weapons around the corpse. They have been at war few times, if it was not over boundaries or for issues of fishing, or with foreigners, and also not without respect to the idols or without that of the priests that divine for them. Their arms were of stones and sticks, which serve as lances and swords, which they call macanas. They have tied to the front of them tiny idols when they wish to fight. For war, they are dyed with jagua, which is the juice of a certain fruit, similar to adormidera without the core, which makes them more black than Jet, and with bija, which also is the fruit of a tree, whose kernels stick to them like wax and tint them a vermillion color. The women smear themselves with these colors to dance their *areito* and so that they prepare meats. *Areito* is like the samba of the Moors, which they dance singing romances in praise of their idols and of their rulers, and in memory of victories and both ancient and notable events, as they have no other forms of histories. They dance very much in these areitos, and sometimes a whole day including the night. They go about drunk from a certain wine common there, which they take in the ring. They are very obedient to their caciques, and so, they do not plant without their permission, nor hunt or fish, which is their principal work, and the fish is their ordinary form of sustenance, and for this they live at the banks of lakes, which have many fish, and the shores of rivers, and they come to be great swimmers, the men as much as the women. In place of wheat they eat maize, which appears something like our corn. They also have yucca bread, which is made from a large white root like a turnip, which they cut and squeeze, because their juice is poisonous. They did not know of the liquor of the grapes, although there are grapevines, and for this they make wine from maize, from fruits and of other very good herbs, which we do not have here, like camito , yayaguas, higo, auzuba, guanabanos, guava , yarubas and guazuma. The pitted fruits are hobos, hicacos, macaguas, guiabaras, and mameis, which is the best of them all. They have no alphabet, nor weights, nor coinage, although there is a lot of gold and silver and other metals, nor a knowledge of iron, as they cut with flint. To avoid being tedious I wish to conclude this chapter of customs, and say that all their things are so very different from our own, as much as the land is new to us.

Syphilis came from the Indies

All of those on the island Hispaniola are syphilitic, and as the Spanish slept with the Indians, they were immediately filled with the disease, a very contagious sickness which torments the victim with great pains. Feeling tormented, and not improving, many returned to Spain to be cured, and others to business; those of which, spread their concealed pain to many courtesan women, and

they to many other men, who passed through to Italy to the war over Naples in favor of the king Fernando II against the French, and spread there that ill of theirs. In the end, the disease was spread to the French, and as it passed in the same time, they thought that they had contracted it from the Italians, and blamed the Neapolitans. The others blamed the French, believing themselves to have contracted it from them. Nevertheless, there were those who called the Spanish responsible for the illness.²³ The doctor Joanes de Vigo and historian Antonio Sabelico make mention of this ill, along with others, saying that it began to settle and become public in Italy in the years of 1492 and '95; and according to Luis Bertomán, that in Calicut they then spread to the Indians this illness of smallpox, a sickness which they do not have there and which killed infinitely many people. And so as the illness came from the Indies, so too did the remedy, which is also another reason to believe that this was its origin, which is the wood and tree named guayacan, of whose kind there are vast reserves. They cure the same disease with the bark from China, which should be the same guayacan or holy bark, which is all the same. This ill was at its beginning very strong, fetid and vile; as of now it doesn't have such rigor nor such infamy.

On the insects cocuyo and nigua, one good and the other bad

Cocuyos are a specie of beetles with wings, or flies, and are slightly smaller than bats. Each has four "stars", which glisten marvelously; they have two of these in their eyes and others below the wings. They illuminate such, that in their clarity, if they fly, one could spin wool, knit, sew, paint, dance, and do another portion of things for the whole night; the natives use them to hunt at night the hutías, which are rabbits, or rats, and also to fish. They walk bringing them bundled at the big toe of the foot, and in their hands, and if they were axes and torches; the Spanish read letters with them, which is more difficult. These cocuyos also serve as a way to kill the mosquitoes which are annoying and refuse to let the men sleep, and in fact I think that for this reason more than for light they bring them to their beds. They attract them with smoldering sticks calling for them by their proper name, although they come for the flame and not for the shouts, as some think. They also catch them with nets, which stops them, thus falling they cannot even raise themselves, so clumsy are they. One who smears their hands or face with these stars of the cocuyo appears to

²³ The exact origin of syphilis is still unknown, though this is a theory that has been considered. A competing theory is that the disease had already existed in Europe within a few people, and that the war in Naples somehow caused its spread to the numerous troops involved. A problem in this theory posited is that the syphilis outbreak in Europe would have occurred either right at the discovery of the Indies, or within only a few years of it and the return of the conquistadors from there.

burn, and so they scare many. If one were to distil the stars they would get from them very marvellous water.

The nigua is like a tiny flea, a jumper and friend of powder; they do not bite except on the feet; it forces itself into the body and flesh; it then leaves its eggs in larger quantities than its body size, which in brief beget others, and if they lay more, they multiply like so, which cannot die out nor be treated with anything but with fire or iron; but if one removes them promptly, like the plowman, their damage is little. The remedy so that they do not bite is to sleep with the feet bare or well covered²⁴. Some Spaniards have lost to this the toes on their feet, and others a whole foot.

The fish which they call on Hispaniola the manatee

The manatee is a fish which is not present in the waters of our hemisphere; they are raised in the sea and in rivers; it is of the form of a goatskin sack, with only two feet which lie at the height of the shoulders and with which they swim. Their body narrows out from the middle to the tail. They have a head like that of an ox, although it has a more sunken and meatier chin; the eyes are small, the color of brown, the hide is strong and with some hair; twenty feet in length, fat around the middle, and so ugly that it couldn't be more so. It has rounded feet, each one with four nails, like the elephant; the females give birth like cows, and so, they have two breasts with which to nurse their young. Eating manatee seems more like meat than fish; it tastes like venison when fresh, like tuna when salted, but it is better like so and much is conserved; the lard that they take from it is very good, and doesn't turn rancid; they prepare leather from it, and use it for shoes and other things. They produce a certain specie of stones in the head, which they take advantage of along with the ijada²⁵. The natives tend to kill them when they are grazing on herbs at the banks of rivers, and with nets when they are young. Thus the cacique Carameteji caught a very small one, and raised it for twenty-six years in a lake that they call Guainabo, where it resided. It came to be so sensitive although large, and so meek and friendly, during a bad year for the old dolphins; he ate from the hand when they gave food to him; he came to be called Mato, which means to them Magnificent; he would go out of the water to eat in the house; he frolicked on the riverbank with the boys and men; he was seen to take delight when they sang; he was made to let them climb on top, and pass the men from one side of the lake to the other without diving, and would bring ten at a time without any effort, and so the Indians had the greatest of pastimes with him. A

²⁴ Respectively, *descalzos* and *bien cubiertos*; this was confusing and contradictory to translate, though I would assume the intent was to say covered rather than barefoot.

²⁵ The Diccionario de Autoridades indicates that this is part of an animal's belly near the hip.

Spaniard wanted to know if he had as hard a skin as they said: he called out "Mato! Mato!", and at his arrival hurled a lance which, although it did not wound him, did hurt him, and from that point he would not leave from the water if there were men dressed and bearded as Christians, however much they would call him. Hatibonico grew much; it entered Guainabo, and brought the good manatee Mato to the sea where he had been born, and left Carameteji and his vassals very sad.

The governors of Hispaniola

Christopher Columbus governed the island for eight years, in which he and his brother Bartholomew Columbus conquered a portion of it and populated many areas. He distributed the land and more than a million Indians that maintained it, among the soldiers, residents, and servants of the Monarchs, who were their favorites, and among his brothers and for himself, for vassals and tributaries, to extract gold from the mines and rivers where it was abundant. He also showed the fifth or fourth part of these to the King. He worked so that everyone worked for the Spanish, when Francisco de Bobadilla was there as governor, who had sent Christopher Columbus and his brothers to Spain as prisoners, the year of 1499. He was there three years and a bit more as governor, and he governed well. Roldán Jiménez came there with his companions. In that time a large quantity of gold was extracted. Nicolás de Ovando succeeded him as governor, who came to the island in 1502 with thirty ships and many men. Francisco de Bobadilla loaded onto these ships more than a hundred thousand pesos of fine gold for the king and other people, which was the first load of such grand wealth that had been seen together. He also loaded many grains of ore, and one for the Queen which was three thousand three hundred castellanos in weight of pure gold, which was found by an Indian of Miguel Díez, an Aragonese. They left with bad timing, and three hundred men drowned at sea, among whom were Roldán Jiménez and Antonio de Torres, captain of the fleet. Of the entire fleet, not even six ships escaped. The hundred thousand pesos of gold and the Queen's gold nugget, the likes of which had never been seen before. Nicolás de Ovando governed the island seven years in a most Christian fashion, and I think that he led it better than any other, as none of those before and after him had had charges of justice and war in the Indies, the mandates of the King, and, above all, the prohibition of the coming and going or the housing in those places of people suspicious in the faith and who might be the children or grandchildren of those defamed by the Inquisition. He conquered the provinces of Higuei, Zabana, and Guaiacaiarima, where the men were bestial, as they had neither houses nor bread. He pacified the revolt of Xaragoa burning forty Indians responsible, and hanging the cacique Guaorocuya and his aunt Anacaona, a woman who was from Caonabo, an absolute and

unrestrained female on that island. He made many Christian towns, and sent much wealth to Spain for the King. And to come here he searched for a loan, although he had more than eight thousand ducats of rent and salary; which was an argument of his cleanliness. He was commander of Larez, and became high commander of Alcántara. Acting after him as governor was don Diego Columbus, Admiral of the Indies, who ruled the island of Santo Domingo and others, having as his high mayor the lawyer Marcos de Aguilar for six or seven years; and by cause of the complaints that were brought against him to the Catholic King, he was removed from office and recalled to Spain, where he was involved in litigation with the Fiscal for some years over the privileges and preeminence of his admiralty and rents. The cardinal and archbishop of Toledo, fray Francisco Giménez de Cisneros, who given the death of the king don Fernando and the absence of his grandson don Carlos, governed these kingdoms, sent to serve as governors the friar Luis de Figueroa (formerly of la Mejorada) to Hispaniola, the friar Alonso to Santo Domingo, formerly of San Juan de Ortega, and to Manzanedo the friar and Hieronymite²⁶ Bernardino, all of whom has as their superior the esteemed Alonso Zuazo, and took count of the officials of the king, and gave residency to the officials Marcelo de Villalobos, Juan Ortiz de Matienzo, and Lucas Vázquez of Aillón, judges of appeals. These friars took the Indians from the courtesans and the absent, because their servants mistreated them, and moved them to towns to indoctrinate them better. But it was damaging to bring them to other towns with the Spanish because they gave them smallpox, a new ill to them, and which killed many. In the time of these friars a granary of sugar grew. After these friars returned to Spain there was an audience and chancellory with a royal stamp in Santo Domingo, and the first magistrates there were Marcelo de Villalobos, Juan Ortiz de Matienzo, Lucas Vázquez de Aillón and Cristóbal Lebrón. At the end of a few years Sebastián Ramírez, born in Villaescusa, de Fuenleal was president, and after then the lands were always ruled over by presidents and magistrates.

Those of Hispaniola had predicted the destruction of their religion and liberties

The caciques and bohitis, in whose memories the records of their ancestors lie, told Christopher Columbus and the Spaniards that came with him, that the father of the cacique Guarionex and another ruler asked of their deity and idol of the devil of what would come to pass after their living days. They fasted five days without interruption, without eating or drinking anything. They cried and disciplined themselves terribly, and burned much incense for their gods, as their religious

²⁶ A member of the Order of St. Jerome.

ceremony requires. Finally, they received response that, if the gods hid well the things of the future from men for their betterment, to them they would want to manifest being good religious men, and that before many years men with long beards and fully clothed would come, who would cut open in one hit a man through the middle with the shining swords that they would bring sheathed. Those who discovered the ancient gods of the land, would reproach them for their accustomed rituals, and shed the blood of their children, or take them as captives. And in memory of such a horrible response they composed a song, which they call areito, and sung it in sad and tearful gathering, and agreeing with this, they fled from the Caribs and any that saw them. Each reader may make the judgment that they may wish, I say that which they said.

All of these things happened to the letter as those priests said and sung, as the Spanish opened many Indians with stab wounds in the wars, and even in the mines, and demolished the idols from their altars, leaving none untouched. They banned all of the rites and ceremonies that they encountered. They made them slaves in the repartition, by which, as they worked more than they were accustomed, and for others, they died and all were killed: from the fifteen times a hundred thousand and more people who had been on that island alone, there are no more than five hundred. Some died from work, others of hunger, and many from smallpox. Some killed themselves with juice of the yucca, and others with noxious herbs; others hung themselves from trees. The women did the same as their husbands, who hung themselves at the same time as them, and intentionally killed their young ones, and drank to not give birth to sons who would serve foreigners. Their scourge upon the Indians was the penalty that God gave them for their sins. Nonetheless, the first Spaniards were at a great fault for treating them so badly, coveting gold more than caring for their fellow man.

The miracles of conversions

Friar Buil and the twelve clerics that he brought as companions, began the conversion of the Indians although we could say that of the Catholic Monarchs, as they took from the island the seven islanders that received the baptismal water in Barcelona, who were the first fruits of the new conversion. The conversions were continued by Pedro Juárez de Deza, who was the first bishop of Vega, and the Roman Alejandro Geraldino, who was the second bishop of Santo Domingo, as the first, who was friar Garcia de Padilla, died before leaving for the New World. Many other clerics and mendicant friars also dedicated themselves to the conversions; and so, they baptized all those on the island who hadn't died in the initial arrivals. The forced bans on the use of idols and ceremonial rites that the Indians had was the cause by which they would listen

to and believe the preachers. After listening, they believed in Jesus Christ and became Christians. The most holy sacramental union of Christ had a great effect, which was put in many churches, so that with it and with crosses the devils of the Indians would disappear and would not talk to them as before, when they admired them. They healed many sick with the rod and devotion of a cross which Christopher Columbus placed the second time that he came in the meadow that they now call Veracruz, whose rod they took for a relic. The warrior Indians tried to tear it down, and were unable, although they dug much. The cacique of the valley Caonau, wanting to experiment with the force and holiness of the new religion of the Christians, slept with his wife, who was reciting an oration in church, and who told him to not soil the house of God, which angered him. He was not so preoccupied with this sanctity, and responded with underestimation of the Sacrament, that it did not matter to him that it would anger God. He fulfilled his appetite, and then in the very same moment, he became mute and crippled. He repented, and was santero²⁷ of that church while he lived, without allowing any to sweep nor dress. The Indians had a miracle, and often visited that church. Four islanders were put into a cave because it was thundering and raining; one of them encountered the Holy Mary, with the bolt of lightning; the others joked of such a god and prayer, and were killed by another bolt, doing no ill to the devotee. The writing and letters that the Spanish wrote to one another also had a great effect, as without being seen nor read they were understood, or the paper spoke, and with this they were fascinated and made wiser. It happened once in the early settlement that a Spaniard sent to another a dozen huítas as cold cuts, so that they wouldn't rot in the heat. The Indian who brought them fell asleep or rested along the route, and was late to arrive to where he was going; and so he was hungry or had a sweet tooth for huítas, and to not remain with jealousy nor desire, he ate three of them. The letter which he brought in response said how grateful he was for the nine huítas and the hour of the day in which he arrived. The master scolded the Indian; he was denied, as they say, to feet bound, but as he understood what the letter said, he confessed the truth. He left embarrassed and punished, and published among his own what the letters said, so that they would be guarded. Lacking paper and ink, they wrote on leaves from guiabara and copey with awls or pins. They also made cards from leaves of the same copey, which took a lot of effort to shuffle.

The things of our Spain which are now in Hispaniola

²⁷ A man dedicated to a saint.

All of the towns which are on the island reside Spaniards and Africans, who work in the mines, on sugar plantations, with livestock, and in similar haciendas, thus, as I said, there are no more than a few Indians, and these live in liberty, and in the relief that they want, by the mercy of the Emperor, so that the people of that island (which as such has paid and pays rents to the royal patrimony of Castile) and their language do not die out. The most ennobled town is Santo Domingo, which Bartholomew Columbus founded on the banks of the river Ozama. He gave it that name because he arrived there on a Sunday feast for Santo Domingo; thus these three causes concurred to call it so. In this city there are the archbishopric and royal audiences, and grandiose treatment and scale of all the Indies, for which all the island is called Santo Domingo as well. The first bishop was the Franciscan friar García de Padilla, and the first archbishop was Alfonso de Fuenmayor, a native of Yanguas, the year of 1548. There were not terrestrial animals with four legs on this island, but rather three classes of rabbits, or better said rats, which they call huítas, corí, and mohuy; quemis, which are like hares, and gozquejos of many colors, which neither howl nor bark. The natives hunt with them, and when they are fat they are eaten. Now, there are all manner of beasts of burden and livestock. The cows have multiplied so much, that they inhabitants give its meat to any who flays its leather, and the dean Rodrigo de Bastias had from only one cow eight hundred calves in twenty-six years; it gave birth to five each year, and at most two calves. At ten months the new ones conceive, and until the fillies do the same. The dogs which have escaped and been raised in the mountains and uninhabited lands are butchers, more so than wolves, and are a menace to goats and sheep. The cats, although they are from Spain, don't urinate as much here as back home when they walk in heat, nor wait for January to shout, but mate in every time of the year, and without a shout nor cries. There were vines on this island, whose grapes seasoned; however, they did not make wine with these, which is something that surprised me, the people there being friends with drunkenness. They brought shoots from there, whose grapes mature during Christmastime. But they still do not make wine, and I don't know if it is for their weakness or the firmness of the land. They are very well given to wheat, although they make little of it, as corn is easy and certain to grow and harvest, and can be used for both bread and alcohol. At the start of seeding the wheat, they make very strong canes and fat spikes of grain, to the point where each one of them produces two thousand grains: a similar instance of multiplication never before seen. For which it is known the fat which is that land of which we speak, by whose cause the olives and all of those trees that have pitted fruits should be sterile, and even many of these don't bloom, as are the peaches and others of its kind. Palm trees, nonetheless, have dates that mature, although they are not particularly good. The contrary succeeds with trees bearing pepita, which are grown very well, whether they are sweet or sour.

There are many natural canafistulas, although these are vain or bad; those which are made from pepitas of boticarios that pass through there, are excellent and in large quantities and number, and are only destroyed by ants. All the vegetables that they bring from here are very fresh; and such that most of them don't produce seeds, like radishes, lettuce, onions, parsley, cabbage, carrots, turnips, and cucumbers. That which has multiplied many times over is sugar, which has thirty producers and rich storehouses. The first Spaniard who planted sugar canes was Pedro de Atienza. The first to harvest it was Miguel Balletero, a Catalan, and the first who had a stable of horses was the lawyer Gonzalo de Velosa. They also harvest bastard balm from a tree called goaconar, which smells good and burns like pine heart. The first who harvested it was Antón de Villasanta through the industry and advice of his wife, who was Indian. They harvest it like other things, and although it is not the same as that of Judea, it is good for sores and pains. There are infinite birds on this island that are not in Spain, and many like those here; nonetheless, there were neither turkeys nor hens; those were raised poorly and in few numbers, and those well and vastly, without any difference in how they are here, save that the hens do not sing at midnight. The things which those such as merchants took as ordinary, and in bulk, from that island to these parts are sugar, brasil, balsam, canafistula, leather, and azul. I have put this chapter here so that all might know how much of a difference and advantage this land has with the movement of settlers. I also have expanded in telling many peculiarities on it because the theme of the history is such, and because it was the start and origin of having discovered the Indies, a land so grandiose as you will have seen and understood by our hydrography, and by those that go to the Indies, who enter or touch or look there.

All of the islands which the Spanish have discovered

Knowing what great things were the lands that Christopher Columbus discovered, many went to continue in the discovery of them all, some at their own cost, others at that of the king, and all hoping to enrich themselves, gain fame and prosper with their rulers. But as the majority of them did nothing but discover and waste away, no record remains of them, not of which I know, especially of those who navigated further north, coasting along the Bacallaos and the lands of Labrador, which offered little wealth. Nor are there any of those who went for the other part of Paria, from the year 1495 to 1500. I will put those of whom I know, without contemplation over any, certifying that all of the Indies have been discovered and navigated by the Spanish, save that which Columbus discovered: as immediately after the Catholic Monarchs sought to know of them and mark them as theirs, taking possession of all the islands, by the grace of the Pope.

The land of Labrador

Many have gone to coast along the land of Labrador to see how far it stretches and to know if there might be a sea route through there, to go to the Molucas and Especiería²⁸, which fall, as we will discuss in another place, under the Equator, believing that to make it would shorten much of the trip. The Castellians searched for it first, as these islands of the Especias pertained to them, and to know and discover the land of theirs. And the Portuguese also by intercepting the navigation, when they could, and entangle a lawsuit that they tried over them, to not cede them anything; and so, Gaspar Cortes Reales went there, in the year 1500, with two caravels. He did not find the strait for which he searched. He gave his name to the islands that lie at the mouth of the gulf of Cuadrado at over fifty degrees. He took as slaves up to sixty men from that land, and became very frightened of the many snows and frosts, as near there the sea freezes regularly. The men there are disposed²⁹ although dark, and good workers. They paint themselves for gala, and carry tendrils of silver and copper; they dress in furs and skins of many other animals, the fur facing inward during the winter and outward during the summer; they squeeze the stomachs and thighs with braids of cotton and the nerves of fish and animals; they eat fish more than anything else, especially salmon, although they have birds and fruits. They make their homes of wood, of which they have much and in good quality, and cover them in the leather of fish and animals, in place of tiles. They say that they have griffins, and that their bears, like many other animals and birds, are white. In this land and islands, the Bretons walk and live, as they conform much with their land, and is at the same latitude and temperature. The men of Norway with the captain Johannes Scolvus, and the English with Sebastian Caboto, have also gone there.

For what reason I start here with the discovery

I will now tell of the discoveries in the Indies at the cape of Labrador to continue in order that I brought them in place of their site, as it appears it would be better like so, and clearer to tell and understand, as there would be confusion in another manner, although it also would bring good order to commence by the time in which they were found.

²⁸ Islands in the Pacific and the Orient.

²⁹ The meaning of this is not clear, but could refer to a better sociability or physical shape- which might make sense given the racial undertones at play.

The Bacallaos

That which they call Bacallaos is a grand stretch of land and coast, and its highest latitude is forty-eight and a half degrees. The people there call a variety of large fish "bacallaos"³⁰, of which there are so many that they hinder the naos navigating, and which the bears close to the sea fish and eat. The man most recognized for finding this land was Sebastian Caboto, a Venetian, who armed two ships in England, where he had lived since he was little, at the cost of the king Henry VII, who desired to trade in Especieria as had the king of Portugal. Others say that it was at his cost, and that he promised Henry to go by north to Cathay, and bring from there spices in less time than the Portuguese routes to the south. He went also to know how suitable the Indies were to populate. He brought three hundred men and took a route through Iceland over the cape of Labrador, putting him up to fifty-eight degrees latitude. Although he says much more, saying that there was such cold in the month of June and bits of ice, which he did not dare to pass any further; and that the days were very long and almost without night, and the nights were very clear. It's true that at seventy degrees latitude the days are eighteen hours in a day. Caboto, thus seeing the frigidity and rarity of the land, turned to go up to the point of the cape, and returning to the Bacallaos, retraced the coast up to thirty-eight degrees, and returned from there to England. The Bretons and the Danish have also gone to Bacallaos, and the Frenchman Jacques Cartier went two times with three galleons, once in the year of '34 and the other in '35, and judged the land to populate from forty-five to fifty-one degrees latitude. They say that they are or will populate this region, being as good a land as France, as to all it is common, and especially to who first occupies it.

The river San Antonio

In the year of '25 the captain Esteban Gómez traveled to this land in a caravel that he had armed in La Coruña at the cost of the Emperor³¹. This captain went in search of a strait, which caused him to encounter the land of Bacallaos, by which he might go to Especieria in less time than in any other route, and bring clover and cinnamon and other spices and medicines which are brought from there. Esteban Gómez had navigated a number of times to the Indies; he had gone with Magellan to the strait³², and had been in the junta of Badajoz, which, as it will later be said, the

³⁰ Varieties of cod.

³¹ Charles V

³² This expedition would have taken him past the tip of Chile and Argentina between 1519 and 1522.

Castillians and Portuguese conducted over the islands of Moluccas³³, where it was discussed how good a strait to this part would be. And like Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Gil González de Ávila and others, he could not discover it from the gulf of Urabá up to Florida, he decided to search further up; however, he did not find it there either, as it doesn't exist. He toured a good portion of land which had never before been seen by anyone, although some say that Sebastian Caboto had already investigated it. He took as many Indians as they could hold in the caravel and took them against the laws and will of the king. And with all of this he returned to the Crown at the end of ten months from when he left. When he entered saying that he had brought slaves, a local from there misheard it as "cloves"³⁴, which was one of the spices that he had promised to bring. He ran with the news, and came to ask *albricas*³⁵ of the king of Esteban Gómez bringing cloves. The news was spread through the court with everyone happy to hear of such a good voyage. But in little time the stupidity of the courier was known, that he had misheard slaves for cloves, and of the contemptible dispatch of the mariner, which had promised that of which he did not know or have, they laughed much of the albricas, and lost hope of the strait that they had so desired; and even some who favored this Esteban Gómez in his voyage were left embarrassed.

The islands of Lucayas

The Lucayas or Yucayas lie north of Cuba and Haiti, and number more than four hundred islands, according to many. They are all small, except for Lucayo, from which the islands take their name, which is between seventeen and eighteen degrees latitude; Guanahaní, which was the first of the lands visited by Christopher Columbus; Manigua, Guanima, Zaguareo, and some others. The people of these islands are whiter and more disposed than those of Cuba and Haiti, especially the women, by whose beauty many men from Tierra Firme, as well as Florida, Chicora, and Yucatán, leave to live with them; and so, there were better customs among these islands than in others, and a high degree of diversity in languages. And from there I believe came a rumor that near that part there were the Amazons and a water source that rejuvenated the elderly. They go about nude, though less so in times of war, feasts and dances, and in these they dress in ponchos and very elaborately-crafted plumage, and giant feathers. The women, if they are married or with a man, cover their shameful parts from the waist to the knee with a loincloth; if they are virgins they carry cotton mesh with blades of grass woven in; this is after their period comes to them, as

³³ Located in the Philippines.

³⁴ Slaves and cloves in Spanish, respectively, are *esclavos* and *clavos*.

³⁵ A reward for offering good news.

before they go about in vivid hides; and once they start ovulating, the parents invite family and friends to have a feast, much like a wedding. They have a king or lord, and he has control over fishing, hunting, and planting, mandating to each that which he has to do. They keep the grain and roots that they harvest in public granaries or storehouses of the king. From there they partition to each one according to what the family has. They give themselves over to much pleasure. Their wealth is measured in ivory and vermilion shells, from which they make earrings, and some precious stones like rubies, bermejuelas³⁶, which look like tendrils of fire, which they take from the brains of a certain specie of giant snails, that they fish in the sea and eat as a valuable delicacy. They are accustomed to wear strings, necklaces and things which are tied around the neck, arms and legs, made with stones of black, white, and a fleshy tone, which are of little value that they find in the sand. And to the women that walk nude all appears good to them. On many of these islands they do not have meat nor do they eat it. Their meals consist of fish, cornbread, and a variety of tubers and fruits; when the Spaniards brought men to Cuba and Santo Domingo many died eating meat, and for this the Spanish would not give them any, or would give it to them in very small quantities. On some of these islands there are so many pigeons and other birds, which nest in trees, that many come from Tierra Firme, Cuba, and Haiti to hunt them, and return with canoes filled with them. The trees where they nest are like pomegranate trees, whose bark seems similar in flavor to cinnamon with the bitterness of ginger, and in odor to cloves, though it is not a spice. Among the many fruits that they have, there is one that is similar to gusanos or lombrices, tasty and healthy, called jaruma. The tree is similar to the walnut, and the leaves are like those of the fig tree; the canopy and leaves of this jaruma, when crushed and applied with its juices to any wound, even if the wounded is old, will cure them. Two Spaniards fought there, and one cut the other on the arm along with his tibia; an old Lucayan came, and with only the bark and leaves of this tree put it on the bone and cured him. A carpenter who was held captive in Santo Domingo excavated a trunk of jaruma, which for sure is hollow like a fig tree, filled it with corn and gourds filled with water, fastened it all down very well, and crossed the sea with two other relatives who paddled. But he had poor luck, as fifty leagues out he was caught by a group of Spaniards who returned him to Santo Domingo. From these islands, thus, of the Lucayos (or Yucayos as some call them), the Spanish captured in the frame of twenty years or a little less forty thousand people. They fooled the islanders by telling them that they were going to bring them to paradise, as the Indians there believed that the dead purged the sinners in cold lands to the north, and afterwards entered into paradise, which was in the lands of mediodia; in this

³⁶ Some variety of red stone.

manner, they finished off the Lucayans, bringing the majority of them to the mines. They say that all of the Christians that captured Indians and worked them to death have died poorly, or never succeeded in their lives, or with that which they won.

The River Jordán in the land of Chicora

Seven locals from Santo Domingo, among them the esteemed Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, the magistrate of that island, readied two boats in the Puerto de Plata, in the year of '20, in order to fetch Indians for the Lucayas which I mention above. They went, and did not find on them men to capture or assault to take to their mines, pastures and granaries. And so, they agreed to go further north so that they might find some and not return empty-handed. They went thus, to a land which they called Chicora and Gualdape, which lies at thirty-two degrees, and is what they now call the cape of Santa Elena and the river Jordán; some, with all of this, talk of how chance, and not their will, left them there. In one way or another, it is certain that many Indians ran to the coast to see the caravels, as it was something new and strange for them, who have only small boats; and they even thought that they might have been some monstrous fish. And as they saw men with beards and clothes leave the ships for land, they fled running to safety; the Spanish disembarked, hurried after them, and caught a man and woman. They dressed them in the style of Spain, and let them go to call to the other people. The king of that land, upon seeing them dressed in that manner, was marveled at their attire, as their own went about nude or in the skins of wild animals, and he sent fifty men with provisions to the bajeles³⁷, with whom many Spaniards went to their king, and he gave them guides in order to see the land, and to wherever they reached land they gave to them treats to eat and little gifts of aforros³⁸, seed pearls and silver. The Spaniards, having seeing the riches and the lay of the land, considered the manner of the people, and having taken the water and necessary supplies, invited many of the Indians to see their boats. They entered without thinking any ill of it; the Spanish then lifted anchors and opened the sails, and took off with their good capture of Choricans to Santo Domingo; but in their route one of the two ships was lost, and the Indians in the other died a little after, as they did not want to eat that which the Spanish gave them, and in part because they ate dogs, donkeys, and other beasts that they found dead and stinking through the walls and by heaps of refuse. With the relation of such things and of others which weren't mentioned, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón came to court, and brought with him an Indian from there, who they named Francisco Chicora, who told of the marvels of this land. Vázquez

³⁷ A smaller variety of sea vessel.

³⁸ A possible translation of this is cloth or textile.

asked for the conquest and governance of Chicora. The Emperor gave it to him along with the habit of Santiago; he returned to Santo Domingo, armed a number of ships in the year '24, went there with the spirit to populate it and with the imagination of grand treasures; but he had not left well, lost his ship captain and many Spaniards in the river Jordán, and in the end perished without doing any dignified thing of note.

The rites of the Chicorans

Those of Chicora are of a dark or jaundiced color, tall in the body, of very small beards, have hair that is black and up to their waists; the women are much larger, and have their hair braided. Those of another nearby province, which they call Duhare, bring them by their heels; their king was like a giant and was named Dartha, and his wife and twenty-five children that he had were also disfigured. Asking them how they grew so large, some said by giving them to eat a specie of blood sausage filled with certain herbs made through their art of enchantment; others, that they did so by stretching their bones as children, after being softened with cooked herbs; and certain Chicorans told that they were baptized, but I think that they said this just to say something, as there were along that coast men that were very tall and looked like giants in comparison to others. The priests go about dressed distinctively from the others and without hair, except that they have two locks on the temples, which are tied below the chin. These priests chew a certain herb, and with the juice they spit upon their soldiers when they are at the point of going to battle, as if they were offering benediction; they cure the injured, bury the dead and do not eat meat. Nobody wants any other medic than those who are religious or old, nor any other cure than those with herbs, of which they know many for a diverse array of sicknesses and wounds. With one that they call "guahi" they treat cholera and however much they have in the stomach if they eat or drink it, and this is very common, and so healthy that they live a long time due to it, and are very strong and healthy. The priests are very bewitching, and can persuade the hoodwinked people; they have two idols, which they do not show to the masses more than two times a year, once during the planting season, and with grandiose pomp. The king keeps watch the night of the vigil in front of these images, and on the morning of the day of the feast, when all of the village is reunited, he shows them his two idols, man and woman, displayed from a high place. The people adore them on their knees and in shouts, asking for mercy. The king comes down, and gives coverings with fine blankets of cotton and jewels to two old horsemen, so that they might bring them to the field where the procession will go. Nobody remains without going with them, given the punishment for staying as a sign of having bad faith. All are dressed in the best that they have; some darken

themselves, others cover themselves in leaves, and others dress themselves in masks of skins; men and women sing and dance; the men celebrate in the day, and the women at night, with oration, song, dance, offerings, incense, and other things in this style. On the following day, they return to their chapel with the same jubilation, and think that with this they will have a good harvest of bread. In another festival, they also bring to the field a wooden statue with the same solemnity and order that goes to idols, and place it on top of a great pole that they thrust into the ground and surround with poles, chests and benches. All of those married come, without anyone staying behind, to make offerings; they put whatever they offer in the chests and over the poles; the priests note the offerings of each one that for this are disputed, and at the end they announce who gave the most and the best presents to the idol, so that they may be recognized by all, and this is a very high honor to have for the whole year. For this honor there are many who offer to obnoxious degrees; they eat the most essential, and even more, of bread, fruits, and the choice dishes offered; the lords and priests distribute them; they take down the statue at night and toss it into the river, or into the sea if it is nearby, so that it may go with the gods of the water, in whose honor they make the feast. Another of their celebrations is the day that they unearth the bones of a king or priest who had a great reputation, and raise them on a scaffold that they make in the field; the women weep alone, walking to the pasture, and offer what they can. They return the bones on the following day to the grave, and in their honor a priest prays, speaks of the immortality of the soul, and talks of the hell or place of pains that the gods have in very cold places, where they purge those bad, and of paradise, which is in a very warm place, which is possessed by Quejuga, the greatest of the gods, meek and lame³⁹, who made many gifts for the souls that have gone to his kingdom, and lets them dance, sing, and rest with their loved ones; and with this, the bones are left canonized, and the preacher dismisses the listeners, giving them incense for the nose made with herbs and odorous gums, blowing it upon them as a greeting. They believe that many people live in the sky, and many below in the earth, as its antipodes, and that there are gods in the sea, and from all of this the priests have songs, which, when their kings die, they make a certain type of fires similar to firecrackers, and are given to believe that they are the recently departed souls of the body, which rise to heaven; and so, they are buried amidst a great deal of crying. The reverence and salutation that they make to their cacique is gracious, because they put their hands over their noses, whisper, and pass them up to the front of the head. The king then bends his head over the left shoulder, if he wants to give his favor and honor one who reveres him. The widow, if her husband died naturally, cannot marry again; if he dies justly, she may. They

³⁹ I cannot tell if this is literally how they see their god, though I would say it is most likely Gómara's own personal comment given his bias against the native religions.

do not admit harlots among the married; they play with balls, tops, and archery with bows, and thus are accurate. They have silver and pearls and other stones; there are many deer, which they raise in the home and walk to the pasture in the field with shepherds, and return them for the night in a corral. They make cheese from their milk.

Boriquen

The island of Boriquen, called San Juan among the Christians, lies at seventeen and eighteen degrees latitude, and at twenty-five leagues from Spain, which is to its west. From east to west it has a length of more than fifty leagues, and in width is eighteen leagues; the land to the north is rich in gold, and that of the south is fertile in bread, fruit, herbs, and fish. They say that these Boriquens did not eat meat, and it should have been so because they did not have animals; nonetheless, they did eat birds and even bats skinned with hot water. In their nature and ancient ways they are like the inhabitants of Haiti and Hispaniola, and are so in the modern lifestyle, except that they are more valiant and that they use bows and arrows but without herbs. There is a gum that they call tabunuco, white and runny like tallow, in which they would mix oil and coat their boats, and as it is bitter, it defends them from shipworm⁴⁰; they also have much guayacan, which they call *palo santo*, to cure the pox and other pains; Christopher Columbus discovered this island in his second voyage, and Juan Ponce de León went there in the year of '09 with permission of the governor Ovando, in a caravel that he had in Santo Domingo, as some Indians told him that the island was very rich. He took land where there was the lord Agucibana, who received him amiably, and became a Christian with his mother, brothers and servants. He gave him one of his sisters as a friend, which is a custom among their lords to honor other great men that they receive as friends and guests, and brought him to the northern coast to get gold, for which he had searched in two or three rivers. Juan Ponce left some Spaniards with Agucibana, and returned to Santo Domingo with the sample of gold and people; but as Nicolás de Ovando had already travelled back to Spain, and the almirante don Diego Colón governed Hispaniola, he returned to Boriquen, which he called San Juan, with his wife and his household. He wrote to the comendador mayor of Alcántara Ovando, who petitioned him and gave him governance of that island, but with the subjection to the viceroy and the almirante of the Indies. He then gathered men and warred upon Boriquen; he established the settlement Caparra, which became depopulated for having its foundations upon swamplands of much *acije*. He populated Guanica,

⁴⁰ A type of mollusk that can bore through the wood of a ship.

which vanished because of the many troublesome mosquitoes there, and then founded Sotomayor and other villages. The conquest of Boriquen cost the lives of many Spaniards, as the islanders were valiant and called upon the Caribs in their defense, who shot noxious herbs without remedy; they thought in the beginning that the Spanish were immortal, and Oraioa, the cacique of Haguaca, in knowing the truth, was made in charge of them with the agreement and consent of all the other caciques, and ordered some of his servants to drown a certain Salcedo who was residing in his house, leaving him in the river Guarabo; the servants forced him under the water, when they carried him away on their shoulders, and as he had died, they took the rest of the Spaniards for mortals. And so, they banded together and rebelled, and killed over a hundred Spaniards. Diego of Salazar was the most recognized in the conquest of Boriquen. The Indians feared him so much, that they did not want to battle where he would respond, and a few times the Spanish army brought him with them, even being very ill with the pox, because the Indians might know that he was there. The islanders had a tendency to say to Spaniards that threatened them: "I don't fear you, you aren't Salazar." They also had a great fear of a dog named Becerrillo, a mastiff, black-eared and medium sized, who won a salary and part as much as a crossbowmen and a half; the dog fought against the Indians spirited and tactfully; he knew his friends from enemies, and did them no ill even when they touched him. He knew who was a Carib and who wasn't; he pursued the routing although he would be in the midst of enemies, or tear them to pieces: upon telling him "he's gone" or "look for him", he would not stop until he brought by force the Indian who left. Our Spaniards undertook with him such good enthusiasm as if they were three on horseback; Becerrillo died of an arrow poisoned with herbs while swimming after a Carib. All of the islanders were Christianized, and its first bishop was Alonso Manso, established the year of '11. Those after Juan Ponce de León, who were many, governed the island for the Almirante, attending more to his benefit than to that of the islanders.

The discovery of Florida

The Almirante left the governance of Boriquen to Juan Ponce de León, and seeing himself without charge and rich, he armed two caravels and went to look for the island Boyuca, where the Indians said there was a spring that turned the elderly young. He travelled lost and hungry for six months among many islands without finding a trace of such a spring. He entered Bimini, and discovered Florida during the Pascua Florida in the year of '12, and for this gave it that name; and hoping to find grand riches there, he came to Spain, where he negotiated with the king don Fernando all that which he asked, with the mediation of Nicolás de Ovando and Pedro Núñez de Guzmán, the

tutor of the infante don Fernando, of whom he had been a page. And so the king gave him the title of Adelanto of Bimini and governor of Florida, and he armed in Seville three ships for this purpose in the year '15. He reached Guacana, which they call Guadalupe; he sent men out to land to take water and firewood, and a few women so that they could wash rags and dirty clothing. Out came the Caribs, who had positioned themselves for an ambush, and shot at the Spaniards with their poisoned arrows, killing most of those who had come onto land, and capturing the women washing. With this ill omen at the start, Juan Ponce left for Boriquen, and from there to Florida. He went onto land with his soldiers to look for foundations on which to establish a settlement; the Indians came to impede his entry and stay; they fought with him, routed him and killed numerous Spaniards, and injured him with an arrow, from whose wound he died in Cuba. And so, his life ended and consumed the greater part of his treasury that he had accumulated in San Juan de Boriquen. Juan Ponce de León went to the island Hispaniola with Christopher Columbus in the year of 1493; he was a skillful soldier, and a captain in the province of Higüey under Nicolás de Ovando, who conquered it.

Florida is a point of land like a tongue, a very important thing in the Indies, and very well-known for the many Spaniards who have died on it. Hernando de Soto, who had been a captain in Peru, and who had been enriched in the prison of Atabaliba with the part that he held as a cavalryman and as a captain, and with the cushion of pearls and stones in which sat that rich and powerful king, asked for the conquest and governance of Florida, being a rich and assorted land (as well as famous), although its men are valiant. Thus, he went there with many good men; he travelled five years searching for mines, thus thinking it was like Peru. He did not settle, and so he died and destroyed those who had followed him; nothing good will happen to the conquistadores who before everything do not make a settlement, especially here, where the Indians are valiant archers and strong men. By the death of the rash Soto, many demanded this conquest in the year of '44, the court residing in Valladolid, among the requestors Julián de Sámano and Pedro de Ahumada, brothers and capable men for such a task, and Ahumada, studied in many things and a virtuous nobleman, with whom I have a close friendship. But not even the emperor, who was in Germany, nor his son the prince don Felipe, who governed over the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, gave it to anyone, counselled by the Council of the Indies and by other people who with good zeal in their opinion spoke against the conquests of the Indies^{e41}; nonetheless they sent there friar Luis Cancel de Balvastro with other Dominican friars, who offered themselves to overcome that land, convert the people, and bring them into the service and obedience of the Emperor, only with.

^{e41} This is the point in history when Las Casas would have offered his *REmedio* to the Council of the Indies in Spain.

Thus, the friar went at the cost of the king in the year of '49; he left for that land with four friars that he brought, and with other secular mariners without weapons, which like so they had to begin the preaching. Many of those Floridans ran to the navy, and without listening they bludgeoned one or two of their companions, and they were eaten; and so, they suffered martyrdom for preaching the faith of Christ: may He take them into his glory. The others took refuge in the boat and kept watch for confessors, as some said. Many who favored the intention of those friars recognize now that by this route it can be bad to attract the Indians to our friendship or to our holy faith, although if it could be done, it would be better. Then one came to the ship who was the page of Hernando de Soto, who told how the Indians put the scalps of the friars with their foreheads in a temple, and that nearby there were men who eat charcoal.

The River Palmas

Before any other Spaniard, Francisco de Garay travelled along the five hundred leagues of coast that are from Florida to the river Pánuco. Nonetheless, because he did nothing more than run the coast, we will stop speaking of him, and speak of Pánfilo de Narváez, who with the title of Adelantado and governor, went to settle and conquer the river Palmas, which lies thirty leagues above Pánuco to the north, and all of the coast up to Florida; and so, we will not invert the order that we begin. I speak, thus, how in the year '27 Pánfilo de Narváez de Sanlúcar de Barrameda for his overtaking of the river Palmas, with five ships, in which he brought six hundred Spaniards, a hundred horses and a large number of supplies, arms, and armor, as he had experience in other armadas. He had work in the route and didn't reach where he wanted to go, by the ignorance of Miruelo and of the other pilot in the fleet, who were not familiar with the land. Narváez left again from there with three hundred companions, and almost all the horses, although with little food; and he sent the boats to search for the river Palmas, a demand to which almost all of the men and horses were lost; and this succeeded by not settling however many men went to land with the people, or by entering land where there was nothing to settle. He who doesn't settle will not make a great conquest, and not conquering the land will not convert its people; so that the most important thing the conquistador has to do is to settle. Narváez saw some Indians with gold, who when asked where they extracted it, said that it was from Appalachia. He went there; in his route he came across a cacique named Dulchachelin, who, in place of peppers and sartalejos, gave him a very decorated deerskin which he brought covered, and came at the cost of another Indian and with much company, many of whom played flutes of cane. Appalachia has up to some forty houses of straw; it is a land poor in what they searched for, but abundant in many other things:

wool, water and sand. There are lions, bears, three classes of deer, and some strange animals that have a fake chest, which are opened and closed like a bag, where they put their kin in order to run and flee from danger. There are many birds of the kind that we have here, like herons and falcons, and those that live as birds of prey; but with all this is a land with much sunlight. The men are very tall, strong and light, who can catch a stag and who can run for an entire day without resting. They carry bows that span a dozen palms, as fat as an arm, and which shoot up to two hundred paces, and can pierce a cuirass, planks, and other robust items. The arrows are for the most part made of cane, and in place of iron they use flint or bone; the cords are from the nerves of deer. From Appalachia they went to Aute, and further in they found better houses, with floor mats and more refined people, thus dressed in deerskins, painted skins and furs, and some so fine and odorous that our men were marveled. They also had thick blankets of yarn, and thick, free heads of hair; they give an arrow as a sign of friendship, and kiss it. On an island that they call Malhado, and which measures twelve leagues and is twelve leagues from land, some of the Spaniards ate each other, who included Pantoja, Sotomayor and Hernando de Esquivel, a native of Badajoz; and on Jambo, Tierra Firme near there, they similarly ate Diego López, Gonzalo Ruiz, Corral, Sierra Palacios and others. The people on this island go about nude; the married women partially cover themselves with vela de arbol that appears similar to wool; the girls cover themselves with the hides of deer and other skins. The men pierce one of their nipples, some both of them, and put through them canes a palm and a half in length. They also pierce the lower face, and insert canes through the piercing. They are men of war, the women of work, and the land is very miserable. The women marry by choice, and each of their doctors with two or more if they wish. The husband does not enter the house of the wife's father or brothers for the first year, nor cook to eat in theirs, nor do they talk to him or look him in the face, although the woman of the two houses brings stewed that which is hunted and fished. They sleep in hides over mats and oysters by ceremony. They give many gifts to their children, and if they should die, they are stained and are buried with a great deal of crying. Their mourning lasts for a year, and all of the village cries three times a day, and the parents and relatives do not wash in all of that time. They do not cry for the elderly. All of the dead are buried, save for their doctors, who are cremated out of honor, and while they burn the villagers sing and dance. They make a powder from the bones, and save the ashes for the family and women to drink at the end of the year, after which they also cut themselves. These doctors cure with fire, and by prompting cautery and wounding. They cut where there is pain, and suck at the wound; they heal with this, and are well paid. With a certain group of Spaniards present, some Indians died from stomach pains, who thought that it was their fault; but they were forgiven, and as they were dead from the cold, hunger and mosquitoes, which

ate them alive as they walked nude, they did not kill them, but ordered them to cure the sick. With fear of death, they began their occupation praying, chanting and blessing, and cured however many came into their care; and so, they gained fame and credit as wise doctors.

From Malhado, crossing many lands, they went to one that they call Jaguaces, whose inhabitants are great liars, thieves, drunk from their wine, and pessimists, who kill their own children if they dream poorly, without any courtesy. They pursue deer until they kill them; such good runners are they. They have piercings in the nipple and lips, using them against nature; they move like the Arabs, and carry the mats of which they arm their households. The elderly and women dress and wear shoes of deer and cowhide, which at a certain time of year come from the north, and which have short horns, long hair and pleasant meat. They eat spiders, ants, worms, salamanders, lizards, snakes, sticks, earth and horse dung and pellets: and in spite of being so hungry, they go about very content and happy, dancing and singing. They buy the women of their enemies for a bow and two arrows, or for a fishing net, and kill their daughters for not giving them to relatives nor to enemies. They live nude, and are bitten so much by mosquitoes that they look like the Saint Lazarus, along with those with whom they are in perpetual war. They carry torches to drive the mosquitoes away, or make bonfires with wood that is rotten or wet so that they might flee, which is as insufferable as they are, especially to the Spanish, who cry in its midst. In the land of Avavares Alonso de Castillo cured many Indians of headaches by exhaling, like a fake doctor; for which they gave him prickly pear, which is a good fruit, and venison, bows and arrows. He similarly blessed five cripples, who were healed, and not without great admiration from the Indians and even from the Spaniards, as they loved him as celestial beings. At the fame of such cures became known to many people from many places, and those of Susola begged him to go with them to heal someone injured. Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Andres Dorantes went, who would also heal the sick; but when they arrived there, the injured had died; and as believers in Jesus Christ, who performed healings, and by preserving their lives among those barbarians, Alvar Núñez blessed him and blew upon him three times, and he revived, which was miraculous. So the same is told. They were among the pack animals for some time, and there are astute warriors; they fight at night and by traps. They go about dancing and jumping from one part to another, so that they would not encounter their opposition; they move about stooped down. They attack if their enemies seem weak, and avoid them if they see strength; they do not pursue a victory nor follow after the enemy. They see and hear much. They do not sleep with the pregnant or with those who have given birth until two years have passed; they leave women who are infertile and marry with others. The children suckle ten to twelve years, until they know how to search for food alone. they make friendships when they fight among each other. Nobody eats what the women stew with their shirt.

When they brew their wines, they spill their glasses, upon passing near a woman, if they are not covered; they get drunk often, and then mistreat their wives. Some men marry with other men who are impotent or castrated, who act like women and serve and substitute them like so, and cannot carry nor shoot a bow. They passed through some villages where the men were very white, but who were one-eyed, or blinded by the clouds, and whose wives were alcoholic. They caught infinitely many hares with rods, and did not eat without first blessing it (by the Christians) or blowing upon it. They came to a land which, either by custom or by observation of it, they neither cried, nor laughed, nor spoke to each other; and one woman, because she cried, was punched and scratched with the teeth of a rat from behind, from the feet to the head. They received the Spanish with their faces turned towards the wall. Their heads were short with their hair covering their eyes. In the valley which they called Corazones, for six hundred venison which they gave, they acquired arrows with tips of very fine emeralds, turquoise, and feathers. There the women brought them shirts of fine cotton, trousers of the same material, and skirts that reached the ground, made of marinated deer hide, without hairs and open in the front. They take seasoned venison where they drink with a certain type of apple, and with them and with the milk of the same tree they smear their arrows. From there they went to San Miguel de Culacán, which, as I have said, is on the coast of the South Sea. Of the three hundred Spaniards who left from the land near Florida with Narváez, I believe that nobody survived except Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, Andrés Dorantes de Béjar and Estebanico de Azamor, those who walked lost, naked, and hungry for a little over nine years by the lands and peoples named here, and through many others, where they cured the feverish, the crippled, the badly injured, and revived a dead man, as they have said. This Pánfilo de Narváez is who was defeated and arrested by Hernán Cortéz de Zempoallan of New Spain, and who also took out one of his eyes, as it will be told more extensively in his chronicles. A morisca⁴² of Hornachos predicted that his fleet would have ill luck, and that few of those that left for the land where he went would escape.

Pánuco

At the death of Juan Ponce de León, who discovered and travelled Florida, Francisco de Garay armed three caravels in Jamaica in the year of 1518, and went to dare for Florida, believing it was an island, as he then preferred to settle islands rather than Tierra Firme. He went onto land, and

⁴² A term for either a Moor or a Christian convert who was previously Muslim.

was routed by the Floridans, who injured and killed many Spaniards; for this, he did not stop until reaching Pánuco, which lies at fifty leagues from the coast. He saw that coast, but did not travel it very meticulously as it is known now. He wanted to make changes in Pánuco, but those of the river, who are brave and butchers, did not let him. But they treated them badly in Chila, eating the Spanish that they killed, and even flayed them and put their skins, after being well tanned, in their temples as a reminder and vanity. That land had appeared good to Juan Ponce, although his trip had gone badly for him there. He returned to Jamaica, prepared the ships, restocked provisions and men, and returned to that land in the following year of '19, and it went worse for him than the first time. Others say that he went no more than once, but that, as he was there for a long time, it is counted as two trips. Whether he went one or two times, what is true is that he became injured of the many things that had been spent, and embarrassed from the little that he had done, especially by what happened to him with Hernán Cortés in Veracruz, as it is told in another part of this work. But by correcting his faults and by winning his fame with Cortés, who was so well-known, and because he took Pánuco for a very rich land, he negotiated its governance in the court by Juan López de Torralva, his servant, talking much of what he had spent in discovering it; and once he had it with a title of adelantado, he armed and stocked eleven ships in the year of '23. As he was rich, and he thought to compete with Hernán Cortés, he counted in them seven hundred Spanish men, one hundred and fifty-four horses and many cavalymen, and went to Pánuco, where he lost with all of this, thus he died in Mexico, and the Indians killed four hundred of the Spaniards, many of whom were sacrificed and eaten, and their skins put in temples tanned or inlaid, as it is a cruel religion that they have, or a religious cruelty. They are similarly immense *putos*, and practice the public concubinage of men, where a thousand of them will lay with each other for a night, and the village is more or less the same. Their beards are torn out, their noses are pierced like the ears in order to put something there; they file their teeth, like a saw, for beauty and health; they do not marry until they are forty years old, although at ten or twelve they are of age. Nuño de Guzmán also went to Pánuco as a governor in the year of 1527. He brought two or three ships, and eighty men, and punished those Indians for their sins, making many of them slaves.

The Island of Jamaica

This island of Jamaica, which they now call Santiago, between seventeen and eighteen degrees in this part of the Equator, and twenty-five leagues from Cuba by its northern part, and other parts as much or a little more from Hispaniola towards the east, measures fifty leagues in length and

less than twenty in width. Christopher Columbus discovered the island in his second voyage to the Indies; his son don Diego conquered it, governing in Santo Domingo through Juan de Esquivel and other captains. The richest governor of that island was Francisco de Garay, and because he armed on it so many ships and men to go to Pánuco I mention him here. Jamaica is like Haiti in all, and so the Indians there came to an end. Ore is extracted here, along with fine cotton; since the Spanish possess it, there many resources of all types gained, and the is better than in other parts. The principal town is called Seville; the first abbot that it had was Pedro Martír of Anglería, a Milanese, who wrote many things on the Indians in Latin, as he was Cronista⁴³ of the Catholic Monarchs; some might have wanted more that he write them in Roman, or better and clearer. But even so we praise him and owe him much, as he was the first in penning them.

New Spain

As Francisco Hernández de Córdoba came to Santiago with the news of those rather rich lands of the Yucatán, as we will later discuss, he ignited the avarice of Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, into sending there many Spaniards who, resisting the Indians , might retrieve the gold, silver and clothes that they had. He armed four caravels and gave them to Juan de Grijalva, his nephew, who loaded two hundred Spaniards into them and departed from Cuba the first of May in the year of '18, and went to Acuzamil, the pilot Alaminos guiding the fleet, who before was with Francisco Hernández de Córdoba. From there, when they had sight of Yucatán, they raised their left hand to measure it, thinking that it was an island, as Francisco Hernández had already explored it by the right, desiring it thus for the degree that they could better dominate the islanders than those on Tierra Firme; and so, coasting along the land, they entered a cove that they called bay of La Ascensión for being such a day⁴⁴. Thus that stretch of land that lies from Acuzamil to the aforementioned bay was discovered. But seeing that much of the coast continued ahead, they turned back, and drew near to land, went to Campoton, where they were ill received, such as Francisco Hernández; thus, having to take water, which they lacked, they had to fight with the natives, and left Juan de Guetaria dead, fifty injured Spaniards injured, and Juan de Grijalva with a tooth and a half missing and two arrow wounds. For that of Grijalva and that of Córdoba, they called that beach Mala-Pelea. They parted from there, and searching for a secure port, that which was named el Deseado appeared. From there they went to the river which they gave the name of Grijalva, in which they discovered the following things: three masks of gilded wood with

⁴³ A royal title, corresponding to chronicler.

⁴⁴ That is to say, it coincided with the religious Feast of Ascension.

turquoise gemstones, which appeared to be the work of a mosaic; another mask more simply adorned, the head of a dog covered in fake stones, a gilded helmet with hair and horns; four patens of gilded tables, and another that had some stones set around an idol; five sets of leather armor, made with wood and gilded, two armor pieces of wood with flakes of gold, a type of scissors of the same kind, seven razors of flint, a mirror of two flames with a ring of gold, a hundred and ten beads of golden earth, seven thin necklaces of gold, forty earrings of gold, each one with three pendants, two bracelets of gold, wide and thin, a pair of tendrils of gold, two covered in feathers, with gold plating in the center, two very gracious tufts, and another of leather and gold; a jacket of feathers, colored cotton cloths, a type of comb, and some ponchos. For this he gave a doublet of green velvet, a silk cap, two buttons, two shirts, some overalls, a dresser, a comb, a mirror, light shoes, three knives, and some scissors; many *contezuelas* of glass, a belt with its buckle, and wine, which none of them wanted to drink, as it was a thing which up to then no Indian appreciated. From that river Grijalva went to San Juan de Ulhua, where it was taken possession by Diego Velázquez in the name of the King, as new land. He talked with the Indians, who came well dressed in their manner, and who presented themselves as affable and understood; he traded with them many things, which were four grains of gold, the head of a dog, a rock like chalcedony; an idol of gold with *comezuelos* and earrings and breastplates of the same and in the navel a black stone; a medallion of stone garnished with gold, with its crown of the same, in which there were two pendants and a crest; four tendrils of turquoise with eight pendants each; two earrings of gold with many pendants; a decorated collar, a *trenza* of gold, ten strings of golden bars, a necklace with a frog of gold, six collars of gold, six grains of gold, four armbands of gold, three strings of fine stones and rods of gold; five masks of stone with gold, forming a mosaic; many fans and feathers, many cloaks and shirts of cotton. In recompense of which Grijalva gave two shirts, two blue and red doublets, two black hoods, two overalls, two dressing tables, two mirrors, two ribbons of studded cord, with their bags; two scissors and four knives, which they had in excess, for having tested cutting with them; two espadrilles, some women's shoes, three combs, a hundred pins, twelve needles, three medallions, two hundred beads of glass, and other trinkets of lesser value. At the end of the trips they brought by alboroque stews and pastries of meat with much chili pepper and baskets of fresh bread, and an Indian maidservant for the captain, which like so the lords of that land used. If Juan de Grijalva had known to be aware of that good venture, and settle there, as those of his company urged him, he would have been another Cortés. But such good had not been done by him, nor did he take a commission of settlement. He dispatched from that place, for Diego Velázquez, to Pedro de Albarado in a caravel with the sick and injured and with many things from the trips, so that it would not be with penalty,

and he continued along the coast towards the north, for many leagues without going onto land. And as it appeared that he had discovered too much, and fearing the currents and time, which being June he saw the mountain ranges covered in snow and that they would lack provisions, he turned to advice from the pilot Alaminos, and he made for the port of San Antón in order to take water and provisions, where he was detained six days trading with the natives, and he traded with them trinkets of haberdashery for forty hachuelas of copper mixed with gold, which were worth two thousand castellanos, and three cups of gold, and a vase of precious stones, and many gold hollows, and other small things that had little value, but were well made. Having seen the wealth and elegance of these Indians, many Spaniards were made happy settling there, but Grijalva did not want to do so, but instead he left right after and came to the bay that they call Términos, between the river Grijalva and the port Deseado, where, upon landing for water they found among some trees an idol of gold and many of clay; two wooden men mounting one over the other in the manner of Sodom, and another of clay, with both hands in its own, which it had cut out, like almost all of the Indians of the Yucatán. This discovery and the bodies of human sacrifices did not agree with the Spanish, as it appeared such a dirty and cruel thing to them. They continued from there, and took land in Champoton, in order to take water; nonetheless, I do not believe that they dared to do so, seeing those of the village were well-armed, and so daring, that they came to shoot arrows into the ocean from the hip, and came in small boats to fight with the caravels. And so, they left that land and returned to Cuba five months after leaving from there. Juan de Grijalva gave that which he had recovered to his uncle Diego Velázquez, and a fifth to the officials of the King. He discovered from Champoton up to San Juan de Ulhua and further, and all of that rich and wonderful land.

Hernan Cortes

Never had such an example of wealth been discovered in the Indies, nor recovered so rapidly in what was discovered, as in the land that Juan de Grijalva coasted; and for this, many moved to go there. But Hernán Cortés was the first with five hundred fifty Spaniards in eleven ships. He was in Acuzamil, took Tabasco, founded Veracruz, won Mexico, arrested Montezuma, conquered and settled New Spain and many other kingdoms. And for the number of the many and great feats that he made in the wars that were had there, which without the prejudice of any Spaniard of the Indies, were the best of the things that were done in those places of the New World, I will write on them for their part, in imitation of Polybius and of Salustius, who took from the Roman histories, which together and as a whole were made, this of Marius, and that of Scipio. I also do this as New

Spain is very rich and improved, highly populated by the Spanish, filled with natives, all of them Christian; as the religion of antiquity was a cruel and strange one, and as other new customs will please or even scare the reader.

The Island of Cuba

Christopher Columbus called Cuba "Fernandina," in honor and memory of the king don Fernando, in whose name he discovered it. Nicolas de Ovando began its conquest through Sebastián de Ocampo; and it was all conquered, in place of the almirante don Diego Columbus, by Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, who distributed, settled, and governed it until he died. Cuba takes the shape of a willow leaf, three hundred leagues long and seventy wide. Everything goes from east to west, and the center of the island is almost at twenty-one degrees latitude; it has at its borders to the east the island of Haiti, Santo Domingo, at fifteen leagues. It has many islands to the south, but the biggest and most important is Jamaica. By its west side is Yucatán; to the north it faces Florida and the Lucayas, which are many islands. Cuba is a rough land, high and mountainous, and on many sides it has the white sea; the rivers are not large, but of good waters and rich in gold and fish. There are also many lakes and ponds, some of which are salty; it is a temperate land, though some feel cold there. The men and the land are in all like that of Hispaniola, and for this there is nothing to repeat on the matter. However, they differ in the following: the language is very diverse; the men and women go about nude; in weddings another is the *novio*, which is a used and guarded custom; if the fiancé is a cacique, all of the invited caciques try the fiancée before him; if a merchant, all of the other merchants may; and if a laborer, his lord or some priest, and the fiancée goes forcibly; the men leave women with little cause, and the women leave the men for nothing; but at the longing of the weddings they dispose of their people as they wish, or because the couple are sodomites. The women walking nude invites and incites the men quickly, and to use much of that horrible sin makes them bad. There is much gold, but not of fine quality; there is good copper and much in rubies and colored stones; there is a spring and mineral of paste like tar, with which, treated with acid or tallow, they coat their boats and glue together anything. There is a quarry of very valuable stones, which without realizing anything more than how they extract them, they fire arquebuses and lombards with them. The snakes are very large, but meek and without venom, clumsy things, which the natives easily catch and without disgust or fear eat. They maintain guanibiquinajes, and have eight or more of them among their crops when they harvest them. Guanibiquinaje is an animal like the hare, with the form of a fox, except that it has the feet of a rabbit, the head of a ferret, the tail of a fox, and long fur like that of the

badger; its meat is red, savory, and healthy. Cuba was highly populated by Indians; now there are no more than the Spanish. All of them became Christians . Many died of work and hunger, many of the pox, and many were sent to New Spain, once Cortés won it, and so there remains no caste of them. The principal town and port is in Santiago. The first bishop was Hernando de Mesa, a Dominican friar. Some miracles occurred at the start of the pacification of this island, by which cause the Indians were converted much faster; and Our Lady appeared many times to the commander cacique, who invoked her, and to others who have said Ave Maria. I have put this piece on Cuba here being a convenient place, as from there came those who discovered New Spain and converted it to the faith of Christ.

A Remedy Against the
Depopulation of the West
Indies

Bartolomé de Las Casas

Foreword

The emperor and king Charles V, our lord, ordered me, don fray Bartolomé de las Casas, bishop of the royal city of Chiapas, to assist a congregation of Prelates, of Grandes¹, and of Scholars, convened by His Majesty in Valladolid in the year of 1542 for the reformation of the abuses of the governance of the Indies. I was given the special responsibility to propose all the things that I might consider convenient. I proposed various remedies, of which the most principal was the eighth because it comprised the substance of the others, which would be useless without this, as directed by their better execution. I endeavored to prove my proposition with twenty reasons in the following manner.

Proposition

My Lord, the eighth remedy is more important than all the others combined, because Your Majesty will conserve the populated Indies if Your Majesty orders its execution, and if this is verified as it is convened; but not being so, Your Majesty will lose all of these provinces, or will possess them while deserted.

The remedy is that Your Majesty establish by a law in the Cortes Generales² of the kingdom that all the Indians that are already found to be subjects to the sovereignty of Your Majesty and those that would be subjected later be free and uniquely vassals of the royal crown, that nevermore in the future could they be taken from royal patrimony by Your Majesty nor from his successors to the throne, nor given to any other person with the title of *encomienda*, deposit, feud³, vassalage, nor another of any nature that may be of any mode, form, or manner, however great, rare, or important be the services of the person in whose favor it would be wished to offer the transfer of vassalage⁴; nor by how great, urgent, or strong may be the necessities in which they may be brought to see the royal treasury; and finally by no motive that may occur, or could be wished to protest. The completion of such a law suits that Your Majesty would promise with solemn justice the proper name and of all those that might later possess the royal crown, adding that the law will not be revoked nor a law procured that might revoke it, but rather would place in

¹ Also known as *Grandee*; this is both a formal title and a general term to describe nobility of particularly high status in Spain.

² A form of legislature in Spain.

³ *Feudo*, misspelled as “*fendo*” in text.

⁴ *Alienacion* is the term used to describe transfers of vassalage, alongside *enagenacion* later in this text.

its testament a particular clause in which it would declare it by mandating and recommending to his successors on the throne that they make and renew the same legal promises.

This provision is absolutely necessary for the twenty causes and reasons that I will explain.

Reason I

The first, because the Indies were nations inhabited by idolaters who ignored the existence of the Christian religion, and when the Catholic Monarchs, the grandsires of Your Majesty, turned to the Pope so that they might acquire the conquest and possession of those lands, they proposed the spiritual benefits that the holy Catholic faith would accomplish with the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of the Indians whose souls would be saved for the better honor and glory of God. In light of such an exposition, the supreme pontiff authorized the enterprise precisely with attention to that which was promised, and chose the industry, power, and religious zeal of the kings of Castile for the execution, without the faculty of delegating upon other persons the care⁵ of the preaching of the gospel, the conversion of the Indians, its instruction in the catechism, and the exhortation of good customs and the practice of virtues.

From here it is inferred that the kings of Castile cannot be absolved of the direct and immediate completion of these promises accepted by the Pope in favor of the religion for the eternal salvation of so many souls; thus the kings would lose their duties if they were to confide the people of the Indies to the care of a particular lord, be it with the title that is wished although it was charged with the obligation of preaching to them the gospel and instructing them in the catechisms, and to ensure their practice of religious customs; thus the kings cannot leave open the completion of these obligations that are inherent to the dignity of their sovereignty.

This is true, as much in the case in which the kings may transfer to the particular lord some part of the royal jurisdiction, high or low with pure or mixed imperium⁶, as in the case in which they are reserved all of it; uniquely conceding the encomienda, the usufruct, and the personal service of an Indian; thus in the two it is verified that the Monarchs cease to exercise directly the commission that the Pope gave to them to watch over the conversion of the idolaters, the teaching of the dogmas, and the practice of religious morality.

This commission is not delegable by its nature, following the decree which says that it should be believed elected the personal industry always that dictates the gravity of the enterprise, or that there is indicated the elevated dignity of the chosen person. The two circumstances concur

⁵ *Cuidado*, misspelled "*ciudadano*" in text.

⁶ Likely a reference to nobility or race.

in the matter which we treat. The gravity of the enterprise could not be larger, as it is the eternal salvation of the Indians. The dignity of the commissioned is not less than that of a powerful sovereign. So thus the care of the conversion of the Indians cannot trespass to any other particular lord.

The motive persuades the same truth because for the conversion and that which follows it infinitely calls for sweetness, mildness and good treatment. The king can do so, because he has no interest to the contrary; but the particular lord is supposed to take from the person of the Indian great monetary benefits, making him work hard by that which fatigues the Indian, he treats the Indian with harshness, and abandons, or at least postpones, that which does not produce him temporal gains, which is the endeavor that the Indian learn the catechisms and good religious morality.

It is also presumed to be a non-delegable commission that which is given with the clause *We confide in your faith, in your prudence, in your virtue*, or with other words of equivalent meaning; and so it is verified in our case, as the bull of the Pope says:

Knowing that we as true Kings and Catholic princes (as we have ever been as we know and have demonstrated by deeds so illustrious and well-known throughout almost all of the globe) not only would you desire the exaltation of the holy Catholic faith and the establishment of the Christian religion, but also that you have dedicated your efforts to this end with sincere spirit, and special care as manifested in the reconquest of the kingdom of Granada, recuperated from the tyranny of the Saracens with such grand glory in the name of God, We are inclined with reason and pleasure to concede to you that which you would desire so that you might spiritedly prosecute, each day more zealously, the proposal which you have formed, agreeable and acceptable to our immortal God.

The same passed when the commissions include the imposed precept upon the commissioned, which is verified in our case as consisting of two clauses. In one the supreme pontiff said to the Catholic Monarchs:

We urge you with efficacy regarding the promises with which to receive the baptism you were obligated to obey to the apostolic precepts, and We require of you by the essence of the mercy of our lord Jesus Christ that once you will commence and proceed with the expedition with pure intention and the zeal of the Catholic faith, you will want to (and should) induce the towns and peoples that inhabit the islands and Tierra-Firme to receive the Christian religion without which you may be stained evermore by any dangers or hardships, but rather conserve the firm hope that God will crown with good success the work commenced.

Such another is inferred from a distinct clause from the same bull in which His Holiness said:

Furthermore, We mandate you in virtue of holy obedience, that you appoint to go to Tierra-Firme and the indicated islands a number of honored men, God-fearing men, the educated and the wise, and experts to instruct the inhabitants in the Catholic faith and in good customs, in which you must practice as many diligences as are possible as We have already been promised, without leaving Us doubts regarding the completion of your maximum devotion and your royal magnanimity.

These two clauses make it clear to see that the lordly Catholic Monarchs, the grandsires of Your Majesty made a promise to the Pope to take personal care of the conversion and instruction of the Indians; that the Pope accepted the promise, reduced its completion to the class of contract, and ordered with a special precept to work with all efficacy towards that which was promised. It cannot be so in the case of confiding this care to particular lords, because far from completing the promise and precept with all efficacy, it was the same as abandoning the conversion and instruction as has been accredited by experience.

Queen Isabel, the most serene and well ventured lady, your most dignified grandsire, knew this truth well, and thus did not want to further permit that the Indians be subject to another lord than herself and her lord-husband the king don Fernando, and it is convenient that Your Majesty know that which occurred in the court in the year of 1499. The don Christopher Columbus, discoverer and first *almirante* of those Indies, conceded there as the reward for great services made in the expedition, to take to Castile and bring an Indian as a servant to each one of those that came. I was one of those to whom he gave this grace. We came to the court; the queen knew of this; she was gravely enraged, saying that neither the almirante nor the anyone had the faculty to dispose of any persons, who owed vassalage to Her Majesty alone. It took much to placate her rage; and without delay she ordered that an ordinance be published in Granada, mandating under the penalty of death, that all of those that had been taken from the Indies be returned to the Indies, which was verified in the year of 1500 once Francisco de Bobadilla went to govern the New World. I can assure Your Majesty the truth of this success.

Reason II

The second, because supposing the obligation that the kings of Castile have to procure the conversion, baptism, and instruction of the Indians, is the indispensable consequence of not putting obstacles towards the procurement of that end; and one of the greatest that can be posed

is giving Indians to a particular lord in the form of encomienda and much more in vassalage for various reasons.

The grand avarice that the Spanish have shown in the usufruct of the personal service of the Indians, has come to such an extreme that they impede the religious in reuniting in the temple the Indians partitioned by the encomienda, pretexting a very grave damage to their interests, and attempting to persuade that they would take large benefits from the service of the Indians, if they were not occupied for as much time in the instruction of the catechisms and religious morality. In effect it has happened, to have the Indians be reunited in the church for this objective, for a Spaniard to come and to take from the temple fifty to sixty Indians assuring that they are necessary to send cargo to another village; to deny the Indians from going while their instruction lasts, to maltreat them by the Spaniard there with rods; for the religious to reclaim their right and that of the Indians in conformation to the laws, and to depreciate this reclamation even at the cost of grave scandals.

The Spanish, who have Indians through encomiendas or vassalage, confess without demure that they lack the obligation that has been recognized of procuring the instruction of the Indians because they think that in this detriment is given to them, in respect to which while the Indian is ignorant, he obeys them punctually out of fear of conflict and punishment; but when they have been instructed in the catechisms and in religious morality he responds in many cases, arguing to not be obligated to obey. To avoid this danger, the particular lords not only look with indifference upon the instruction of their Indians, but even with hate, because the weakness of man, the frailty of his nature, and the violence of his passions make them prefer temporal profit and monetary worth over spiritual happiness and the conversion of the Indians, and they prefer to have ignorant vassals over instructed Christians.

It does not influence only a little to impede the conversion and instruction of the Indians the obstacle that the particular lords oppose that the religious preach and instruct, when they fear that they observe or see the cruelties with which they treat the Indians; thus the religious, seeing such atrocities and shocked by the unhappy patients, give notice of the poor treatment to the governor. Rarely do they result in a remedy, because the justices to whom they give their complaints tend to possess Indians as well and look upon the matter as a trivial and unimportant thin; but ultimately once the effects of this tyranny are public, they take some provision, and a short number of cases suffice so that the particular lords of the Indians procure by indirect judgments so that the religious abstain from convening Indians, preaching to them the Gospel or instructing them in the catechism; whose very grave damage would be avoided, if the Indians knew no other lord than the King.

The Spanish owners or encomenderos of the Indians seek to discredit the religious doctriners so that the justices or governors not give them faith regarding the cruelties of their behavior. They say that the friars make themselves partisans of the Indians because they are loved by them and take part in gifts that the Indians make them with things that should go to their masters. But these falsifications are another new cause for which particular vassalage should not be permitted. It is true that the Indians dearly love the religious doctriners, and the contrary would be very notable. They see that the religious traverse long routes, deserts, at times dangerous, always with discomfort to inform the village of the doctrine; that they explain with sweetness the mysteries of the faith, and the rules of the moral; that they console them in their afflictions, and that they protect them from their persecutions. How would they cease to love one who exercises as charity so many and such great favors? But avarice is not the origin, because the unhappy Indians are poor, unclothed, starving, sick, and weak from the hardness of the heart of their lords, and consequently incapable of having precious things to offer as gifts. The true motive of the Spanish is to have denaturalized the Indians converting them from men into timid hares, and to have brought them to know that their inhumanities will triumph against justice if the Indians remain idolaters and ignorant without learning Christian doctrine, nor await the protection of the religious.

Particular vassalage produces consequences contrary to religion, and by many principles the custom of repartitioning Indians is not the least worthy of attention among the conquistadores, their servants, and other distinguished Spaniards. The repartition of all the Indians in a village occurs frequently, giving them away, separating by chance ten, fifty, a hundred and more for a Spaniard, then to another, later to another, and leave the husband, the wife, and the children as the slaves of different masters, without a founded hope of reuniting; because a lord appoints his slaves to serve as beasts of burden in merchant travels of a hundred or two hundred leagues, which is to say, to die on the trip; another master orders his own to work in mines distant from the residence of his family; another rents his Indians to one who will make them suffer great pains; ultimately, the separation of the spouses, children, and siblings, is for an indefinite time, against the precepts of religious morals, those which they still do not permit the Indians to hear from the religious because their temporal interests are seen as of superior importance.

Your Majesty has mandated that these tributes be appraised with justice, and there cannot be extracted from the Indian more of a contribution than the sum appraised by the law; but this mandate of Your Majesty is belittled in the Indies. The governors, the justices, those employed in all classes are the first who give a bad example, and the other Spaniards imitate well what they see in this point. They want personal service and not tribute, because they take infinitely more interests, and they do not suffer anything from the death of their slaves as they take others in their

place. They only preserve the law of Your Majesty for that of the short number of Indians that remain royal vassals, for which it was promulgated without making a case the law which speaks of all, given that the legislator does not know of any other class of Indians.

So that the evangelist can preach, and so that he can instruct those that embrace the Christian religion in the catechisms, it is necessary that there be people to whom he can preach, and the freedom of the people that must attend to its instruction. God did not give the written law in the time of Abraham by chance because there was only a chosen family and not a people; nor in the first age of Moses, because although it is true that the Hebrews composed a group of more than six hundred thousand fighting men, they were not a free people. He gave it to them nonetheless when, having left Egypt, they were an independent nation, with the subordination of only their leader Moses.

The Christian religion orders the congregation of people in the temple for worship; its seven sacraments, its mysteries, articles of the faith, its precepts and moral rules, demand the existence of a people, without which the life of the errant men would be work that of wild animals in the woods, mountains, and deserts; they demand the liberty of a people because without it, the bonds of society are dissolved, and because the unfree people cannot be instructed when and as it is convenient.

Finally, slavery is the immediate cause of many millions of men having died in idolatry, against that which was promised by the Catholic Monarchs and that mandated by the Supreme Pontiff. Without slavery the Indians would obey the King of Castile, embrace the Christian religion, be instructed in its dogmas and morals; but once they say maltreatment, they would abandon society, be withdrawn to the mountains, or die ill-treated in the service of their masters without any signal of love for the religion received. Being vassals of only the king and paying their tribute appraised by the law, all will be good Christians.

Reason III

The third, because the Spanish laymen are not apt to the object of preaching the Gospel to the Indians, to persuade them of the love of the Christian religion, and instruct them in the catechisms. It is suitable to know the formula with which the governors give the Indians for slaves, albeit without this name. So it says:

“To you *Fulano de Tal* are entrusted by means of deposit *this many* Indians in the town of *such*, and is authorized to you so that you might serve yourself from them in your mines and granaries, taking gold and benefit yourself from their services, with the condition that you must take care of teaching them to them Christian doctrine, and any other things touched upon by our holy Catholic faith; thus with this I discharge the conscience of His Majesty, our lord the King, and my own.”

Does His Majesty wish to know if this is enough in order to discharge the royal conscience? Thus it would serve Your Majesty to hear of an event of mine verified in Santa-Marta, and to believe firmly that other such events occur, however much less, in almost all towns.

Juan Colmenero, an uncivil person of vulgar class, a soldier who had been in the conquest, received in encomienda all of the Indians of a large village, with the charge expressed in the certificate. Some time ago, some religious preachers and I were there; we observed that the Indians knew nothing of Christianity but that this was not strange, because having examined the same Juan Colmenero, we found that he did not know how to *signarse*, nor to *santiguarse*⁸. “Well then what have you taught to these poor Indians?” “Me? To give them to the Devil. Isn't it enough to tell them ‘*Per signin santin cruces*’?”⁹

Does Your Majesty wish that the preacher be the other Spaniard, who having taken from the Indians of a village their idols of gold and make them receive the baptism, brought later other idols of copper recovered in their skirmishes, and obligated the Indians of his village to buy them paying the price in enslaved Indians to bring them to sell?

Or that the Curates be the secular Spaniards, however much they present themselves as *hidalgos*,¹⁰ when the greater number of them do not know the creed, nor the commandments of the law of god? When the majority are most vicious¹¹ in their customs, and have not gone to the Indies but to satiate their immense avarice?

The Indians do not have more than one wife, in agreement with the necessity that their nature inspires; the Spaniards make use of many freely and publicly, even to the excess of having a man with fourteen known concubines. Will they preach well chastity to the Indians?

⁷ This is a manner of proposing a generic Spanish name, literally “*So-and-so of Such*”.

⁸ Both words indicate variants of making the sign of the cross over one's body; *signarse* is to take the hand to the head, then mouth, then chest, saying “*By the sign of the holy cross, from our enemies, free us, O Lord*”; *santiguarse* is to bring the hand to the head, chest, left then right shoulder, saying “*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen.*”

⁹ “*By the sign of the holy cross.*”

¹⁰ Signifies one of the lowest ranks of the Spanish nobility; Las Casas is essentially calling into question the decision to treat laymen as nobles and clergy.

¹¹ That is to say, exhibiting vices rather than simply violence.

These Indians do not rob, nor kill, nor make ill of anyone because they are naturally good, mild, docile, humble, and favored by Nature in a temperate complexion; the secular Spaniards are proud, rageful, arrogant, they rob, kill, and make ill with fierceness, cruelty, and a thousand signs of inhumanity; will they preach well the moral virtues?

The Indians are religious with respect to their idols; so they are as well with the one true God, those who have been made Christians and who live in villages of Your Majesty with ministers of worship. The Spanish encomenderos continually take blasphemies in the tongue against God and his saints; they scorn the worship and dedicate themselves to avarice, as if gold were their only God. How could it be hoped that such men will care well for the religion and for the morals of the Indians?

These form their judgments for that which they see, and they believe that the God of the Christians is the worst of the Gods, as that which is said by the professors of his law are so iniquitous; they think equally that the King of the Spaniards is the cruelest tyrant and largest executioner of men, because the governors under his laws are unjust, inhuman, and ferocious. Is it well that to such people is confided the teaching of religion and morality?

I know well, my undefeated lord, that Your Imperial Majesty was unaware of all of this, but I can assure you that it is not only true, but that I could add stronger and more abominable things that would fill you with shock and fright.¹²

From here it has come to be that God is now as unknown as He was a century ago in almost all of the Indies, excluding the kingdom of Mexico¹³.

We should be shocked of the capacity the Spaniard possesses to invent, without the authority of the Catholic Monarchs, the most unjust will of completing the spiritual obligations of the sovereign relevant to the salvation of the Indians, with the fraudulent medium of transferring them to a layman, ignorant and ferocious, entrusting him to complete them at the same time that he is authorized to serve himself of the persons of the Indians. I do not ignore who was the author of such horrible iniquity, but I do not name him, to not defame his name. Avarice was the origin of the idea; the rest did not serve but as a cloak to cover it.

Those who took into their care the conversion and instruction of the Indians in this new form, invented to enrich themselves, do not appear like the workers of the vineyard of the lord

¹² A trait that has amused me in Las Casas' *Remedio* and other writings is his constant dismissal of the idea that the king could be responsible for any of the problems in the Indies even though he benefits from the exploitation of the natives there. The reason for this is simple, that he must appease the king and refrain from openly criticizing him, but also presents a question that I've tried to grapple: What did Las Casas honestly think of his ruler? Or of the Spanish presence in *any* form in the New World?

¹³ Spelled *Mégico* in text.

mentioned in the Gospel; as God did not promise to reward them with temporal riches but with those spiritual.

And so the mode with which these new preachers conduct themselves is very different. God wishes that the conversion be procured by means of persuasion and sweetness; in the Indies the particular lords use rigor, cruelty, and however much fits into their ferocious and bloodthirsty souls.

It cannot be believed that the clause of the certificate is enough to unload the conscience of Your Majesty because it can only be doubted while its effects go ignored; but now Your Majesty knows what passed of the eight million Indians that have perished in idolatry because of the iniquitous system of the conquistadors, the authors of the repartitioning of the Indian peoples.

These ills cannot be avoided only by prohibiting legal lordship over these peoples, if they are given in encomienda, as experience has accredited that the encomenderos abuse it as much as lords; and over all because so badly or worse do they care for the conversion and teaching of the Indians.

There is not nor can there be another remedy than to leave the Indian peoples in America as free as are those of Castile, and to procure there the good of religion by means of priests as it is practiced in all other parts of the world.

Reason IV

The fourth, because one of the things most recommended for the benefit of the Christian religion is peace, so that Christians may freely exercise acts of piety, worship of God, and religious devotion. If this supposes great importance of a pacific state at all times, it is verified much more in the circumstances of having a very considerable number of new Christians that need to go to the temple with greater frequency in order to hear the explication of the Christian doctrine, and cannot do so without being free, pending some foreign will.

The necessary peace for this objective is not compatible with the subjugation of the Indians to particular lords, even when they are by means of encomienda. It produces perpetual war among the Indians and their masters; the former want their daily liberty to seek the friar who preaches to them; the latter impede this, and send their Indians to the mines, to the conduct of trade, and other incompatible destinations. Each motivation embitters the others, and the least complaint of an Indian against his master produces a death given in the mines, in their travel, or in whatever other part. If the Indian wishes to go to the Governor General of the province when

the justice of the town denies him his protection, such another occurs in a manner that the life of the Indian is in constant danger, and the Christian religion loses its conquests.

A habitual state of bloody war among tyrants and the tyrannized with so unequal a party, is the origin from which the Indians accuse the religion and Your Majesty of the properties which are not true, but which produce, as if they were so, a formal hatred of the two objects: towards religion because the Indians pass judgment of it by the morals that they see practiced; towards Your Majesty because the tolerance of such horrible tyrannies induces them to believe that Your Majesty is as barbaric as their tyrants.

Consequently, there is no other means by which to establish peace between the Spanish inhabitants and the Indians than the solemn declaration of the latter being as free as the former, all of them brothers by their humanity, by inhabiting their lands, and by religion, in a manner that the Indians may not fear the Spaniards and that justice be administered to them in the same manner as to the other residents. And so they could attend the temple when they have the obligation or devotion.

Reason V

The fifth, because if the Supreme Pontiff approved of the acquisition and retention of the kingdoms of the Indies, it was not because Your Majesty would have more power nor more riches than before, but rather because in this way there would come to be a large increase in the number of Christians, servants of the true God, multiplying the religious worship in the temples, and the practices of virtues of the individuals that profess the same religion.

Consequently, the pontifical concession was in the favor of the Indians, and not of Your Majesty; thus although it may appear to the contrary by the literal text of the bulls, its words only mean the Kings of Castile to have been chosen as instruments of the spiritual and temporal felicity of the Indians.

May it be true, this diminishment is proven by the facts and the depopulation. The islands Hispaniola had three million people. The island of Cuba, Jamaica, San Juan, and the more than sixty islands of the Lucayos and Gigantes, were all highly populated. Tierra Firme was no less populated. In the course of thirty-eight years, more than twelve million Indians have perished there, without counting those that had perished before in the conquest of each one of the different kingdoms, nor the increased number of those that would have been produced by matrimony.

Such horrible mortality has arisen precisely from the enslavement of the Indians, be it named this or encomienda as the effects of this were always the same as those of vassalage and of sale.

If there are still people who tell Your Majesty the contrary, I am quick to refute all of them, be they of whatever rank, as I am armed with the testimonies of the truth, I fear nobody and will show that they have lied and seek to trick even Your Majesty for their particular interests of the past, present, and future, and I will make it seen that such lies make them traitors to Your Majesty and guilty of injuring majesty both human and divine.

What other cause would have produced the effects of the depopulation of two thousand five hundred leagues?¹⁴ The object of a government is not to conserve soil nor even the walls of its buildings, but the people that inhabit them. And so the monetary interests of the Crown would have grown as well, and the depopulation is one of the largest grievances that has occurred to the royal treasury, in addition to burdening the conscience of Your Majesty.

It is true that some have attempted to hide forever from Your Majesty this depopulation and the cruel means with which they have verified it; but the spiritual and temporal damage is not less true because of this, nor is the obligation of Your Majesty to prevent its continuation less significant.

With this motive, it appears just to me to recall a clause of the testament of the most serene queen our lady, doña Isabel, grandmother to Your Majesty worthy to reign in the heavens. So it says:

“And take into account at the time that we were conceded by the Holy See the islands and Tierra Firme from across the Ocean sea discovered and being discovered, our principal intention was (at the time that we supplicated the pope Alexander VI, of good memory, that he make for us the stated concession) of endeavoring to induce and bring the peoples of these lands and convert them to our holy Catholic faith, and to send to the stated islands of Tierra Firme prelates and preachers and clerics, and other educated people, fearful of god, to instruct the natives and inhabitants, and to teach and endow them with good customs; and to put upon them the due diligence (following largely the stated letters, contained in the concession) hence I ask the king my lord most affectionately, and charge and order the stated princess, doña Juana my daughter, and the stated prince don Felipe her husband that they would do as such and complete

¹⁴ Modern historians tend to attribute most of the depopulation experienced in the New World as the result of exposure to new communicable diseases, which the Spanish brought as latent carriers. This should not, however, diminish the conquistadors' persecution as a role in this; as Las Casas later points out, conditions on the *haciendas* and *encomiendas* of the Spanish colonies were such that natives were not allowed to rest even when sick, and many who complained of sickness were accused of laziness and punished harshly.

their charge; and that this be their principal end; and that in this they might put great diligence, and not consent nor give place so that the native Indians and inhabitants of the stated islands and Tierra Firme, won and yet to be won, would receive some grievance in their person nor in their goods; but rather order that they be well and justly treated; and if they have received some wrongdoing, that they would remedy and settle it, in a manner that does not exceed anything of that which is not included and ordered by the apostolic letters of the aforementioned concession.”

The precepts of this good-fortuned lady can be seen here; and it is fitting to know, that in spite of this clause, her death marks the precise age in which the destruction of the Indies began, in the manner which, if it were to the pleasure of Your Majesty, I will manifest through making a true relation.

Reason VI

The sixth, because the Spanish are capital enemies of the Indians, and being so it cannot and should not be conferred to them the conservation of the persons of such unhappiness, their education, their teaching nor anything related to the spiritual duties, or those temporal, of the Indians. This enmity is constant and notorious on many principles.

The Spanish have slandered them by attributing to them crimes most grave that the Jews have not known¹⁵, or that if some individual incurred among them, it should not be brought to consequence against the common people of the Indian nations.

The first crime is that of sodomy, and I can assure that it is not true on the large islands of Cuba, San Juan, Jamaica, and Hispaniola, nor in the sixty Lucayan islands. This I know myself. I am informed that it is also not in Peru nor in the Yucatan. In other parts this may have been heard, but if it were true, the remedy for this is not the condemnation of all.¹⁶

¹⁵ This was a period of time in Spain (and in fact most of Europe) when the Jews were highly persecuted and viewed with contempt. In 1492, after ages of forced conversions, the Alhambra Decree of the Catholic Monarchs was issued, banishing any Jews still in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon that would not convert. Equally detested were the *conversos* and *moriscos*, those who converted from Judaism or Islam, whom many Spaniards believed still practiced their old religions privately.

¹⁶ It is difficult to say with certainty what groups in the world did and did not permit homosexuality, but it can be generally said that there were a variety of attitudes towards it both accepting and intolerant. The dominant ethnic group among the Aztecs, for instance, stood against homosexuals and made it a punishable offense; at the same time, it's questionable whether laws like this were ever enforced among the Aztecs, and many of their subject ethnic groups were highly tolerant of it. Spanish accounts of widespread sodomy (such as that espoused by Gómara) should be taken with some skepticism, since claims of sins like these were frequently used to justify conquests against the natives.

The second crime that the Spanish have attributed to them for their particular interests, is that the Indians eat human flesh. We can assure with true, proper science, that this is not so in any of the previously cited places. If there were to be such a vice in other regions of the Indies I would not approve; but not for this will I stop believing that the general accusation is a falsehood invented with malice in order to achieve the ends that their avarice brought.¹⁷

The third crime of which they accuse them is of being idolaters; and such an accusation is another new and great malice, as this is not a punishable crime as part of preaching of the gospel. Our own progenitors were idolaters until the apostles or their successors preached the Christian religion; but so that our ascendants would become Christians, they were not enslaved, mistreated, robbed or killed, because the old evangelists of the holy gospel were instead sweet, mild, and compassionate in accord with the standard provided by our lord Jesus Christ who recommended many times this moderation, assuring that by baptism they would be pardoned of all the sins of life preceding their Christianity, without which they would no longer return to impute such misdeeds. Only the posterior sins could be taken into consideration; but the Indians who by chance have fallen in the power of one who treats them well, are not accustomed to return to idolatry; experience lies in their favor. We have seen relapse, but always as the result of bad treatment suffered before the Christian religion can be rooted in their hearts.

The fourth falsehood is to say that the Indians are irrational beasts, undignified to be called men, incapable of instruction, and only useful to serve as beasts of burden. If the accusers believe it to be so, I can call them heretics, and they deserve to be burned as such. If they do not believe it, they are perverse slanderers that proceed with this wickedness by succeeding in that Your Majesty permits the enslavement of the Indians. The Indians are humble, docile, and timid; three qualities, which united in a man constituted under the tyrannical power of the discoverers and conquistadors of the Indians, are very capable of being made to take the place of a very patient beast, destitute of talents; but observe well the small number of Indians either free or subject to a rational lord, and it will be seen that they have good talent and excellent dispositions to learn whatever science or art that is taught to them.¹⁸

¹⁷Spanish accounts frequently cite cannibalism among the natives (such as, once again, Gómara), but again these should be taken with some skepticism. Modern historians agree that groups such as the Aztecs did practice cannibalism, though instances when it occurred tend to be described as ritual or infrequent rather than a part of daily life; little archaeological evidence exists to support many of the claims of cannibalism practiced.

¹⁸ In his later debate against the pro-imperial Sepulveda, who insisted that the Native Americans fit the definition of a natural slave according to Aristotle, Las Casas more extensively deals with the idea that the natives are barbarians by proposing that they had formed a civilization that in many respects was better than the Europeans: *"They are not ignorant, inhuman or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom ... wisely administered the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours."*

The sixth proof of the enmity of the Spaniards against the Indians, is the eagerness that they have formed since the death of the lady queen doña Isabel to reduce them to slavery, first with the name of slaves and the mark of the king as public testimony of the infamy; and later with that of the lifelong *encomiendas* of the possessor and his first successor; then with various other titles and pretexts, whether direct or indirect; always saying that in this manner it is fit to be seen, the conversion of the Indians and their instruction in the Christian doctrine.

With the Queen dead, they fooled the Catholic King don Fernando and acquired license to take Indians from the Lucayan islands and bring them to Hispaniola. They brought¹⁹ into effect more than fifty thousand people of both sexes and of all ages, depopulating the Lucayans until leaving in them no more than eleven people. Pedro de Isla (who now is a Franciscan friar) hired a brig, travelled for two years searching for people in the aforementioned islands and could only find the low number indicated.

If I recounted to Your Majesty the cruelties that the Spaniards made against the Indians, it would tear apart one's bowels; it is thus horrifying to know that these men are called Christians.

They asked for license to make war against the Indians of other provinces, because like so they had the pretext to multiply the number of slaves, pretending that the Indians were rebels against the sovereignty of the king; they marked infinitely many and sold them like beasts.

This trade of men which was prohibited to them ends with the Indians given in *encomienda*; however, they exercised²⁰ it with fraud looking for indirect ways of hiding the contract of sale and disfiguring it with different pretexts.

In those wars they killed with the utmost cruelty women, the elderly, and very young children, all individuals of the three classes incapable of making war; they robbed them of their goods, burned their homes, and even their places, that as a result they left depopulated the country.

Consequently, if the practice of the *encomiendas* were allowed to continue, it was the same as decreeing the death of all the Indians, as there would be no other consequences from entrusting the people of those unhappy natives to the care of their cruel executioners and true, irreconcilable enemies.

The laws state that the custody of a pupil should not be entrusted to a person of whom there may be a well-founded suspicion that he will treat the pupil badly and to his own ends. That which is called *encomienda* is nothing other than that custody newly invented; and consequently

¹⁹ "*Llebar*", in place of *llevar*.

²⁰ "*Egercian*" in place of *ejercían*.

it cannot be confided²¹ that of an Indian to a Spaniard; as there is not only suspicion of abuse, but verified evidence with many thousands of precedents.

The laws do not permit following another doctrine by greater deposit than could offer such pretenders of custody as they could at the most remedy the relative damages to temporal goods not related to the health, life, and education of a person; and the same should be said of the Spaniards who solicit Indians in encomienda.

The tutors who are already in possession of custody are removed from it once they have manifested cruelty and ill treatment upon their pupils even when they should promise their correction and give guarantees because experience has made seen the inutility of remedy. And by this measure Your Majesty should order that all the Indians given up to today in encomienda be free and uniquely subject to the royal justices as the Spaniards are, as the concessions were null by right, and in whichever case revocable after having seen the ill treatment given by the encomenderos to the encomendados.

Reason VII

The seventh, because the doctrines of the ancient political philosophers and the laws of different countries given in accord with those doctrines teach and mandate that no charge to which this accompaniment the use of power, jurisdiction, of governance, should be confided to poor and greedy men, by reason that nature inspires in him the desire to be rich, from which there tends to follow the dominant passion to not notice the quality of the means to achieve with promptness these riches; and to not deny that the greater number of Spaniards that go to the Indies, are found in that case, by that which they cannot be confided Indians but rather with plain knowledge that they will abuse the encomienda to enrich themselves however much before making them work in excess, in place of procuring their conversion to the faith, and their teaching in the catechism.

The histories tell that two men, having been named in Rome to govern Hispania, one poor and the other greedy, Scipio expressed in the Senate that similar governors would not be convenient, as the first for leaving the state of poverty²² and the other for his vice of avarice, would sell justice, and the poor natives of the country would no longer receive it. Whoever would know well the solidness of the discourse of Scipio Africanus and that it should be applied to the issue of not giving anything in encomienda nor in any other manner to the Spaniards the individual

²¹ *Fiarso*; misspelled in text as "*fiarso*".

²² *Pobreza*; misspelled as "*probeza*".

governance of the peoples of the Indies, who would be infinitely better if they were governed in common by the officials of the King as are the other residents of the towns.

Avarice is a vice of such a nature that those filled with it never come to possess as much money as they wish (as it was said by the author of the holy book of Ecclesiastes) but instead however much they acquire they desire more, a human quality that is founded in the knowledge of the advantages that the possession of wealth produces, as, according to the cited Ecclesiastes, *all things obey gold*, a truth exhaustedly proven by experience. With it are attained goods, pleasures, nobility, honors, authority, luck, and even the satisfaction of all the human passions of all types possible. In this the greedy are founded for which Saint Paul said that avarice is the root of all evil, and the disciple added that that the greedy have corrupt souls. Avarice thus being the origin of this slavery and of the encomiendas holding Indians, this doctrine should be applied to them.

A well-ruled government should prevent the damages of avarice with a much greater care than those of other vices even without excluding lust. The reason is very sensible: luxury ceases or at least diminishes with age; to the contrary, avarice increases and proportions to the means of satisfying all the passions including sexuality. However older a man may be is however many more whims he needs to enjoy commodities, and see here the origin of the growth of avarice in the elderly. This passion being incurable by human means and being already seen that the Spanish have come to the Indies driven by the spirit of avarice, it cannot be believed but by a rash confidence that they will abandon this passion once they have obtained from Your Majesty the most advantageous occasions of satisfying it.

It would not be enough to publish penal laws against those that treat ill the Indians nor against those that make them work harder than reason dictates; all of it would be useless. The greedy man is a slave to the passion more than is observed in the other vicious inclinations, by the concept that all would be plainly satisfied once they come to have riches. The royal council told Your Majesty in Barcelona, ten or twelve years ago, that it would not be enough to put gallows in front of the house of a Spaniard and tell him that there he will be hung at the moment he takes in an excess of the indicated vices. The council told Your Majesty the truth; it agreed then with many useful provisions. If they were to be executed, perhaps it would not be necessary for me to write this paper; but nothing was done from however much there was resolved.

He who is made rich by way of killing Indians, by means of excessive work in the mines, does not fear the gallows, nor any other legal penalty. He knows that the other Indians stay silent out of fear of dying in another form; this experience motivates him to believe that his crime will be ignored.

He thinks that if by chance a judge is informed and prosecutes him officially, he could suffocate the proceedings with his money, a confidence which is founded in his most frequent experiences.

He believes that even if they were to proceed, the process would not have proofs of his excesses, because the Indians, induced by fear, not only will be too timid to declare his true person, but rather will be induced to make a deposition in his favor.

If the witnesses were to be the Indians of another, he would hope to corrupt them by the fear that their proper lord might prosecute them for taking interest in the accused.

Even when he is faced with Spanish witnesses, it is easy to gain favorable declarations; some for wanting a similar testimony in time, and others at the cost of buying their favor.

The slightest excuse that is indicated by a witness makes him confident that his judge will give him an infinite value of time to a definitive sentence, because it is worth the process of a similar nature so that a judge may be made rich as he desires, as by this they pass almost all the judiciaries of the Indies.

The vehemence of the passions not only enslaves the heart but also blinds the inner eyes of human understanding, and for this it is useless to put forth penalties against one who desires something with ardor if they are offered a chance to take it; it appears that a miracle of the grace of God would be necessary to contain that which proportions the satisfaction of desire mortally, because he could not know nor presume that God would make such a miracle.

What would we say of a father who presents the neck of his son to the razor of a frenetic enemy, his most capital one? Or if he leaves a young and beautiful daughter in a deserted field to a libertine man, who he supposes by precedent occasions would entice him to enjoy such beauty? Or if he were to abandon another son in woods where there reside hungry lions and tigers? Would it be enough in any of the first two cases to threaten the madman or the libertine? I find no difference between them and the hungry lions and tigers to whom it is useless to threaten with capital punishment.

For this reason, my lord, I could not issue to Your Majesty the penalties of the gravest mortal sin of homicide for each Indian that may have perished by consequence of ill treatment from their lord; thus the threats with which Your Majesty will have wanted to avoid the damage in the proclamation of laws, could not serve Your Majesty as an excuse before God after which their insufficiency²³ has been made known.

²³ *Insuficiencia*; misspelled "*insufiencía*".

In the Peninsula it is true that if by disgrace, a magistrate named by Your Majesty to govern a province is greedy, steals copious sums of funds instantly, in a manner such that once the complaints come to Your Majesty, he is already rich and does not fear prosecution, confiding in his money. This occurs so, Your Majesty being in the kingdom, holding a royal council and two chanceries to which all can complain without fear, through which the governed do not live subject to domestic tyranny; that they have liberty to travel by themselves or by means of others; that they can write letters and petitions; and finally that they are found in a situation infinitely better than the Indians.

What will it serve, thus, to proclaim penal laws to refrain the encomenderos, or the lords of the Indians? Nothing, my lord, nothing. The Reales Audiencias of these countries lie two hundred, three hundred, even four hundred leagues away; Your Majesty, at more than three thousand with the sea in between; the Indians within the homes of their masters, impeded from escaping or even petitioning; they do not wait for any recourse but death to rest; and with effect of a few years they lie dying; but they leave the country depopulated; and Your Majesty cannot encounter or find remedy nor compensation for the damages of such a nature.

The defenders of this contrarian system say that if the Indians are ceded in lordship to a rich Spaniard given an hacienda in America, the people of the Indies will appear like precious property whose preservation is most important for their children, grandchildren, and descendants by which they say that ill treatment would not be plausible from now on; although it's given that which I refer to concerning the other Indians, and thus there is little case made of whether the Indians would die or live, given the ease with which they were taken to replace others by cause of their abundance in those times; but now the number of Indians is small compared with that of older times, and the masters take an infinite interest in that their slaves live long, marry, and procreate new slaves, which is not possible to obtain without taking them in moderation.

But all of this argument is sophistry; the same reflections with equal promises were made to the parents to the current King's predecessors, to the Catholic King don Fernando, grandfather of Your Majesty; and they took them not as property but in encomienda for three generations; however, it is evident and tried that at the middle of the first generation (which was Your own) there were already no living Indians.

The reason is very sensible. The eagerness to multiply the riches of gold in short time, influences the hearts of greedy men with higher efficacy than virtue and prudence. The effects of those are their own present pleasures; those of prudence leave for their children and subjects future contingents. And so we see many heads of families who quickly lose by means of excessive work property of beasts bought at rather expensive prices, whose conservation would have

excused them the cost of buying others and served their heirs for some years. That of the present always has more force than that of the future; and if not, why do men sin? Does conserving their virtue not matter more to them? The pleasures of today win over the hope of enjoyment after death.

The bishop who now resides over Cuenca, after having been so in Santo-Domingo, wrote to the Catholic King and then to Your Majesty this same issue, finding himself president of the royal audience and governor on the island of Hispaniola. I also made such a statement to Your Majesty in the year of 1517, when Your Majesty came from Flanders to reign in Castile; and although good provisions were presented, they were not enough because they were poorly executed.

To whom is owed more credit? To two bishops that have no more interest, direct or indirect, than that of the salvation of souls, and that the lands of America not be left totally deserted; or those who speak to the contrary out of the most demonstrable avarice, notwithstanding that they work to disfigure it at the cost of falsehoods against the Indians.

The promises made by such men to the Catholic King and to Your Majesty were made in the form that we have seen by our own eyes; that is, leaving some islands without any human person, many with a very small number of inhabitants, and Tierra Firme so depopulated as we have already expressed.

The law of God thus does not permit that the Indians be given to the Spaniards in any form of enslavement, encomienda, deposit, fief, nor with any other title that one might wish to invent. This same law of God has made Your Majesty the father, tutor, and governor of the Indians and consequently has imposed upon You the obligation of incorporating them into the royal crown with the same rights of liberty and care as that other vassals, with the quality that the incorporation be perpetual, and irrevocable, and that all be promulgated by the law in the Cortes Generales of the kingdom.

Reason VIII

The eighth, because natural, divine, humane, civil and canonical laws mandate that no one be encumbered by two charges, this is with both services personal and regal; and all of these laws are violated by merely giving the people of the Indies to the Spaniards, be it with the titles of vassals, encomiendas, enfeoffment, deposit, or whatever other form that can be imagined; thus the very unhappy Indians in such a case are subject to four people, to all of whom they must pay tribute, and in addition sustain their family if they are married.

The first lord is the King, to whom is paid as to a sovereign of his the quantity that the law designates; and if it is given by him a master, he cares much of compensating himself by however many whims he may encounter without prejudice of his interests, although it may be however less by means of increasing the bodily work of the Indian in the service of his.

The second lord is the master, be he encomendero, proprietor, or of some other nature; and although the laws appraised the sum of tribute that they could be made to pay, no case has been made of such dispositions, and the master charges what he wants as he wants, by chance that there is an Indian from whom his master robs two hundred in place of ten in which the price of his service was appraised, and does not dare however to complain before the justices, because rarely do they succeed in administering justice, and even when they receive it, their masters later find many indirect means to elude it; and so this servitude appears more intolerable than if it were of the devil, as in the end all know that there is no devil to expect but tyranny; but natural reason inspires to expect from men another thing, through which by nature are not enemies among themselves as the demon that is man.

The third lord of the Indian is the man destined to guard the work of the Indians. Ordinarily he is known by the name of *Estanciero*, or also by that of *Calpisque*; and this third lord is worse than the second if he can be so. He flogs the Indian freely and on his own whim that one does not work as much as he wishes or in the manner that accommodates him; he gives blows with a rod; he smears the bodies of the Indians with hot oil; he violates their daughters and women when he fancies them; he robs their gains for himself, or to give them to his master under the circumstances; and if some Indian signals to him that he will give notice of his tyrannies to the master, the *estanciero* instills in him more fear by just threatening to accuse him of having seen him commit idolatry, which is enough for the Indians to suffer their cruelties, which is better than whatever they might imagine.

The fourth lord is the *cacique* whom they recognize as the most acceptable, because ultimately he is an Indian like them; but however, it is necessary that, at the cost of their job, they earn something to give him, as the rents of a cacique consist of that which the other Indians give him, who in the times before were recognized as his subjects; and they cannot excuse themselves from giving something to him, because the same caciques have to also pay tributes, and for this they receive what is necessary from their compatriots. Sometimes the caciques are even placed on the part of the masters by the Spaniards that are in charge feeling content, and with this motive they themselves exercise some form of persecution.

On the contrary, the Indians free from vassalage and subjugation to a particular lord don't recognize an authority more than that of the King and that of their Cacique. That of the King does

not inconvenience them because, paying the tribute decreed in the law, they are left as independent as the Spaniards in this part. Neither does that of the Cacique, because it only pertains to the particular governance of the Indians among themselves; the motive to pay him tribute ceases, since they pay the King directly.

Similar to the Indians given in encomienda, vassalage, deposit or feud, we can add that they have a fifth lord, in each one over the servants, or over the Negros that their lord might have appointed to the task of overseeing the work of the Indians, as whichever of all of them imposes with the most imponderable rigor upon the unhappy, they mistreat them at their whim, and rob them of the gains from their labor whenever it suits them, through which all the world is recognized as authorized to be the executioner of the unhappy deeds, whose complaints will never exist out of fear, and if they make them, they would be scorned. Is there any lot more fatal than that of the Indian?

The evangelist and all the holy texts order that even slaves are to be treated with charity. Will His Majesty comply with this sacred law entering the Indians into such subjections and being able to excuse such tributes? No my lord, Your Majesty is obligated to conserve them under your immediate protection so that they might be administered justice, and the contrary is to fail to uphold the promises made to the pope for the obtainment of the bulls and precepts in them that were imposed upon the kings of Castile in them.

Reason IX

The ninth, because all the natives and inhabitants of the Indies were free before the lords of Castile were their sovereigns; and having been subjected to this new sovereignty was not in order to lose liberty but rather to duplicate it by means of the Christian religion, and of the Spanish enlightenment.

And so it was declared many times by the queen doña Isabel in different royal warrants and in all the other occasions in which she was offered to speak of the Indians with opportunity, we have seen the tone in which she spoke of them in her testament; and I have in my possession a royal decree released shortly before her death, in which on the date of the 20th of December of 1503, she ordered the Comendador mayor of Alcantara, governor of the island Hispaniola, that the Indians be treated as free people, thus they put it into effect.

It was consequently from this that there came to be in Burgos by the Catholic King a convention formed by His Majesty, and whose sessions were conducted there with the assistance of theologians and jurists. The royal council was consulted in the matter and equally agreed that

the Indians were free people. This counsel was newly repeated when Your Majesty already reigned and the declaration was the same.

Such another passed in the year of 1523 when Your Majesty formed the congregation of Grandes, and Prelates, Councilors, Theologians, and Jurists; and the contrary could not have passed if the truth is sought sincerely, because there is not and cannot be any reason for the contrary nor even the appearance of a reason, and if some reflections have appeared powerful enough to offer doubts, it has uniquely been by the slanderous facts which were recounted, and the unjust worth that avarice, disguised with the cloak of zeal, seeks to give them.

The Indians thus being free, they cannot be deprived of their liberty under any pretext. Sophism is intended to persuade that natural liberty can only be opposed directly to slavery, but that it is possible to be free, and to yet be given in vassalage; thus in Spain the same occurs in that the inhabitants of towns of the lordship be naturally free and not slaves, yet which are immediate vassals owed to the King as the sovereign of the country. From which fact those given to avarice deduce that the declarations of liberty made in favor of the Indians do not impede directly nor indirectly in giving them vassalage, be it perpetual as property to the recipient, their children, inheritors and successors, or be they temporal through encomienda, deposit, feud, or whatever other title.

But this sophism also is destroyed after examining the matter well, and having the present laws of Castile. The liberty of the Indians is of a much superior order, because the sovereignty of the King is endowed with the obligation of conserving the Indian in such a state that he not have obstacles to be converted to the Catholic religion and instructed in it; and he would have them insuperable if they were subject to a particular lordship as experience has demonstrated. This class of vassalage was no more in Castile, by that which cannot be brought to consequence for the matter of this day.

It is manifest that there is not enough power on the Earth to prohibit the conservation of the liberty of the free man that is not made by their crimes worthy of the prohibition, and such are the Indians, which no longer have given cause for such a penalty.

If nobody can be licitly divested of their goods without a just cause declared such in a contradictory judgment, however much less of liberty that is the greater of the goods?

A father cannot transfer the possession of his son to another who wants to adopt him by such, against the will of the adopted, notwithstanding that the adoption is a favor by which the son acquires right to inheritance of the adopter; and consequently, less could a sovereign transfer the possession of a vassal of his to the lordship of another particular person that does not treat him

as the King does, nor must give esteem or goods, nor even free him of the previous vassalage, as his Majesty conserved it as if he had not made the transfer.

The currency of a kingdom cannot be altered by the monarch according to the laws without the consent of the nation, because it is known that this novelty can produce problems; but nobody ignores that, as great as they may be, they are not capable of being bought with that of the loss of liberty; and so it would be more iniquitous to not require the consent of the interested parties, which could not be presumed.

The laws of Your Majesty do not permit the nobility to trespass upon the tenant serfs and tributaries, and found this prohibition in the obligations that a government must protect said serfs preventing the damage that they could suffer from changing lords. What better reason to intervene to avoid this danger when an attempt to transfer to the nobility a group of free men, who are declared, and in fact, free Indians?

The people are considered insulted when the King separates them from the royal patrimony of the crown donating them to a particular lord even when jurisdiction over the inhabitants is not conceded to the recipient, and claim then that they can against the transfer, because they deem their civil status as less honorific than that of other towns whose dwellers are exempt from particular lordship. Is it not clear that it would be infinitely better this offense than if the people of the town were entered into service as slaves, and by the least of servants without pay, without esteem, without means of freeing themselves of ill treatment, and without hope of relief until after death?

But it is very worthwhile to remember Your Majesty when being so immense the difference between one case and another, the people of Castile have lost many times in the courts and abroad that are rescinded such transfers of vassalage as null, through the laws promoted in the Cortes Generales of the kingdom by the predecessors of Your Majesty by which it is declared that the Castilian kings do not have the authority to transfer cities, villas²⁴, or villages; that the transfers of vassalage made are null, and that His Majesty should reincorporate them into the crown, which the predecessors of Your Majesty have promised many times with oaths; and compliance having been defective, the kingdoms came at last to be pacified with the condition that no more will His Majesty make further transfers without the personal concurrence and consent of the procuradores of six cities of those that have a vote in the Cortes; and that whatever transfer of vassals made without this requisite be nullified by right and fact, in a manner that, although²⁵ the recipient, or another representative of his rights take de facto possession, be this nullified totally, and the

²⁴ In context, a Spanish settlement between a small town and a city.

²⁵ *Aunque*; misspelled "*unque*".

inhabitants could resist and unmake this, in the form that they could even with the force of arms, without which they would be imputed evermore of the crime.

Even when the same Indians would have consented voluntarily to be given to a particular lord in encomienda, Your Majesty cannot licitly give them, since experience has confirmed this to be the same as to condemn them to a death that is cruel, much more painful, much more prolonged, over whose truth there is no longer any doubt, and much less after it is on record that two hundred Indians died poisoning themselves with toxic herbs on the island of Hispaniola solely for not being able to further tolerate the fatigue of service; and more such people have hung themselves on the island of Cuba by the same motive.

Furthermore, it is certain that Your Majesty in such is the sovereign of the Indians in however much they wish voluntarily to be subject to Your Majesty without such a circumstance they are not vassals; a respect in which Your Majesty has not any title to reign over them, because it would not be held in its own right, and the Pope only gave it in order to bring them to the knowledge of the true God and the Christian religion, and to instruct them in the mysteries and precepts of it; from which their voluntary subjection is continued in order to profess Christianity as freely as before they had professed the religion of their fathers.

In another part neither Your Majesty nor any other sovereign has the authority to dispose of the life of subjects arbitrarily, as only God is the lord of the lives of men, and never sanctioned Kings with absolute power without limits so that he might condemn to death the men who have not clearly committed a crime worthy of such a punishment. And giving the Indians to a particular lord, be it with whatever title it may be, is different from condemning them to death only in the manner of execution, because it is consistent with continuous experience that the unhappy Indians in encomienda die in short time as a consequence of fatigue and ill-treatment.

Reason X

The tenth, because the laws of common right and particular laws of Spain state that privilege must be divested from one who abuses it to do ill to his fellow man, to his homeland and to his King. All this is verified among the encomenderos, whose abuse cannot come to more, in light that they not only deprive the Indians in encomienda of jewels and goods, but that they kill them by means of fatigue and ill treatment. Consequently, it is not only unjust to confide in them other Indians, but to even permit them to continue having those that were put in encomiendas under them in previous times.

Contracting the laws of privileges to the particular point of slaves, they stipulate that the lord that treats subjects with cruelty should be obligated to transfer them to another of whom it is known or presumed will treat them with more humanity. These laws are founded over the right of custody that the governors have of each individual of the state that he might lack as protector and defender, which happens upon the slaves in their complaints against the lord. This truth produces the obligation to which Your Majesty is found as promised to not permit the abuse of the lords of the Indians; and consequently that of removing the occasion of tyrannies.

It is determined by the laws of Castile that if the King concedes some privilege whose practice be contrary to the Catholic religion, against good customs, against the common good of the kingdom, or against the particular right of a third party, it is left ineffective, and there is no obligation of recognizing or executing the privilege. And all of these circumstances are verified in the transfer of the Indians to a particular lord. It is against the Catholic religion, because it is positively clear that the encomenderos care less for nothing than the Christian instruction of the Indians. It is against the moral good, because the particular lords do not teach do not teach the Indians in any manner by occupying them in the mines, or distinct tasks that may produce money. It is against the common good of the kingdom, because the number of those who would populate the country and pay contributions is diminished. It is against third interests, because the Indians lose all the advantages of acquiring for themselves and their family the product of their labor.

The same laws prohibit disposing of the goods and haciendas of one person in favor of another; and it is opposed to them totally to bestow the king the authority to dispose of the greatest of the goods of a free man, which is liberty.

Conceding for an instant, and only by way of speculation, that the King could licitly make the transfer of the Indians, we would find ourselves in the case of another law in which it is ordered that if a privilege is just and valid in its principles, and afterwards comes to be unjust by whatever motive (be it whatever it might), it should be interpreted as revoked. From this it follows that even when the transfer of the Indians would have been innocent and valid in the era of its transfer, it could not be sustained for any more time since it was known that, as a general point, the encomenderos treat the Indians under encomienda unjustly. The stated laws suppose that the sovereign had had the intention of transferring the usufruct of the work of the Indians for only the time in which they lacked the abuse of the privilege.

It appears that God has wanted to make the injustice of such transfers known, deciding that the ill consequences of abuse be visible. The national damage against the common good is palpable; this the price of houses is tripled in comparison of that which existed before, and although the novelty may be the offspring of the excess of money coming from America that has

produced the devaluation of silver, it is however evident that the most considerable part of the money has gone to other kingdoms, leaving very little in Spain, being thus that neither Solomon nor another King of the world has received in the world such gold and such silver as has come to the Peninsula since the possession of the Indies to today.

Reason XI

The eleventh, because never have the kings authorized the subjection of the Indians to a particular lord, and the provisions that the greedy cite have a different sense than that which they were given, and were even conscious of the supposed falsehoods that were made in the narration of the facts. This truth will be better understood through the history of the first accounts that gave occasion to abuse.

The first almirante and discoverer of the Indies, don Christopher Columbus, being on the island Hispaniola, thought that it would conform to the will of the Catholic Monarchs don Fernando and doña Isabel to obligate the Indians to pay annually to Their Highnesses some tribute. Consequently he ordered that each one of the heads of the family among the Indians nearby the country in which there were mines would contribute with the gold that would fit in the hollow of a cascabel; those further a fixed portion of cotton, if they had it in their earth; the remaining others any objects produced in their districts.

Some Spaniards rebelled²⁶ against the almirante, and refusing to obey him they went out to discover, explore and dominate various islands; and establishing themselves in the province of *Xaragua* they began to use the Indians as slaves, obligating them to suffer this ill fate because they did not know how to resist such conquerors.

Don Christopher Columbus suffered infinitely during the rebellion of those Spaniards, and finally could only bring them back to obedience by consenting that each one would have a settlement of Indians at their command with the right to be served by their inhabitants to labor the earth, to benefit the mines, and do other productive work for the benefit of the governor, which the title of *senor por encomienda*, a word that began to be known because don Christopher Columbus *les encomendo*²⁷ the governance of the town, and the protection of the Indians with rights to their service.

With respect to the island of Hispaniola, in which there were about three hundred Spaniards, the Indians enjoyed their ancient liberty; they lived in their villages peacefully, worked

²⁶ "*Revelaron*", as compared to *rebelaron*.

²⁷ "Bestowed upon them."

in their homes and farms as before, although they had still not embraced Christianity, and many voluntarily did great services to the Spaniards, whom they considered united with them by means of seeing them married, some with an Indian lady in a village, others with the daughter of a lord, others with those of various principal Indians.

The almirante dead, the Catholic Monarchs named as governor of the island Hispaniola and aggregated countries the commander of Lares who then was comendador mayor of Alcantara²⁸, ordering him by royal instructions to treat the Indians well as free people and to procure their bringing to the Christian religion.

The new governor brought with him three thousand Spaniards; but in place of distributing them among different towns on the island, he retained them in the city of Santo Domingo, from whose error has been derived all this ill. If they had inhabited different populations, all of them would have had to eat with abundance and acquired riches with time; but, all of them remaining in the city, they came to experience shortages of food and attributed this calamity and others that had subsisted to the malice of the innocent Indians.

From their results the comendador mayor of Alcantara wrote to the Monarchs things that were very false against the Indians; I then found myself there; I know originally firsthand that which passed, and it is clear to me that all the facts were opposed entirely to the truth of some, and disfigured the others. He said among other things that the Indians fled from the Christians, not wanting to treat with them, nor turn to the instruction of the doctrine, nor form a civil society with the Spaniards by which they made it impossible to bring them further to the profession of Christianity if they would not be subjected to live each one under the immediate command of a Spaniard, who would obligate them to work, as they preferred idleness and the vagabond life to such a degree that not even paying them a day's wage could incite them to work.

In respect to the instruction of the doctrine, the lie of this report brought a very refined malice with the abuse of the knowledge that was possessed that the Catholic King would see this point as the most grave by cause of his true and holy zeal of the conversion of the Indians; but what was in truth was that the governor did not send them preachers nor catechists; he ordered them to converge at the city, and it is clear that the Indian inhabitants a hundred leagues away, some more than a hundred and fifty, did not have the will to walk there nude, by bare foot, leaving their children and wives abandoned to listen to one who had to talk to them about a God unknown

²⁸ This governor would have been Nicolas de Ovando, who held both of the titles listed and was made governor after Columbus. Gómara writes of him with a much different view than Las Casas, saying that he governed "most Christianly", and cites him as one of the islands most effective governors for his religious work and his conquests against local natives.

to them, of a religion from which they never had heard the slightest word. The Catholic Monarchs, tricked by this false relation from a governor in whom they had deposited their confidence, decreed in the year of 1502, being in Granada to issue a royal order in which it was well-known what was the true intention, but contained clauses that opened the door to abuse. Among other things the Queen stated:

“And because we would desire that the aforementioned Indians be converted to our holy Catholic faith, and that they be indoctrinated in the matters of it; and because this could be better done communicating the said Indians with the Christians that on this stated island reside, and walking and treating with them, and joining one to another...I ordered giving this letter of mine in the reason stated by which I order to you the stated governor that from the day that this my letter will come forth, to compel and pressure the stated Indians that treat and converse with the Christians of the stated island, and work in their edifices, in gaining and mining gold and other metals and in making granaries and storehouses for the Christian inhabitants and dwellers on said island; and to pay to each one, the day that they work, the daily wage and support according to the quality of the land and of the person, and of the profession it appears to you that they should possess, ordering to each Cacique to take charge of a certain number of the stated Indians so that each makes them go to work where it would be necessary; and so on the free days and days that would appear, to bring them together to listen and be indoctrinated in things of the faith, in the designated places; and so that each Cacique is accorded with the number of Indians that are signaled to the person or persons that you will name so that they may work in that which such persons would order them, paying them the daily wage that will be appraised by you, which they will do and complete as the free people that they are and not as serfs. And ensure that the stated Indians are well treated; and those among them that would be Christians, better than the others; and do not consent nor give place that any person does them ill or damage, nor any other quarrel; nor one or the other shall you do thence from now on under penalty, etc.”

From this written response, various consequences followed. The first, that the principal objective of the Queen was the conversion of the Indians to the holy Catholic faith and its instruction in the catechisms, as it was said by this: *And because we would desire that the aforementioned Indians be converted to our holy Catholic faith, and that they be indoctrinated in it....and because this could be better done communicating etc.*

2nd: That the Queen no longer had the intention of including in this order women, children, the elderly, nor those impeded from work but only those who could work, and not all of them but only those that the Cacique would designate, some at one point and others at a later time, and always without including the principal and rich Indians who were maintained by the product of

their goods and do not do bodily work, and much more for others by salary nor by daily wages; which intelligence is in agreement with the instruction that the Catholic King Fernando V gave to Pedro Arias, when he named him governor of *Tierra-Firme*.

3rd: That consideration should be taken towards the proper necessities of the Indian workers, of their wives and their children, in a manner that the distance of terrain to where the Caciques would bring the Indian workers be such that they would be permitted to return to their homes at night, or at least each Sabbath; as this is in agreement with the clause from which they were imposed the obligation of going to work *as free men and not as serfs*.

4th: That the provision should be observed on some days and not all, which the words of the royal ordinance allude to when it is mandated to pay the daily wage to *each one, the day that they work*: so the clause of *compel and pressure* means the compulsion and pressure that is accustomed to the *free men*, but not that of obligating them to work every day.

5th: That the work was to be moderated and restricted by the observance of Sundays and days of rest as it happens among the other Christian workers, as the contrary would be unjust, and it is not presumptuous that the Queen would have consented to it if she had known of it.

6th: That the wage should be proportional to the work of free men, in a manner that could serve the needs of their wives, children and family, having the present loss of days of travel and return from their homes and residence.

7th: That that should be seen as any other free laborers, not compelling them to work when they become sick, nor charging them with jobs capable of producing sicknesses and death as it happened by having them treated worse than beasts.

8th: That the Queen never had intention of ordering this provision but solely gave it by the report of the comendador according to which it was indispensable for conversion; this in respect to the payoff of the contribution of gold, the Queen was not capable of having ordered such a thing; and less if she could have predicted the nefarious manner that later came by its execution.

As for the first of the eight preceding consequences the comendador mayor did not do anything in the nine years of his governance; nor did he care for the conversion of the Indians any more than if they had been dogs or cats, which I can affirm according to my conscience, as I saw it myself then and afterwards.

In regard to the 2nd, not only did he not indicate to each Cacique the number of Indian workers that they should lead, but disposed of all generally without respect to sex, age, condition and circumstances. He divided among the Spaniards all of the Indians including the Caciques giving to each Spaniard a certificate whose text is reducible to a little more or less the following: *"To you Martin Gonzalez: To you are bestowed in the Cacique Tumateca a hundred and fifty*

Indians so that they you would be served by them in your mines and granaries with the Cacique, etc. Consequently, the Cacique, his wife and their children, as much as the poorest and most infirm of the tribe were condemned to work in the mines as true slaves with the name of *encomendados*.

With respect to the 3rd, not only did he not conduct the businesses in the manner that husbands would be reunited with their wives and children each day or at least once per week, but neither for many months or perhaps not even for a year. The *encomenderos* sent the Indians to work in the mines, and their wives to the farms; they were away from home by eighty leagues or more; the farms by half, more or less; the jobs in the mines were cruel, by which circumstance together with the scarcity and poor quality of food the greater number were reduced to nothing before returning to see their children. Those who achieved this pleasure went so weakened that they did not multiply their family. On the farms, the women would excavate four palms in height the earth of four square feet with sticks that do not cut like hoes and fatigue the cultivator infinitely more; others were destined to spin cotton or other distinct labors, all difficult. The children died of hunger, some for having lost the milk of their mothers; others for the shortage and poor quality of food. Ourselves being on the island of Cuba, more than seven thousand of the creatures died from hunger in less than three months. Some mothers took herbs to have abortions, others killed their children out of piety poorly understood to free them from a life that they foresaw as the greatest disgrace. And so the great Indian population of the Island of Cuba came to an end in little time.

As for the fourth condition, all that passed was to the contrary of that which the Catholic Queen had wanted. His commissioner did not specify days of work nor limitations of time. As a consequence, the *encomenderos* did not permit the Indians the least rest, nor established intervals in the work. They introduced the practice of naming a subordinate leader with the name of *minero* for the exploitation of mines; another with the title of *estancionero* for the estates, farms and houses of agriculture. The two were other such inhuman hangmen who treated the Indians not with the mildness and sweetness that the Queen had ordered in her ruling, but with a cruelty that nobody would take to use in the punishment of their beasts. They gave them the treatment of dogs, and mistreated them with sticks, rods for flogging, beatings and whatever other cruel instrument that the occasion would offer. Some Indians unable to bear such cruel persecution fled to the mounts, and from their results was born the idea of creating other Spanish overseers titled *Alguaciles del campo*²⁹ (whose task was to look in the mountains for the fugitive Indians) and a

²⁹ *Alguacil* is a term for a baliff.

judge with the title of *Visitador*. The captured fugitive Indian was taken to a tribunal of the *visitador* and as it did not satisfy his hate to order his punishment, thus more inhuman than the wild animals, he would tie the fugitive himself to a post from his house and would give them the cruelest floggings with a tarred whip known in the galleys by the name of *Anguilla*, and comparable to a rod of iron, to such a grade that some Indians died thereafter, and others in little time from the results, leaving the soil of the house of the *visitador* drenched in blood. If I wanted to tell to the smallest detail the tragedies derived from the abuse of the order of the Queen, I could not tell Your Majesty the tenth part of that which would be the real number.

In regard to the fifth condition relative to the moderation and quality of the jobs, it is enough to know that they imposed upon the Indians the most fatiguing works of the exploitation of mines; thus it resulted from history that the greatest penalty of death among the Romans was the condemnation to work in the metal mines, to which many were destined that we venerate as martyrs. To extract gold, it is frequently necessary to demolish mountains, penetrate into their lower bowels, up to the *abisino*; to encounter there a great quantity of water, to live in there, to extract by hand, and to do other labors all the more painful. The experience made it known that almost all died, and out of economy rather than piety, they invented a new distribution of jobs, of the sort where the Indians would be in the mines for only five months out of the year; then forty days titled *huelga*³⁰, or rest, but without reason, as the Indians did not stop working but instead made mountains of the golden earth, which was greater work than that of digging vines in Spain. During the labors in the mines and fiend there was no Sunday observed or any other day of rest. The food that they were normally given was a scanty portion of bread from that country, *Cazabi*, made with certain tubers, which is of very little substance if it is not mixed with meat or fish. They were also given the *pimienta estilada* from those provinces, which is a certain root similar to the roasted turnip. The Spaniard that intended to be generous would make to kill a pig each week for fifty Indians; but the *minero* would be reserved half and distribute the rest among the fifty Indians; by chance that each one of them received each day a ration as small as the that which is similar to each of the Christian assistants taking the holy bread at the mass on Sundays. There were Spaniards who, by not having enough means to sustain the Indians, sent them to the mountains so that they might be maintained two or three days there with the wild fruits of the trees, and return home; they would work in this some other days, and repeat the expedition. With such judgments was a Spaniard who formed a *hacienda* and sold it for six hundred castellanos, as I was told by one of the Indians who had worked the earth. Consider, Your Majesty, what sweetness and what

³⁰ In a modern context, this word is used to mean a strike from work.

mildness of jobs for some weak people, in part by nature, and in part by the shortage and poor quality of foods.

In regard to the sixth by which it was declared that the Indians would be assigned and paid a wage corresponding to their jobs and other things, there are observations that are very worthy of the notice and consideration of Your Majesty. The indicated governor was content with paying, for one year, a *half-castellano* which is worth *two hundred and twenty-five maravedis, or four hundred and fifty blancas*, which is little more than a blanca a day, or as they might say three blancas for two days; that only ninety seven blancas are gained all year over the half-castellano. As if this were a great payment, the governor ordered that there be brought effects from Castile known among the Indians by the generic name of *Cocona*, equivalent to our Castellan word *Galardon*³¹, in a manner such that with the 225 maravedis one could buy a comb, a shovel, and a small string of beads of green or blue. Even this did not pay them much in many years; and certainly the Indians cared little to reclaim it, because their thoughts were reduced to satisfying the hunger that tormented them, or rather to die however much before to free themselves from that torment. And so there were many suicides and a continuous depreciation for a religion that they did not understand, nor were explained, and whose morality they believed to be unjust as its practice was similarly manifested.

With respect to the seventh of which the Indians would be treated as free men, leaving them time to rest and care for their homes, the governor not only did not comply with the will of the Queen, but converted the Indians into true slaves and with an unsupportable enslavement. When those unhappy stated they were sick and asked for rest, the *Encomenderos* accused them of fiction, saying that the Indians were idlers and that they faked sickness in order to not work. As a consequence of mistreating them with hunger, strikes, and other inhuman methods to compel them to work, the Indians became gravely sick; and only then were they sent to their distant homes forty leagues away; the greater number of them died en route, and the remainder a short time after. I myself found various times in my travels some dead Indians in their path, and others dying from hunger. See, Your Majesty, how in America they complete the royal orders.

As for the eighth circumstance, it is evident that the Queen gave the indicated provision by having been informed that the gentlest, quickest, and easiest means to convert the Indians was to distribute them among the Christian Spaniards so that they would hear them speak of God and of the Christian doctrine frequently. Consequently, it is not possible to find an excuse in the manner which the governor used in the partitioning of Indians; and much less the system that he

³¹ A prize or award.

observed afterwards with positive tyranny; thus within just a year of the distribution were already dead two-thirds of the Indians distributed, overcoming the loss by means of a new partitioning of work that produced effects equal to those of the first.

This tyrant named, in 1502, governed the island of Hispaniola from before 1504, in which time the queen Isabel died, until 1513 in which it was governed by the monarchy, the Catholic King Fernando V, to whom the truth of the facts were not told as they were. Those who surrounded him had an interest in the prosecution of these thefts and disorders. And so nine-tenths of the population of the island perished in nine years of that government.

In 1509 and 1510, other Spaniards went to govern the islands of San Juan, Jamaica, and Cuba, and they had no difficulty in imitating the conduct of the governor of Hispaniola. There was a Spaniard who received three hundred Indians in Cuba, and who only had thirty at the end of three months; I am an eyewitness as I was there since the discovery of that island, and could tell other cases that would horrify Your Imperial Majesty.

In 1514, the Catholic King named Pedro Arias as governor of Tierra Firme, and gave him instruction from which it resulted that His Majesty did not approve the partitioning of Indians, nor the treatment that had tended to be given to the Indians, nor the manner that had been followed for their conversion to the faith; as a consequence of that which was ordered that the Indians be left to each live in their home as any other resident of that country; that a moderate contribution be imposed upon them, and that they be counseled with sweetness and mildness to make a civil society with the Spanish entering in conversation with them, and that they furthermore be exhorted always in agreeable manners to profess the Catholic religion out of good faith. In this His Majesty continued the advice that had been given to the first almirante and explorer don Christopher Columbus.

All would have gone well with the completion and loyal execution of such a just provision; but the detestable example of the comendador mayor of Alcantara who from the death of the Queen Isabel began to depopulate the island of Hispaniola, and that which was already occurring in the other islands of Cuba, Jamaica, and San Juan, motivated Pedro Arias, in order to enrich himself by the given means; and not only did he introduce the abuse of the partitioning and encomiendas in the northern provinces of Tierra Firme, but was also the origin from which there might be made other such distinct governors in the provinces of Nicaragua, Cartagena, Venezuela, Santa Maria and Peru, as from Cuba came an equal plague to Honduras, Guatemala, New Spain, in a manner that the comendador mayor of Alcantara was the first cause of the general depopulation of the Indies.

Pedro Arias entered Tierra Firme like a wolf, hungry enough from many days to enter the pen of a great number of meek sheep and tender lambs; and he made for himself and by means of other subordinate Spaniards of his such a corruption of thefts, deaths, fires, violence and other evils that he depopulated more than four hundred leagues of land from Darien in which he disembarked to Nicaragua even with the country having been more populated than the known world, making damages of six million in gold, and more, without counting the immense sums that he stole, infinitely superior to that which can be imagined.

Afterwards new lands had been discovered and in all prevailed such an evil doctrine and worse practice, being told to proceed with the legal authority from the instruction given by the Queen, grandmother of Your Majesty, to the governor of Hispaniola. But now it remains proven to be a false testimony thus making a comparison between the letter of *Instruction* and the practice, there was not any conformity found, and twelve years more modern is that of the King, the grandfather of Your Majesty, that (even without knowing thoroughly the ill results of the manner with which that was put into execution) manifested the contrary desires restoring the practice and the counsel of the first almirante and discoverer Columbus, from which the Queen Isabel wished to be separated evermore, as it only complied in the content of the *Instruction* conditionally and under the false pretense that was proposed as a base.

From here come certain consequences: 1st, to be null by right however much it is defended as the legal foundation to persuade that the Indians have not been treated tyrannically. The general depopulation would be enough to prove the contrary, because it cannot be presumed anymore to a legislator the will to ruin that whose conservation conveniences him.

2nd: That even when the practice of giving Indians in encomienda would have been legal by cause of the *Instruction* that the Catholic Queen gave to the comendador mayor of Alcantara for the governance of the island Hispaniola, it was not nor could be that of the manner with which he treated the Indians whose exorbitant diminishment has caused and causes immense monetary damages to the treasury of the peninsula, far from the incalculable deeds to the religion and the population of the country.

Reason XII

The twelfth, because if Your Majesty does not give the Indians their liberty, and permits that the practice of partitioning in encomienda continue, the few that still live will die, as have died the many millions enslaved from the year of 1504 to today.

Thus the Indies will be left deserted, because the Spaniards will return to the Peninsula, having none there any who might aid them as free laborers for the exploitation of mines, cultivation of land, and care for their flocks; and even when some Spaniards remain in America, they could not multiply in a thousand years the number of inhabitants necessary to replace that of the dead Indians in only forty years.

It is not believable that a conscience as delicate as that of Your Majesty could conform with a system so unjust; nor do I take it as possible that an understanding so perceptive might be seen however many millions of reales the royal treasury would lose.

Reason XIII

The thirteenth, because if Your Majesty permits the encomiendas to continue, the royal Crown would lose infinitely much by different courses. The Indians recovering their liberty, without recognizing any other lord than the sovereign, would love Your Majesty and serve him contently out of gratitude. If their love were to be consolidated by the esteem that they would be given and by the benevolence that they would experience, they would be instructed in the handling of Spanish arms, and united and mixed with the Castellans, they would come to be good soldiers, highly useful in whatever war that might occur against an invader. They would be loyal out of interest, as each one is a zealous defender of their lands, fields, homes and goods.

Being considered residents capable of acquiring properties and riches as the Spaniards, they would infinitely multiply the sum of monies belonging to the royal treasury. All of the contrary occurs now and so the rent of the Crown has gone diminishing day by day; in early times more than a million *castellanos of gold* most fine came per year to Spain for the royal treasury, and only ten thousand pesos come today; within a little time it will be less, because the crown does not have any secure rent in the Indies, and will more or less lose the benefit that the Indians work in the gold mines; in which perhaps nothing would be extracted if they come to lack those as it should then happen if the slavery so called encomienda is left to continue.

The place where this is all going to worse is in Peru, as Your Majesty could and should have there a secure rent of three million castellanos of gold and silver; but it was lost by the cruel manner with which the Spaniards have conducted themselves since, out of avarice they unjustly killed the king Atabaliba, who would have given this quantity annually to Your Majesty with pleasure, and perhaps another much greater.

If the Indians were treated with justice, they would take to the Christian religion, and contribute to its favor; but as they experience the contrary, Your Majesty lacks also in the riches

that would suit him to have for the costs of the wars that Your Majesty makes in favor of the religion.

This could receive other transcendental damages to the same Spaniards, as God can be irritated against Spain for the sins of her natives, permitting a new invasion of barbarian peoples as he permitted the Moors in the time of the fat kings.³²

Even if this does not pass, the infamy of the Spanish nation will be inevitable among the other kingdoms of Europe, because they would not refuse acknowledge, in one manner or another, that the Spaniards conduct themselves in the Indies as thieves, murderers, inhuman, and bloody enemies of the religion that they claim to profess³³; and they will not think well of a government that does not put in place a remedy to such evils, being able to do so. From here the attempt would be followed by the depreciation of all the nation and even of its King by that which they would dare to that of another manner they would not dare evermore against this kingdom.

It is most just, therefore, that Your Majesty prevent these dangers, giving liberty to the Indians that need it, and who deserve justice.

Reason XIV

The fourteenth, because if Your Majesty permits that the encomiendas continue there could result in some part a danger of Your Majesty losing sovereignty over the country.

Those who boast of being *conquistadores* or that descend from them are much more proud, arrogant, and vain than other Spaniards. Those in whom this quality is combined with wealth know well which are the surest means of winning the hearts of the sensible Indians. They do not lack among them one who is capable of ambitious projects. If there formed something of a revolt between the nobility and the sovereign of some provinces against Your Majesty would attempt to look for some time bounty, love, compassion, and would win with this judgment and those of gifts and flattering promises for the will of those who neither love nor could love Your Majesty, because the tolerance that Your Majesty holds in favor of the barbarians that tyrannize

³² This is an interesting reimagining of the Spanish trend to portray the conquests in the New World as a continuation of the Reconquista, with the Indians as the Moors that must be subjugated. This reversal of roles is something that I have encountered in other authors from this time period (typically religious figures defending the natives), who would portray the Spaniards as the invading Moors and the natives as the oppressed Christians.

³³ This trend of expounding "The Black Legend" of Spain did take hold in many places in Europe, particularly competing colonial powers such as England and France where the atrocities committed against the Indians was used as propaganda. Las Casas not only predicted this outcome, but inadvertently contributed to its rise, as his works were among those used to show the Spanish activities in the New World.

them and of the executioners that torment them, is a terrible obstacle in the way of love for a sovereign.

What provision could remove this danger better than to administer justice to them? They have it in order to be free. I have proved it well in the preceding reasons. If Your Majesty does this as he is obligated by conscience, the Indians will thank him with special favor; they will take affection for their benefactor; they will bless his name, the memory and governance of Your Majesty; and in similar circumstances, although some ambitious man might pretend to want them very much so that they would serve him in the criminal project of insurrection, they will no longer encounter an Indian that would join them.

A Viceroy wrote on a certain occasion to some conquistadores many things in favor of the Indians and among them the following clause: "I believe, my lords, that you think that these Indians must not recognize any other god, nor any other king but yourselves." The Viceroy had reason, but the remedy for such a great wrong is not to write letters but to execute the cited *Instruction* of the Catholic King Fernando V.

Your Imperial Majesty has given some titles of Duke, Marquis, and Count. I ask Your Majesty to not concede others because they only serve to increase the pride of those that have acquired these decorations, and all cede against the unhappy Indians. But in any case it matters greatly that no title of lordship be given, and less with jurisdiction over the Indians, because there is a danger that someday one who is honored will want to become King.

Reason XV

The fifteenth, because the permission of the encomiendas of Indians has been and will be the cause from which the Kings no longer know the truth of that which happens in the Indies but by chance.

When the Catholic King, the grandfather of Your Majesty, came from Naples in the year of 1506, the councilors and other ministers of the council of the Indies asked for the grace of some Indians in encomienda, stating it to be a custom to give them to the governors of the provinces of those vast dominions and to others employed in them. The king was poorly informed then by his councilors, acceded to the pretension, and there was one who living in Madrid had in America a thousand and a hundred Indians in encomienda; others had eight hundred, as did all, more or less.

From here resulted the closing of all the gates by which the truth could come to the ears of the King. Never was any such counsel said.

Two religious men came from the Indies, one a Dominican, the other a Franciscan, to inform the King; but they could not achieve that of the king hearing it. The councilors of the Indies, and other powerful men who had won encomiendas, ensured by luck that the friars did not see His Majesty.

This ignorance lasted with all of its pernicious effects until the year of 1515. At that point a cleric came, who saw the King in Plasencia de Extremadura. His Majesty promised a remedy, began a trip to Seville, and died without having had the time to proclaim that which he had proposed to fix the ills.

The governance of the kingdom was put in the charge of the cardinal don Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros; he exercised this proceeding in agreement with Adriano de Procyeto, the Dean of Lovaina, ambassador and teacher of Your Majesty (who then became a cardinal and afterwards the supreme pontiff³⁴). They knew well that the root of the evil was in the circumstances of the councilors of the Indies having Indians in encomienda. They prohibited the practice immediately, ordering that they be returned to plain liberty however many Indians had been possessed by persons employed in administration, governance, judiciaries, and other royal offices. This would have remedied everything at once, if the commissioners had complied well with their commission; but the cardinal Cisneros died, and it was easy to hide the truth from the cardinal Adriano.

But do not doubt, Your Majesty, that before this all it was convenient to bring forth the same provision, and later to put a clause in its testament prohibiting very effectively the successors of the throne from not only giving Indians in vassalage but in encomienda, and establishing the inability of the right to acquire them validly against the councilors of Your Majesty and against all those employed in the service of Your Majesty as much here as in the Indies. Occurring so from one to another successor the notice of the prohibition, these maxims were fortified; and even when some infractions are verified, they will not be as frequent.

When the councilors, magistrates, viceroys, captain generals, governors, corregidores³⁵, and others employed with command and authority, do not have nor wish to have Indians in encomienda, they will be the first who ensure the compliance of the prohibition for others, and the declaration of nullity of the concessions that might be made.

Reason XVI

³⁴ This would have been Pope Adrian VI

³⁵ This is a special designation in Spain, the equivalent of a town magistrate.

The sixteenth, because the distance from the Indies is an obstacle to justice.

Some have intended to make believe that the practice of giving Indians in encomienda could be conserved by wise and just laws preventing the abuses of the encomenderos; but Your Majesty should take it as impossible all of a remedy if it permits depriving the Indians of their liberty.

All the world knows that Your Majesty and the succeeding Kings must live in Spain without ever going to America. This circumstance is enough and more so that the Kings would never come to know exactly the truth of what passes in the Indies, if there are people interested in hiding it. They will never lack means to justify by witnesses and papers however much it may convenience them against the intentions of Your Majesty.³⁶

Neither would it be sufficient to promulgate laws, or to give provisions. The circumstances of America are such that there comes at times being just and very useful that which is ordered in Madrid, and to produce afterwards injustices and damages in the Indies. The long time that lasts between the mandate and execution by cause of the enormous distance, gives place to alter that which is favorable to something pernicious, and what is just to something unjust. Then the interest of the executors is joined and all contributes so that the results of a good law are greater evils than those that it was intended to remedy.

Do not trust, Your Majesty, the promises that may be made to resolve by foresight and knowledge of all of this; as even when they comply to it, the ill would remain on foot. The execution would be pernicious, and Your Majesty would eternally ignore the abuses and damages.

The only remedy is to do justice. The Indians take to enjoy their natural liberty, and only this is capable of taking away the dangers of slavery, and consequently the depopulation of the country.

Reason XVII

The seventeenth, because the liberty of the Indians consolidates the empire of Your Majesty.

It is a very certain thing that if the Indians are declared free from vassalage and service to all particular persons, they will love Your Majesty as a redeemer of their slavery; and they will feel

³⁶ To my knowledge, no European monarch visited the Americas prior to the 19th century. The first instance of this was during the Napoleonic Wars, when the court of Portugal was forced to relocate to Brazil during the French occupation of the Iberian peninsula.

most happy knowing that they, their wives, and children are to be incorporated into the royal patrimony of the Crown forever.

They will pay with pleasure the contributions to the royal treasury knowing them to be the only ones, and would pay double if some extraordinary urgency called for it, because the custom of supporting enslavement, and the poverty that they would have to take as mild whatever excess that some time would be intended.

Your Majesty knows that the governors are not firm, sustained by terror; and that the founded are consolidated only by the foundations of love. How much more glorious is Your Majesty to reign by love than by terror! And how much more secure and permanent will your throne be!

Reason XVIII

The eighteenth, because the savage Indians will be civilized, and the religion will be respected.

The ill treatments were the origin of the flights of many Indians that live as wild animals in the mounts and forests unpopulated, without clothes, without given food, and without religion. The manner with which they are made to run in order to hunt them like wild boar or tigers, has produced in their souls a great aversion to all that is or could be perceived as Christian, and it has made them retire each day more vacant the deserts, leaving leagues and leagues of land without homes or people, and living without some religious worship and even without clear notices of what is a religion.

If Your Majesty would declare that all the Indians belong to the royal patrimony of the Crown; that their transfer to vassalage is left prohibited by fundamental law of the kingdom; that the Indians are free residents as the Europeans, owners of themselves as those capable of acquiring good roots, of establishing industries and mills for their own commerce and of having civil equality before the law with the Spaniards, it is most certain that the Indian inhabitants of the populations would send news to the fugitives. Those men, when they see that that narration is true, would come near to the towns, and would make homes in proportioned places; the deserts would be populated; the travelers would find places to lodge; the advantages would be immense; at the turn of a century a new population would be grown.

And who could calculate the number of the spiritual benefits? The religious would enter with total security in the towns of the Indians; they would preach to them the gospels, instruct them in the Christian doctrine, and instill little by little with mildness and without violence the love

of the religion that today they abhor, because they identify it with the disorder, viciousness, and cruelties that they see in the Christians.

Reason XIX

The nineteenth, because it is so that Your Majesty has mandated and declared many times and there is not any reason to determine the contrary now.

In the year of 1523 Your Majesty ordered that the royal council of the Indies would admit to their sessions various theologians and other wise and just men designated by Your Majesty and that all together would decide that which would be fitting in this same matter which we now ventilate. The accord was the Indians would be free, solely the vassals of Your Majesty, and that they would not be given to anyone with the title of vassalage, feud, encomienda, or deposit, nor with any other title. Your Majesty has conformed with the consultation and dispatched to the governor captain Hernan Cortes an Instruction in which an article of the matter began with these words: *"In addition, however much by great experience etc."*

Having been named governor of Florida the lawyer Ayllon, Your Majesty gave to him the same instruction, in which Your Majesty confessed that the theologians, doctors, and other individuals of the convention had encumbered your conscience saying that the contrary could not be done licitly.

Your Majesty thought that your orders had been completed, but Hernan Cortes did not want to accommodate anymore the instruction, because his interests dominated him, and he attempted to fool Your Majesty, leaving him to live in the false concept of being obeyed while he searched for new sophisms for persuading that the instruction was not capable of remedying the ill, and that the Indians needed to be the subjects of personal Spaniards.

There were new consultations and congregations, in the year of 1529, and Your Majesty, being in Barcelona, took well to approve the dictation which contained among other things the following articles:

"It appears that the Indians by all rights and reason are and should be entirely free and that they are not obligated to any other personal service more than the other free peoples of these kingdoms; and that they should only pay tithes to God; if a remission were not made to them for some time, and to their Majesty the tribute that it would appear that justly they should be imposed to conform to its possibility and to the quality of the lands; which should be remitted by those that govern."

“It furthermore appears that the Indians should not be put in encomienda to any person and that all the encomiendas made should be then removed, and that the stated Indians should not be given to the Spaniards by this nor any other title, nor so that they would use their service, nor possess them by means of partitioning nor in any other manner, by the experience that is taken from the great cruelties and excessive jobs and lack of support and ill treatment that they have done to them, and make to suffer, being free men, where achievement results and the consummation of the stated Indians and the depopulation of the earth as it has been done on the island of Hispaniola.

Furthermore it appears that to the present until the stated Indians are instructed more in the faith and go taking more of our customs and some understanding and use of living in some policy, his Majesty must not give them as vassals to other persons, perpetually nor temporally because it must be believed that in effect it would be to bring them to the same servitude and ruin that they now suffer or to something worse; and it should not be made fundamental in the Ordinances, prohibitions, and penalties that would be made in favor of the stated Indians; thus experience shows us that those that until today are ordered (which are very good) none have been guarded; nor is it enough the prohibition to excuse the stated ill treatments, putting the stated Indians under the subjection of particulars that are not the King.”

In agreement with this dictate was that which the bishop of Cuenca told Your Majesty after having governed well the Indians for the space of many years and having seen practically himself the damages that result from the contrary system. Among various, highly useful things of his letter, he said in this manner:

“The second, that they must not be conceded nor given, be they vassals in either little nor in large quantity, by any title; now, nor in any other time. The reason is for that which I have said: and because by experience it has appeared that the Indians that are given to the Spaniards by whatever title it be, have been lost; and because the nobility of the people should be left in the Crown of Your Majesty; and because the people and lives of the Indians are of the Spaniards in such few taken, that speaking truly it cannot be believed by those who have not seen it; and because the Indians show much contentment when they are given to understand that they are of Your Majesty; and some say (even in front of me) that those that have them in encomienda, are *Calpisques* and *Mazegnales* of Your Majesty, and that they are of Your Majesty, not theirs.

And if to give jurisdiction brings many inconveniences, they will be more and greater by giving vassals. And it should be enough to say that as their own hacienda and of their children will watch, conserve, and increase it, because the avarice that attracts them, will make it so that they do not watch their conservation; and if one should do so, they will not do much; and because

the majority have no consideration for the children but for the benefits that they have to have to live; and some prefer that the partitioning not be made to enjoy the Indians that they have, that not doing so and giving to them and their children a part of what they have; because they take as better their present interest that is not that their children must inherit it forever; and because on the island of Hispaniola it is done; and there is experience that will not approve of giving them to their children.”

This, the bishop of Cuenca said, and asked of Your Majesty that he consider well the sentences of this letter; as he will see confirmed in it however much we bring manifested to Your Majesty and however many who were asked and had no interest in hiding the truth would say the same; thus it is to say, the contrary is to be an enemy of God, of religion and of souls, as well as Your Majesty, the Crown, the common good, and even humanity.

Reason XX

The twentieth, because the declaration placing the Indians under the royal patrimony of the Crown will produce great spiritual utilities to the Spaniards of both hemispheres.

All the world knows how extensive all of Spain is and even in the other countries of Europe, the opinion of stealing from the Indians however much comes from America in gold, silver, and precious stones.

The Spaniards that receive these treasures directly, and the others to whom they pass as alms, gifts, donations and whatever other gratuitous modes, are reputed in the opinion of many impartial people, as possessors of ill faith, participants in the act of theft, obligated to repay them.

This opinion already has some consciences anxious; it can be suspect that their number grows. The incorporation of the Indians into the Crown would be a remedy for such ills. It would prevent danger in the future; and with the help of time it would dissipate the doubts over the present.

Conclusion

I have here my lord the twenty principal reasons that support the *eighth universal remedy of the ills of the Indies*. They merit that Your Majesty consider them in a manner that is proposed that is fitting in order to avoid the total depopulation of some very vast countries.

If Haman was reputed as worthy of death because he conspired against the existence of the people of Israel, a much greater crime of murder is committed by those that conspire against the American people because this has been infinitely more numerous than that of the Hebrews.

Objection

Those that see the matter of the Indies with worry say that all will be lost with the incorporation of the Indians into the Crown; that the Spaniards would not be able to sustain themselves and return to Europe; that the religious would not be able to preach the gospel to the Indians without the help of the Spanish which they would lack by their return to the Peninsula; that Your Majesty would lose the lordship and sovereignty of America because, leaving there the Indians without the fear of the Spaniards, they would negate the rights of Your Majesty; that all would be idolaters as before the discovery of those countries; and that there is no other manner to avoid these dangers than to subject the Indians to the Spaniards, be it as vassals, be it as *encomendados*.

But I respond to the *first* that there are no motives to reclaim anything of however much contains the objection; as rather there are foundations from experience for all the contrary. The Spaniards will remain in the Indies although they might be left without enslaved Indians; thus the country always presents them many other means of increasing their riches more than if they would return to the Peninsula.

The *second*, that even when the danger were certain, the remedy of slavery would not result legally from this by more than is discussed the titles of vassalage, feud, *encomienda*, or deposit. The law of God prohibits doing evil things, even when the motive might be to prepare other rights. The children that dire recently baptized receive a kingdom of eternal glory, and however, it is not licit to give them that happiness by killing them. Murder does not cease to be the gravest sin by more kingdoms of glory that might be proportioned to the murdered children.

Consequently, the desires to conserve for Your Majesty the lordship and sovereignty of the Indians could no longer make licit the thefts and homicides that will be produced and would be produced in the future by the cruel system of enslaving the Indians with the title of vassalage, feud, *encomienda*, deposit, or whatever other that may be invented.

Protestation

I protest before God, and his angels and saints of his heavenly kingdom, and before all men that live now in this year of 1542, and those that will live after my death, which now cannot wait much longer), having written the twenty reasons indicated without any interest of mine, seeking only that of the souls of the King and of the Spanish, at the same time as the interest of the souls of the Indians, thus is evident to me by proper science the passing of fifteen million Indians that have died without religion in the last forty five years by consequence of the tyrannies, cruelties, and ill-governance of the Spaniards that in the name of the king of Castile exercised and exercise power over the Indians. I protest also that I write it so avoiding in whatever amount would be my part of the total depopulation of such vast and rich lands with notable detriment of religion, and of Spain; thus I foresee that they are going to leave it deserted, if it is not ended quickly the danger from which comes the mortality verified successively by consequence of the vicious system that has reigned up to today and which still intends to sustain itself by worried men and bad intention. If the dictation of such men prevails, those that will live after my death will be witnesses of the completion of my sad predictions. May God not permit it. Amen. Year of 1542.