

of their...
Evaluate: What European...
native peoples in this way?

DOCUMENT 1.8

**JUAN GINÉS DE SEPÚLVEDA, Concerning the
Just Causes of the War against the Indians**

1547

Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1489–1573), a Spanish theologian and philosopher, was tasked by Charles V, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, to respond to Bartolomé de las Casas's assertions that the Spaniards were unjustly treating Native Americans. Below is an excerpt from his book, *Concerning the Just Causes of the War against the Indians*.

... [T]he Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between savage and cruel races and the most merciful, between the most intemperate and the moderate and temperate and, I might even say, between apes and men. . . .

Compare, then, these gifts of prudence, talent, magnanimity, temperance, humanity, and religion with those possessed by these half-men . . . , in whom you will barely find the vestiges of humanity, who not only do not possess any learning at all, but are not even literate or in possession of any monument to their history except for some obscure and vague reminiscences of several things put down in various paintings; nor do they have written laws, but barbarian institutions and customs. Well, then, if we are dealing with virtue, what temperance or mercy can you expect from men who are committed to all types of intemperance and base frivolity, and eat human flesh? And do not believe that before the arrival of the Christians they lived in that pacific kingdom of Saturn which the poets have invented; for, on the contrary, they waged continual and ferocious war upon one another with such fierceness that they did not consider a victory at all worthwhile unless they sated their monstrous hunger with the flesh of their enemies. . . .

Columbia University, "Democratizes Alter; Or, On the Just Causes for War against the Indians," in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 526–527.