

**SOURCE A: Juan Gines de Sepulveda Belittles the Indians (1547)**

**Juan Gines Sepulveda was an outstanding example of the "Renaissance man." A Spaniard who studied in the cradle of the Renaissance, Italy, he achieved fame as a theologian, philosopher, historian, and astronomer. When Emperor Charles V convened a debate in Valladolid, Spain, in 1550-1551 to determine the future of Spain's relationship with the American aborigines, he naturally turned to Sepulveda as one of the most learned men in his realm. As a student of Aristotle, Sepulveda relied heavily on the classical distinction between "civilized" Greeks and "barbarians." The selection that follows is not a transcript of the debate at Valladolid but an excerpt from Sepulveda book *The Second Democrates*, published in 1547, in which he set forth his basic arguments.**

The 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.

You surely do not expect me to recall at length the prudence and talents of the Spanish.... And what can I say of the gentleness and humanity of our people, who, even in battle, after having gained the victory, put forth their greatest effort and care to save the greatest possible number of the conquered and to protect them from the cruelty of their allies? 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? Although some of them show a certain ingenuity for various works of artisanship, this is no proof of human cleverness, for we can observe animals, birds, and spiders making certain structures which no human accomplishment can competently imitate. Therefore, if you wish to reduce them, I do not say to our domination, but to a servitude a little less harsh, it will not be difficult for them to change their masters, and instead of the ones they had, who were barbarous and impious and inhuman, to accept the Christians, cultivators of human virtues and the true faith. ...