AMERICAN HOLOCAUST

The Conquest of the New World

DAVID E. STANNARD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York *Oxford* 1992

"A much-needed counterbalance to centuries of romantic confabulation."
Los Angeles Times Book Review

In a work of impassioned scholarship, David E. Stannard describes in horrific detail the mass destruction of entire New World societies that followed in the wake of European contact with the Western Hemisphere—destruction that lasted for more than four centuries, and that continues in many places even today. In a sweeping introductory overview of the native cultures of the Americas as they existed prior to 1492, Stannard provides a vibrant context for understanding the human dimension of what was lost in that tragic firestorm of violence and introduced disease. He concludes with a searching examination of the religious and cultural roots of Euro-American racism and genocidal behavior.

"Vivid and relentless, combining a formidable array of primary sources with meticulous analysis—a devastating reassessment of the Conquest as nothing less than a holy war." *Kirkus Reviews*

"The product of massive reading in the important sources....Stannard's convincing claim is that what happened was the worst demographic disaster in the history of our species." *The Boston Sunday Globe*

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The Washington Post Book World

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The Chicago Sunday Tribune

David E. Stannard is Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii. His previous books include *Death in America*, *Shrinking History*, *The Puritan Way of Death*, and *Before the Horror.*

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2

COMBINED, NORTH AMERICA and South America cover an area of 16,000,000 square miles, more than a quarter of the land surface of the globe. To its first human inhabitants, tens of thousands of years ago, this enormous domain they had discovered was literally a world unto itself: a world of miles-high mountains and vast fertile prairies, of desert shrublands and dense tropical rain forests, of frigid arctic tundra and hot murky swamps, of deep and fecund river valleys, of sparkling-water lakes, of canopied woodlands, of savannahs and steppes—and thousands upon thousands of miles of magnificent ocean coast. There were places where it almost never rained, and places where it virtually never stopped; there were places where the temperature reached 130 degrees Fahrenheit, and places where it dropped to 80 degrees below zero. But in all these places, under all these conditions, eventually some native people made their homes.

By the time ancient Greece was falling under the control of Rome, in North America the Adena Culture already had been flourishing for a thousand years. As many as 500 Adena living sites have been uncovered by modern archaeologists. Centered in present-day Ohio, they radiate out as far as Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. We will never know how many hundreds more such sites are buried beneath the modern cities and suburbs of the northeastern United States, but we do know that these early sedentary peoples lived in towns with houses that were circular in design and that ranged from single-family dwellings as small as twenty feet in diameter to multi-family units up to eighty feet across. ~~These residences commonly were built in clear proximity to large public enclosures of 300 feet and more in diameter that mod~~

(2)

[redacted]. It is estimated, for instance, that it took more than 4000 years for the dissolving ice barrier to creep north from what now is Hartford, Connecticut to St. Johnsbury, Vermont—a distance of less than 200 miles. With the partial melting of the great frozen glaciers, some of the water they had imprisoned was unlocked, trickling into the ocean basins and, over a great stretch of time, slowly lifting world-wide sea levels up hundreds of feet. As the water rose it began ebbing over and eventually inundating continental shelves once again, along with other relatively low-lying lands throughout the globe, including most of Berengia.

The natives of Berengia, who probably never noticed any of these gross geologic changes, so gradual were they on the scale of human time perception, naturally followed the climate-dictated changing shape of the land. Finally, at some point, Asia and North America became separate continents again, as they had been many tens of thousands of years earlier. Berengia was no more. And those of her inhabitants then living in the segregated Western Hemisphere became North America's indigenous peoples, isolated from the rest of the world by ocean waters on every side. Apart from the possible exception of a chance encounter with an Asian or Polynesian raft or canoe from time to time (possible in theory only, there is as yet no good evidence that such encounters ever actually occurred), the various native peoples of the Americas lived from those days forward, for thousands upon thousands of years, separate from the human life that was evolving and migrating about on the rest of the islands and continents of the earth.[11]

Much more controversial than the issue of where the first peoples of the Americas came from and how they got to the Western Hemisphere are the questions of when they originally moved from Berengia into North and South America—and how many people were resident in the New World when Columbus arrived in 1492. Both these subjects have been matters of intense scholarly scrutiny during the past several decades, and during that time both of them also have undergone revolutions in terms of scholarly knowledge. Until the 1940s, for example, it commonly was believed that the earliest human inhabitants of the Americas had migrated from the Alaskan portion of Berengia down into North and then South America no more than 6000 years ago. It is now recognized as beyond doubt, however, that numerous complex human communities existed in South America at least 13,000 years ago and in North America at least 6000 years before that. These are absolute minimums. Very recent and compelling archaeological evidence puts the date for earliest human habitation in Chile at 32,000 B.C. or earlier and North American habitation at around 40,000 B.C., while some highly respected scholars contend that the actual first date of human entry into the hemisphere may have been closer to 70,000 B.C.[12]

Similarly dramatic developments have characterized scholarly estimates

of the size of the pre-Columbian population of the Americas. In the 1940s and 1950s conventional wisdom held that the population of the entire hemisphere in 1492 was little more than 8,000,000—with fewer than 1,000,000 people living in the region north of present-day Mexico. Today, few serious students of the subject would put the hemispheric figure at less than 75,000,000 to 100,000,000 (with approximately 8,000,000 to 12,000,000 north of Mexico), while one of the most well-regarded specialists in the field recently has suggested that a more accurate estimate would be around 145,000,000 for the hemisphere as a whole and about 18,000,000 for the area north of Mexico.[13]

III

In the most fundamental quantitative ways, then, recent scholarship has begun to redirect inquiry and expose falsehoods that have dominated characterizations of the Americas' native peoples for centuries—although very little of this research has yet found its way into textbooks or other non-technical historical overviews. It now appears likely, for example, that the people of the so-called New World were already well-established residents of plains, mountains, forests, foothills, and coasts throughout the Western Hemisphere by the time the people of Europe were scratching their first carvings onto cave walls in the Dordogne region of France and northern Spain. It also is almost certain that the population of the Americas (and probably even Meso- and South America by themselves) exceeded the combined total of Europe and Russia at the time of Columbus's first voyage in 1492. And there is no doubt at all, according to modern linguistic analysis, that the cultural diversity of the Americas' pre-Columbian indigenous peoples was much greater than that of their Old World counterparts.[14] A bit of common sense might suggest that this should not be surprising. After all, North and South America are four times the size of Europe. But common sense rarely succeeds in combating cultural conceit. And cultural conceit has long been the driving force behind the tales most European and white American historians have told of the European invasion of the Americas.

The native peoples of the Americas are far from unique, of course, in traditionally having the basic elements of their historical existence willfully misperceived. In his sweeping and iconoclastic study of modern Africa, for instance, Ali A. Mazrui makes the cogent point that ethnocentrism has so shaped Western perceptions of geography that the very maps of the world found in our homes and offices and classrooms, based on the famous Mercator projection, dramatically misrepresent the true size of Africa by artificially deflating its land area (and that of all equatorial regions of the world) in comparison with the land areas of Europe and North America.[15] Because the Mercator map exaggerates the distance between the lines of

latitude for those regions that lie closest to the poles, North America is made to appear one and a half times the size of Africa when in fact Africa contains in excess of 2,000,000 more square miles of land. A proportional cartographic distortion also affects the comparative depictions of Africa and Europe. Thus, the literal "picture" of Africa in relation to the rest of the world that schoolchildren have been taught for centuries is in fact an outright fraud.

A parallel ethnocentrism—this time historical, however, not geographic—traditionally has distorted conventional European and American views of the native American past. While texts on the subject routinely acknowledge the high civilizations of the Aztecs and the Incas (although the more sordid aspects of their religious rituals never fail to dominate discussion), the rest of North and South and Central America prior to the arrival of Europeans generally is seen as a barbaric wasteland.

Outside the perimeters of the Aztec and Inca empires, in that portion of the Americas lying south of the Rio Grande, most accounts tend to imply that there was nothing deserving of a modern reader's attention. One historian suggests that this myopia only indicates "that the geographical focus of modern scholarship parallels closely the political and economic realities of colonial times" in Meso- and South America, when the Europeans' hunger for gold caused them to focus their interests and concerns disproportionately on central Mexico and Peru.[16] As for the area north of the Rio Grande, the millions of Indians who lived for many centuries in permanently settled agricultural and sometimes urban communities on this vast continent are most often described as "handfuls of indigenous people" who were "scattered" across a "virgin land," "a vast emptiness," or even a "void," to cite the descriptions of some recently published, well-regarded, and symptomatic historical texts. The Indians themselves, according to these accounts, were simply "a part of the landscape" who lived, like other "lurking beasts," in a "trackless wilderness," where they had "no towns or villages" and either lived in "houses of a sort" or simply "roamed" across the land. The cultures of these "redskins" were, at best, "static and passive" (except when they were indulging in their "strange ceremonies" or taking advantage of their "compliant maidens"), though once encountered by Europeans, these living "environmental hazards" showed themselves to be "treacherous" and "belligerent," "savage foes" and "predators," for whom "massacre and torture were [the] rule," who introduced to Europeans the meaning of "total war," and whose threat of "nightly terror . . . haunted the fringes of settlement through the whole colonial era."[17]

This hostile attitude of stubbornly determined ignorance, it should be noted, is not confined to textbook writers. Recently, three highly praised books of scholarship on early American history by eminent Harvard historians Oscar Handlin and Bernard Bailyn have referred to thoroughly

populated and agriculturally cultivated Indian territories as "empty space," "wilderness," "vast chaos," "unopened lands," and the ubiquitous "virgin land" that blissfully was awaiting European "exploitation." Bailyn, for his part, also refers to forced labor and slavery at the hands of the invading British as "population recruitment," while Handlin makes more references to the Indians' "quickly developed taste for firewater" than to any other single attribute.[18] And Handlin and Bailyn are typical, having been trained by the likes of the distinguished Samuel Eliot Morison who, a decade and a half earlier, had dismissed the indigenous peoples of the Americas as mere "pagans expecting short and brutish lives, void of hope for any future." (Earlier in his career Morison referred to Indians as "Stone Age savages," comparing their resistance to genocide with "the many instances today of backward peoples getting enlarged notions of nationalism and turning ferociously on Europeans who have attempted to civilize them.")[19]

It should come as no surprise to learn that professional eminence is no bar against articulated racist absurdities such as this, but if one example were chosen to stand for all the rest, perhaps the award would go to Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, who wrote at the start of his book *The Rise of Christian Europe* of "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe," who are nothing less than people without history. "Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach," he conceded, "but at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history."[20]

The Eurocentric racial contempt for the indigenous peoples of North and South America, as well as Africa, that is reflected in scholarly writings of this sort is now so complete and second nature to most Americans that it has passed into popular lore and common knowledge of the "every schoolboy knows" variety. No intent to distort the truth is any longer necessary. All that is required, once the model is established, is the recitation of rote learning as it passes from one uncritical generation to the next.

As Mazrui points out with regard to the cartographic distortions that uniformly minimize Africa as a physical presence in the world, the historical distortions that systematically reduce in demographic and cultural and moral significance the native peoples of the Americas are part of a very old and enduring political design. They constitute what the historian of South Africa, Leonard Thompson, calls a "political mythology." In Thompson's words, a political myth is "a tale told about the past to legitimize or discredit a regime," whereas a political mythology is "a cluster of such myths that reinforce one another and jointly constitute the historical element in the ideology of the regime or its rival."[21] The occasion for these observations by Thompson was his book analyzing South Africa's system

of *apartheid*. Two of the basic building blocks of this particular political mythology are the fabricated notions, embedded in Afrikaner imperialist history, that the blacks of South Africa—apart from being barbaric, so-called Hottentot brutes—were themselves fairly recent arrivals in the southern part of the continent, and that they were relatively few in number when the first European colonizers arrived.[22] Thus, in the Afrikaners' mythical version of the South African past, European settlers moved into a land that was largely empty, except for a small number of newly arrived savages who in time succumbed to progress and—thanks to the material comforts provided by the modern world, compared with the dark barbarism of their African ancestors—ultimately wound up benefiting from their own conquest.

One of the functions of this particular type of historical myth was described some years ago by the historian Francis Jennings. In addition to the fact that large and ancient populations commonly are associated with civilization and small populations with savagery, Jennings noted that, in cases where an invading population has done great damage to an existing native culture or cultures, small subsequent population estimates regarding the pre-conquest size of the indigenous population nicely serve "to smother retroactive moral scruples" that otherwise might surface.[23] Writing a few years after Jennings, Robert F. Berkhofer made much the same point regarding manufactured historical views of native barbarism: "the image of the savage," he stated flatly, serves "to rationalize European conquest."[24]

Jennings and Berkhofer could well have been writing about South Africa and its morally rationalizing post-conquest historians, but they were not; they were writing about America and *its* morally rationalizing post-conquest chroniclers. For the political mythology that long has served to justify the South African practice of *apartheid* finds a very close parallel in America's political mythology regarding the history of the Western Hemisphere's indigenous peoples. Indeed, this same form of official mendacity commonly underpins the falsified histories, written by the conquerors, of colonial and post-colonial societies throughout the world.

Employing what Edward W. Said has called "the moral epistemology of imperialism," the approved histories of such societies—the United States, Israel, South Africa, and Australia among them—commonly commence with what Said refers to as a "blotting out of knowledge" of the indigenous people. Adds another observer, native peoples in most general histories are treated in the same way that the fauna and flora of the region are: "consigned to the category of miscellaneous information. . . . they inhabit the realm of the 'etc.' "[25] Once the natives have thus been banished from collective memory, at least as people of numerical and cultural consequence, the settler group's moral and intellectual right to conquest is claimed to be established without question. As Frantz Fanon once put it: "The colonialist . . . reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time occurring without him. His irruption into the history of the colonized people is deified, transformed into absolute necessity."[26] Then, as Said has cogently observed, the *settler* group adorns itself with the mantle of the victim: the European homeland of the colonists—or the metropolitan European power that politically controls the settlement area—is portrayed as the oppressor, while the European settlers depict themselves as valiant seekers of justice and freedom, struggling to gain their deserved independence on the land that they "discovered" or that is theirs by holy right.

In such post-independence national celebrations of self, it is essential that the dispossessed native people not openly be acknowledged, lest they become embarrassingly unwelcome trespassers whose legacy of past and ongoing persecution by the celebrants might spoil the festivities' moral tone. This particular celebration, however, has gone on long enough. Before turning to an examination of the European invasion of the Americas, then, and the monumental Indian population collapse directly brought on by that genocidal siege, it is necessary that we survey, however briefly, some of the cultures of the Americas, and the people who created them, in the millennia that preceded the European conquest.

had to carry out at least part of their journey to those lands across a sea gap in eastern Indonesia—and since the initial settlement of New Guinea and Australia occurred at least 50,000 years ago, and probably much earlier—it certainly is possible, perhaps likely, that America's first people had the technological skills to make seaborne, stepping-stone migrations down the western coastline tens of thousands of years before the end of the last Ice Age.[15] Moreover, if that was the primary path of migration, it now is forever hidden from archaeological inquiry, because any coastal settlements or villages that may have existed forty, fifty, or sixty thousand years ago were located on the continental shelf that, like the homeland of Beringia, presently is hundreds of feet beneath the ocean's waves.[16]

If the evolving scholarly estimates of the date when humans first entered the Western Hemisphere seem dramatic—changing within the past half-century from about 4000 B.C. to around 40,000 B.C., and perhaps even earlier—the proportionate change is at least equally striking for advances in knowledge during that same time regarding the magnitude of human population in the Americas prior to European contact.

The earliest recorded estimates of New World population came from the first Spanish intruders in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. While they of course could make no estimates for lands they had not seen, they did produce figures for the areas in which they had traveled. Bartholomé de Las Casas, for example, put the figure for the island of Hispaniola at between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000 at the time of the Spanish arrival, although Las Casas himself did not visit the island until ten years after Columbus's first voyage, by which time the population was only a fraction—perhaps 10 percent—of what it had been prior to European contact. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, who arrived in the Americas a decade later than Las Casas, claimed that Panama and the adjacent portion of southern Central America originally held around 2,000,000 indigenous people. And even as late as the eighteenth century Francisco Javier Clavijero claimed that Mexico had an abundance of 30,000,000 people prior to the Spanish conquest.[17]

Because the post-conquest native population collapses in these and other regions were so massive and so sudden, many later writers found these first estimates—and their implications for an originally enormous hemispheric population—impossible to believe. As a result, by the 1920s there was general scholarly agreement that the combined population of North and South America in 1492 was probably no more than 40,000,000 to 50,000,000 people.[18] Within a decade, however, prevailing opinion had dropped even those reduced numbers down to less than 14,000,000—and in 1939 anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber published a highly influential report suggesting that the population of the entire Western Hemisphere in 1492 was only about 8,400,000—with North America accounting for less than 1,000,000 of that total.[19]

Recognizing that all these estimates were founded upon a great deal of speculation and very little knowledge of local conditions, Kroeber suggested that work begin on detailed region-by-region analyses. The charge was accepted, particularly by a group of scholars from various disciplines at Kroeber's own University of California at Berkeley, most notably Carl Sauer, Sherburne F. Cook, and Woodrow Borah. The result was a path-breaking revolution in historical demographic technique that in time became known as the "Berkeley School." Examining enormous amounts of data from a great variety of sources—ranging from church and government archives listing tribute, baptismal, and marriage records, to the environmental carrying capacities of known cultivated lands and much more—these researchers concentrated their efforts at first on California and central Mexico, extending their inquiries later to regions as diverse as New England, the Yucatán, and the island of Hispaniola.[20]

The results of these efforts were the most detailed and methodologically sophisticated population estimates ever conducted for the pre-European Americas. And the figures they turned up were astonishing: 25,000,000 people for central Mexico alone and 8,000,000 people for Hispaniola are just two of the more striking re-calculations by members of the Berkeley School. By the early 1960s the accumulated body of such studies was sufficient to allow Woodrow Borah to assert that the pre-Columbian population of the Americas was probably "upwards of one hundred million." Soon after, anthropologist Henry F. Dobyns published a famous watershed analysis of all the major studies that had been conducted up to that time. His conclusion was that North and South America contained between 90,000,000 and more than 112,000,000 people before the coming of the Spanish.[21] Comparative figures for selected other parts of the world at this same time put the population of Europe at 60,000,000 to 70,000,000; Russia at 10,000,000 to 18,000,000; and Africa at 40,000,000 to 72,000,000.[22]

Subsequently, since the mid-1960s, scores of scholars from around the world have published new pre-Columbian population estimates of unprecedented sophistication for nations, tribes, and regions from northernmost Canada to southern Chile—and for most other major habitation sites lying in between. One after another they have confirmed the general principle that the populations of individual locales were much higher in pre-Columbian times than heretofore suspected. Conservative-minded historical demographers have been reluctant to extrapolate from these findings to overall hemispheric projections, but even the more cautious among them generally now concede that the total population of the Americas prior to 1492 was in the neighborhood of 75,000,000 persons, about 10 percent of whom lived north of Mexico. Others—including Dobyns—have begun to suspect that Dobyns's earlier maximum of more than 112,000,000 may have been too low and that a figure of about 145,000,000 would be a closer approximation of the true number for the hemisphere, with 18,000,000 or so the

best estimate for the region that presently constitutes the United States and Canada.[23]

Among the reasons for some researchers to have concluded recently that *all* estimates to date have been too low, is the increasingly acknowledged likelihood that European diseases, once introduced into the virgin soil environments of the Americas, often raced ahead of their foreign carriers and spread disastrously into native population centers long before the European explorers and settlers themselves arrived. In other instances, some Europeans may have been on the scene when the initial epidemics occurred, but these people generally were soldiers more interested in conquest than in studying those they were killing. New archaeological studies in particular locales have demonstrated that this previously "invisible" population loss may have been widespread—a phenomenon that also is now being uncovered among post-European contact indigenous peoples as far away from the Americas as New Zealand, the Pacific islands of Fiji, and Hawai'i.[24] If this did indeed happen on a large scale throughout the Americas, as Dobyns and others now contend that it did, even the higher range of current hemispheric population estimates may be too low. This is because the historical consequence of such archaeological research findings is the discovery that time and again the first European observers and recorders in an area arrived only well after it was totally bereft of its long-established human inhabitants, or at the very least that such observers and recorders found—and incorrectly took to be the norm prior to their arrival—only residual populations so small and demoralized that they provided no hint of true previous population magnitude or cultural vitality.[25]

Even if certain plagues, such as smallpox, did not always precede the appearance of the European disease carriers themselves into certain regions, however, those who still disagree with Dobyns and his supporters on this point acknowledge that population loss among native societies routinely reached and exceeded 95 percent—a rate of decline more than sufficient to account for a pre-Columbian hemispheric population in the neighborhood of 100,000,000 and more.[26] Comparative research in South America and Hawai'i has shown, moreover, that cultural and biological outgrowths of military assault and epidemic disease, such as severe psychological disorientation and high levels of pathogen- and stress-induced infertility, can by themselves be primary agents in population losses of near-extermination magnitude.[27] In sum, while debate continues as to the *actual* population of the Americas prior to the arrival of Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century, few informed scholars any longer contend that it was not at least within the general range of 75 to 100,000,000 persons, with roughly 8,000,000 to 12,000,000 living north of Mexico—while some of the more outstanding scholars in the field have begun to suspect that the true figure was even higher than the highest end of this range.

7

to know where he was and routinely lost ships that were under his command), this rhetorical claim of biblical guidance is a clue to understanding the European reaction to his reported find.[29]

Columbus finished his letter, describing what he had seen on his voyage, on March 4th of 1493. A printed version of it was published in Barcelona and was widely circulated less than a month later. A month after that a translated edition was circulating in Rome. A month after that a version that set the letter to verse appeared. Others followed in Antwerp, Basel, Paris, Florence, Strassburg, Valladolid, and elsewhere, most of them going back for second and third and fourth printings. At least seventeen different translated editions appeared throughout Europe within five years following Columbus's return from that first voyage.

If not the biblical Eden, or the fabled Fortunate Isles of classical myth, Columbus, it seemed, at least had found some sort of paradise on earth. Such places had long filled the legends and dreams of all the peoples of Europe, as they would on into the future: it is no coincidence that during the next two centuries the invented utopias of Bacon and More and Harrington and others invariably would be located in distant oceanic lands to the west.

But myths of paradise and utopia were complex—and often confused—affairs. On the one hand, in some versions, they represented a rediscovered time of innocent perfection dating from *before* the biblical Fall from Grace; on the other hand, some dreams of such perfection envisioned and were built upon the expectation of a *future* time of anticipated peace and harmony. And bound up with every myth, past, present, or future, was still another and contradictory vision of the primordial world, a Satanic vision of savagery and wildness and the dark.

Before long, reports were circulating that Satan himself resided on one of those islands in the Caribbean Sea. Perhaps it was only natural then, as Lewis Hanke has said, that "the popular image, in the first feverish months, of a terrestrial paradise was soon succeeded by that of a hostile continent peopled with armed warriors rushing out of the tropical forests or strange cities to resist the advance of the Spanish soldiers and the missionary efforts of their companion friars."[30]

It was only a matter of time before that stereotype of barbarically hostile natives had metamorphosed once again. As best described by its most famous proponent, the eminent Spanish scholar Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the next representation of the New World's Indians was as creatures of a subhuman, Caliban-like nature who were intended by God "to be placed under the authority of civilized and virtuous princes or nations, so that they may learn, from the might, wisdom, and law of their conquerors, to practice better morals, worthier customs and a more civilized way of life."[31] That the visions of the ferocious Indian assailant or the inferior natural slave were fictions, as much as the image of a prelapsarian American Eden had been, mattered not one bit to anyone. The myths were simply formed and re-formed, shaped and re-shaped, and made to do whatever work their propagators at any given moment wanted done.

Numerous modern scholars have dissected and analyzed the effects of both biblical and classical myth on the minds of Europeans during this so-called Age of Discovery. But at least as strong as all the mixed-up imaginings of terrestrial heavens and Elysian fields, of lusty maidens and cannibalistic human beasts, was a fervent, and in many cases a truly maniacal, European craving for raw power and the wealth of gold and silver. Among the clergy, meanwhile, there was the promise of God's favor should they successfully introduce the New World's "pagan innocents" to the glory of his grace. It is not surprising, then, that in the very first sentence of his celebrated letter to the Spanish Crown Columbus says of the lands that he has found, "and of them all have I taken possession for Their Highnesses, by proclamation and with the royal standard displayed, and nobody objected." Consider the picture: standing alone with a few of his fellow officers in the white coral sand of a tiny island whose identification remains disputed to this day, an island "discovered" by Columbus despite the fact that it was well populated and had in fact been discovered by others thousands of years earlier, the admiral "took possession" of it—and of all the people it contained. And "nobody objected." Clearly, God was on the Spaniards' side.

So it went, from island to island, small and large, throughout the Caribbean. Wherever he went Columbus planted a cross, "making," as he said, "the declarations that are required," and claiming ownership of the land for his royal patrons back in Spain. Despite the fact that Columbus noted in his own journal of the voyage that "the people of these lands do not understand me nor I them," it seems to have been of particular satisfaction to him that never once did any of the onlooking Arawak-speaking islanders object to his repeated proclamations in Spanish that he was taking control of their lands away from them.[32] Ludicrous though this scene may appear to us in retrospect, at the time it was a deadly serious ritual, similar in ways equally ludicrous and deadly to the other famous ritual the Spanish bestowed upon the non-Spanish-speaking people of the Americas, the *requerimiento*.

Following Columbus, each time the Spanish encountered a native individual or group in the course of their travels they were ordered to read to the Indians a statement informing them of the truth of Christianity and the necessity to swear immediate allegiance to the Pope and to the Spanish crown. After this, if the Indians refused or even delayed in their acceptance (or, more likely, their understanding) of the *requerimiento*, the statement continued:

I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of Their Highnesses. We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as Their Highnesses may command. And we shall take your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey and refuse to receive their lord and resist and contradict him.[33]

In practice, the Spanish usually did not wait for the Indians to reply to their demands. *First* the Indians were manacled; then, as it were, they were read their rights. As one Spanish conquistador and historian described the routine: "After they had been put in chains, someone read the *Requerimiento* without knowing their language and without any interpreters, and without either the reader or the Indians understanding the language they had no opportunity to reply, being immediately carried away prisoners, the Spanish not failing to use the stick on those who did not go fast enough."[34]

In this perverse way, the invasion and destruction of what many, including Columbus, had thought was a heaven on earth began. Not that a reading of the *requerimiento* was necessary to the inhuman violence the Spanish were to perpetrate against the native peoples they confronted. Rather, the proclamation was merely a legalistic rationale for a fanatically religious and fanatically juridical and fanatically brutal people to justify a holocaust. After all, Columbus had seized and kidnapped Indian men, women, and children throughout his first voyage, long before the *requerimiento* was in use, five at one stop, six at another, more at others, filling his ships with varied samples of Indians to display like exotic beasts in Seville and Barcelona upon his return.

On at least one occasion Columbus sent a raiding party ashore to capture some women with their children to keep his growing excess of captured native males company, "because," he wrote in his journal, his past experience in abducting African slaves had taught him that "the [Indian] men would behave better in Spain with women of their country than without them." On this date he also records the vignette of "the husband of one of these women and father of three children, a boy and two girls," who followed his captured family onto Columbus's ship and said that if they had to go "he wished to come with them, and begged me hard, and they all now remain consoled with him."[35]

But not for long. As a harbinger of things to come, only a half-dozen or so of those many captured native slaves survived the journey to Spain, and of them only two were alive six months later. On his second voyage Columbus tried an even more ambitious kidnapping and enslavement scheme. It is described by an Italian nobleman, Michele de Cuneo, who accompanied Columbus on this voyage:

When our caravels in which I wished to go home had to leave for Spain, we gathered together in our settlement 1600 people male and female of those Indians, of whom, among the best males and females, we embarked on our caravels on 17 February 1495, 550 souls. Of the rest who were left the announcement went around that whoever wanted them could take as many as he pleased; and this was done. And when everybody had been supplied there were some 400 of them left to whom permission was granted to go wherever they wanted. Among them were many women who had infants at the breast. They, in order the better to escape us, since they were afraid we would turn to catch them again, left their infants anywhere on the ground and started to flee like desperate people.[36]

No one knows what happened to those six hundred or so left-over natives who were enslaved, on the Admiral's orders, by "whoever wanted them," or the four hundred or so who fled in terror, or their abandoned infants—but by the time Columbus's ships entered the waters outside Spain, of the 550 captured Indians he took with him two hundred had died. Says Cuneo: "We cast them into the sea." When they reached Cadiz, half of the remaining 350 slaves were sick and dying. Only a relative few survived much longer, because, Cuneo surmised, "they are not working people and they very much fear cold, nor have they long life."[37]

This final point—"nor have they long life"—would not have been true a few years earlier: the health and life expectancy of the natives had been far superior to that of the Europeans prior to the Columbian invasion. But by the time Cuneo was writing he was certainly correct. Once the first Spanish settlements had taken root, the hold on life that any Indian had, at any given moment, was tenuous at best. Spanish diseases had begun their own invasion of the Americas almost from the moment Columbus and his crews first breathed upon their New World hosts. But the systematic, genocidal destruction of the Indians did not begin until Columbus's return.

II

Columbus's second voyage was the true beginning of the invasion of the Americas. The royal instructions authorizing the expedition had directed that the finest ships in Andalusia be outfitted for the trip and that they be commanded by the most expert pilots and navigators in the realm. Seventeen ships made the voyage and aboard those ships were more than 1200 soldiers, sailors, and colonists—including a cavalry troop of lancers and half a dozen priests. Along the way, at the Canary Islands, some other passengers were boarded: goats and sheep and cattle, and eight pigs, were placed on deck and in the holds below.

In early January of 1494 the fleet arrived at the place on the northern coast of Hispaniola that Columbus had chosen to build his New World

capital, his town of Isabela. No sooner were the ships unloaded, however, than sickness broke out among the crews. It quickly spread among the natives, who had come to greet the ships with gifts of fish and fruits, "as if we had been their brothers," recalled one of the men on board.[38] Within a few days, the Admiral's surgeon reported, a third of the Spaniards had fallen ill, while natives everywhere were dead. Columbus directed groups of the healthy among his crews to explore the island's inland regions and find the fabulous gold mines they all were sure existed. But many of those men returned to the ships, having come down with the mysterious illness along the way.

For years historians have speculated as to what the epidemic was that laid low so many Spaniards and killed so many native people. Carl Sauer thought it might have been some sort of intestinal infection, while Samuel Eliot Morison diagnosed it as either malaria or something caused by "drinking well water and eating strange fish." Most recently, Kirkpatrick Sale has opted for bacillic dysentery—although he too lists malaria or even syphilis as among the likely culprits.[39] Others have thought it everything from smallpox to yellow fever. While it is possible (even probable) that more than one disease was causing the afflictions, the reported symptoms had nothing of the signs of syphilis, and malaria was not then present in the Indies or the Americas, nor would it be for many years to come.[40] For the same reasons, it could not have been yellow fever or smallpox that was wreaking all this havoc, and it certainly did not derive from something the Spanish ate or drank, because it spread like wildfire not only among the Spanish, but with particular virulence among the Indian people all across the island.[41] No, the most recent and original medically informed hypothesis—and the one that goes the furthest in explaining reported symptoms, including high mortality, and the extraordinary contagiousness—identifies influenza as the cause, influenza carried by those Canary Islands pigs.[42]

If, as the Spanish physician and medical historian Francisco Guerra now contends, the epidemic that ravaged Hispaniola in 1494 was swine influenza, it would have been a pestilence of devastating proportions. For it now appears that it was swine flu that swept the world in 1918, killing off at least 20,000,000 people before it finally dissipated. Like other people in the Americas, and unlike the Spanish, the natives of Hispaniola had no previous exposure to the virus—nor to the numerous other diseases that historically, in other parts of the world, had spread from domesticated animal hosts. Other than small dogs in some locations and llamas in the Andes, few animals were domesticated anywhere in the hemisphere. And of the many plagues that in time would overwhelm the Americas' native peoples, influenza—of various types, from both humans and non-human vectors—was second only to smallpox and maybe measles as the most rapid epidemic killer of them all.[43]

Whatever it was, in any case, the imported pathogen moved among the

native people with a relentlessness that nothing ever had in all their history. "So many Indians died that they could not be counted," wrote Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, adding that "all through the land the Indians lay dead everywhere. The stench was very great and pestiferous."[44] And in the wake of the plague they had introduced, the Spanish soldiers followed, seeking gold from the natives, or information as to where to find it. They were troubled by the illness, and numbers of them died from it. But unlike the island natives the European invaders and their forebears had lived with epidemic pestilence for ages. Their lungs were damaged from it, their faces scarred with pocks, but accumulations of disease exposure allowed them now to weather much. So they carried infections with them everywhere they went—burdensome, but rarely fatal, except to the natives that they met.

Following the Admiral's orders, reconnaissance parties were sent out across the island and off to Cuba, Jamaica, and to other nearby lands. The Spanish plagues raced on ahead. Still, the natives, as Columbus had observed during his first voyage, continued to be kind and generous to their guests, and so innocent in the use of dangerous weapons that when Columbus "showed them swords," he said, "they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance."[45]

Wherever the marauding, diseased, and heavily armed Spanish forces went out on patrol, accompanied by ferocious armored dogs that had been trained to kill and disembowel, they preyed on the local communities—already plague-enfeebled—forcing them to supply food and women and slaves, and whatever else the soldiers might desire. At virtually every previous landing on this trip Columbus's troops had gone ashore and killed indiscriminately, as though for sport, whatever animals and birds and natives they encountered, "looting and destroying all they found," as the Admiral's son Fernando blithely put it.[46] Once on Hispaniola, however, Columbus fell ill—whether from the flu or, more likely, from some other malady—and what little restraint he had maintained over his men disappeared as he went through a lengthy period of recuperation. The troops went wild, stealing, killing, raping, and torturing natives, trying to force them to divulge the whereabouts of the imagined treasure-houses of gold.

The Indians tried to retaliate by launching ineffective ambushes of stray Spaniards. But the combined killing force of Spanish diseases and Spanish military might was far greater than anything the natives could ever have imagined. Finally, they decided the best response was flight. Crops were left to rot in the fields as the Indians attempted to escape the frenzy of the conquistadors' attacks. Starvation then added its contribution, along with pestilence and mass murder, to the native peoples' woes.

Some desperate Hispaniola natives fled to other islands. One of these, a *cacique* named Hatuey, brought with him to Cuba as many of his surviving people as he could—and what little gold that they possessed. Once

there, in a place called Punta Maisi, he assembled his followers together and displayed for them the treasures that they had, explaining that this was what the Spanish troops were after, that these apparently were objects of worship to the murderous invaders. Whereupon, to protect his people from the greed and savagery of these vile strangers, he threw the gold to the bottom of a nearby river.

It didn't work. The Spanish found Hatuey and his people, killed most of them, enslaved the others, and condemned their leader to be burned alive. Reportedly, as they were tying him to the stake, a Franciscan friar urged him to take Jesus to his heart so that his soul might go to heaven, rather than descend into hell. Hatuey replied that if heaven was where the Christians went, he would rather go to hell.[47]

The massacres continued. Columbus remained ill for months while his soldiers wandered freely. More than 50,000 natives were reported dead from these encounters by the time the Admiral had recovered from his sickness.[48] And when at last his health and strength had been restored, Columbus's response to his men's unorganized depredations was to organize them. In March of 1495 he massed together several hundred armored troops, cavalry, and a score or more of trained attack dogs. They set forth across the countryside, tearing into assembled masses of sick and unarmed native people, slaughtering them by the thousands. The pattern set by these raids would be the model the Spanish would follow for the next decade and beyond. As Bartolomé de Las Casas, the most famous of the accompanying Spanish missionaries from that trip recalled:

> Once the Indians were in the woods, the next step was to form squadrons and pursue them, and whenever the Spaniards found them, they pitilessly slaughtered everyone like sheep in a corral. It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel; not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all. So they would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin and they would send him on saying "Go now, spread the news to your chiefs." They would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or the cutting of bodies in half with one blow. They burned or hanged captured chiefs.[49]

At least one chief, the man considered by Columbus to be Hispaniola's ranking native leader, was not burned or hanged, however. He was captured, put in chains, and sent off by ship for public display and imprisonment in Spain. Like most of the Indians who had been forced to make that voyage, though, he never made it to Seville: he died en route.

With the same determination Columbus had shown in organizing his troops' previously disorganized and indiscriminate killings, the Admiral then set about the task of systematizing their haphazard enslavement of

the natives. Gold was all that they were seeking, so every Indian on the island who was not a child was ordered to deliver to the Spanish a certain amount of the precious ore every three months. When the gold was delivered the individual was presented with a token to wear around his or her neck as proof that the tribute had been paid. Anyone found without the appropriate number of tokens had his hands cut off.

Since Hispaniola's gold supply was far less than what the Spaniards' fantasies suggested, Indians who wished to survive were driven to seek out their quotas of the ore at the expense of other endeavors, including food production. The famines that had begun earlier, when the Indians attempted to hide from the Spanish murderers, now grew much worse, while new diseases that the Spanish carried with them preyed ever more intensely on the malnourished and weakened bodies of the natives. And the soldiers never ceased to take delight in killing just for fun.

Spanish reports of their own murderous sadism during this time are legion. For a lark they "tore babes from their mother's breast by their feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks." The bodies of other infants "they spitted . . . together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords." On one famous occasion in Cuba a troop of a hundred or more Spaniards stopped by the banks of a dry river and sharpened their swords on the whetstones in its bed. Eager to compare the sharpness of their blades, reported an eyewitness to the events, they drew their weapons and

> began to rip open the bellies, to cut and kill those lambs—men, women, children, and old folk, all of whom were seated, off guard and frightened, watching the mares and the Spaniards. And within two credos, not a man of all of them there remains alive. The Spaniards enter the large house nearby, for this was happening at its door, and in the same way, with cuts and stabs, begin to kill as many as they found there, so that a stream of blood was running, as if a great number of cows had perished. . . . To see the wounds which covered the bodies of the dead and dying was a spectacle of horror and dread.[50]

This particular slaughter began at the village of Zucayo, where the townsfolk earlier had provided for the conquistadors a feast of cassava, fruit, and fish. From there it spread. No one knows just how many Indians the Spanish killed in this sadistic spree, but Las Casas put the number at well over 20,000 before the soldiers' thirst for horror had been slaked.

Another report, this one by a group of concerned Dominican friars, concentrated on the way the Spanish soldiers treated native infants:

> Some Christians encounter an Indian woman, who was carrying in her arms a child at suck; and since the dog they had with them was hungry, they tore the child from the mother's arms and flung it still living to the dog, who

proceeded to devour it before the mother's eyes. . . . When there were among the prisoners some women who had recently given birth, if the new-born babes happened to cry, they seized them by the legs and hurled them against the rocks, or flung them into the jungle so that they would be certain to die there.[51]

Or, Las Casas again, in another incident he witnessed:

The Spaniards found pleasure in inventing all kinds of odd cruelties, the more cruel the better, with which to spill human blood. They built a long gibbet, low enough for the toes to touch the ground and prevent strangling, and hanged thirteen [natives] at a time in honor of Christ Our Saviour and the twelve Apostles. When the Indians were thus still alive and hanging, the Spaniards tested their strength and their blades against them, ripping chests open with one blow and exposing entrails, and there were those who did worse. Then, straw was wrapped around their torn bodies and they were burned alive. One man caught two children about two years old, pierced their throats with a dagger, then hurled them down a precipice.[52]

If some of this has a sickeningly familiar ring to readers who recall the massacres at My Lai and Song My and other Vietnamese villages in the not too distant past, the familiarity is reinforced by the term the Spanish used to describe their campaign of terror: "pacification."[53] But as horrific as those bloodbaths were in Vietnam, in sheer magnitude they were as nothing compared with what happened on the single island of Hispaniola five hundred years ago: the island's population of about eight million people at the time of Columbus's arrival in 1492 already had declined by a third to a half before the year 1496 was out. And after 1496 the death rate, if anything, accelerated.

In plotting on a graph the decline of Hispaniola's native population there appears a curious bulge, around the year 1510, when the diminishing numbers seemed to stabilize and even grow a bit. Then the inexorable downward spiral toward extinction continues. What that little blip on the demographic record indicates is not, however, a moment of respite for the island's people, nor a contradiction to the overall pattern of Hispaniola's population free-fall following Columbus's arrival. Rather, it is a shadowy and passing footnote to the holocaust the Spanish at the same time were bringing to the *rest* of the Caribbean, for that fleeting instant of population stabilization was caused by the importation of tens of thousands of slaves from surrounding islands in a fruitless attempt by the Spanish to replace the dying natives of Hispaniola.[54]

But death seized these imported slaves as quickly as it had Hispaniola's natives. And thus, the islands of the Bahamas were rapidly stripped of perhaps half a million people, in large part for use as short-lived replacements by the Spanish for Hispaniola's nearly eradicated indigenous inhabitants. Then Cuba, with its enormous population, suffered the same fate.

With the Caribbean's millions of native people thereby effectively liquidated in barely a quarter of a century, forced through the murderous vortex of Spanish savagery and greed, the slavers turned next to the smaller islands off the mainland coast. The first raid took place in 1515 when natives from Guanaja in the Bay Islands off Honduras were captured and taken to forced labor camps in depopulated Cuba. Other slave expeditions followed, and by 1525, when Cortés arrived in the region, all the Bay Islands themselves had been entirely shorn of their inhabitants.[55]

In order to exploit most fully the land and its populace, and to satisfy the increasingly dangerous and rebellion-organizing ambitions of his well-armed Spanish troops, Columbus instituted a program called the *repartimiento* or "Indian grants"—later referred to, in a revised version, as the system of *encomiendas*. This was a dividing-up, not of the land, but of entire peoples and communities, and the bestowal of them upon a would-be Spanish master. The master was free to do what he wished with "his people"—have them plant, have them work in the mines, have them do anything, as Carl Sauer puts it, "without limit or benefit of tenure."[56]

The result was an even greater increase in cruelty and a magnification of the firestorm of human devastation. Caring only for short-term material wealth that could be wrenched up from the earth, the Spanish overlords on Hispaniola removed their slaves to unfamiliar locales—"the roads to the mines were like anthills," Las Casas recalled—deprived them of food, and forced them to work until they dropped. At the mines and fields in which they labored, the Indians were herded together under the supervision of Spanish overseers, known as *mineros* in the mines and *estancieros* on the plantations, who "treated the Indians with such rigor and inhumanity that they seemed the very ministers of Hell, driving them day and night with beatings, kicks, lashes and blows and calling them no sweeter names than dogs." Needless to say, some Indians attempted to escape from this. They were hunted down with mastiffs. When found, if not torn apart on the spot, they were returned and a show-trial was held for them, and for the edification of other Indians who were made to stand and watch. The escapees were

brought before the *visitador* [Spanish inspector-magistrate] and the accuser, that is, the supposedly pious master, who accused them of being rebellious dogs and good-for-nothings and demanded stiff punishment. The *visitador* then had them tied to a post and he himself, with his own hands, as the most honorable man in town, took a sailor's tarred whip as tough as iron, the kind they use in galleys, and flogged them until blood ran from their naked bodies, mere skin and bones from starvation. Then, leaving them for dead, he stopped and threatened the same punishment if they tried it again.[57]

Occasionally, when slaves were so broken by illness, malnutrition, or exhaustion unto death that they became incapable of further labor output,

(12)

they were dismissed from the mines or the fields where they worked. Las Casas estimated that perhaps 10 percent of the Indian conscripts survived long enough for this to happen. However, he continued:

> When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to such work, the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs, and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless, giving them some cassava for the twenty- to eighty-league journey. They would go then, falling into the first stream and dying there in desperation; others would hold on longer, but very few ever made it home. I sometimes came upon dead bodies on my way, and upon others who were gasping and moaning in their death agony, repeating "Hungry, hungry."[58]

In the face of utter hopelessness, the Indians began simply surrendering their lives. Some committed suicide. Many refused to have children, recognizing that their offspring, even if they successfully endured the Spanish cruelties, would only become slaves themselves. And others, wrote Las Casas,

> saw that without any offence on their part they were despoiled of their kingdoms, their lands and liberties and of their lives, their wives, and homes. As they saw themselves each day perishing by the cruel and inhuman treatment of the Spaniards, crushed to the earth by the horses, cut in pieces by swords, eaten and torn by dogs, many buried alive and suffering all kinds of exquisite tortures . . . [they] decided to abandon themselves to their unhappy fate with no further struggles, placing themselves in the hands of their enemies that they might do with them as they liked.[59]

Other natives, in time, did find ways to become reunited with whatever remained of their families. But when most wives and husbands were brought back together,

> they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides that they had no mind for marital communication and in this way they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7,000 babies died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation, while others caused themselves to abort with certain herbs that produced stillborn children. In this way husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk, while others had not time or energy for procreation, and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile, though so unfortunate, was depopulated.[60]

By 1496, we already have noted, the population of Hispaniola had fallen from eight million to between four and five million. By 1508 it was down to less than a hundred thousand. By 1518 it numbered less than twenty thousand. And by 1535, say the leading scholars on this grim topic, "for all practical purposes, the native population was extinct."[61]

In less than the normal lifetime of a single human being, an entire culture of millions of people, thousands of years resident in their homeland, had been exterminated. The same fate befell the native peoples of the surrounding islands in the Caribbean as well. Of all the horrific genocides that have occurred in the twentieth century against Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, Ibos, Bengalis, Timorese, Kampucheans, Ugandans, and more, none has come close to destroying this many—or this great a proportion—of wholly innocent people.[62]

And then the Spanish turned their attention to the mainland of Mexico and Central America. The slaughter had barely begun. The exquisite city of Tenochtitlán was next.

III

Unlike most of the Caribbean peoples the Spanish encountered, the inhabitants of Mexico had a good deal of experience with warfare. To be sure, Aztec warriors were trained in highly individualistic fighting techniques, since the aim of battle was not to kill masses of the enemy, but rather to capture and bring back a single worthy opponent to be sacrificed at the following year's ceremonies of fertility.[63] Still, those fighting skills were formidable. And when combined with the Aztecs' enormous numerical advantage, they were more than a match for any invading army out of Europe. As the European interlopers' own accounts make clear, individual Indian warriors repeatedly showed themselves the equal, and more, of any among the Spanish militia. The story of one Aztec soldier who, in hand-to-hand combat, fought off a handful of Spanish horsemen—"when they could not bring him down, one of the Spaniards threw his lance at the Indian, who caught it and fought for another hour before being shot by two archers and then stabbed"—was but one among innumerable such reports from the conquistadors themselves.[64]

The Indians' battlefield experience, however, was the result of complex political rivalries that had existed in the region for centuries, rivalries the Spanish under Hernando Cortés were able to turn to their advantage. As one scholar of Aztec military strategy recently has emphasized, "while the Spanish conquest is now seen as a major watershed in the history of the New World," to the various competing Indian polities at the time "the Spanish were simply another group, albeit an alien one, seeking to gain political dominance in central Mexico." As such, although the first people the Spanish confronted, the Tlaxcaltecs, could easily have defeated the conquistadors, they saw in them instead potential confederates against their traditional adversaries.[65] It was thus with a formidable army of In-

APPENDIX II
On Racism and Genocide

In the preceding pages I have referred repeatedly to European and white American attitudes toward the native peoples of the Americas as "racist" and to the Euro-Americans' furious destruction of the native peoples of the Americas as "genocide." The definitions of both these terms have been subject to discussion in recent years. Some readers may have wished to see in the text reference to those discussions, but to do so would have necessitated lengthy digressions that other readers might have found more distracting than enlightening. Therefore, I have added as an appendix the following remarks.

There are various ways in which cultures can construct ideologies of degradation, and such ideologies can be, and are, attached to any number of characteristics that serve to socially transform a collection of individuals within a culture into a group—gender, nationality, age, sexual preference, social and economic class, religion, and much else, including race. It is race that is the issue here. And the question, as it has been posed (and answered in opposing ways) in recent years is this: Did those Europeans and early American white colonists treat Indians and Africans as they did at least in part because of a racist ideology that long had been in place—or was Euro-American racism in the Americas a later development, even a product of white *versus* Indian and white *versus* black conflict? In short, which came first, the carrying out of terrible and systematic damage to others or the ideology of degradation?

To some, understandably, this may seem an academic question, in the worst sense of that term. After all, to the American native woman having her breasts cut off by sadistically gleeful Spanish conquistadors, or watch-

ing her infant thrown to a pack of dogs—or to the native man about to be impaled on a sword of European manufacture, or watching his village and his family being burned to cinders by Puritans who boasted that "our Mouth [was] filled with Laughter, and our Tongues with Singing" while they attempted to exterminate an entire people from the earth—it no doubt mattered little whether the genocidal racism of their tormentors had preceded or followed from the first meetings of their societies.[1] If such questions concern us now, for reasons other than academic curiosity, they do so in order that we may better understand how such horrors could have been perpetrated and how—perhaps—they may be anticipated and avoided in the future. Moreover, like many other matters of ivory tower pedigree, this one carries with it an inner element of real world political contentiousness. This is why, for many years, addressing it has caused such scholarly disagreement. That the answer to this question matters can best be seen by reviewing the ways historians have approached the issue first as it pertains to African Americans and then to Indians.

Until well into the twentieth century most white American historians spent little time arguing over the chronological priority of racism or slavery in the historical mistreatment of Africans in America. This was so for a reason that by itself is revealing: it was not a subject that lent itself to disagreement because those historians' *own* low regard for blacks was so second nature to them that they simply assumed it to be a natural, justified, and nearly universal attitude, and one that thereby must have long predated the formal enslavement of Africans. And the formal enslavement of blacks in America, they assumed, certainly began immediately upon the involuntary arrival in the colonies of the first Africans in 1619.

Although there were some earlier historians who raised questions that had bearing on this matter, it was not until the 1950s that they began to propose, in numbers and with some vigor, the thesis that slavery had preceded racism in America.[2] Working within a social climate to which they could not have been immune, a climate that was registering a rising chorus of insistent claims by African Americans for equal access to the social and political benefits of American life, these historians contended that slavery emerged gradually as an institution, following the first arrivals of blacks in North America, and that racism emerged still later, in part as a *rationale* for the maintenance of what by then had become a racially defined slave society.[3] Although this was an argument not without some documentary support, it also was an argument suited to the politics of academic liberals who then were coming to agree with historian Kenneth Stampp that "innately Negroes *are*, after all, only white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less."[4]

From this political and ethical perspective—in the midst of a civil rights movement that was attempting to make such integrationist ideals conform with reality—the liberal historian's notion that racism was, in Winthrop

Jordan's words, "scarcely more than an appurtenance of slavery . . . . squared nicely with the hopes of those even more directly concerned with the problem of contemporary race relations. . . . For if prejudice was natural there would be little one could do to wipe it out. Prejudice must have followed enslavement, not vice versa, else any liberal program of action would be badly compromised."[5]

There was, of course, another benefit not mentioned by Jordan that was gained from such a reading of the historical record. The moral core of Western culture in general, and American culture in particular, appeared far more favorable in the light of an interpretation that found racism to be an aberration, rather than a constant, in Western history. Thus, not only did the slavery-begot-racism scenario encourage a more optimistic belief in the possibility of curtailing racism in the present, it also gave support to a relatively cheerful interpretation of the American and European cultural past.

Not everyone was convinced, however. In 1959 Carl N. Degler published an article, "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice," strongly arguing that slavery took root very early in American colonial society and that it did so in large part because of the white colonists' preexisting racist attitudes—attitudes visible, among other places, in Elizabethan literature, including Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus*, but also evident in the relative prices of black and white servants, discriminatory court decisions, and more.[6] The ensuing flurry of debate on the issue had a number of internal problems, not the least of which was a tendency to assume that the general attitudes and behaviors of the white colonists were very nearly monolithic. Thus, whenever one partisan found an exception to the other's body of data he or she was likely to hold it up as a refutation of the other's entire thesis. Some writers, for example, pointed to a 1640 law prohibiting blacks in Virginia from bearing arms, and cited this as evidence of racially based discrimination, while critics of this interpretation noted the presence in Virginia during this same time of a black former slave who had gained his freedom and purchased a slave himself, and they used this as evidence that blacks were *not* treated with special unfairness. Within a few years, however, Degler's general contention was given an able assist by Winthrop Jordan, first in an article of his own, then in 1968 with his massive and justly celebrated study, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812*.[7]

Examining materials ranging from biblical passages to sixteenth-century poetry, travelers' tales, and more, Jordan concluded in *White Over Black* that European antipathy for Africans had long pre-dated the enslavement of blacks in America, or for that matter, the arrival of Europeans to the Western Hemisphere. "From the first," he wrote, "Englishmen tended to set Negroes over against themselves, to stress what they conceived to be radically contrasting qualities of color, religion, and style of life, as well as

animality and a peculiarly potent sexuality."[8] In short, virtually all the elements that would go into the full blown eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideology of anti-black racism were present in European thought long before the arrival of the first blacks in Virginia in 1619.

But although racial antipathy preceded enslavement, Jordan cautioned against too simplistic a cause-and-effect model. A predisposition to invidious racial distinctions was not in itself sufficient to explain the wholesale enslavement and the horrendously systematic degradation of Africans that emerged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North America. Rather, Jordan suggested that "both slavery and prejudice [were] species of a general debasement of the Negro," each of them—once they were joined—"constantly reacting upon each other" in a dynamic "cycle of degradation" that created a unique "engine of oppression."[9] (It will be recalled that I quoted these phrases in my text and adopted the same ideological-institutional dynamic in pursuit of an explanation for genocide against the Americas' native peoples.)

In this conclusion Jordan actually was delivering heavily documented support to an insight first expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville more than a century earlier. Since the age of the ancients, Tocqueville had said, a scornful attitude toward the enslaved had followed upon their enforced servitude, a scornful attitude that remained for a time after the abolition of slavery, but one that eventually dissipated. However, in America, he wrote, "the insubstantial and ephemeral fact of servitude is most fatally combined with the physical and permanent fact of difference in race. Memories of slavery disgrace the race, and race perpetuates memories of slavery." Added to this, Tocqueville noted, was the fact that for whites in general, including himself:

> This man born in degradation, this stranger brought by slavery into our midst, is hardly recognized as sharing the common features of humanity. His face appears to us hideous, his intelligence limited, and his tastes low; we almost take him for some being intermediate between beast and man. . . . To induce the whites to abandon the opinion they have conceived of the intellectual and moral inferiority of their former slaves, the Negroes must change, but they cannot change so long as this opinion persists.[10]

In sum, as Jordan later picked up the argument, while the roots of a racist antipathy among whites toward blacks did indeed clearly precede the rise of the institution of slavery in America, this is a less important independent phenomenon than some may have thought, since once the attitude and the institution became fused—and they did so at a very early date—they reinforced one another, strengthening and deepening the white commitment to both of them. The idea of racism as deeply imbedded in Western consciousness was still a very troubling notion to many, however,

and resistance to it remained strong among historians, despite Jordan's rich documentation and subtlety of analysis. The form this resistance subsequently would take was established by George M. Fredrickson in a highly influential article that appeared only three years after *White Over Black* was published.

It is necessary, Fredrickson contended, to distinguish between what he called "ideological" racism and "societal" racism. Ideological racism is "the *explicit* and *rationalized* racism that can be discerned in nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought and ideology" while societal racism can be observed in "one racial group [acting] *as if* another were inherently inferior . . . despite the fact that such a group may not have developed or preserved a conscious and consistent rationale for its behavior." This "dual definition of racism," Fredrickson claimed, made it possible to identify the differences between "genuinely racist societies and other inegalitarian societies where there may be manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination but which nevertheless cannot be described as racist in their basic character." In a given society, according to this logic, as long as some reason *other than race* can be found to justify and rationalize the degradation—and, presumably, even the enslavement and mass murder—of people who are of a different race from that of their oppressors, that society "is not racist in the full sense of the word," Fredrickson claimed. Moreover,

> if the discrimination for reasons of color is not *consistently and universally* applied to individual members of what is, in a statistical sense, the socially inferior group [and] if some members of this group can, despite their physical characteristics, achieve high status because of such attributes as wealth, education, and aristocratic culture, there is evidence of the overriding importance of *nonracial* status criteria. In such a situation, race becomes only one factor in determining status, an attribute which can be outweighed or neutralized by other factors.[11]

By joining this definitional statement with the same sort of historical data produced by those historians who, twenty years earlier, had argued that American racism was essentially a product of slavery—for example, that along with slaves there were free blacks in seventeenth-century Virginia, some of whom enjoyed legal and economic rights—Fredrickson concluded that "America . . . was not born racist; it became so gradually as the result of a series of crimes against black humanity that stemmed primarily from selfishness, greed and the pursuit of privilege."[12] This judgment served to undergird Fredrickson's subsequent work and clearly influenced most of the other prominent discussions of the subject that would appear in the later 1970s and 1980s.[13]

There are, however, some problems with Fredrickson's analysis. The

(16)

first of these is his use of the word "ideological" when "biological" would have been more precise in describing the nature of the formal structures of racist thought that emerged in the nineteenth century. Prior to the rise of the biological and zoological pseudosciences that served as the underpinnings for what Fredrickson calls "ideological" racism, and after the decline of those pseudosciences in the twentieth century, there existed and continues to exist in America a widespread, systematic, and ideologically justified degradation of entire categories of people who are readily identifiable by characteristics that commonly are associated with race.[14] The fact that in pre-pseudoscience days the categorical justifications drew heavily (though, as we saw in the text, not exclusively) on religious and philosophical structures of thought, while in post-pseudoscience days most justifications tend to draw on historical and environmental principles—such as the "culture of poverty" or the black American family's alleged "tangle of pathology"—does not make these systems of discrimination any less "ideological" (or any less racist) than those biological fictions that dominated racist thinking in the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth. Biology certainly can become ideological—but ideology is not necessarily based on biology.

As for the idea that racism proper did not and could not emerge until the rise of an "explicit and rationalized" pseudoscientific ideology regarding the term "race" itself, as Richard Drinnon has remarked, this "is roughly equivalent to saying—though the parallel is more benign—that the practice of birth control waited upon Margaret Sanger to coin the term."[15] In addition, since traditional pseudoscientific racism is no longer in vogue—and, indeed, since the very idea of "race" has long been scientifically discredited as a valid way of categorizing humans—by Fredrickson's definition, racism "in the full sense of the word" does not and can not exist today.[16] That will be news to its victims.

If these difficulties with Fredrickson's (and many other recent historians') definition of racism necessarily result in the dubious conclusion that, to use Fredrickson's terms, "genuine" or "explicit" racism was a momentary aberration in human history, arising in the early nineteenth century and dying out around the middle of the twentieth century, an additional problem with his definition is that one logical consequence of it leads to the remarkable discovery that true racism has, in fact, *never* existed, at least in America. For Fredrickson and most other historians writing on the topic continue to assert that for racism proper to exist—to quote again the passage in Fredrickson cited above—it must be "*universally* applied to individual members of what is, in a statistical sense, the socially inferior group." Should any exceptions to such categorical "discrimination for reasons of color" exist in an otherwise seemingly racist time and place, the exceptions serve as "evidence of the overriding importance of nonracial

status criteria" and as sufficient documentation to establish that such a society cannot correctly be labeled racist.

It is by appealing to this definition that Fredrickson and others continue to assert that the existence of free blacks in seventeenth-century Virginia—and particularly of someone like Anthony Johnson, who arrived in Virginia as a slave from Africa and somehow became a freeman, a land owner, and the owner of a slave—proves that seventeenth-century Virginia was not a racist society, that racism only emerged in later years.[17] Again, not only can this criterion be used to argue that racism is not a serious and tenacious problem today (since some blacks and other people of color, in theory at least, may escape its tentacles), but in addition it speciously serves to establish that even the deep South in the middle of the nineteenth century was not ideologically or "explicitly" racist. For if Anthony Johnson, with his small plot of land and single slave is a sufficient example to show that seventeenth century Virginia was not racist, what are we to make of William Ellison, a black former slave who lived in South Carolina from the 1790s until the outbreak of the Civil War, acquiring in that time a 900-acre plantation, more than sixty slaves, and more wealth than 95 percent of the South's white men? And at least half a dozen other southern blacks at this time—among the more than 3600 African Americans who then possessed over 12,000 slaves—were wealthier and owned more slaves than Ellison.[18]

If ever a region in America could properly be described as racist, it was the deep South in the decades immediately preceding the Civil War. Thus, we are left with a choice between one of two conclusions: either the existence of Ellison and other wealthy, slave-owning southern blacks at this time proves that the deep South was not then a truly racist society, in which case, no locale in America, at any time, can ever have been categorically and "explicitly" racist; or the criteria used by Fredrickson and others are inappropriate and ineffective for use in locating and defining a racist society. It should not be necessary to point out that only the latter choice makes any sense at all.

It might also be noted that the same criteria used to demonstrate that the seventeenth-century slave-holding colonies were not "genuinely" racist can be used with equal veracity (which is to say none) to show that the German Nazi Party in the 1930s was not "genuinely" anti-Semitic, since a large proportion of its membership, when surveyed, expressed no anti-Semitic attitudes.[19] None of this should be taken to mean, however, that a formalized and widely believed pseudoscientific theory of racial inequality is not *different* from lower-level and more diffuse racist thinking. They are different, but they both are thoroughly racist.

There is a certain paradoxical quality to the fact that while the rest of informed society has come to recognize the existence of subtler and more

(17)

complex forms of racism—such as "institutional" racism (or Joel Kovel's more psychologically grounded "metaracism") as forms of oppression that clearly are racist but do not depend for their existence on an openly articulated and formal racial theory—many of the historians who have in recent years devoted their professional lives to studying the phenomenon have seemed determined to define racism almost out of existence.[20] Indeed, confusion on racism as a historical phenomenon has grown to the point that Jane Tompkins, the author of an article in a journal of avant-garde scholarly repute, has gone so far as to make the fanciful assertion—directly *contra* Fredrickson, but equally illogical—that racism could not have existed in early American colonial society because white people at that time were *unanimous* in their racist opinions! In short, according to Tompkins (who, like Fredrickson, is not alone in her conviction), unanimity of opinion is indication of a cultural norm, of people simply "look[ing] at other cultures in the way their own culture had taught them to see one another."[21] Thus, on the one hand we have Fredrickson arguing that only if *every* member of an oppressed racial group in a society is oppressed for explicitly racial reasons can that society be characterized as racist—and on the other hand there is Tompkins contending that if there is unanimity of racist opinion among the oppressor group in a society, that society, by definition, is *non*-racist.

This is the sort of thing that gives professors a bad name. And, although thus far we have been looking largely at writings on early white American attitudes toward African Americans (the exception is Tompkins), the very same lines of argument have been and continue to be played out regarding sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Euro-American attitudes toward Indians. During the 1960s it had been customary for scholars, such as Alden T. Vaughan, who were studying Indian-white conflict in the American colonies, to assert that even during the ferocious extermination campaigns of the English against the native peoples of Virginia as well as against the Pequots and Narragansetts and Wampanoags of New England, the behavior of the British was not "determined by any fundamental distinction of race," nor by "deep-seated bias" of any kind.[22] In *White Over Black*, Jordan inadvertently had provided further fuel for this argument by comparing blatant assertions of racial antipathy of the English for Africans with what he viewed as their more benign attitude toward Indian racial characteristics. His perspective was then used to underpin uninformed claims by later historians that whites did not harbor racist attitudes toward Indians even centuries after their first proudly proclaimed attempts to exterminate them.[23]

In their denial of racial motivation as part of the driving force behind the colonists' efforts to eradicate the Indians, most of these historians' writings also were unblushing apologies for the genocide that had taken place. Thus, Vaughan, for example, dismissed mass murder as "some mis-

understandings and injustices [that] occurred" while the British were only trying "to convert, civilize, and educate [the Indian] as quickly as possible."[24] During the 1970s and early 1980s, however, a series of books by historians taking a second look at these matters reached very different conclusions. Wilbur R. Jacobs, Francis Jennings, Richard Drinnon, and Neal Salisbury were only four among many during this time who rang down the curtain on the view that the colonists in their dealings with the Indians were kind and gentle souls.[25] Following their work, there remained little doubt that the colonists were driven by a racist zeal to eliminate the Indians—at least once the major colonist-Indian wars had gotten under way. But remaining to be addressed was the same question that had for so long entangled historians studying white minds and black slavery: Did the adventurers and colonists bring *with* them racist attitudes that predisposed them to such inhumane treatment of people of color, or did those attitudes emerge *after* and derive from their experience with the people they later enslaved and destroyed?

It should be clear from the discussion in Chapter Six of this book that Spanish, English, and other European attitudes toward the native peoples of the Americas were virulently racist long before the settlement of the first British colony in North America. Although European mistreatment of people because of a perception of them as racially different is a very ancient practice, a dramatic shift to a rigid European attitude toward race in general was becoming evident in the fourteenth century with the Church's authorization of the enslavement of Christians if their ancestry was non-European, and it escalated from that point forward with an able assist from the Spanish doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* and the other sixteenth-century European pseudobiological and religious rationales discussed earlier. It is impossible to read the voluminous Spanish justifications for the enslavement and mass murder of the Americas' native peoples—as well as the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century statements of the British on the same subjects—without recognizing their deeply racist content. Impossible, that is, unless you carefully define racism so narrowly that it is certain not to be found.

And that is what has begun to happen in recent years. Race, of course, is a social construct that different societies create in different ways, drawing on supposedly "natural" characteristics in people that are held to be congenital; racism is the ideological use of such a construct to subordinate and dominate another group. Nevertheless, in scholarly imitation of the man who searches for his lost keys under a lamp post because the light is better there—even though he knows he dropped his keys a block away—Alden T. Vaughan has now invented the idea that racism cannot exist in the absence of negative statements about another group's *skin color*. Not surprisingly, in the light cast by this particular lamp post, he has found little explicit Anglo-American disparagement of Indians' skin color in the

(18)

early years of settlement—those years when Indian men, women, and children were being butchered, burned alive, enslaved, poisoned en masse, and referred to as "wild beasts," "brutish savages," and "viperous broods"—and so, according to Vaughan's *ad hoc* definition, the British did not then think of the Indians they were systematically liquidating as "inherently inferior."[26]

As with Fredrickson's impossibly narrow definition of racism, so with Vaughan it needs to be pointed out that neither skin color distinctions nor pseudoscientific ideas of biological determinism are *necessary* criteria for the categorization and degradation of people under the rubric of "race." Even a glance at the standard etymologies of the word ("the outward race and stocke of Abraham"; "to be the Race of Satan"; "the British race"; "that Pygmean Race"—to cite some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples) clearly shows that the term "race" was in widespread use in Britain to denote groups of people and classes of things marked by characteristics *other* than color well before it was used exclusively in that way, and centuries before it had grafted upon it the elaborate apparatus of biological and zoological pseudoscience. Indeed, a sense of "racial" superiority—sometimes having to do with color and sometimes not—had been imbedded in English consciousness at least since the appearance in the twelfth century of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain,* the great elaboration of the Arthurian legend.[27]

It is true, as noted several times in Chapter Six of this book, that racist thought and behavior by whites toward Indians intensified during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but after the first few decades of the sixteenth century—at the very latest—the escalation of racism was a change in degree, not type (as Vaughan claims), of prejudice and oppression. In sum, there is little doubt that the dominant sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ecclesiastical, literary, and popular opinion in Spain and Britain and Europe's American colonies regarding the native peoples of North and South America was that they were a racially degraded and inferior lot—borderline humans as far as most whites were concerned. Although there was, even at that early date, beginning to emerge in Europe various detailed theories of racist pseudoscience, anyone who has ever been on the receiving end of racist aggression knows that such endeavors do not require of their perpetrators the presence of formal scientific or other doctrine; as W.E.B. DuBois once observed: "the chief fact [in my life] has been race—not so much scientific race, as that deep conviction of myriads of men that congenital differences among the main masses of human beings absolutely condition the individual destiny of every member of a group."[28] Most people of color today, as well as for centuries past, would have understood what DuBois was saying—even if some modern white historians apparently do not.

. . .

The definition of genocide, though also a subject of debate for many years, will take much less time to discuss. That is because most of the controversy over the term—such as whether victims of mass murder whose only common denominator is political belief are truly victims of genocide—is not relevant to the subject of this book. All that is relevant is whether the Spanish and Anglo-American destruction of the culturally and ethnically and racially defined peoples of the Americas constituted genocide.

The term "genocide" was coined by Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,* published in 1944. Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn summarize Lemkin's pioneering thinking:

> Under Lemkin's definition, genocide was the coordinated and planned annihilation of a national, religious, or racial group by a variety of actions aimed at undermining the foundations essential to the survival of the group as a group. Lemkin conceived of genocide as "a composite of different acts of persecution or destruction." His definition included attacks on political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of the group. Even nonlethal acts that undermined the liberty, dignity, and personal security of members of a group constituted genocide if they contributed to weakening the viability of the group. Under Lemkin's definition, acts of ethnocide—a term coined by the French after the war to cover the destruction of a culture without the killing of its bearers—also qualified as genocide.[29]

Two years after the publication of Lemkin's book—and thanks to his constant lobbying efforts—the United Nations General Assembly passed the following resolution:

> Genocide is the denial of the right of existence to entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings; such denial of the right of existence shocks the conscience of mankind, results in great losses to humanity in the form of cultural and other contributions represented by these groups, and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations. Many instances of such crimes of genocide have occurred, when racial, religious, political and other groups have been destroyed, entirely or in part. The punishment of the crime of genocide is a matter of international concern. The General Assembly Therefore, Affirms that genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices—whether private individuals, public officials or statesmen, and whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or any other grounds—are punishable.

Finally, in 1948, the Genocide Convention of the United Nations was adopted unanimously and without abstentions:

3

Chap 3. Pestilence and genocide

(19) Europe during the era of Columbus

THE SPAIN THAT Christopher Columbus and his crews left behind just before dawn on August 3, 1492, as they sailed forth from Palos and out into the Atlantic, was for most of its people a land of violence, squalor, treachery, and intolerance. In this respect Spain was no different from the rest of Europe.

Epidemic outbreaks of plague and smallpox, along with routine attacks of measles, influenza, diphtheria, typhus, typhoid fever, and more, frequently swept European cities and towns clean of 10 to 20 percent of their populations at a single stroke. As late as the mid-seventeenth century more than 80,000 Londoners—one out of every six residents in the city—died from plague in a matter of months. And again and again, as with its companion diseases, the pestilence they called the Black Death returned. Like most of the other urban centers in Europe, says one historian who has specialized in the subject, "every twenty-five or thirty years—sometimes more frequently—the city was convulsed by a great epidemic."[1] Indeed, for centuries an individual's life chances in Europe's pesthouse cities were so poor that the natural populations of the towns were in perpetual decline that was offset only by in-migration from the countryside—in-migration, says one historian, that was "vital if [the cities] were to be preserved from extinction."[2]

Famine, too, was common. What J. H. Elliott has said of sixteenth-century Spain had held true throughout the Continent for generations beyond memory: "The rich ate, and ate to excess, watched by a thousand hungry eyes as they consumed their gargantuan meals. The rest of the population starved."[3] This was in normal times. The slightest fluctuation in food prices could cause the sudden deaths of additional tens of thou-

sands who lived on the margins of perpetual hunger. So precarious was the existence of these multitudes in France that as late as the seventeenth century each "average" increase in the price of wheat or millet directly killed a proportion of the French population equal to nearly twice the percentage of Americans who died in the Civil War.[4]

That was the seventeenth century, when times were getting better. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries prices fluctuated constantly, leading people to complain as a Spanish agriculturalist did in 1513 that "today a pound of mutton costs as much as a whole sheep used to, a loaf as much as a *fanega* [a bushel and a half] of wheat, a pound of wax or oil as much as an *arroba* [25 Spanish pounds]."[5] The result of this, as one French historian has observed, was that "the epidemic that raged in Paris in 1482 fits the classic pattern: famine in the countryside, flight of the poor to the city in search of help, then outbreak of disease in the city following upon the malnutrition."[6] And in Spain the threat of famine in the countryside was especially omnipresent. Areas such as Castile and Andalusia were wracked with harvest failures that brought on mass death repeatedly during the fifteenth century.[7] But since both causes of death, disease and famine, were so common throughout Europe, many surviving records did not bother (or were unable) to make distinctions between them. Consequently, even today historians find it difficult or impossible to distinguish between those of the citizenry who died of disease and those who merely starved to death.[8]

Roadside ditches, filled with stagnant water, served as public latrines in the cities of the fifteenth century, and they would continue to do so for centuries to follow. So too would other noxious habits and public health hazards of the time persist on into the future—from the practice of leaving the decomposing offal of butchered animals to fester in the streets, to London's "special problem," as historian Lawrence Stone puts it, of "poor's holes." These were "large, deep, open pits in which were laid the bodies of the poor, side by side, row upon row. Only when the pit was filled with bodies was it finally covered over with earth." As one contemporary, quoted by Stone, delicately observed: "How noisome the stench is that arises from these holes so stowed with dead bodies, especially in sultry seasons and after rain."[9]

Along with the stench and repulsive appearance of the openly displayed dead, human and animal alike, a modern visitor to a European city in this era would be repelled by the appearance and the vile aromas given off by the living as well. Most people never bathed, not once in an entire lifetime. Almost everyone had his or her brush with smallpox and other deforming diseases that left survivors partially blinded, pock-marked, or crippled, while it was the norm for men and women to have "bad breath from the rotting teeth and constant stomach disorders which can be documented from many sources, while suppurating ulcers, eczema, scabs, running sores and other nauseating skin diseases were extremely common, and often lasted for years."[10]

Street crime in most cities lurked around every corner. One especially popular technique for robbing someone was to drop a heavy rock or chunk of masonry on his head from an upper-story window and then to rifle the body for jewelry and money. This was a time, observes Norbert Elias, when "it was one of the festive pleasures of Midsummer Day to burn alive one or two dozen cats," and when, as Johan Huizinga once put it, "the continuous disruption of town and country by every kind of dangerous rabble [and] the permanent threat of harsh and unreliable law enforcement . . . nourished a feeling of universal uncertainty."[11] With neither culturally developed systems of social obligation and restraint in place, nor effective police forces in their stead, the cities of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were little more than chaotic population agglomerates with entire sections serving as the residential turf of thieves and brigands, and where the wealthy were forced to hire torch-bearing bodyguards to accompany them out at night. In times of famine, cities and towns became the setting for food riots. And the largest riot of all, of course—though the word hardly does it justice—was the Peasants' War, which broke out in 1524 following a series of local revolts that had been occurring repeatedly since the previous century. The Peasants' War killed over 100,000 people.

As for rural life in calmer moments, Jean de La Bruyère's seventeenth-century description of human existence in the French countryside gives an apt summary of what historians for the past several decades have been uncovering in their research on rustic communities in Europe at large during the entire late medieval to early modern epoch: "sullen animals, male and female [are] scattered over the country, dark, livid, scorched by the sun, attached to the earth they dig up and turn over with invincible persistence; they have a kind of articulate speech, and when they rise to their feet, they show a human face, and, indeed, they are men. At night they retire to dens where they live on black bread, water, and roots."[12]

To be sure, La Bruyère was a satirist and although, in the manner of all caricaturists, his portrait contains key elements of truth, it also is cruel in what it omits. And what it omits is the fact that these wretchedly poor country folk, for all their life-threatening deprivations, were not "sullen animals." They were, in fact, people quite capable of experiencing the same feelings of tenderness and love and fear and sadness, however constricted by the limitations of their existence, as did, and do, all human beings in every corner of the globe.

But what Lawrence Stone has said about the typical English village also was likely true throughout Europe at this time—that is, that because of the dismal social conditions and prevailing social values, it "was a place filled with malice and hatred, its only unifying bond being the occasional

episode of mass hysteria, which temporarily bound together the majority in order to harry and persecute the local witch." Indeed, as in England, there were towns on the Continent where as many as a third of the population were accused of witchcraft and where ten out of every hundred people were executed for it in a single year. In one small, remote locale within reputedly peaceful Switzerland, more than 3300 people were killed in the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century for allegedly Satanic activities. The tiny village of Wiesensteig saw sixty-three women burned to death in one year alone, while in Obermarchtal fifty-four people—out of a total population of barely 700—died at the stake during a three-year period. Thus, while it is true that the Europeans of those days possessed the same range of emotions that we do, as Stone puts it, "it is noticeable that hate seems to have been more prominent an emotion than love."[13]

At the time La Bruyère was writing (which was a good bit later than the time of Columbus, during which time conditions had improved), the French "knew every nuance of poverty," says one modern historian, and they had a battery of formal terms to describe precise levels of indigence: *pauvre, le vrai pauvre, le mauvais pauvre, pauvre valide ou invalide, pauvre honteux, indigent, misérable, nécessiteux, mendiant de profession, mendiant de bonne foi, mendiant volontaire, mendiant sédentaire,* and more. At the top were those who "at best lived at subsistence level, at worst fell far below," while at the bottom were those described as *dans un état d'indigence absolue,* meaning that "one had no food or adequate clothing or proper shelter, that one had parted with the few battered cooking-pots and blankets which often constituted the main assets of a working-class family."[14] Across the whole of France, between a third and half the population fell under one of these categories of destitution, and in regions such as Brittany, western Normandy, Poitou, and the Massif the proportion ascended upwards of two-thirds. In rural areas in general, between half and 90 percent of the population did not have land sufficient for their support, forcing them to migrate out, fall into permanent debt, or die.[15]

And France was hardly unique. In Genoa, writes historian Fernand Braudel, "the homeless poor sold themselves as galley slaves every winter." They were fortunate to have that option. In more northern climes, during winter months, the indigent simply froze to death. The summer, on the other hand, was when the plague made its cyclical visitations. That is why, in summer months, the wealthy left the cities to the poor: as Braudel points out elsewhere, Rome along with other towns "was a graveyard of fever" during times of warmer weather.[16]

Throughout Europe, about half the children born during this time died before reaching the age of ten. Among the poorer classes—and in Spain particularly, which had an infant mortality rate almost 40 percent higher even than England's—things were much worse.[17] In addition to exposure, disease, and malnutrition, one of the causes for such a high infant mortality rate (close to three out of ten babies in Spain did not live to see their first birthdays) was abandonment. Thousands upon thousands of children who could not be cared for were simply left to die on dungheaps or in roadside ditches.[18] Others were sold into slavery.

East European children, particularly Romanians, seem to have been favorites of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century slave trade, although many thousands of adults were enslaved as well. Child slaves, however, were as expensive as adults, for reasons best left to the imagination, as is indicated by a fourteenth-century letter from a man involved in the business: "We are informed about the little slave girl you say you personally need," he wrote to his prospective client, "and about her features and age, and for what you want her. . . . Whenever ships come from Romania, they should carry some [slave girls]; but keep in mind that little slave girls are as expensive as the grown ones, and there will be none that does not cost 50 to 60 florins if we want one of any value."[19] Those purchasing female slaves of child-bearing age sometimes were particularly lucky and received a free bonus of a baby on the way. As historian John Boswell has reported: "Ten to twenty percent of the female slaves sold in Seville in the fifteenth century were pregnant or breast-feeding, and their infants were usually included with them at no extra cost."[20]

The wealthy had their problems too. They hungered after gold and silver. The Crusades, begun four centuries earlier, had increased the appetites of affluent Europeans for exotic foreign luxuries—for silks and spices, fine cotton, drugs, perfumes, and jewelry—material pleasures that required pay in bullion. Thus, gold had become for Europeans, in the words of one Venetian commentator of the time, "the sinews of all government . . . its mind, soul . . . its essence and its very life." The supply of the precious metal, by way of the Middle East and Africa, had always been uncertain. Now, however, the wars in eastern Europe had nearly emptied the Continent's coffers. A new supply, a more regular supply—and preferably a cheaper supply—was needed.[21]

Violence, of course, was everywhere, as alluded to above; but occasionally it took on an especially perverse character. In addition to the hunting down and burning of witches, which was an everyday affair in most locales, in Milan in 1476 a man was torn to pieces by an enraged mob and his dismembered limbs were then eaten by his tormenters. In Paris and Lyon, Huguenots were killed and butchered, and their various body parts were sold openly in the streets. Other eruptions of bizarre torture, murder, and ritual cannibalism were not uncommon.[22]

Such behavior, nonetheless, was not officially condoned, at least not usually. Indeed, wild and untrue accusations of such activities formed the basis for many of the witch hunts and religious persecutions—particularly of Jews—during this time.[23] In precisely those years when Columbus was trekking around Europe in search of support for his maritime adventures,

the Inquisition was raging in Spain. Here, and elsewhere in Europe, those out of favor with the powerful—particularly those who were believed to be un-Christian—were tortured and killed in the most ingenious of fashions: on the gallows, at the stake, on the rack—while others were crushed, beheaded, flayed alive, or drawn and quartered.

On the very day that Columbus finally set forth on his journey that would shake the world, the port of the city he sailed from was filled with ships that were deporting Jews from Spain. By the time the expulsion was complete between 120,000 and 150,000 Jews had been driven from their homes (their valuables, often meager, having first been confiscated) and then they were cast out to sea. As one contemporary described the scene:

> It was pitiful to see their sufferings. Many were consumed by hunger, especially nursing mothers and their babies. Half-dead mothers held dying children in their arms. . . . I can hardly say how cruelly and greedily they were treated by those who transported them. Many were drowned by the avarice of the sailors, and those who were unable to pay their passage sold their children.[24]

This was the world an ex-trader of African slaves named Christopher Columbus and his shipmates left behind as they sailed from the city of Palos in August of 1492. It was a world wracked by disease—disease that killed in massive numbers, but, importantly, that also tended to immunize survivors. A world in which all but the wealthy often could not feed themselves, and in which the wealthy themselves hungered after gold.[25] It was a world, as well, of cruel violence and certainty of holy truth. Little wonder, then, that the first report back from that Atlantic voyage, purportedly to the Orient, caused such sensations across the length and breadth of Europe.

In a letter composed aboard the *Niña,* as the returning ships passed through the Azores, Columbus described his discovery, during the previous fall and winter, of what he thought was the Indian Sea and its "many islands filled with people without number." One of the first major islands, which he called Juana, known to us today as Cuba, "was so long that I thought it must be the mainland, the province of [Cathay]." Another large island—the one we now know as Hispaniola, containing the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic—he called La Española. Columbus had reason to be impressed with the size of these two islands, since together they were two-thirds as large as his home country of Italy.

The Admiral continued his description of the wonders he had seen, in a passage that must be quoted at length if we are to achieve even a small understanding of the impact his voyage almost immediately had on the people of Europe, living under the wretched conditions of their time and just coming out of another cold and miserable winter:

> As Juana, so all the other [islands] are very fertile to an excessive degree, and this one especially. In it there are many harbors on the sea coast, beyond comparison with others which I know in Christendom, and numerous rivers, good and large, which is marvelous. Its lands are lofty and in it there are many sierras and very high mountains, to which the island Tenerife is not comparable. All are most beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all accessible, and filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky; and I am told that they never lose their foliage, which I can believe, for I saw them as green and beautiful as they are in Spain in May, and some of them were flowering, some with fruit . . . . And there were singing the nightingale and other little birds of a thousand kinds in the month of November, there where I went. There are palm trees of six or eight kinds, which are a wonder to behold because of their beautiful variety, and so are the other trees and fruits and plants; therein are marvelous pine groves, and extensive meadow country; and there is honey, and there are many kinds of birds and a great variety of fruits. Upcountry there are many mines of metals, and the population is innumerable. *La Española* is marvelous, the sierras and the mountains and the plains and the meadows and the lands are so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, and for livestock of every sort, and for building towns and villages. The harbors of the sea here are such as you could not believe it without seeing them; and so the rivers, many and great, and good streams, the most of which bear gold.[26]

If it sounded like Paradise, that was no accident. Paradise filled with gold. And when he came to describe the people he had met, Columbus's Edenic imagery never faltered:

> The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and seen, or have not seen, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, except that some women cover one place only with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for that purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they capable of using them, although they are well-built people of handsome stature, because they are wondrous timid. . . . [T]hey are so artless and free with all they possess, that no one would believe it without having seen it. Of anything they have, if you ask them for it, they never say no; rather they invite the person to share it, and show as much love as if they were giving their hearts; and whether the thing be of value or of small price, at once they are content with whatever little thing of whatever kind may be given to them.[27]

For years to come Columbus repeatedly would insist that his expeditions and adventures in the New World had nothing to do with "mere reason, mathematics, and maps," as two scholars of the subject put it, but rather that "his 'execution of the affair of the Indies' was a fulfillment of prophecies in Isaiah."[28] In addition to helping explain, if taken seriously, why Columbus in many respects was a less successful navigator and helmsman than is commonly supposed (once into the Caribbean he rarely seemed

The assumption that civilization cannot exist at the equator is contradicted by continuous tradition.
And God knows better!
Ibn Khaldun, ***The Muqaddimah***, trans. F. Rosenthal, 3 vols. (Princeton, 1967), vol.I, p.71.

"Africans are civilized to the marrow of their bones!
The idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention."
(Leo Frobenius, German Africanist)

THE REAL NEGRO MYTHOLOGY

(...) those who expect to see in their fellow men fools, blockheads or devils, will find evidence to confirm their prejudices. If we are convinced the other fellow cannot sing, we have only to call his song "a hellish row" in order to justify our claim. Simply by applying a certain vocabulary one can easily turn Gods into idols, faces into grimaces, votive images into fetishes, discussions into palavers and distort real objects and matters of fact through bigotry and prejudice. Prejudice has created types in the mind of the public. Only the most highly cultivated person, humane, cosmopolitan, enlightened, progressive, counts as a "real European." A "real African," on the other hand, lives in the bush, carves "primitive" scriptures, can neither read nor write, goes naked, lives carefree and happy from day to day and tells fairy stories about the crocodile and the elephant. The more "primitive," the more "really African." But an African who is enlightened and cosmopolitan, who presides in the most cultivated fashion over congresses, who makes political speeches or write novels, no longer counts as a "real" African.

Jahn, Janheinz, Muntu: African culture and the Western World
(New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), p.20

Malcolm X's Perspective on "the Invention of Africa" and epistemic violence

"Now what effect does the struggle in Africa have on us? Why should the Black man in America concern himself since he's been away from the African continent for three or four hundred years? Why should we concern ourselves? What impact does what happens to them have upon us? Number one, you have to realize that up until 1959 Africa was dominated by the colonial powers. Having complete control over Africa, the colonial powers of Europe projected the image of Africa negatively. They always projected Africa in a negative light: jungle savages, cannibals, nothing civilized. it was so negative that it was negative to you and me, and you and I began to hate it. We didn't want anybody telling us anything about Africa, much less calling us Africans, we ended up hating ourselves, without even realizing it. Because you can't hate the roots of a tree and not hate the tree. You can't hate your origin and not end up hating yourself. You can't hate Africa and not hate yourself.

(Malcolm X, February 1965: The final Speeches. New York; Pathfinder, 1992. p.93)

Basil Davidson and the decolonization of Knowledge

"Old views (views of Victorian evolutionists) about Africa are worth recalling because, though vanished from serious discussion, they still retain a kind of underground existence. The stercoraceous sediment of Burton's opinions, and of others such as Burton, has settled like a layer of dust and ashes on the minds of large numbers of otherwise thoughtful people, and is constantly being swirled about. What this leads to, despite all factual evidence to the contrary, are endless suspicions that writers such as Lothrop Stoddard were or are just possibly right when they wrote or write about the 'natural and inherent inferiority' of Africans; that 'in the Negro, we are in the presence of a being differing profoundly not merely from the white man but also from (other) human types'; or that 'the Negro... has contributed virtually nothing' to the civilization of the world. However scientifically mistaken, these notions apparently remain part of our culture. Often it is the aggressive violence of such opinions that most surprises."

(Basil Davidson, *The African Genius*.. Boston: Little, Brown and Company,1969); p.25.

"The Negro, many have believed, is a man without a past. Black Africa-Africa south of the Sahara desert-is on this view a continent where men by their own efforts have never raised themselves much above the level of the beasts. "No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences," commented David Hume. "No approach to the civilization of his white fellow creatures who he imitates as a monkey does a man," added Trollope...Africans, on this view, had never evolved civilization of their own; if they possessed a history, it could be scarcely worth the telling. And this belief that Africans had lived in universal chaos or stagnation until the coming of Europeans seemed not only to find its justification in a thousand tales of savage misery and benigned ignorance; it was also, of course, exceedingly convenient in high imperial times. For it could be argued (and it was; indeed, it still is) that these peoples, history-less, were naturally inferior or else they were 'children who had still to grow up'; in either case they were manifestly in need of government by others who had grown up."

Davidson, Basil, *The Lost Cities of Africa*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959); p.ix.

Colonialism, Racism and the distortion of African History

"When our Grand children reflect on the middle and later years of the twentieth century, above all on the years lying between about 1950 and 1980, and think about us writers of African history, of the history of the black peoples, I think that they will see us as emerging from a time of ignorance and misunderstanding. For these were the liberating years when accounts began at last to be squared with the malice and mystification of racism. And by racism I do not mean, of course, that phalanx of old superstitions, fears and fantasies associated with ancient white ideas about blackness, or not less ancient black ideas about whiteness, the ideas of an old world in which distance always induced distortion. By racism I mean the conscious and systematic weapon of domination, of exploitation (...) , which first saw its demonic rise with the onset of the trans-Atlantic trade in African captives sold into slavery, and which, later, led on to the imperialist colonialism of our yesterdays. This racism was not a "mistake," a "misunderstanding" or a "grievous deviation from the proper norms of behavior." It was not an accident of human error. It was not an unthinking reversion to barbarism. This racism was conceived as the moral justification - the necessary justification, as it was seen by those in the white man's world who were neither thieves nor moral monsters - for doing to black people what church and state no longer thought it permissible to do to white people: the justification for enslaving black people, that is, when it was no longer permissible to enslave white people. This weapon of exploitation has its own history, developing new uses in new situations, as many of us know or remember or even now may still experience. But this has been a history, nonetheless, which began to come to an end in the middle and later years of the twentieth century. One of the reasons why it began to come to an end has been the emergence of the Africans from their colonialist subjection."

(Basil Davidson, *African Civilization Revisited from Antiquity to Modern time*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991);pp.3-4.

Basil Davidson and the Decolonization of knowledge:

"Having taken possession of Africa in the 1880s and soon after, the dispossessors were bound to assure themselves, if only for their own peace of mind, that they had also acted for the benefit and eventual welfare of the peoples they had dispossessed. Left to their pre-industrial and pre-scientific primitivism, said the colonialists, Africans could never have modernized their communities, their ideas and beliefs, their ways of self-government. Colonialism might be a rough and though business; never mind, foreign rule was what Africa needed if any real progress were to become possible. The Africa of a century ago, it was said, was lost in the futile ties of a bygone age, unable to help itself.
Davidson, Basil, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History* (London: Longman, 1994); p.269.

"It is an old and true saying that you cannot develop other people, you can only develop yourself. Other people either develop themselves, or they do not at all. Peoples in Africa, before the long colonial interruption, had developed themselves. From this self-development had come a rich variety of social and political systems: self-governing communities, complex patterns of trade and of production for trade, valuable techniques like the skills of tropical agriculture, metal-working, textile weaving and so on. History also shows that this self-development, in all its complexity, had derived from indispensable principles of statecraft. Communities which upheld these principles had been able to succeed and prosper. Communities which ignored or denied these principles had failed and fallen into confusion. These pre-colonial principles were concerned with preventing the abuse of executive power; with ensuring that power was shared across the community in question; and, to safeguard this participation, with upholding the rule of law. Every successful community in old Africa had operated in one way or another on these principles of statecraft; and such communities had been many. These were the truths that the colonial powers, and their ideologists, had always denied. Colonial ideologists had said that black people had never known how best to govern themselves: white people must do it for them. Such was the ideological basis of colonialism. And the same idea, however muted, was also the basis of...new-colonialism."
Davidson, Basil, *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*. (London: Longman, 1995); p.265.

Colonialism and the ideology of Civilization

- *"It has been said that our civilizing mission alone can justify our occupation of the lands of uncivilized peoples. All our writings, lectures and broadcasts repeat ad nauseam our wish to civilize the African peoples. No doubt there are people who delight to regard as progress of civilization the amelioration of material conditions, increase in professional skill, improvements in housing, in hygiene and in scholastic instruction. These are, no doubt, useful and even necessary "values." But do they constitute "civilization"? Is not civilization, above all else, progress in human personality?... One of the best things which the Europeans have brought to Africans is their precept and example in the matter of activity. Industrialization, however, the introduction of an European economy, permanent raising of production-all that is not necessarily a measure of civilization. On the contrary, it may lead to the destruction of civilization, unless sufficient account is taken of man, of human personality."*

Tempels, Placide, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969), pp.171-172.

- *"The word civilization evokes powerful images and understandings. We in the United States have been taught, from elementary school onward, that a few ancient peoples-like the Egyptians or Greeks-were "civilized" and that civilization achieved its highest level of development here and in other Western countries. Civilization, we are told, is beneficial, desirable-and definitely preferable to being uncivilized. The idea of civilization thus always implicitly involves a comparison: the existence of civilized people implies that there are uncivilized folk who are inferior because they are not civilized. Uncivilized peoples, for their part, have either been told that they can never become civilized or that they should become civilized as soon as possible."*

Patterson, Thomas C., Inventing Western Civilization.
(New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997); p.9.

- ***"We have been taught, inside the classroom and outside of it, that there exists an entity called the West, and that one can think of this West as a society and civilization independent of and in opposition to other societies and civilizations. Many of us even grew up believing that this West has a genealogy, according to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution. Industry, crossed with democracy, in turn yielded the United States, embodying the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."***

Wolf, Eric R., Europe and The People without History. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.5

Human Rights and the idea of "Primitive religions."

After having denounced colonialism with a vigor rare among Western scholars, Thomas Pakenham concluded his magnificent "The Scramble for Africa" with the following astonishing residue of Hegelian way of thinking:

"By contrast with the uneven benefits that decolonization has brought to Africa, it has well suited the interests of Europe. Missionaries have continued to offer Christianity and civilization to the needy. White businessmen have continued to make their fortunes in Africa. In the last thirty years, Africa's imports from the rest of the world have risen ten times. Lugard was right. In the post-colonial era, he predicted, Britain would still be Nigeria's best customer. Indeed, his forecast could have been applied to all the ex-imperial powers. Trade preceded the flag and has outlasted it. Giant European and North American companies continue to dominate the economies of fledgling African states. The new word for this is neo-colonialism. It is much the same as informal empire: the invisible empire of trade and influence that had preceded the Scramble. Yet how many Africans would wish to turn the clock back to the 1880s? The steamers and airlines of the world now bring material benefits to the forty-seven new states of the continent on a scale undreamt of a century ago. Best of all, Europe has given Africa the aspirations for freedom and human dignity, the humanitarian ideals of Livingstone, even if Europe itself was seldom able to live up to them."

Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*. (New York: Avon Books, 1991); p.680.

In a recent study on human rights in the global context, Steven J. Hood (professor and chair of the Department of Politics and International Relations at Ursinus college, in Pennsylvania) denounces the process of what he sees as "Rights hunting in Non- Western Traditions" and explicitly declares:

"In their effort to secure human rights while still preserving cultural identities, scholars have engaged in a hunt for notions of rights in non-Western traditions. I argue that such a quest is misdirected. Human rights... are ideas rooted in the Western philosophical tradition. Using the examples of Confucianism and Islam, I suggest that they lack the philosophical foundations for a full-fledged concept of rights... I conclude that non-Western thinkers must adopt rights theory from the Western liberal traditions."

Steven J. Hood, "Rights Hunting in Non-Western Traditions" in Bell, Lynda S., et al., eds., *Negociating Culture and Human Rights*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); p.96.

Writing in 1991 on the history of human rights, the American historian Arthur Schlesinger offered the following view of world history:

There remains however a crucial difference between the Western tradition and the others. The crimes of the West have produced their own antidotes. They have provoked great movements to end slavery, to raise the status of women, to abolish torture, to combat racism, to defend freedom of inquiry and expression, to advance personal liberty and human rights. Whatever the particular crimes of Europe, that continent is also the source - the unique source - of those liberating ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom that constitute our most precious legacy and to which most of the world today aspires. These are European ideas, not Asian, nor African, nor Middle Eastern ideas, except by adoption.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Whittle Communications, 1991); p.76.

On the exclusion of African from History and Civilization

Reflecting on the continuing exclusion of Africa from World History, Graham Connah made the following observation:

"There were cities and states in tropical Africa long before the colonial ambitions of European peoples transformed that continent. The appearance of such cities and states was one of the most significant developments of tropical Africa's history prior to the colonial experience. It is also a development that has had relatively little attention from world-wide scholarship, although there does exist a substantial specialist academic literature on the subject. Outside Africa itself there persists, amongst people in general, a deeply ingrained conviction that precolonial tropical Africa consisted only of scattered villages of mud or grass huts, their inhabitants subsisting on shifting cultivation or semi-nomadic pastoralism. What is more surprising, and more disturbing, is that this sort of stereotype seems also to have had some effect upon scholars considering the emergence of cities and states as global phenomena. For example, in 1978 the Wolfson Lectures at the University of Oxford were devoted to the subject 'The Origins of Civilization' but in their published version at least, they contained no discussion of African developments other than those in Egypt. At a more popular level, a recent book entitled The Encyclopedia of ancient civilizations(Cotterell, 1983) similarly excludes Africa (except, of course, for Egypt) although it does include West Asia, India, Europe, China, and America. Yet such a coverage is liberal indeed compared with what would have been acceptable thirty or forty years ago. Gordon Childe was perhaps the most important exponent of an academic tradition that saw the origins of civilization as the origins of European culture. Glyn Daniel has described how he once asked Childe why he did not give more attention to the American civilizations. Childe's answer was characteristically terse and to the point: 'Never been there - peripheral and highly suspect'. Could it be that the continued exclusion of tropical Africa from general discussions of world civilization represents a survival of this sort of attitude ?"

Graham Connah, African civilizations: Precolonial cities and states in tropical Africa: An Archaeological perspective; (Cambridge University Press, 1987; p.6.

THE CALORE-COLORE PARADIGM

Text 1. Martin Bernal:

"Eighteenth-century Northern Europeans extended the benefits of a harsh climate from morality to a manly intelligence. The Romantic belief that living further north or higher up the mountains made one think better was still very much alive when I was student at Cambridge. It was explained to me that Cambridge was superior to Oxford because there was no substantial barrier between it and the North Pole. Oxford, however, stuck as it was in a miasmic river valley in the center of England, would naturally produce muddy and muddled thought. Furthermore, as if Cambridge's geographical advantage were not enough, we were encouraged to spend vacations uncomfortably in the Alps or the Lake District, opening our synapses in the bracing air."

Martin Bernal, "Race, Class, and Gender in the Formation of the Aryan Model of Greek Origins." in Mudimbe, V.Y., ed., *Nations, Identities, Cultures.* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997); p.13.

Text 2. Aristotle:

Having spoken of the number of the citizens, we will proceed to speak of what should be their character. This is a subject which can be easily understood by any one who casts his eye on the more celebrated states of Hellas, and generally on the distribution of races in the habitable world. Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; and therefore they retain comparative freedom, but have no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent. Hence it continues free, and is the best-governed of any nation, and, if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the world."

Aristotle, Politics., bookVII, chapter7. (Great Books of the Western World vol.8; Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. 1993); pp.531-532.

Text 3. Montesquieu:

"The inhabitants of warm countries are, like old men, timorous; the people in cold countries are, like young men, brave.... if we travel towards the north, we meet with people who have few vices, many virtues, and a great share of frankness and sincerity. If we draw near the south, we fancy ourselves entirely removed from the verge of morality; here the strongest passions are productive of all manner of crimes."

Montesquieu, "Esprit de Lois," section on "Laws in relation to the nature of the climate" in Great Books, pp.102-103.

World History: From Eurocentrism to Multicentrism/Multiculturalism

(By Mario Liverani, 1996)

Despite their opposition to the process of decolonization of knowledge about world civilization presented by scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop and Martin Bernal, the authors of Black Athena revisited have come to some major agreement on the necessity for a new epistemological model for the understanding of world history. One of these authors, Mario Liverani, clearly expressed his agreement with the basic framework promoted by Bernal and declared explicitly that in this era of the global village, world history must move "from Eurocentrism to multicentrism." In a text which needs to be quoted extensively for its clarity and pertinence, Liverani summarized well the tension between what I call Hegelian paradigm and the paradigm shift framed by Cheikh Anta Diop and Martin Bernal in the study of world civilization:

The logical structure of the first volume of Black Athena is built on a syllogism whose accuracy I fully concede. The major premise is that scholarship (historiography in particular) is influenced by the scholar's sociopolitical background. The minor premise is that the ancient history of the eastern Mediterranean world was constructed by European scholars living in imperial times and countries. The conclusion is that their work was biased by imperialism and is now in need of thorough revision. Conservative scholars object to such a syllogism, invoking the alternative major premise of "pure scholarship." However, the syllogism is accepted by most progressive scholars and is certainly not Bernal's invention. Conservative classical scholars seem to have been more seriously offended (or simply surprised) by Bernal's presumption of imperial bias than Orientals were by Edward Said's in Orientalism a few years before.

From the mid-nineteenth century to World War II, Europe controlled or influenced most of the world: by immigration, colonization, conquest, and trade all of the Americas, Australia and Oceania, Africa, and most of Asia were either organized into states of European design or directly ruled by European empires...The cultural tools and the sublimated characteristics of Western imperialism and colonization were ethnology and Orientalism... As for Greece, in the early nineteenth century it was rather a Levantine than a European country. It entered Europe only after its war of independence against the Ottoman empire (1821-29), an event which the romantic European intelligentsia viewed and took part in as if on the model of the Greek war against Persia which had occurred more than two thousand years before. The division of Greece from the Near East was partly based on the racial factor distinguishing "Aryans" from "Semites."...Cultural and political features were perhaps more important in counterpoising Europe and the Orient: rational thought versus magic, freedom versus serfdom, democracy versus despotism, development versus stagnation, individualism versus collectivism, and so on.

Eurocentrism gave rise to a privileged axis in world history: civilization was considered to have been successively displaced in time and space, from the Ancient Near East to Greece, to Rome, to the Christian Middle Ages, to the Western European Renaissance, to the industrial empires.

This privileged axis, which clearly explained the late nineteenth-century preeminence of the Western world, existed before the imperial era but was not fully implemented until the discovery of new data on ancient Near Eastern civilizations by nineteenth-century Western archaeologists, who were themselves-although unwittingly-the sublimated representatives of colonial conquest.

After World War II, the process of decolonization changed the world map: now the Near and Middle East are ruled by local, independent states,... the rest of Asia and Africa are also largely independent. Because of this marked political change, the most sudden and extensive through all of world history, and the related cultural changes-the progress of mass communications (the "global village"), the growth of Western-style schools of historical research in Asian and African universities, to the very establishment of world cultural organizations (UNESCO)- a new model is now required in the reconstruction of world history: a multicultural model, in which different centers and different political and cultural strategies are all granted equal attention and merits as due, quite apart from their greater or lesser success in the course of events.

The construction of a new multicentered model is a difficult scholarly task. It is the main historiographical challenge of this generation. Scholars from universities and other cultural institutions in Europe and America, Asia and Africa are working on this model, making use of different methodological tools, and, of course, laboring under biases produced by their own cultural backgrounds. On the one hand it is clear that scholars in the new states outside of Europe and North America or in the marginalized ethnic minorities inside the industrialized world often have not yet acquired the necessary technical standards, so that most of the burden of the enterprise still falls on Western scholars. On the other hand it is also obvious that non-Western scholars are distrustful of the West (and rightly so!) and willing to go ahead by themselves, even at the risk of allowing their own simplifications and nationalistic and ethnic biases to interfere with a multicentered global approach. A satisfactory elaboration of the new model will take a long time and must surmount many problems, both historiographical and political.

In building the new model, a critical evaluation of the former, Eurocentered approach is a necessary and very delicate operation. Bernal has contributed to such a revisionary evaluation, together with other scholars before and after him, but there is still a long road ahead. He has been most successful in reaching so large an audience, but the popularity of his project could seriously damage a good cause,....

Mario Liverani, "The Bathwater and the Baby" in Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited.* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); pp.422-424.

Liverani is not alone in supporting this position. Genuine comparative studies of the evolution of civilization in the West and in other regions of the world shows clearly that the horizontal and polycentric model of world civilization is more accurate than the hierarchical and unipolar model which sees civilization as a proprium of the West which spreads its benefits to the world through colonialism. It has become evident to many scholars that the world must move from ethnocentrism and uniqueness models to a multicultural and polycentric foundation of world civilization.

God as a Problem

The notion of god is one of the most complexly dialectical of all human ideas. On the one hand, it is clearly our idea: We humans created it; we shaped and refined it in the course of history p.

Whatever may be the dangers of the image/concept "God," it remains (at least in Western cultures) our most profound and comprehensive symbol.. p.164.

Before we ask 'Does God exist' and before we answer 'God exists' or claim 'God does not exist,' we must first of all know what is at issue when we use the word God, for this word is complex and ambiguous. Indeed God is a problem.

His existence is problematic so too is our knowledge of his nature. Not only do world religious present us a diversity of contrasting ideas of God, even Christian theology itself is highly pluralistic and polysemic. Indeed the Bible contains many theologies with different ideas of God, and the history of Christian theology offers us such a diversity of concepts of God that some seem utterly irreconcialable.

The Confession of faith which all the great churches of the East and the West have had in common from the early Christian centuries down to our own day begins with the statement: ***Credo in unum Deum***, "I believe in one God." This opening sentence is also the foundational statement of the entire creed; it contains in an implicit way the whole of the Christian faith. For anyone who believes that God exists and that he will give life to those who seek him is saved (Heb. 11.6). In other words, anyone who believes that God is the one God who has revealed himself in the Old and new testaments as the God who helps and liberates, who is life and gives life – that person is saved.

God – who is the salvation of the world and the human race – is as it were the one word spoken in the many words of theology. To this extent theology is accountable speech (logos) about God (theos), or the science of God, as the ancient called it. But what does it really mean to say 'God'?

This question of kurt Tucholsky is quite understandable; in fact, it is even necessary. For, as Martin Buber says in an often quoted passage,

God is the most heavy-laden of all human words.
None has become so soiled, so mutilated...
Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and weighted it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears their whole burden.
The races of men with their religious factions have torn the word to pieces; they have killed for it and died for it, and it bears their fingermarks and their blood...
They draw caricatures and write 'God' underneath;
they murder one another to say 'in God's name'...
We must esteem those who interdict it because they rebel against the injustice and wrong which are so readily referred to 'God' for authorization.

THEOLOGY OF CONQUEST

Deuteronomy, Chapter 7, 1-26 (Theology of Election):

"When the LORD, your God, brings you into the land which you are to enter and occupy, and dislodges great nations before you--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites: seven nations more numerous and powerful than you-and when the LORD, your God, delivers them up to you and you defeat them, you shall doom them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. You shall not intermarry with them, neither giving your daughters to their sons nor taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn your sons from following me to serving other gods, and then the wrath of the LORD would flare up against you and quickly destroy you.

"But this is how you must deal with them: Tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, chop down their sacred poles, and destroy their idols by fire. For you are a people sacred to the LORD, your God; he has chosen you from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly his own. It was not because you are the largest of all nations that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you, for you are really the smallest of all nations. It was because the LORD loved you and because of his fidelity to the oath he had sworn to your fathers, that he brought you out with his strong hand from the place of slavery, and ransomed you from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Understand, then, that the LORD, your God, is God indeed, the faithful God who keeps his merciful covenant down to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments, but who repays with destruction the person who hates him; he does not dally with such a one, but makes him personally pay for it. You shall therefore carefully observe the commandments, the statutes and the decrees which I enjoin on you today. "As your reward for heeding these decrees and observing them carefully, the LORD, your God, will keep with you the merciful covenant which he promised on oath to your fathers. He will love and bless and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the produce of your soil, your grain and wine and oil, the issue of your herds and the young of your flocks, in the land which he swore to your fathers he would give you.

You will be blessed above all peoples; no man or woman among you shall be childless nor shall your livestock be barren. The LORD will remove all sickness from you; he will not afflict you with any of the malignant diseases that you know from Egypt, but will leave them with all your enemies.

"You shall consume all the nations which the LORD, your God, will deliver up to you. You are not to look on them with pity, lest you be ensnared into serving their gods.

Perhaps you will say to yourselves, 'These nations are greater than we. How can we dispossess them?' But do not be afraid of them. Rather, call to mind what the LORD, your God, did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great testings which your own eyes have seen, the signs and wonders, his strong hand and outstretched arm with which the LORD, your God, brought you out. The same also will he do to all the nations of whom you are now afraid.

Moreover, the LORD, your God, will send hornets among them, until the survivors who have hidden from you are destroyed.

Therefore, do not be terrified by them, for the LORD, your God, who is in your midst, is a great and awesome God. He will dislodge these nations before you little by little. You cannot exterminate them all at once, lest the wild beasts become too numerous for you.

The LORD, your God, will deliver them up to you and will rout them utterly until they are annihilated.

He will deliver their kings into your hand, that you may make their names perish from under the heavens. No man will be able to stand up against you, till you have put an end to them.

The images of their gods you shall destroy by fire. Do not covet the silver or gold on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD, your God.

You shall not bring any abominable thing into your house, lest you be doomed with it; loathe and abhor it utterly as a thing that is doomed.

THE PROMISED LAND

Genesis, Chapter 12, 1-3:

The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."

Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, 1-10:

"When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it,

you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the LORD, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the LORD, your God, chooses for the dwelling place of his name.... Then you shall declare before the LORD, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 6, 1-25:

"These then are the commandments, the statutes and decrees which the LORD, your God, has ordered that you be taught to observe in the land into which you are crossing for conquest,

so that you and your son and your grandson may fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life. Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them, that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers, to give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!

... "When the LORD, your God, brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that he would give you, a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, with houses full of goods of all sorts that you did not garner, with cisterns that you did not dig, with vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant; and when, therefore, you eat your fill, take care not to forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. The LORD, your God, shall you fear; him shall you serve, and by his name shall you swear. You shall not follow other gods, such as those of the surrounding nations,

lest the wrath of the LORD, your God, flare up against you and he destroy you from the face of the land; for the LORD, your God, who is in your midst, is a jealous God.... keep the commandments of the LORD, your God, and the ordinances and statutes he has enjoined on you. Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that you may, according to his word, prosper, and may enter in and possess the good land which the LORD promised on oath to your fathers, thrusting all your enemies out of your way. "Later on, when your son asks you what these ordinances, statutes and decrees mean which the LORD, our God, has enjoined on you, you shall say to your son, 'We were once slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and wrought before our eyes signs and wonders, great and dire, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and his whole house. He brought us from there to lead us into the land he promised on oath to our fathers, and to give it to us. Therefore, the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes in fear of the LORD, our God, that we may always have as prosperous and happy a life as we have today...

RELIGION, SLAVERY,
AND THE ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF OTHERS.

GOD'S WILL ON SLAVES?

Ephesians, ***Chapter 6, 5-9:***

"Slaves, be obedient to your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ, not only when being watched, as currying favor, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, willingly serving the Lord and not human beings, knowing that each will be requited from the Lord for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Masters, act in the same way toward them, and stop bullying, knowing that both they and you have a Master in heaven and that with him there is no partiality."

1 Timothy, ***Chapter 6, 1-6:***

"Those who are under the yoke of slavery must regard their masters as worthy of full respect, so that the name of God and our teaching may not suffer abuse. Those whose masters are believers must not take advantage of them because they are brothers but must give better service because those who will profit from their work are believers and are beloved. Whoever teaches something different and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the religious teaching is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid disposition for arguments and verbal disputes. From these come envy, rivalry, insults, evil suspicions, and mutual friction among people with corrupted minds, who are deprived of the truth, supposing religion to be a means of gain. Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain."

RELIGION AND "SACRED VIOLENCE."

"The full story of religion is not rose-colored;
often it is crude.
Wisdom and charity are intermittent,
and the net result is profoundly ambiguous.
A balanced view of religion would include
human sacrifice and scapegoating,
fanaticism and persecution,
the Christian Crusades and the holy wars of Islam.
It would include witch hunts in Massachusetts,
monkey trials in Tennessee,
and snake worship in the Ozarks.
The list would have no end."
(Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991; p.4)

EUROPEAN PROFIT FROM THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

"Large-scale plantation production with slave labor was initiated in the Caribbean in the mid-seventeenth century by English and French planters who imported African slaves to fill the void left by the native peoples killed by European weapons and disease. By the end of the eighteenth century, the products of slave labor in the Americas constituted one third of the value of European commerce."
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.121.

I. The case of France
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In 1791, Bishop Mauny of France presented in the French National Assembly an argument against France's ending the slave trade and giving freedom to its slave colonies:

"If you were to lose each year more than 200 million livres that you now get from your colonies: if you had not the exclusive trade with your colonies to feed your manufactures, to maintain your navy, to keep your agriculture going, to repay for your imports, to provide for your luxury needs, to advantageously balance your trade with Europe and Asia, then I say it clearly, the kingdom would be irretrievably lost."
Walter Rodney, How Europe underdeveloped Africa, Washington,DC: Howard University Press, 1982; p.75

II. The case of England and other European countries
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"To European merchants involved in the slave trade the export of Africans across the Atlantic was only one part of a wider trading system...
In the late eighteenth century the special manufacture of cheap, substandard guns for the African market became an important source of profit for the new British industrial city of Birmingham. As dependence upon European manufactured imports increased, further development of African craft industries declined. At the same time the import of European guns made African warfare more effective and increased the supply of slaves...
Though risks were involved, as ships could be lost at sea, profits to the European merchants were generally huge. Profits from the 'triangular trade' largely accounted for the rising wealth of a number of major European port cities, such as Bristol and Liverpool in Britain, Bordeaux and Nantes in France, and Amsterdam in Holland. Merchants moved into banking and ultimately helped finance the capitalist factory system of the European industrial revolution. And as European merchants were well aware at the time, the key to their source of Atlantic trading profits was the systematic exploitation of African slave labour."
Shillington, Kevin, History of Africa, London: McMillan Press, 1989; p.179-180

III. England and other European countries.

When word of Hawkins' voyage reached Queen Elizabeth, she denounced it as a "detestable" venture that "would call down vengeance from Heaven upon the undertakers." But she cooled off when Hawkins' voyage disclosed his profits, and she wound up investing in his next slaving expedition...In 1672 Charles II chartered the Royal African Company. It not only dominated the English slave trade for 50 years but made English the world's greatest slave trader. For 30 years, under a treaty with Spain, the ships that carried slaves from West Africa to the Spanish colonies were exclusively English. This, added to the traffic with her own colonies, brought enormous profits. It was a great triangle of trade, with separate profits extracted on each side... Upon the slave trade England built her commercial supremacy... Production of the goods for the cargoes to Africa stimulated British industry, gave employment to her workers, and brought great profits to her businessmen. Much of that commercial capital made its way into industry to help launch the industrial revolution. (Major cities such as London, Liverpool and Bristol built immense wealth on the back of African slaves. What is here true of England was also true of many cities of France, Netherlands, Spain or Portugal).

London, headquarters of the Royal African Company, was the slavers' chief home port, until Bristol and then Liverpool began to outpace the capital. Liverpool finally won out. It was closer to the factories that supplied the goods for the Guinea trade. It also built longer and lower and faster ships, plus the docks to hold them, making Liverpool the biggest port in the world. The backers of the Liverpool slave trade were tougher and tighter than all others, cutting corners so that they could undersell their competitors.

By 1800 Liverpool was sending 120 ships a year to the African coast, with a total loading capacity of some 35,000 slaves. The city carried about 90% of the slaves out of Africa. The average net profit of each voyage was 30 percent, and profits of 100 percent were not uncommon. The whole city, said a Liverpool minister, "was built up by the blood of the poor Africans." Tailors, grocers, tallow-chandlers, attorneys – all had shares in fitting the slave ships. The trade used the labor of thousands of boatbuilders, carpenters, coopers, riggers, sailmakers, glaziers, joiners, ironmongers, gunsmiths, and carters. Just ten companies in the town controlled two-thirds of the slave trade. As pointed out earlier, this production of the goods for the cargoes to Africa stimulated British industry, gave employment to her workers, and brought great profits to her businessmen. Much of that commercial capital made its way into industry to help launch the industrial revolution in England. This picture was just as true for France. Gaston-Martin, a French historian of the slave trade, wrote: "There was not a single great ship owner at Nantes who, between 1714 and 1789, did not buy and sell slaves; there was not one who sold only slaves; it is almost as certain that none would have become what he was if he did not sell slaves. In this lies the essential importance of the slave trade: on its success or failure depended the progress or ruin of all the others."

These pillars of the slave trade were also the pillars of society, who conducted their everyday trade in human beings with the blessing of the church, the government, the monarchy, and the public. The kings of England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal appreciated the profits to be made by the trade and gave it their patronage. Charles II and James II invested in the trade. Until 1783 the British government did all it could to encourage the trade. When colonials tried to gain revenue by imposing duties on imported slaves, the British Board of Trade opposed it, saying it was "absolutely necessary that a trade so beneficial to the kingdom should be carried on the greatest advantage. The well supplying of the plantations and colonies with a sufficient number of Negroes at reasonable prices is in our opinion the chief point to be considered."...

The men who brought the black slaves from Africa to the New World were a mixed lot – cutthroats and Christians, speculators and adventurers, gentlemen and pirates, seamen and surgeons. Best known among the early slaving captains was Sir John Hawkins, later rear admiral of Queen Elizabeth's fleet when it defeated the Spanish Armada. The role of Christianity in the slave trade was not implicit or hidden. It was proclaimed openly. Thanks to their prayers and Christian faith, slave traders could survive danger in the oceans and gain more profit from their sinister trade. Indeed, many a slave traders invoked the blessing of Jesus. To insure such a blessing and express their gratitude to Jesus, some named their major slave ships with Christian symbols. This is true not only for Protestant England, but also for Catholic Spain and Portugal, and indeed for all European nations involved in the trade, be they Dutch or French.

Slave trading was no vulgar or wicked occupation that shut a man out from office or honors. Engaged in the British trade were dukes, earls, lords, countesses, knights – and kings. The slaves of the Royal African Company were branded with initials D.Y. for the Duke of York. Many mayors of Liverpool were slavers, and so were the city's aldermen. Slave traders sat in both houses of Parliament.

Slaving did not even interfere with a man's humanitarianism. Slave traders merited monuments for founding charity schools and orphanages, for protecting the poor, building hospitals, and "terrifying evildoers.' Many notorious slave traders are praised as pious, good and noble souls, indeed as remarkable men of faith. Foster Cunliffe and John Hawkins, two major pioneers of the slave trade in England, are a good case in point.

The esteem in which his community held Foster Cunliffe, a pioneer in the slave trade, is engraved for all time on a stone in St. Peter's Church, where he is described as "a Christian devout and exemplary in the exercise of every private and public duty, friend to mercy, patron to distress, an enemy only to vice and sloth, he lived esteemed by all who knew him... and died lamented by the wise and good."

When Hawkins reached Sierra Leone (on the Coast of West Africa), with his three small ships, he took, "partly by the sword, and partly by other means," as he put it, at least 300 blacks. Sailing for the Spanish colonies across the Atlantic, his ships were becalmed, and the slaves were in danger of dying. Hawkins, a pious Protestant, comforted himself with the thought that God would not allow his "elect" to suffer. The wind picked up, and he reached Hispaniola, where he exchanged the slaves for hides, ginger, sugar, and pearls... Believing strongly in Jesus' blessing upon him, Hawkins will name his ships after Jesus or Christian matters of faith. In 1567 Hawkins made a third slaving voyage with six vessels. He led on the flagship, the JESUS OF LUBECK. Another ship, the GRACE OF GOD was commanded by his 22-year-old cousin, Francis Drake, already a veteran of one slaving voyage. The two biggest ships in the fleet were owned by the queen. Laymen of the Church of England accepted the slavery they saw all around them. It was a fact of life, and the whole of British society had invested in it. The Liverpool Town Hall was decorated with "blackamoors" carved in stone. Chains and padlocks, leg irons and handcuffs, thumbscrews and mouth-openers (to force slaves on hunger strikes to eat) were on view in the shop windows and advertised in the newspapers. On the streets fashionable ladies paraded with their little black slaves adorned in turbans and pantaloons. Slave servants were common in rich households. They could be bought at public auction and, like slaves everywhere, were so tempted to escape that the postmaster's duties included the capture of runaways.

But it is not merely some isolated Christians who supported the slave trade... Organized religions have never differed much from their memberships. Church officials, Christian kings and their governments, all supported a trade that was so beneficial to them. ...The European slave trade began in the year 1411, when a little Portuguese ship commanded by young Antam Goncalvez captured 12 blacks in a raid on the Atlantic coast of Africa. The prisoners were carried back to Lisbon as gifts for Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460). Delighted with his new slaves, Prince Henry set word to the Pope, seeking his approval for more raids. The Pope's reply granted, "to all of those who shall be engaged in the said war, complete forgiveness of all their sins." In 1455 a papal bull authorized Portugal to reduce to servitude all heathen peoples.... Indeed, the church supported the slave trade as a means of converting heathens. This is not true only for the Catholic Church but also for Protestantism, and especially the Church of England. Trader John Newton used to order prayers twice a day aboard his slave ship, saying he never knew "sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion." The Bishop of Exeter himself held 655 slaves, whom he did not give up until the government compensated him for them in 1833. Even the Quakers – Britain and American – for a long time found it hard to extend their nonconformity to so profitable an investment as slave dealing. Appropriately, one Boston slave ship putting in at Sierra Leone was named the "Willing Quaker."

Milton Meltzer, Slavery. A World history. Volume II. From the Renaissance to Today (updated edition, Da Capo Press, 1993); pp.1; 39-46.

DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION
Clifford Geertz :
Religion is
- a system of symbols which acts to
- establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by
- formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and
- clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that
- the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
(from The Interpretation of Cultures, p.90)

Max Weber (1804-1891) :
Religion starts with the metaphysical needs of the human mind to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it.
- Religious or magical behavior or thinking must not be set apart from the range of everyday purposive conduct, particularly since even the ends of the religious and magical actions are predominantly economic... People pursue their interests. Among the weapons people use in their struggle are ideas, and among ideas are religions as a system of ideas that justify self interests... When a man who is happy compares his position with that of one who is unhappy, he is not content with the fact of his happiness, but desires something more, namely the right to this happiness, the consciousness that he has earned his good fortune, in contrast to the unfortunate one who must equally have earned his misfortune. Our everyday experience proves that there exists just such a psychological need for reassurance as to the legitimacy or deservedness of one's happiness, whether this involves political success, superior economic status,... or anything else. What the privileged classes require of religion, if anything at all, is this psychological reassurance of legitimacy."
Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

Homo religiosus as Homo economicus and Homo politicus

It is true that religion preaches peace, harmony, non-violence, forgiveness and love extended even to the enemy. Gautama Buddha and Yeshua of Nazareth articulated the most radical demands of the ethic of brotherly love, i.e., the injunction that evil should not be resisted by force, and that believers must instead love and pray for their enemies. But the history of world religions indicates that this brand of mystical religion did not in practice prevail. The apolitical Christian religion of love is indeed a rare case in the history of Christianity itself. It is an ideal always proclaimed even as people engage on the battlefield. This paradox is rather the dominant feature of the large trend of Christianity, as it is also found in Islam and in Judaism. "Bellum Justum" doctrine is the most dominant teaching in the history of the three monotheistic sisters, and probably in the history of many other world religions. As Max Weber pointed out every religiously grounded unworldly love and, indeed, every ethical religion experience tensions with the sphere of political behavior. But this tension appears only when religion has progressed to a status of equality with the sphere of political associations. Until then, what prevails is a solid marriage between religious ethic and the warrior ethic of the State. Very often the priestly caste has functioned as the servant of the ruling class which used priests to control the masses and to legitimize the power of the monarch. Sometimes the Priests, and especially the High-Priests belonged to the nobility and were themselves in charge of political government. In Judaism, for example, Moses was at once the High-Priest and Beloved Servant of God, the Supreme Judge and the Commander-in-chief of the Military. The same situation is found in the case of Muhammed in Islam. Whether politicians control the Church or the Church controls the Government, in both cases we find a religious ethic which glorifies the warrior virtues of the State. The Byzantine and Roman court bishops of emperor Constantine are a good case in point. The phenomenon referred to as Caesaropapism and the "constantinization of the Christian Church" exemplify this same marriage between the throne and the Altar.

When Christians were persecuted by Roman emperors, Church fathers regarded the empire as the dominion of Anti-Christ. The use of force was deemed to be unrighteous in almost every case, and serving in the military was regarded as a sinful job. But after the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and the progressive transformation of Christianity into the only "State Religion," theologians suddenly proclaimed the doctrine of Just war. To be a soldier in the Roman Legion became, for Christians, a sacred duty to crush the enemies of Christ.

In ancient Greek city-states, as in many ancient societies, gods where patriotic and nationalistic. The ancient political god of the locality, even when he was an ethical and universally powerful god, existed merely for the protection of the political interests of his followers, very much like Athena the warrior princess goddess of Athens. Moreover, as Max Weber reminds us, for the religion of Yahweh, political victory and especially vengeance against the enemy constituted the real reward granted by God. Even the Christian God is still invoked as a god of war and as a god of our fathers, in much the same way that local gods were invoked in the ancient Greek Polis. The contradiction often found between the priestly preaching about brotherliness towards fellow religionists and the glorification of war against outsiders did not as a general rule decisively stigmatize martial virtues and heroic qualities. This contradiction became invisible because religions developed a distinction between "just and unjust wars." As Weber pointed out, this distinction was itself the product of pharisaic thought rather than a virtuous enlightenment. One is reminded of the fact that for centuries Christian ministers have prayed along the beaches of the North Sea for a "blessing upon the strand," in reaction to the numerous shipwrecks there. And still today, as the events before and after September 11 clearly indicate, war is not contrary to religious belief as understood by most people who see themselves as "true believers" and who proudly define themselves as "conservative," an expression which implies beholders of true religious values and moral qualities.

Adapted from Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion.*(Boston: Beacon Press,1993); chap. XIV. "The Relationship of Religion to Politics, Economics, Sexuality, and Art"; pp.223-274

Karl Marx (1818-1883):

- "Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet won through to himself or has already lost himself again. But man is not abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state, society. This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality."
- "Religion is the opium of the people. It is the sigh of the oppressed creatures, the heart of heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself."

(From "A Contribution to the critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right")

Joseph Conrad:

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea-something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to."

Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness*, in Adler, Mortimer J., ed., Imaginative Literature.

Chinua Achebe:

"Colonization may indeed be a very complex affair, but one thing is certain: You do not walk in, seize the land, the person, the history of another, and then sit back and compose hymns of praise in his honor. To do that would amount to calling yourself a bandit. So what do you do? You construct very elaborate excuses for your action. You say, for instance, that the man in question is worthless and quite unfit to manage himself and his affairs. If there are valuable things like gold or diamonds which you are carting away from his territory, you proceed to prove that he doesn't own them in the real sense of the word – that he and they just happened to be lying around the same place when you arrived. Finally, if worse comes to the worst, you will be prepared to question whether such as he can be, like you, fully human."
Chinua Achebe in African Commentary, vol.1, n0.2, Nov.1989.

Christian attitude toward other religions.

CHRISTIANITY, PATRIOTISM AND COLONIALISM

(An example of Post-colonial epistemology, by V.Y. Mudimbe)

"Three major figures, from the fifteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, determined modalities and the pace of mastering, colonizing, and transforming the "Dark Continent": the explorer, the soldier, and the missionary... Of all "these bearers of the African burden," the missionary was, paradoxically, the best symbol of the colonial enterprise. He devoted himself sincerely to the ideals of colonialism: the expansion of Civilization, the dissemination of Christianity, and the advance of Progress. With equal enthusiasm, he served as an agent of a political empire, a representative of a civilization, and an envoy of God... As A.J. Christopher rightly observed "missionaries, possibly more than members of other branches of the colonial establishment, aimed at the radical transforma tion of indigenous society... They therefore sought, whether consciously or unconsciously, the destruction of pre-colonial societies and their replacement by new Christian societies in the image of Europe."...

The missionary played an essential role in the general process of expropriation and, subsequently, exploitation of all the "new found lands" upon the earth. As G. Williams puts it, if in many areas his presence "helped to soften the harshness of European impact on the indigenous peoples whose lands were invaded and exploited," his "fervour was allied, rather than opposed to commercial motive." The scramble for Africa in the nineteenth century took place in an atmosphere of Christian revival: the age of Enlightenment and its criticism of religion had ended...

The more carefully one studies the history of missions in Africa, the more difficult it becomes not to identify it with cultural propaganda, patriotic motivations, and commercial interests, since the missions' program is indeed more complex than the simple transmission of the Christian faith. From the sixteenth century to the eighteenth, missionaries were, through all the "new worlds," part of the political process of creating and extending the right of European sovereignty over "newly discovered lands. In doing so, they obeyed the "sacred instructions" of Pope Alexander VI in his bull ***Inter Caetera*** (1493): to overthrow paganism and establish the Christian faith in all barbarous nations. The bulls of Nicholas V – ***Dum Diversas*** (1452) and ***Romanus Pontifex*** (1455) – had indeed already given the kings of Portugal the right to dispossess and eternally enslave Mahometans, pagans, and black peoples in general. ***Dum Diversas*** clearly stipulates this right to invade, conquer, expel, and fight Muslims, pagans, and other enemies of Christ wherever they may be. Christian kings, following the Pope's decisions could occupy pagan kingdoms, principalities, lordships, possessions and dispossess them of their personal property, land, and whatever they might have. The king and his successors have the power and right to put these peoples into perpetual slavery. The missionaries, preceding or following a European flag, not only helped their home country to acquire new lands but also accomplished a "divine" mission ordered by the Holy Father, ***Dominator Dominus***. It was in God's name that the Pope considered the planet his franchise and established the basic principles of *terra nullius* (nobody's land), which denies non-Christian natives the right to an autonomous political existence and the right to own or to transfer ownership.

V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the order of knowledge.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); pp.45-47.

Tissa Balasuriya and the Decolonization of Mariology

As Tissa pointed out Mariology has often served as a tool of European nationalism and colonial ideology of an imperialist and Capitalist Christianity:

One example of the way in which Marian spirituality has been evolving in the Catholic Church is found in the apparitions of Mary. Generally the apparitions reveal the conditioning of Christians at a given time and place. For instance, at Lourdes, Mary appears to Bernadette and speaks of herself as the Immaculate Conception, but she does not say anything about the conditions of the working class in France of the day. The apparition occurred during the heyday of the growth of industrial capitalism in Western Europe, and the working class was being severely exploited. Mary as the mother of all, and especially as a woman of the working class, should have felt these social evils to be a grave injustice.

Much less did Mary, appearing in Lourdes, even hint at the enormous harm being done in Africa by French military and economic expansion in the colonial empire. It would be interesting to know whether Mary ever appeared to British Christians to challenge them concerning the British presence in Ireland or in India.

Why was Mary of Lourdes incapable of enlightening French Christians concerning the atrocities being committed in Africa by their compatriots? These atrocities were committed almost in alliance with the Christian Churches. We note instead how Marian spirituality ignored such important aspects of Christian witness. However, if Bernadette had spoken of such things as the rights of French workers or of the African peoples, the shrine of Lourdes would probably not have developed in the manner it has during the last one and a quarter centuries.

Mary appeared in Fatima in 1917, the year of the communist revolution in Russia. The message of Fatima was regarded as a warning against atheistic communism and its threat to the world. At the same time, however, Portugal was exploiting Africans in Angola and Mozambique. Yet Mary seemed to say nothing about the internal and external evils of the ruling Portuguese regime. This Mary, who comes to us in apparitions, and who is accepted by the dominant establishment, is not a liberating Mary. She speaks of sin and prayer and their significance in the Church and the world. Such Marian apparitions do not communicate to women the sense of their dignity and rights. Services at Marian shrines are usually dominated by male clergy, and women are the recipients of advice and benedictions. The consciousness of Mary as an adult lay woman and mother, who participated actively in the work of Jesus, and in the mission of the early Church, is not conveyed by these apparitions nor the devotions associated with them.

Thus Marian devotions still have, by and large, a domesticating impact on women and the laity. Religious women, too, are not helped by them to acquire a greater sense of their dignity, responsibilities and rights in the Church and in society.

The male-dominated, patriarchal, salvation-oriented theology of the period from Augustine to Vatican II still pervades much of the Marian piety of Sri Lanka. There are a few changes, but very much more can be done to present Mary as she is seen in the Gospels, and in a manner relevant to today's struggles.

The Marian shrines, which are numerous and popular in Sri Lanka, have a similar impact. A shrine like Madhu has the effect of bringing Sri Lankans of different races together, and this can make a valuable social contribution. But many of the devotions are as described above. The hymns and prayers at the novenas of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Our Lady of Fatima and the Miraculous Medal encourage largely individualistic piety.

Marian devotions - hymns and prayers and litanies - do not encourage the laity to penitence characterized by a concern for humanity and justice. This is quite different from the focus of the Mary of the Gospels.

Similarly, Mary, who is said to have given the rosary to Christians, is claimed to have been on their side against the Turks, and she is invoked as the champion of Christians in the battle of Lepanto as "Our Lady of Victories." It is presumed that she favours Christians, but why should she be partial to one group - say Europeans? Is she a European or Christian goddess or really the mother of Jesus who cared for all?

We have, therefore, to examine the Mary of our theology, spirituality and popular devotions. With a few exceptions, witnessed by the Madonna of Guadelupe, or the Black Mary of Poland, where people suffering hardships present her differently, she is portrayed as one who does not understand the socialist world, nor the suffering imposed by countries that called themselves Christian in Asia, Africa and the Americas.This traditional Mary is a Mary of the capitalist, patriarchal, colonialist, First World of Christendom.

This top-down Mariology leaves Mary to embody the message that the powerful want to hear. It is those who determine and dominate theological thinking who decide on the authenticity of any Mariology.

Mariology might also be analysed in social terms, for it has been developed within a Christian community that depreciated the human, the feminine and sexuality, and did not appreciate liberative commitment to social justice.

Mary has been declared the patroness of many Catholic countries. In Sri Lanka, the national basilica has been dedicated to her. She is honoured as Queen of Sri Lanka. But what is the substance of the message which is expressed in the basilica and in its official teachings and prayers to Mary? It would seem that she is invoked mainly as a protectress in distress, and a healer in sickness. The Madonna was invoked to defend us against the Japanese during British rule, but she was not asked to help our peoples in their struggle for national independence and economic liberation. It may be said that we were saved from the ravages of war. This is true, but it is not understood that the causes of the war were in great measure the imperialist hold of Britain and her Western allies over most of the poor world. It is necessary to consider these issues critically, otherwise we might create our national Madonna and shrines to accommodate the framework of an unjust world order. This is quite against the spirit of the Magnificat.

At present the shrine can help people to understand the root causes of our people's misery, which include the selfishness and exploitation of local and foreign agencies.

The national basilica can thus be a witness to Mary or a counter witness to her. Currently it would seem that little at the shrine is conducive to the triple liberation which the Magnificat proclaims: social, cultural and political.These areas need to be reconsidered in order that the shrine may be faithful to the message of Mary and of the Gospels.

Tissa Balasuriya, *Mary and Human Liberation.*(Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997); pp.31-33.
This book was first published in 1990.

COLONIALISM AND RELIGIOUS PATRIOTISM
A LESSON FROM GERMANY AND SPAIN

NAZISM AND THE THEOLOGY OF "CHOSEN PEOPLE."

The blending of Christianity with modern nationalisms, and precisely the involvement of theology in ideologies of "national destiny" and "national identity" reveals a striking parallelism between American nationalism and that German nationalism which led to totalitarianism and holocaust. Germany emerged in modem times as the paradigmatic example of Christian national self-understanding. The early twentieth century witnessed what pastor Reinhold Dietrich called **"the Christianizing of Germanness and the Germanizing of Christianity."** The process of Germanizing Christianity led to the outright identification of Christianity with German national aspirations to greatness. The twentieth century followed in this the previous movements of Romanticism and Renaissance created in reaction to French dominance and the patriotism generated by the struggle for the unification of a land which was then divided in almost three hundred small kingdoms. In his Philosophy of world history, well before Adolf Hitler, Hegel had identified Christianity and the apex of world history with the destiny of the German nation. After him, other philosophers like Heidegger, Biblical scholars like Kittel, and theologians concurred.

It is worth noting that **"theological nationalism"** did not grow simply as the result of State control over powerless churches. During the nineteenth century, for example, it is at the very moment Germany was developing various programs for loosening state control of churches that the notion of a special German Christianity grew more popular, and with it the notion of the uniqueness of the German people in the world and in God's plan of salvation. Friedrich Schleiemacher articulated that view more explicitly around the notion of "Volk." "Each volk," he wrote, "was designated to illustrate a special aspect of the image of God, in its own peculiar setting and by its own specially determined position in the world." This view gave birth to a German religious patriotism that linked Germany, the Bible, Martin Luther, and the duty to bring a particular brand of Christian piety to the rest of the world. A German theology of Election was born to replace Israel in God's favor. During the First World War, German pastors compared their congregations to the "chosen people" of the Old Testament and referred to the nation as "the Israel of the New Covenant." Johann Kessler, a Lutheran pastor in Dresden, move forward to formulate an explanation of such a new theology of election:

> **We believe in a world calling for our nation. A nation that God has equipped with such gifts of the Spirit and such depths of mind, that he called to be a bearer of the gospel in the days of the Reformation... God has great things in store for such a nation... We are the tools with which God will construct his Kingdom today. We are the soldiers with which he will win his victory.**

Corrigan, John, et al., *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions.* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998); p.459.

CIVIL RELIGION AND THE RELIGIOUS PATRIOTISM OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE
Spain: Patriotism, Conquest, Genocide and Evangelization

Christopher Colombus interpreted his own work of exploration in explicitly religious terms:

"God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth
of which he spoke in the Apocalypse of St. John...
Let Christ rejoice on earth, as he rejoices in heaven
in the prospect of the salvation of the souls of so many nations hitherto lost."

John Corrigan, Frederick M. Denny, Carlos M.N. Eire, Martin S. Jaffee, Jews, Christians, Muslims: A comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998); p.192.

At the time of the so-called discovery of America, a time dominated by Catholic kings of Spain and Portugal, Spain had just completed its liberation from Islam by expelling in 1492 from its territory both the remnants of the Muslim occupation that had lasted almost seven hundred years, and the Jewish community. The 'discovery' of America completed the glory of Spain, then regarded as 'the country where the sun never sets.'

Spanish patriotic fever reached its highest level. The sense of being God's special country, the bastion and bulwark of a triumphant Christendom was confirmed by the Pope who declared the kings of Spain the most Christian kings and gave them the divine right to conquer, dispossess and enslave the enemies of Christ. Thus Spain combined its dream of possessing the land of the Golden Fleece (gold, silver, and all kinds of wealth), its quest for glory, power, and wealth, with the "glorious Crusade" spirit of its militaristic patriotism, and its self-image and self-definition as the chosen people. Conquest came to be viewed as Spain's divine mission, its "mandate from heaven." But how could a Christian and healthy mind preach a God of love and peace, while engaging in the violent conquest of foreign lands and genocide? Spaniards with a conscience could not avoid this question. However as the case of conquistador Hernan Cortes shows, an elaborated justification of war and looting was well articulated through the demonization of Native Americans and their religions. This was made possible by the dogmatic understanding of Christianity as the only true religion.

Speaking about his own experience, Hernan Cortes, one of the early and most famous 'conquistadores' explained in his own words how Spaniards managed to reconcile their love for Christ, their imperialistic spirit of Conquest, and the genocide of Native Americans:

"Many times I have played in my thoughts with such difficulties [the war with the Aztec people] and I must confess that sometimes I felt quite restless in my thoughts. But, looking at it from other angles, there are many things that give me courage and satisfaction. In the first place, the dignity and holiness of our cause, because we fight for the cause of Christ when we fight against idol worshippers who, as such, are enemies of Christ since they worship demons instead of the God of kindness and omnipotence, and we wage war both to punish those who persist in their idolatry and to open to those who have accepted the authority of Christians and of our King... But other thoughts come also to my mind: that is, the benefits that we can obtain if we come out victorious, because there are many other reasons for fighting these wars... There are some who fight for land and things, others for power and glory... And many times find satisfaction for their ambitions when, having defeated their enemies, they control the lands and the cities... But it is not only one of these causes but all of them at the same time that move and constrain us to continue this war."

(These words by Hernan Cortes are quoted by Gines de Sepulveda in his Cronica Indiana)

guez Bonino, "Theology of Latin America" in John Parratt, ed., An Introduction to Third World es. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); p.17.

COLONIALISM AND THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIANITY

On Christianity, Christianness, and Christendom

(Raimundo Pannikar, "The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges: Three Kairological Moments of Christic Self-Understanding.")

To be a Christian as a member of Christianity amounts to belonging to one religion among many. It may be more or less pure than others. It would, however, represent non only an abuse of language but an abusive language to denounce other religions as false or incomplete... Still, the spirit and the reality of Christendom has neither disappeared nor can it be totally abolished from Christian consciousness... Christianity has become so powerful and universal, so convinced of its mission, that it does not feel the need to look outside... Christianity perceives itself as a privileged phylum called upon to unify the world, to "convert" the other cultural and religious streams into a Christian Amazonas, watering the entire planet... For many, Christianity is a demanding enterprise; being the only true religion it requires faith, courage, and decision. You have to be a Christian chevalier. You need to be a hero; you have the sacred duty of conquering and reconquering for Christ the life within and the world without... The Christian religion understands itself as the culmination of religious evolution; it stands for universal values and claims a sort of universality. In brief, Christianity does not need to despise other but it certainly considers itself superior. But superiority cannot be a neutral feeling or worldview. Those who consider Christianity superior to all other religions, also consider the Christian cultures and civilization superior to all other cultures and civilizations. And ultimately the Christian man is supposed to be closer to God since he embraced the truest religion. He is supposed to be more religious, more virtuous, more compassionate, more humane than all other human beings, in brief the better friend of God, and Christians become the chosen people, and Christian countries the kingdom of God. The notion of the Uniqueness of Christianity and the superiority complex it carries with it are not abstract matters. Christianity is a historical religion, well grounded in the concrete world of living creatures. The syndrome of the superiority of Christianity is translated into the belief in a global civilization, a world government, one world market, universal code of human rights, and democracy, all expressions of the new face of Christendom.

Although hardly 10 percent of the world speaks fluent English, and although Christians are a minority on the planet, English-speaking people are prone to assume that what they want and think represents universal patterns. A number of cultures are caught in such a universalizing syndrome... must Christians recognize that they cannot – and should not – conquer the world, because they represent only one phylum in human history, and thus should not claim the universality of being the only true religion?...Many Christians will feel that they are betraying their deepest beliefs if they give up the conviction that the Christic dimension of their faith is meant to be universal.

On the other hand, an increasing number of Christians are becoming dimly but painfully aware that the claim to universality is an imperialistic remnant of times that should be past, and that most followers of other religions feel this claim as a threat – and an insult – to their beliefs.

But why do other cultures and religions perceive Christianity as a threat? We have to turn to the history and fundamental spirit of Christianity to gain some understanding. Historically, it is obvious that to be a Christian does not merely mean to believe in Jesus and love God. Christianity is a very complex state of affairs, indeed a complex state of being. The Christian is not only committed to faith in God. He is also committed to a certain worldview, and a certain social organization. To be a Christian does not mean just to profess fidelity to Christ; it also entails adherence to Christian society, be it called church or institution. The sense of "belonging" to a very special organization or family has consequences. The ideal becomes Christendom, the Christian empire, Christian civilization.

Affirming the present-day recognition that theological understanding of the Christian phenomenon is a function of temporal, contextual, and may other parameters, we can understand why Christians have not always interpreted the christic fact in the same way. The self-understanding of Christians throughout history can be summed up in five historical periods, although each of them is still permeating the others: 1)the witnessing period (the true Christian is the martyr, from the time of Jesus to the fall of the Roman empire, around 470 A.D), 2)

Conversion (Constantinian Christianity wants to convert pagans and the whole world), 3) crusades (Middle Ages), 4)mission (during the colonial era), and5) dialogue (in post-colonial era). In this last phase Christian empires have collapsed, Christianity is in crisis, Christendom has little prospect, but the Christ-symbol remains effective. Christianness emerges on the sociological plane. To be sure, the Christian somehow retains all five traits. There is something of a witness in all Christians, and they will feel uneasy if they are not somewhat better than non-Christians (conversion), if they do not have the courage to confess their faith (a militant, a crusader), and do not sense the burden and responsibility of caring for the whole world (mission). Now discovering that they are not alone, Christians open up to dialogue. We are just at the beginning of a new spiral of the interaction between Christians and the peoples of other belief systems. Since European discovery of other lands, the true Christian was the missionary. Christianity sees itself as having a world mission. Christians still pay and pray for the missions. Even political embassies are called missions up to our own times and the name becomes universally accepted. But two world wars, a hundred million war-deaths in our century, and the independence of some one hundred fifty new states mark the end of this period of missions. Many Christians realize that they can no longer "missionize" other peoples. We enter into the contemporary age. Here dialogue becomes indispensable.

CHRISTIANITY AND COLONIALISM

"Because of Jesus Christ, Christianity understand itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right... This pluralism is a greater threat and a reason for greater unrest for Christianity than for any other religion. For no other religion – not even Islam – maintains so absolutely that it is the religion, the one and only valid revelation of the one living God as does the Christian religion. The fact of the pluralism of religions, which endures and still from time to time becomes virulent and even after a history of 2000 years, must therefore be the greatest scandal and the greatest vexation for Christianity."

(Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions" in Theological Investigations, vol.5; Baltimore: Helicon, 1966; pp.116-118

– *"Following the example of Paul, the church became Greek with the Greek world and barbarian with the European barbarian world. However, it has not become Arabic with the Arabs, black with the blacks, Indian with the Indians, or Chinese with the Chinese. Viewed as a whole, the Church of Jesus Christ has remained a European-American affair."*

Hans Kung, Concile et retour à l'unité (Paris: Cerf, 1961), pp.14-15. Cited by Ngindu Mushete, "The History of Theology in Africa: From Polemics to Critical Irenics" in Appiah-Kubi, Kofi and Torres, Sergio, eds., *African theology en route*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), p.26.

To better understand why European missionary theology will be rejected by Native American, African or Asian theologians as not representing the thought and spiritual needs of the colonized people, it is important to grasp the basic view of non-European people which guided Western missionaries in their theology of world history. Christianity was considered superior to all the world religions, and subsequently European civilization, understood as Christian, was also viewed as the only meaningful civilization. As Riches pointed out, what came to Africa, Asia, or Latin America was first of all a "colonial Christianity": Christianity came far more frequently as a colonizer than as a servant, and even when it came as a servant, it was as a servant with preconceived notions about what services it ought to render and what persons it ought to serve. The servant felt superior to the one to be served, and therefore deemed itself to have nothing to receive. It had no intention of listening.

Missionaries have indeed worked to implant the Roman Catholic Church in countries where it was not, and which, to boot, no longer belonged to themselves. Missionaries tend to be utterly unaware of the fact that they are agents of a Western Christian romanité. They say they work to save souls, extend the true faith, preach the gospel. And doubtless this is what they do. But they do so by working for the implanting of the Roman Church, its doctrine, its liturgy, its discipline, its organization, and its mentality. They do so unaware, since, after all, it goes without saying in the common consciousness: the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church of Jesus Christ, the sole depositary of salvation. The language that mobilized vocations and Christian charity was based first and foremost on the pity that ought to be inspired by the sad supernatural, moral, and human state of the "savages." There was no question of acknowledging the intrinsic values of other religions-which, for that matter, were little known. The very "values" of these religions, if indeed they had been perceived, were obstacles to the uniformistic, salvationistic Romanization that prevailed.

As Eboussi Boulaga pointed out, "these problems cannot be brushed aside with, "The church has always been above economic and political interests, above the interests of nationalism and imperialism." Why not? For the very reason that we have called the African churches to account. The churches of the West are a segment of the capitalist world. They suffer from the alienations and ills of the society of which they are integral parts, and to which they spontaneously conform. They exhibit the same will to power, the same spiritual self-satisfaction that springs from wealth, the same idolatry of victorious strength, material success, and "apostolic profit," the same rejection of other ways of being human, and all the rest. Only the irreducible existence of other "worlds" can deliver these churches from these passions."

Eboussi Boulaga, F., *Christianity without Fetishes: An African critique and recaptureof Christianity*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984); p.24.

"In the nineteenth century, the order of the day practically everywhere was the anti-slavery struggle. Yesterday the slaves had been baptized; today they were emancipated before being baptized, and freedom villages were founded. At Freetown, Libreville, Bagamoyo, philanthropy wrought wonders... Africa emerged from slavery, only to be plunged into colonization. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85 partitioned Africa into some thirty territories, or groups of territories, for exploitation and administration. The representatives of the states of Europe and America, invited by Bismarck to Berlin, regarded the blacks as minor children in need of the tutelage of whites. The colonial pact, finally, and the "indigenate," or "native protectorate, established in Africa in the name of human rights, stripped our peoples of any rights or dignity... It was in the desert of this desolation of ours that the voice of the missionary resounded. Practically everywhere, the missionary was the ally of the colonizer, if an ally that the latter sometimes feared.. When Germany lost its colonies in 1919 did not the German missionary congregations depart, along with their administrators, and did not the French, Belgian and British arrive in the same ships with their new administrators? And when Italy conquered Ethiopia how many Italian congregations suddenly discovered a missionary vocation in Ethiopia? ... And this is how it went. It was not at all strange to hear natives speak of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide as the ministry of colonies of the Vatican or the spiritual ministry of colonies of Europe."

Mveng, Engelbert, "La rentrée de l'Afrique dans l'Eglise," in *Parole et Mission*, 12 (1969), pp.366-67. And Henry, A., "La mission sans frontières," in *Parole et Mission*, 8 (1965), pp.215 f.

BEYOND PRIMITIVISM

Among scholars Evans-Pritchard articulated an insightful critique which demonstrated that other scholars who called non-Christian religions primitive or savages were mistaken both in their premises and in their methods. He noticed that "none of the anthropologists whose theories about primitive religion have been most influential had ever been near a primitive people. It is as though a chemist had never thought it necessary to enter a laboratory." He remarked that most scholars of traditional religions relied on theories which were often pure conjecture, arbitrary and which had long ago been discredited as naïve introspective guesses. These theories which often relied on inadequate and unreliable facts include mainly the schools of evolutionists, psychologists and sociologists:

> *The theories of writers about primitive religion have not been sustained by research. During the last century what was presented as theory was generally the supposition that some particular form of religion was the most primitive and that from it developed other forms, the development being sometimes presented as a succession of inevitable and well-defined stages. The form of religion presented by a writer as the most primitive was that which he considered to be the most simple, crude, and irrational; to exhibit most conspicuously 'crass materialism','primeval stupidity', 'naïve eudaemonism', 'crude anthropomorphism', or 'daemonic dread'. Many such origins have been propounded: magic, fetishism, manism, animism, pre-animism, mana, totemism, etc. All this was for the most part pure conjecture. The determination of the primordium, in the absence of historical evidences, was as Schleiter, among others, has shown, quite arbitrary... Now, if we take the Nuer..., an account of their religion at least shows the inadequacy of most of these so-called evolutionary theories and exposes the conceit of the assumptions on which they were based.*

The issue of historical evidence is critical here, for as Evans-Pritchard observed Western scholars would have been on firm ground using, for instance, the "Abrahamic religions" which offer an abundant literature to researchers. Instead by choosing the so-called "religions of the primitives" they found themselves into a kind of "epistemological desert" where their imagination could fly freely in building all sorts of a priori speculations:

> *Explanations of primitive religions were often couched at the same time both in terms of historical origins and of psychological origins, which made for great confusion, especially as the logical and chronological senses of 'primitive' and 'origin' were also seldom kept distinct. The psychological explanations were very varied, changing with changes in psychological theory. Intellectualist interpretations were succeeded by emotionalist interpretations and they by psycho-analytical interpretations. Religion was discussed and explained in terms of association of ideas, of personification of natural phenomena, of awe, of thrill, of fear, anxiety and frustration, of projection, and so forth. Most of these theories have long ago been discredited as naïve introspective guesses...All these theories about primitive religions, evolutionary, psychological, and sociological, suffered from a common weakness. The facts on which they were based were both inadequate and unreliable. Indeed, such wide generalizations could only have been put forward at a time when systematic studies of the religions of primitive peoples were lacking, and by persons with no direct, however slight, experience of them. That they were in reality a priori assumptions posited on the facts rather than scientific conclusions derived from them became increasingly apparent as new knowledge of these religions came to light and their variety and complexity were better appreciated. It is indeed surprising that these writers, whose speculations were for the most part attempts to explain religion as a general phenomenon, should have turned their attention exclusively to the religions of present-day primitive peoples or to the earliest forms of the higher religions-to those religions, that is, about which information was the most lacking and the most uncertain-rather than to the contemporaneous world religions with their vast literatures and known histories, to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. Had they done so, however, and, even more, had they conducted research into what these religions mean to ordinary people rather than into how philosophers, theologians, lawyers, mystics, and others have presented them, they would have seen how inadequate their theories were. Also, the religions of*

primitive peoples could not then have been treated, as they so often were, as something so unlike the religions of civilization that they appeared to require a special kind of interpretation and a special vocabulary.

In the light of this analysis and his experience with the Nuer religion, Evans-Pritchard concluded that many scholars who wrote on traditional religions were simply wrong in some of their assertions.

Evans-Pritchard concluded that many scholars who wrote on traditional religions were simply wrong in some of their assertions. One of the naïveté in this regard was the assumption by many influential sociologists of religion, Durkheim included, that the religion of the primitive people was a pure illusion inspired by their ignorance. Evans-Pritchard observed that in this matter scholars were deeply mistaken:

> Sociological theories of religion have frowned on evolutionary and psychological explanations alike. They have rather sought to understand primitive religions, or certain aspects of them, as products of social life. Fustel de Coulanges, Robertson Smith, Durkheim, Mauss, Hertz, and others have shown successfully that many features of these religions can be understood only by sociological analysis, by relating them to the social structure. This is true of Nuer religion...But Durkheim and his colleagues and pupils were not content to say that religion, being part of the social life, is strongly influenced by the social structure. They claimed that the religious conceptions of primitive peoples are nothing more than a symbolic representation of the social order. It is to his society that he prays and makes sacrifice. This postulate of sociologistic metaphysic seems to me to be an assertion for which evidence is totally lacking. It was Durkheim and not the savage who made society into a god.

Another demystification can be found in Evans-Pritchard attack on the value-judgment which led some scholars to claim that traditional religions where "religions of fear and terror" in contrast to the "high religions" like Christianity defined as religions of love and genuine worship:

> The Nuer are undoubtedly a primitive people by the usual standard of reckoning, but their religious thought is remarkably sensitive, refined, and intelligent. It is also highly complex...Certainly one cannot speak of any specifically religious emotion for the Nuer. One can only judge by overt behaviour on occasions of religious activity and, I have noted, on such occasions Nuer may be afraid, anxious, joyful, indifferent, or in other states, according to the situation and the degree to which they are involved in it. Miss Ray Huffman says that their religion is one of fear, and I feel I ought to say that this is the one point with which Dr. Mary Smith finds serious fault in my account of it. She, like Miss Huffman, holds that it is a religion of fear, even of terror. For me this is over-simplification and a misunderstanding. It is true that Nuer, like everyone else, fear death, bereavement, sickness, and other troubles, and that it is precisely in such situations that they so often pray and sacrifice. It can be admitted also that, in that these troubles are manifestations of Spirit, they fear Spirit and wish to be rid of it. But we cannot say that on that account their religion is simply one of fear, which is, moreover, a very complex state of mind, and one not easy to define or assess. On the contrary, it is because Nuer are afraid of these misfortunes that one might speak of their religion as one of hope and comfort.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Nuer Religion*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); pp.311-313.