

**Summer APUSH Requirement - Due August 31st**

Read Chapter 1 of BOTH *The People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn & *America The Last Best Hope* by William Bennett. Fill out the charts below to help you examine Zinn and Bennett's telling of history with these people or groups.

Author	Europeans	Columbus	Native Americans	Las Casas or the Spanish	Other Notes
<b>Bennett</b>	Actions:    Adjectives:    Phrases:    Primary Sources Used:	Actions:    Adjectives:    Phrases:    Primary Sources Used:	Actions:    Adjectives:    Phrases:    Primary Sources Used:	Actions:    Adjectives:    Phrases:    Primary Sources Used:	

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Complete this chart after reading both chapters of Bennett and Zinn. Historical evidence is 1st hand accounts from the time period such as journal entries, government records and art work. Historians are like detectives, they use the evidence to piece together the past. Historians then interpret the evidence. Their interpretation is their view of the past.

Historical Skills	<b>Bennett</b>	<b>Zinn</b>
<b>Evidence</b>	1.    2.    3.	1.    2.    3.
<b>Interpretation</b>	1.    2.    3.	1.    2.    3.

Read the primary source from the Aztecs and Cortes. Write a response to the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What are three significant differences between the Aztecs account of events and Cortes? Be specific.

2. What did Cortes think should be done with the Indians?

3. How does Cortes describe the Aztec in terms of physical appearance, social and religious practices?

4. What can you learn about Cortes from his description of the Aztec?

5. According to BOTH accounts, what helped the Spanish defeat the Aztecs? Be specific. What does Cortes say? What does the Aztec source say?

## A People's History of the United States - Howard Zinn

### Chapter 1: Columbus, The Indians and Human Progress

Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts. He later wrote of this in his log:

They brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things. which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned... They were well-built. with good bodies and handsome features... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

These Arawaks of the Bahama Islands were much like Indians on the mainland, who were remarkable (European observers were to say again and again) for their hospitality, their belief in sharing. These traits did not stand out in the Europe of the Renaissance, dominated as it was by the religion of popes, the government of kings, the frenzy for money that marked Western civilization and its first messenger to the Americas, Christopher Columbus.

Columbus wrote:

As soon as I arrived in the Indies, on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.

The information that Columbus wanted most was: where is the gold? He had persuaded the king and queen of Spain to finance an expedition to the lands, the wealth he expected would be on the other side of the Atlantic-the Indies and Asia, gold and spices. For like other informed people of his time, he knew the world was round and he could sail west in order to get to the Far East.

Spain was recently unified, one of the new modern nation-states, like France, England, and Portugal. Its population, mostly poor peasants, worked for the nobility, who were 2 percent of the population and owned 95 per cent of the land. Spain had tied itself to the Catholic Church, expelled all the Jews, driven out the Moors. Like other states of the modern world, Spain sought gold, which was becoming the new mark of wealth, more useful than land because it could buy anything.

There was gold in Asia, it was thought, and certainly silks and spices, for Marco Polo and others had brought back marvelous things from their overland expeditions centuries before. Now that the Turks had conquered Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, and controlled the land routes to Asia, a sea route was needed. Portuguese sailors were working their way around the southern tip of Africa, Spain decided to gamble on a long sail across an unknown ocean.

In return for bringing back gold and spices, they promised Columbus 10 percent of the profits. governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new tide: Admiral of the Ocean Sea. He was a merchant's clerk from the Italian city of Genoa, part-time weaver (the son of a skilled weaver), and expert sailor. He set out with three sailing ships, the largest of which was the *Santa Maria*, perhaps 100 feet long, and thirty-nine crew members.

Columbus would never have made it to Asia, which was thousands of miles farther away than he had calculated, imagining a smaller world. He would have been doomed by that great expanse of sea. But he was lucky. One-fourth of the way there he came upon an unknown, uncharted land that lay between Europe and Asia-the Americas. It was early October 1492, and thirty-three days since he and his crew had left the Canary Islands, off the Atlantic coast of Africa. Now they saw branches and sticks floating in the water. They saw flocks of birds.

These were signs of land. Then, on October 12, a sailor called Rodrigo saw the early morning moon shining on white sands, and cried out. It was an island in the Bahamas, the Caribbean Sea. The first man to sight land was supposed to get a yearly pension of 10,000 maravedis for life, but Rodrigo never got it. Columbus claimed he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward.

So, approaching land, they were met by the Arawak Indians, who swam out to greet them. The Arawaks lived in village communes, had a developed agriculture of corn, yams, cassava. They could spin and weave, but they had no horses or work animals. They had no iron, but they wore tiny gold ornaments in their ears.

This was to have enormous consequences: it led Columbus to take some of them aboard ship as prisoners because he insisted that they guide him to the source of the gold. He then sailed to what is now Cuba, then to Hispaniola (the island which today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic). There, bits of visible gold in the rivers, and a gold mask presented to Columbus by a local Indian chief led to wild visions of gold fields.

On Hispaniola, out of timbers from the *Santa Maria*, which had run aground, Columbus built a fort, the first European military base in the Western Hemisphere. He called it Navidad (Christmas) and left thirty-nine crew members there, with instructions to find and store the gold. He took more Indian prisoners and put them aboard his two remaining ships. At one part of the island he got into a fight with Indians who refused to trade as many bows and arrows as he and his men wanted. Two were run through with swords and bled to death. Then the *Nina* and the *Pinta* set sail for the Azores and Spain. When the weather turned cold, the Indian prisoners began to die.

Columbus's report to the Court in Madrid was extravagant. He insisted he had reached Asia (it was Cuba) and an island of the coast of China (Hispaniola). His descriptions were part fact, part fiction:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful...the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers of which the majority contain gold...There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals....

The Indians, Columbus reported, "are so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone..." He concluded his report by asking for a little help from their Majesties, and in return he would bring them from his next voyage "as much gold as they need ... and as many slaves as they ask." He was full of religious talk: "Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities."

Because of Columbus's exaggerated report and promises, his second expedition was given seventeen ships and more than twelve hundred men. The aim was clear: slaves and gold. They went from island to island in the Caribbean, taking Indians as captives. But as word spread of the Europeans' intent they found more and more empty villages. On Haiti, they found that the sailors left behind at Fort Navidad had been killed in a battle with the Indians, after they had roamed the island in gangs looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves for sex and labor.

Now, from his base on Haiti. Columbus sent expedition after expedition into the interior. They found no gold fields, but had to fill up the ships returning to Spain with some kind of dividend. In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked the five hundred best specimens to load onto ships. Of those five hundred, two hundred died en route. The rest arrived alive in Spain and were put up for sale by the archdeacon of the town, who reported that, although the slaves were "naked as the day they were born," they showed "no more embarrassment than an animal." Columbus later wrote: "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."

But too many of the slaves died in captivity. And so Columbus, desperate to pay back dividends to those who had invested, had to make good his promise to fill the ships with gold. In the province of Cicao on Haiti, where he and his men imagined huge gold fields to exist, they ordered all persons fourteen years or older to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. When they brought it, they were given copper tokens to hang around their necks. Indians found without a copper token had their hands cut off and bled to death.

The Indians had been given an impossible task. The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So they fled, were hunted down with dogs, and were killed.

Trying to put together an army of resistance, the Arawaks faced Spaniards who had armor, muskets, swords, horses. When the Spaniards took prisoners they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead.

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates, known later as *encomiendas*. They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands. By the year 1515, there were perhaps fifty thousand Indians left. By 1550, there were five hundred. A report of the year 1650 shows none of the original Arawaks or their descendants left on the island.

The chief source—and, on many matters the only source-of information about what happened on the islands after Columbus came is Bartolome de las Casas, who, as a young priest, participated in the conquest of Cuba. For a time he owned a plantation on which Indian slaves worked, but he gave that up and became a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty. Las Casas transcribed Columbus's journal and, in his fifties, began a multivolume *History of the Indies*. In it, he describes the Indians. They are agile, he says, and can swim long distances, especially the women. They are not completely peaceful, because they do battle from time to time with other tribes, but their casualties seem small, and they fight when they are individually moved to do so because of some grievance, not on the orders of captains or kings.

Women in Indian society were treated so well as to startle the Spaniards. Las Casas describes sex relations:

Marriage laws are non-existent men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy or anger. They multiply in great abundance: pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly: up the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirth, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole. Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or at his hands.

The Indians, Las Casas says, have no religion, at least no temples. They live in:

large communal bell-shaped buildings, housing up to 600 people at one time ... made of very strong wood and roofed with palm leaves .... They prize bird feathers of various colors, beads made of fishbones, and green and white stones with which they adorn their ears and lips, but they put no value on gold and other precious things. They lack all manner of commerce. neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions and by the same token covet the possessions of their friends and expect the same degree of liberality....

In Book Two of his *History of the Indies*, Las Casas (who at first urged replacing Indians by black slaves, thinking they were stronger and would survive, but later relented when he saw the effects on blacks) tells about the treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards. It is a unique account and deserves to be quoted at length:

Endless testimonies ... prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives...But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then .... The admiral, it is true, was blind as those who came after him. and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians....

Las Casas tells how the Spaniards “grew more conceited every day” and after a while refused to walk any distance. They “rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry” or were carried on hammocks by Indians running in relays. “In this case they also had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings.”

Total control led to total cruelty. The Spaniards “thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades.” Las Casas tells how “two of



these so-called Christians met two Indian boys one day, each carrying a parrot: they took the parrots and for fun beheaded the boys.”

The Indians' attempts to defend themselves failed, and when they ran off into the hills they were found and killed. So, Las Casas reports, "they suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could turn for help." He describes their work in the mines:

... mountains are stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top thousand times; they dig, split rocks, move stones, and carry dirt on their backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it breaks them: and when water invades the mines, the most arduous task of all is to dry the mines by scooping up pansful of water and throwing it up outside....

After each six or eight months' work in the mines, which was the time required of each crew to dig enough gold for melting, up to a third of the men died.

While the men were sent many miles away to the mines, the wives remained to work the soil, forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants.

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides ... 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. 7000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation.... in this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk ... and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile ... was depopulated. ... My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now tremble as I write. ...

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...."

Thus began the history, five hundred years ago, of the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas. That beginning, when you read Las Casas-even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, as some historians have calculated, or 8 million as others now believe is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure-there is no bloodshed-and Columbus Day is a celebration.

Past the elementary and high schools, there are only occasional hints of something else. Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian, was the most distinguished writer on Columbus, the author of a multivolume biography, and was himself a sailor who retraced Columbus's route across the Atlantic. In his popular book *Christopher Columbus, Mariner*, written in 1954, he tells about the enslavement and the killing: "The cruel policy initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide."

That is on one page, buried halfway into the telling of a grand romance. In the book's last paragraph, Morison sums up his view of Columbus:

He had his faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great-his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer to lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities-his seamanship.

One can lie outright about the past. Or one can omit facts which might lead to unacceptable conclusions. Morison does neither. He refuses to lie about Columbus. He does not omit the story of mass murder; indeed he describes it with the harshest word one can use: genocide.

But he does something else-he mentions the truth quickly and goes on to other things more important to him. Outright lying or quiet omission takes the risk of discovery which, when made, might arouse the reader to rebel against the writer. To state the facts, however, and then to bury them in a mass of other information is to say to the reader with a certain infectious calm: yes, mass murder took place, but it's not that important-it should weigh very little in our final judgments; it should affect very little what we do in the world.

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.

My argument cannot be against selection, simplification, emphasis, which are inevitable for both cartographers and historians. But the map-maker's distortion is a technical necessity for a common purpose shared by all people who need maps. The historian's distortion is more than technical, it is ideological; it is released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual.

Furthermore, this ideological interest is not openly expressed in the way a mapmaker's technical interest is obvious ("This is a Mercator projection for long-range navigation-for short-range, you'd better use a different projection"). No, it is presented as if all readers of history had a common interest which historians serve to the best of their ability. This is not intentional deception; the historian has been trained in a society in which education and knowledge are put forward as technical problems of excellence and not as tools for contending social classes, races, nations.

To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves- unwittingly-to justify what was done. My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse. Judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us

all)-that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks) – the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress-is only one of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. It is as if they, like Columbus, deserve universal acceptance, as if they-the Founding Fathers, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy, the leading members of Congress, the famous Justices of the Supreme Court - represent the nation as a whole. The pretense is that there really is such a thing as "the United States, " subject to occasional conflicts and quarrels, but fundamentally a community of people with common interests. It is as if there really is a "national interest" represented in the Constitution, in territorial expansion, in the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the courts, the development of capitalism, the culture of education and the mass media.

"History is the memory of states," wrote Henry Kissinger in his first book. *A World Restored*, in which he proceeded to tell the history of nineteenth century Europe from the viewpoint of the leaders of Austria and England, ignoring the millions who suffered from those statesmen's policies. From his standpoint, the "peace" that Europe had before the French Revolution was "restored" by the diplomacy of a few national leaders. But for factory workers in England, farmers in France, colored people in Asia and Africa women and children everywhere except in the upper classes, it was a world of conquest, violence, hunger, exploitation-a world not restored but disintegrated.

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history. I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America.

What Columbus did to the Arawarks of the Bahamas, Cortes did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powatans and the Pequots.

The Aztec civilization of Mexico came out of the heritage of Mayan, Zapotec, and Toltec cultures. It built enormous constructions from stone tools and human labor, developing a writing system and a priesthood. It also engaged in (let us not overlook this) the ritual killing of thousands of people as sacrifices to the gods. The cruelty of the Aztecs, however, did not erase a certain innocence, and when a

Spanish armada appeared at Vera Cruz, and a bearded white man came ashore, with strange beasts (horses), clad in iron, it was thought that he was the legendary Aztec man-god who had died three hundred years before, with the promise to return—the mysterious Quetzalcoatl. And so they welcomed him, with munificent hospitality.

That was Hernando Cortes, come from Spain with an expedition financed by merchants and landowners and blessed by the deputies of God, with one obsessive goal: to find gold. In the mind of Montezuma, the king of the Aztecs, there must have been a certain doubt about whether Cortes was indeed Quetzalcoatl, because he sent a hundred runners to Cortes, bearing enormous treasures, gold and silver wrought into objects of fantastic beauty, but at the same time begging him to go back. (The painter Durer a few years later described what he was just arrived in Spain from that expedition—a sun of gold, a moon of silver, worth a fortune.)

Cortes then began his march of death from town to town, using deception, turning Aztec against Aztec, killing with the kind of deliberateness that accompanies a strategy—to paralyze the will of the population by a sudden frightful deed. And so, in Cholulu, he invited the headmen of Cholula nation to the square. And when they came with thousands of unarmed retainers, Cortes's small army of Spaniards, posted around the square with cannon, armed with crossbows, mounted on horses, massacred them, down to the last man. Then they looted the city and moved on. When their cavalcade of murder was over they were in Mexico City, Montezuma was dead, and the Aztec civilization, shattered, was in the hands of the Spaniards.

All of this is told in the Spaniards' own accounts.

In Peru, that other Spanish conquistador Pizarro, used the same tactics, and for the same reasons—the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expedition, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy rising out of feudalism, to participate in what Karl Marx would later call “the primitive accumulation of capital.” These were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries.

In the North American English colonies, the pattern was set early, as Columbus had set it in the island of the Bahamas. In 1585, before there was any permanent English settlement in Virginia, Richard Grenville landed there with seven ships. The Indians he met were hospitable, but when one of them stole a small silver cup, Grenville sacked and burned the whole Indian village.

Jamestown itself was set up inside the territory of an Indian confederacy, led by the chief, Powhatan. Powhatan watched the English settle on his people's land, but did not attack, maintaining a posture of coolness. When the English were going through their “starving time” in the winter of 1610, some of them ran off to join the Indians, where they would be fed. When the summer came, the governor of the colony sent a messenger to ask Powhatan, according to the English account, replied with “noe other than prowde and disdaynefull Answers.” Some soldiers were therefore sent out “to take Revendge.” They fell upon an Indian settlement, killing fifteen or sixteen Indians, burned the houses, cut down the corn growing around

the village, took the queen of the tribe and her children into boats, and then ended up throwing the children overboard “and shoteinge owtt their Braynes in the wter.” The queen was later taken off and stabbed to death.

Twelve years later, the Indians, alarmed as the English settlements kept growing in numbers, apparently decided to try and wipe them out for good. They went on a rampage and massacred 347 men, women, and children. From then on it was total war.

Not able to enslave the Indians, and not able to live with them, the English decided to exterminate them. Edmund Morgan writes, in his history of early Virginia, *American Slavery, American Freedom*:

Since the Indians were better woodsmen than the English and virtually impossible to track down, the method was to feign peaceful intentions, let them settle down and plant their corn wherever they chose, and then, just before harvest, fall upon them, killing as many as possible and burning the corn... Within two or three years of the massacre the English had avenged the deaths of that day many times over.

In the first year of the white man in Virginia, 1607, Powhatan had addressed a plea to John Smith that turned out prophetic. How authentic it is may be taken as, if not the rough letter of that first plea, the exact spirit of it:

I have seen two generations of my people die...I know the difference between peace and war better than any man in my country. I am now grown old, and must die soon; my authority must descend to my brothers, Opitchapan, Opechancanough, and Catatough—then to my two sisters, and then to my two daughters. I wish them to know as much as I do, and that your love to them may be line mine to you. Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions and run into the woods; then you will starve for wronging your friends. Why are you jealous of us? We are unarmed, and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner, and not so simple as not to know that it is much better to eat good meat, sleep comfortably, live quietly with my wives and children, laugh and be merry with the English, and trade for their cooper and hatchets, than to run away from them, and to lie cold in the woods, feed on acorns, roots and such trash, and be so hunted that I can neither eat nor sleep. In these wars, my men must sit up watching, and if a twig break, they all cry out “Here comes Captain Smith!” So I must end my miserable life. Take away your guns and swords, the cause of all our jealousy, or you may all die in the same manner.

When the Pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a “vacuum.” The Indians, he said, had not “subdued” the land, and therefore had only a “natural” right to it, but not a “civil right.” A “natural right” did not have legal standing.

The Puritans also appealed to the Bible, Psalms 2:8: “Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” And to justify their use of force to take land, they cited Romans 13:2: “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

The Puritans lived in uneasy truce with the Pequot Indians, who occupied what is now southern Connecticut and Rhode Island. But they wanted them out of the way; they wanted their land. And they seemed to want also to establish their rule firmly over Connecticut settlers in that area. The murder of a white trader, Indian-kidnaper, and troublemaker became an excuse to make war on the Pequots in 1636.

A punitive expedition left Boston to attack the Narragansett Indians on Block Island, who were lumped with the Pequots. As Governor Winthrop wrote:

They had commission to put to death the men of Block Island, but to spare the women and children, and to bring them away, and to take possession of the island; and from thence to go to the Pequods to demand the murderers of Captain Stone and other English, and one thousand fathom of wampum for damages, etc. and some of their children as hostages, which if they should refuse, they were to obtain it by force.

The English landed and killed some Indians, but the rest hid in the thick forests of the island and the English went from one deserted village to the next, destroying crops. Then they sailed back to the mainland and raided Pequot villages along the coast, destroying crops again. One of the officers of that expedition, in his account, gives some insight into the Pequots they encountered: “The Indians spying of us came running in multitudes along the water side, crying, What cheer, Englishmen, what cheer, what do you come for? They not thinking we intended war, went on cheerfully...”

So, the war with the Pequots began. Massacres took place on both sides. The English developed a tactic of warfare used earlier by Cortes and later, in the twentieth century, even more systematically: deliberate attacks on noncombatants for the purpose of terrorizing the enemy. This is ethnohistorian Francis Jennings’s interpretation of Captain John Mason’s attack on a Pequot village on the Mystic River near Long Island Sound: “Mason proposed to avoid attacking Pequot warriors, which would have overtaxed his unseasoned, unreliable troops. Battle, as such, was not his purpose. Battle is only one of the ways to destroy an enemy’s will to fight. Massacre can accomplish the same end with less risk, and Mason had determined that massacre would be his objective.”

So the English set fire to the wigwams of the village. By their own account: “The Captain also said, We must Burn Them; and immediately stepping into the Wigwam...brought out a Fire Brand, and putting it into the Matts with which they were covered, set the Wigwams on Fire.” William Bradford, in his *History of the Plymouth Plantation* written at the time, describes John Mason’s raid on the Pequot village:

Those that scaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, other rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was fearful sight to see them thus frying in th fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stincke and sente there of, but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enenise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting as enimie.

As Dr. Cotton Mather, Puritan theologian, put it: “It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day.”

The war continued. Indian tribes were used against one another, and never seemed able to join together in fighting the English. Jennings sums up:

The terror was very real among the Indians, but in time they came to mediate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen's most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage; (2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart.

A footnote in Virgil Vogel's book *This Land Was Ours* (1972) says: "The official figure on the number of Pequots now in Connecticut is twenty-one persons."

Forty years after the Pequot War, Puritans and Indians fought again. This time it was the Wampanoags, occupying the south shore of Massachusetts Bay, who were in the way and also beginning to trade some of their land to people outside the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their chief, Massasoit, was dead. His son Wamsutta had been killed by Englishmen, and Wamsutta's brother Metacom (later to be called King Philip by the English) became chief. The English found their excuse, a murder which they attributed to Metacom, and they began a war of conquest against the aggressors, but claimed they attacked for preventive purposes. As Roger Williams, more friendly to the Indians than most, put it: "All men of conscience or prudence ply to windward, to maintain their wars to be defensive."

Jennings says the elite of the Puritans wanted the war; the ordinary white Englishman did not want it and often refused to fight. The Indians certainly did not want war, but they matched atrocity with atrocity. When it was over, in 1676, the English had won, but their resources were drained; they had lost six hundred men. Three thousand Indians were dead, including Metacom himself. Yet the Indian raids did not stop.

For a while, the English tried softer tactics. But ultimately, it was back to annihilation. The Indian population of 10 million that lived north of Mexico when Columbus came would ultimately be reduced to less than a million. Huge number of Indians would die from diseases introduced by the whites. A Dutch traveler in New Netherland wrote in 1656 that "the Indians...affirm, that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the smallpox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they now are, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died" When the English first settled Martha's Vineyard in 1642, the wars on that island, but by 1764, only 313 Indians were left there. Similarly, Block Island Indians numbered perhaps 1,200 to 1,500 in 1662, and by 1774 were reduced to fifty-one.

Behind the English invasion of North America, behind their massacre of Indians, their deception, their brutality, was that special powerful drive born in civilization based on private property. It was a morally ambiguous drive; the need for space, for land, was a real human need. But in conditions of scarcity, in a barbarous epoch of history ruled by competition, this human need was transformed into the murder of whole peoples. Roger Williams said it was

a depraved appetite after the great vanities, dreams and shadows of this vanishing life, great portions of land, land in this wilderness, as if men were in as great necessity and danger for want of great portions of land, as poor, hungry, thirsty seamen have, after a sick and stormy, a long and starving passage. This is one of the gods of New England, which the living and most high Eternal will destroy and famish.

Was all this bloodshed and deceit—from Columbus to Cortes, Pizarro, the Puritans—a necessity for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization? Was Morison right in burying the story of genocide inside a more important story of human progress? Perhaps a persuasive argument can be made—as it was made by Stalin when he killed peasants for industrial progress in the Soviet Union, as it was made by Churchill explaining the bombing of Dresden and Hamburg, and Truman explaining Hiroshima. But how can the judgment be made if the benefits and losses cannot be balanced because the losses are either unmentioned or mentioned quickly?

That quick disposal might be acceptable (“Unfortunate, yes, but it had to be done”) to the middle and upper classes of the conquering and “advanced” countries. But is it acceptable to the poor of Asia, Africa, Latin America, or to the prisoners in Soviet labor camps, or the blacks on urban ghettos, or the Indians on reservations—to the victims of that progress which benefits a privileged minority in the world? Was it acceptable (or just inescapable?) to the miners and railroaders of America, the factory hands, the men and women who died by the hundreds of thousands from accidents or sickness, where they worked or where they lived—casualties of progress? And even the privileged minority—must it not reconsider, with that practicality which even privileged cannot abolish, the value of its privileges, when they become threatened by the anger of the sacrificed, whether in organized rebellion, unorganized riot, or simply those brutal individual acts of desperation labeled crimes by law and the state?

If there *are* necessary sacrifices to be made for human progress, is it not essential to hold to the principle that those to be sacrificed must make the decision themselves? We can all decide to give up something of ours, but do we have the right to throw into the pyre the children of others, or even our own children, for a progress which is not nearly as clear or present as sickness or health, life or death?

What did people in Spain get out of all that death and brutality visited on the Indians of the Americas? For a brief period in history, there was the glory of a Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere. As Hans Koning sums it up in his book *Columbus: His Enterprise*:

For all the gold and silver stolen and shipped to Spain did not make the Spanish people richer. It gave their kings an edge in the balance of power for a time, a chance to hire more mercenary soldiers for their wars. They ended up losing those wars anyway, and all that was left was a deadly inflation, a starving population, the rich richer, the poor poorer, and a ruined peasant class.

Beyond all that, how certain are we that what was destroyed was inferior? Who were these people who came out on the beach and swam to bring presents to Columbus and his crew, who watched Cortes and Pizarro ride through their countryside, who peered out of the forest at the first white settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts?



Columbus called them Indians, because he miscalculated the size of the earth. In this book we too call them Indians, with some reluctance, because it happens too often that people are saddled with names given them by their conquerors.

And yet, there is some reason to call them Indians, because they did come, perhaps 25,000 years ago, from Asia, across the land bridge of the Bering Straits (later to disappear under water) to Alaska. Then they moved southward, seeking warmth and land, in a trek lasting thousands of years that took them into North America, then Central and South America. In Nicaragua, Brazil, and Ecuador their petrified footprints can still be seen, along with the prints of bison, who disappeared about five thousand years ago, so they must have reached South America at least that far back.

Widely dispersed over the great land mass of the Americas, they numbered approximately 75 million people by the time Columbus came perhaps 25 million in North America. Responding to the different environment of soil and climate, they developed hundreds of different tribal cultures, perhaps two thousand different languages. They perfected the art of agriculture, and figured out how to grow maize (corn), which cannot grow by itself and must be planted, cultivated, fertilized, harvested, husked, shelled. They ingeniously developed a variety of other vegetables and fruits, as well as peanuts and chocolate and tobacco and rubber.

On their own, the Indians were engaged in the great agricultural revolution that other peoples in Asia, Europe, Africa were going through about the same time.

While many of the tribes remained nomadic hunters and food gatherers in wandering, egalitarian communes, others began to live in more settled communities where there was more food, larger populations, more divisions of labor among men and women, more surplus to feed chiefs and priests, more leisure time for artistic and social work, for building houses. About a thousand years before Christ, while comparable constructions were going on in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and Zuni and Hopi Indians of what is now New Mexico had begun to build villages consisting of large terraced buildings, nestled in among cliffs and mountains for protection from enemies, with hundreds of rooms in each village. Before the arrival of the European explorers, they were using irrigation canals, dams, were doing ceramics, weaving baskets, making cloth out of cotton.

By the time of Christ and Julius Caesar, there had developed in the Ohio River Valley a culture of so-called Moundbuilders, Indians who constructed thousands of enormous sculptures out of earth, sometimes in the shapes of huge humans, birds, or serpents, sometimes as burial sites, sometimes as fortifications. One of them was 3 ½ miles long, enclosing 100 acres. These Moundbuilders seem to have been part of a complex trading system of ornaments and weapons from as far off as the Great Lakes, the Far West and the Gulf of Mexico.

About A.D. 500, as this Moundbuilder culture of the Ohio Valley was beginning to decline, another culture was developing westward, in the valley of the Mississippi. Centered on what is now St. Louis. It had an advanced agriculture, included thousands of villages, and also built huge earthen mounds as burial and ceremonial places near a vast Indian metropolis that may have had thirty thousand people. The largest mound was 100 feet high, with a rectangular base larger than that of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. In the

city, known as Cahokia, were toolmakers, hide dressers, potters, jewelers, weavers, saltmakers, copper engravers, and magnificent ceramists. One funeral blanket was made of twelve thousand shell beads.

From the Adirondacks to the Great Lakes, in what is now Pennsylvania and upper New York, lived the most powerful of the northeastern tribes, the League of the Iroquois, which included the Mohawks (People of the Flint), Oneidas (People of the Stone), Onondagas (People of the Mountain) Cayugas (People at the Landing), and Senecas (Great Hill Epeople), thousands of people bound together by a common Iroquois language.

In the vision of the Mohawk chief Hiawatha, the legendary Dekaniwidah spoke to the Iroquois: “We bind ourselves together by taking hold of each other’s hands so firmly and forming a circle so strong that if a tree should fall upon it, it could not shake nor break it, so that our people and grandchildren shall remain in the circle in security, peace and happiness.”

In the villages of the Iroquois, land was owned in common and worked in common. Hunting was done together, and the catch was divided among the members of the village. Houses were considered common property and were shared by several families. The concept of private ownership of land and homes was foreign to the Iroquois. A French Jesuit priest who encountered them in the 1650s wrote: “No poorhouses are needed among them, because they are neither mendicants nor paupers... Their kindness, humanity and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common.”

Women were important and respected in Iroquois society. Families were matrilineal. That is, the family line went down through the female members, whose husbands joined the family, while sons who married then joined their wives’ families. Each extended family lived in a “long house.” When a woman wanted a divorce, she set her husband’s things outside the door.

Families were grouped in clans, and a dozen or more clans might make up a village. The senior women in the village named the men who represented the clan at village and tribal councils. They also named the forty-nine chiefs who were the ruling councils for the Five Nations confederacy of the Iroquois. The women attended clan meetings, stood behind the circle of men who spoke and voted, and removed the men from office if they strayed too far from the wishes of the women.

The women tended the crops and took general charge of village affairs while the men were always hunting or fishing. And since they supplied the moccasins and food for warring expeditions, they had some control over military matters. As Gary B. Nash notes in his fascinating study of early America *Red, White, and Black*: “This power was shared between the sexes and the European idea of male dominancy and female subordination in all things was conspicuously absent in Iroquois society.”

Children in Iroquois society, while taught the cultural heritage of their people and solidarity with the tribe, were also taught to be independent, not to submit to overbearing authority. They were taught equality in status and the sharing of possessions. The Iroquois did not use harsh punishment on children;

they did not insist on early weaning or early toilet training, but gradually allowed the children to learn self-care.

All of this was in sharp contrast to European values as brought over by the first colonists, a society of rich and poor, controlled by priests, by governors, by male heads of families. For example, the pastor of a Pilgrim colony, John Robinson, thus advised his parishioners how to deal with their children: “And surely there is in all children...a stubbornness, and stoutness of mind arising from natural pride, which must, in the first place, be broken and beaten down; that so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness, other virtues may, in their time, be built thereon.”

Gary Nash describes Iroquois culture:

No laws and ordinances, sheriffs and constables, judges and juries, or courts or jails—the apparatus of authority in European societies—were to be found in the northeast woodlands prior to European arrival. Yet boundaries of acceptable behavior were firmly set. Though priding themselves on the autonomous individual, the Iroquois maintained a strict sense of right and wrong...He who stole another’s food or acted invalourously in war was “shamed” by his people and ostracized from their company until he had atoned for his actions and demonstrated to their satisfaction that he had morally purified himself.

Not only the Iroquois but other Indian tribes behaved the same way. In 1635, Maryland Indians responded to the governor’s demand that if any of them killed an Englishman, the guilty one should be delivered up for punishment according to English law. The Indians said:

It is the manner amongst us Indians, that if any such accident happen, wee doe redeeme the life of a man that is so slaine, with a 100 armes length of Beades and since that you are heere strangers, and come into our Countrey, you should rather conform yourselves to the Customes of our Countrey, that impose yours upon us...

So, Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world.

They were people without a written language, but with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe’s, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. They paid careful attention to the development of personality, intensity of will, independence and flexibility, passion and potency, to their partnership with one another and with nature.

John Collier, an American scholar who lived among Indians in the 1920s and 1930s in the American Southwest, said of their spirit: “Could we make it our own, there would be an eternally inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace.”

Perhaps there is some romantic mythology in that. But the evidence from European travelers in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, put together recently by an American specialist on Indian

life, William Brandon, is overwhelmingly supportive of much of that “myth.” Even allowing for the imperfection of myths, it is enough to make us question, for that time and ours, the excuse of progress in the annihilation of races, and the telling of history from the standpoint of the conquerors and leaders of Western civilization.

# America The Last Best Hope Volume I: From the Age of Discovery to a World War - William J. Bennett

## Chapter 1: WESTWARD THE COURSE (1492-1607)

*America comes into view slowly for Europeans, just beyond the western horizon. Led by Christopher Columbus, a series of brave and ruthless explorers race to make new discoveries and lay claim to vast regions. Spain seeks empire, as does Portugal. Having freed the Iberian Peninsula from seven hundred years of Muslim rule, they nonetheless retain a dread practice of the Moors—human slavery. France and England come later, settling respectively in Canada and along the Atlantic seaboard. These latecomers, the English, challenge Spain's far-flung empire, eventually seizing control of the seas from their former Iberian masters. Despite fears of the unknown—disease, privations, wild animals, and sometimes hostile natives—the Europeans are irresistibly drawn to the possibilities of new life in the New World.*

### I. Columbus: “The Christ Bearer”

Bartholomeu Dias's two sailing ships limped back into Lisbon harbor in December 1488, bringing startling news: he had succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. The sea route to the riches of India and the Spice Islands of Asia lay open to the seafaring Portuguese. Among those waiting in Lisbon for Dias to bring his report to his king, John II, was a tall, red-haired sea captain from Genoa, Italy, named Christopher Columbus. Dias's triumph would mean more years of disappointment for the Italian mariner. If India could be reached by going east, the king would have little interest in financing Columbus's great enterprise – a westward voyage to the Indies.

The Portuguese had been inching along the coast of Africa for a century. Unlike their neighbors in Spain, who spent most of the fifteenth century fighting to rid their country of the Muslim Moors, Portugal had been united, seeking. Prince Henry the Navigator had established a world famous school at Sagres to bring together all the elements of seamanship, mapmaking, piloting, and navigation. Prince Henry sent out as many as fifteen expeditions to Africa's Cape Bojador, just south of the Canary Islands. His captains all returned claiming that the shallow waters and fierce currents made that point impassable. Finally, Prince Henry ordered Gil Eannes to sail beyond the cape. Eannes did so in 1434 by sailing west into the Atlantic before heading back to Africa's coast. He had at last passed the dreaded cape. This same Eannes ten years later would bring back the first shipload of two hundred African slaves. Gomes Eanes de Zurara, a Portuguese contemporary of Eannes, writes that desperate African mothers would “clasp their infants in their arms, and throw themselves on the ground to cover them with their bodies, disregarding any injury to their own persons so that they could prevent their children from being separated from them.” Zurara tried to lessen the horror of these scenes by assuring readers that the slaves were “treated with kindness and no difference was made between them and free-born servants of Portugal.” He said they were taught trades, converted to Christianity, and intermarried with the Portuguese. Still, he gives us insight when he writes: “What heart could be so hard as not to be pierced by piteous feeling to see that company?” And the presence of light-skinned Africans among them suggested that some, at least, had been bought in markets from “the ubiquitous Muslim salesmen.”

Slavery was an inescapable part of African life. Mansa Musa, a devout Muslim, was the king of Mali (currently part of Niger). He sold fourteen thousand female slaves to finance his journey to Cairo in 1324. The Arabs were always “seizing our people as merchandise,” complained the black king of Bornu (in

present-day Nigeria) to the sultan of Egypt in the 1390s. With the extension of Islam into West Africa's "Gold Coast" came an increasingly vigorous trade in black slaves. The Christian Portuguese emulated this practice. Three hundred years before adoption of the U.S. Constitution, decisions made in Europe and Africa would have great and terrible consequences for a nation as yet unimagined and a people still unnamed.

Portugal's efforts gained momentum when the Muslim Ottoman Turks finally conquered Constantinople in 1453. This meant that city-states like Genoa and Venice would have to deal with the Turks for such prized goods as pepper, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. And it would drive the Atlantic kingdoms outward.

Columbus had had to plead for King John II to give him a safe passage to Lisbon because he feared arrest for his debts. Columbus was surely capable of directing such a venture as he proposed. He had traded as far away as Iceland and Britain and throughout the Mediterranean at a time when most mariners never ventured outside the sight of land. Still, Columbus spent years unsuccessfully appealing for support for his great project.

One thing Columbus did not have to contend with was any notion that the earth was flat. Although a popular misconception, in truth all scholars at that time knew the earth was a sphere. What they did not know was the circumference of the earth. Here, Columbus radically miscalculated. He thought that Japan lay only 2,400 to 2,500 miles west of the Canary Islands.

Columbus heard Dias make his report to Portugal's king and returned, empty-handed, to Spain. These were years of great frustration for Columbus as Spain's Monarchs — Ferdinand and Isabella — concentrated their attention on driving the Moors out of the Iberian Peninsula. Finally, in 1492, the Spanish rulers succeeded in freeing their country of seven hundred years of Moorish domination. Ferdinand and Isabella saw their victory as a gift from God. They styled themselves "their most Catholic majesties." Columbus's devout religious faith clearly helped him in his appeals to them for aid. He took seriously his first name, which means "bearer of Christ." He pleaded for the chance to carry Christianity to the lands beyond the sea.

With three small ships, called caravels, Columbus set sail from the port of Palos on 2 August 1492. Favored by fair winds and clear skies, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and his flagship, the *Santa Maria*, made excellent time. Even under such favorable conditions, Columbus's Spanish sailors soon began to grumble. With steady winds carrying them west, how would they return to Spain? And when the little flotilla entered a dense patch of sargassum (gulf weed), the men fretted about getting stuck in the thickening growths. Most troubling of all, perhaps, was the fact that they were Spaniards and the *Capitán General* was not. Columbus was Genoese, and centuries of foreign occupation had led these sons of Spain to be deeply suspicious of outsiders. Columbus had to deceive his sailors by keeping double logs of the ships' daily distance covered. Even by his false account, however, the men could tell that they had gone farther west than anyone had ever gone before, and farther west than they had been led to believe they would have to go in order to make a landfall.

Threatened with mutiny by his crew, Columbus was forced to promise his captains on October 9 that if they failed to sight land within three days, they would all turn about and head back to Spain. The captains were Martin Alonso Pinzon, commander of the *Pinta*, and his brother, Vicente Yanez Pinzon, who led the *Niña*. They were Spaniards, from a Palos shipping family, and gave Columbus help without which he could never have succeeded. Fortunately for Columbus, stiff breezes sped his ships' way and his crew

began to see clear signs of land ahead. Flights of migrating birds covered the moon. Tree branches with still-green leaves floated by, giving assurances of land just over the horizon.

Suddenly, gale winds and rough seas confronted the expectant mariners on the night of October 11. Determined, Columbus refused to shorten sail. Early in the morning of the twelfth, the cry came from Rodrigo de Triana, the lookout on the *Pinta* — “*Tierra! Tierra!*” Columbus gave orders to stand off the shore to avoid reefs and shoals and, finally, to shorten sail. At dawn, they began their search for a safe place to land.

Columbus, the “admiral” as he was now called, put out in a longboat from the *Santa Maria* and headed into shore. It carried the royal flag of Castile (a great province of Spain) and the banner of the expedition, which was a cross of green surmounted by a crown, all on a white field. The brothers Pinzon joined the shore party in their own ships’ boats. The men knelt in the sand, prayed, and gave thanks to God for their safe passage. Then Columbus named the island — a part of today’s Bahamas — San Salvador, Holy Savior.

Soon, Columbus and his men were exploring — and naming and claiming — other islands in the Caribbean. When natives appeared, docile, nearly naked, and eager to trade with the Europeans, Columbus named them Indians. If not India proper, he was certain he had landed somewhere in Asia — though the language and manners of the people did not correspond with anything travelers since Marco Polo had reported of the Orient.

Significantly, many of the Indians wore small gold nose rings. Columbus had had to assure his seamen that the voyage would be worth their while. They were not the ones who would receive the glory, they knew. Nor would they achieve high office or status for the great discovery. Gold would have to suffice, and Columbus soon felt the pressure to find suitable quantities of the precious metal.

Equally significant, natives also introduced Columbus’s men to tobacco and taught them to inhale its smoke. Tobacco use was ubiquitous throughout the Americas, and the Spaniards found smoking pleasurable. Here, in the earliest hours of the encounter between Europeans and native peoples, the exotic leaf loomed large. It would eventually become the cash crop for a number of American states and a major financial interest for more than five hundred years.

On an island he would name *La Isla Española* — The Spanish Island (or Hispaniola), Columbus found more Indians eager to trade. Importantly, these Indians seemed to have plenty of gold.

So willing, so easily plied with cheap trinkets — like little brass hawk’s bells worth only pennies in Spain — these Indians were vulnerable to the Spaniards in many ways. They could be dominated as slaves and put to work mining gold. What’s more, the native women seemed sexually open. To sailors who had had no contact with the opposite sex for months at a time and who had little fear of venereal disease, the sensual enticements proved irresistible. Syphilis has been traced to this first encounter of Columbus’s men and the aboriginal peoples of the Caribbean. A contemporary of Columbus, Bishop Las Casas, thinks Indians who came back to Barcelona from the first voyage gave the disease to “women of the town,” a euphemism for prostitutes, who then gave it to Spanish soldiers. From there, it spread throughout Europe and the world. The Indians, on the other hand, contracted smallpox and measles from the Spaniards; these diseases devastated populations with no previous exposure and built-up immunity.

When the *Santa Maria* wrecked on a coral reef off Hispaniola on Christmas Day 1492, Columbus’s men offloaded supplies, trading truck and food. A local chieftain, or cacique, named Guacanagari ordered his people to help retrieve the cargo of the stricken flagship. Columbus noted in his journal that the Indians

guarded his supplies, taking not so much as “a lace point.” From the timbers of the wrecked vessel, Columbus built a fortress he named *La Navidad* — Christmas — that became the first European habitation in America. And when he prepared to return to Spain, he had little trouble recruiting volunteers to stay behind. The prospect of gold proved a powerful incentive.

The *Niña* and the *Pinta* departed 18 January 1493 from Samana Bay for the return trip. Columbus was not what we would call a capable navigator. The sextant and accurate chronometers were still centuries away. But he was an extraordinarily good mariner, with a keen sense of water and wind. He knew how to recognize currents and signs of land. His early calculations had placed Cuba at the same latitude as Cape Cod. Fortunately, he knew enough to correct that. Most of the return voyage passed uneventfully until, on February 12, the two ships sailed into a fierce winter gale. The admiral and Vicente Pinzon took turns guiding the *Niña*'s helmsman. Each wave threatened to capsize the little vessel. There was no hope of rescue in such seas. Columbus's men vowed to make a pilgrimage to the nearest shrine of the Virgin Mary if they survived the storm.

When they sighted land in the Portuguese Azores, it took three days before Columbus could come to a safe anchorage near a village called *Nossa Senhora dos Anjos* (Our Lady of the Angels). True to their vow, Columbus's men hurried to the local church, but while praying at the altar in their nightshirts as a sign of penitence, they were arrested! Portuguese authorities suspected the Spanish seamen had been sailing to prohibited parts of the African coast. With his crewmen in jail, Columbus — still aboard ship — threatened to bombard the town if they were not freed. Fortunately, the captain of the port finally arrived after being delayed by yet another storm and was sufficiently persuaded that Columbus and his men had indeed come back from the *otro mundo* — the other world — and had not been poaching on Portugal's rich African preserves. He generously provided them with supplies before their departure. The incident — almost a farce — nonetheless shows the extreme lengths to which the Portuguese were willing to go to protect their monopoly on the growing slave trade.

Setting out for the mainland in the *Niña*, Columbus again encountered severe storms. When he finally saw land again, it was at the mouth of Portugal's Tagus River. Menaced by a Portuguese warship, he applied for permission from the king to land. King João II — who had twice refused to support Columbus's great enterprise — not only granted the permission and ordered the ship's resupply, but he summoned the admiral to report to him at a monastery thirty miles away. Some of the king's jealous courtiers, realizing at last what Spain would gain from this amazing discovery, secretly advised him to have Columbus assassinated. When the Indians who had joined the crew showed the king a crude map of their islands made from beans, João cried out, “Why did I let slip such a wonderful chance?” Despite the king's disappointment, no attempt was made on Columbus's life.

Even on leaving Portugal, Columbus's claim to be the discoverer of the New World was not secure. Martin Alonso Pinzon, captain of the *Pinta*, had missed most of the storms west of the Azores and thus the delays they caused in Columbus's return. Having arrived first, he sent word across Spain of his coming and asked Ferdinand and Isabella for permission to report directly to them. But the monarchs replied that they would hear the news first from their Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Meanwhile, Columbus made up for lost time and docked in Palos harbor shortly before the *Pinta* arrived. Columbus would not be robbed of the credit by his Spanish sea captain. Within a month, a broken Pinzon died at his country house near Palos.

In April 1493, Columbus came to the Alcazar, the royal palace, to formally make his report to Ferdinand and Isabella. He knelt before the king and queen, but they arose and gave him the honor of a seat at Isabella's side. The Indians were presented and the assembly was awed not only by gold jewelry, but also



by such oddities as the parrots that had never been seen in Europe. Less impressive were the “spices” Columbus presented, for the fabled riches of the Indies were not to be seen in his collection of common American plants. Then the company adjourned for a Te Deum at the chapel royal. The last line — *O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded* — moved the brave mariner to tears.

If only Columbus had stopped there, at that chapel! Nothing that would happen in the remaining thirteen years or his life would add to his fame. Much that he did detracted from it. He proceeded to lead a second, third, and fourth voyage to the New World. The second voyage — the largest — proceeded with seventeen ships. Although he would continue to explore and claim rich islands in the Caribbean, and to range as far as modern-day Panama on the North American mainland, his record as an administrator was a dismal one. After the third voyage, he had even been arrested and returned to Spain in chains! Columbus added immeasurably to mankind’s store of knowledge. Yet he never quite realized that his *otro mundo* was not, in fact, a part of Asia, but an entirely new continent.

The tragic turn in his relations with the Indians cannot be avoided. More importantly, the relations of the Indians with the Spanish settlers for whom Columbus opened the way would turn vicious. The gentle Tainos were not the only new people Columbus encountered. The fierce Caribs — whose warlike ways included cannibalism — presented a challenge to the benign intentions with which Columbus had set forth. Soon, the failure to produce a rich trove of spices reduced the Spanish colonial enterprise to grubbing for gold and enslaving Indians in order to get it. Columbus appealed, vainly, for a better quality of settler. After the initial voyage, in which only three crewmen had been recruited from Spain’s prisons, many of those who came to the New World were criminals. Who else could be recruited? When tales of the Indians’ wiping out the first settlement at Navidad came back to Spain, the initial enthusiasm for conversion of the Indians cooled.

The results of Columbus’s voyages of discovery are truly incalculable. From this new land, Europe received maize, tomatoes, peppers, peanuts, yams, and turkeys. The introduction of the potato, alone, revolutionized European agriculture. Millions were fed from these new crops of the New World. This ironically fueled European dominance. Europeans introduced into the New World wheat, apples, grapes, as well as pigs and horses. Horses, in particular, became the basis for an entire hunting culture among the Indians of the Great Plains. The courageous and incredibly skilled Plains Indians rode horses that were all descended from those brought over by the Spaniards.

Columbus’s discoveries opened the way for a “triangle trade” that would develop over the centuries. Ships from England and Europe would travel to the Gold Coast of Africa to pick up slaves for the dreaded, deadly Middle Passage westward across the Atlantic to the Caribbean and, in time, to the English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard of North America. American colonists would then exchange raw materials — tobacco, cotton, and timber — for slaves — and the ships would return eastward across the Atlantic.

To the modern complaint that Columbus brought slavery to the New World and that the Europeans’ diseases wiped out indigenous peoples, a response is due. Slavery was a pervasive fact of life among the Europeans, but also particularly among the Arabs, the Africans, and the Indians themselves. In Asia, slavery had always existed. It seems hard to credit an attack on Columbus that singles him out for what was then a fairly universal practice. As much as we deplore slavery today, we cannot ignore the moral development of the West from our present vantage point outside the context of history. It was from the very experience of administering a far-flung empire that Spanish scholars began to elaborate universal doctrines of human rights that led, eventually, to the abolition of slavery in the West. A counter-challenge

might be offered: Who, in Columbus's time, did not practice slavery? One might conclude that far from being slavery's worst practitioners, westerners led the world to end the practice.

The very frightful consequences of smallpox and measles — which would continue to take their toll among Indians well into the nineteenth century — could hardly have been known by the European explorers of Columbus's day. Very little of the germ theory of disease was then known. And when it did become known, vaccines to protect against them were the product of that European culture — that same exploring, seeking spirit of Columbus — that is now so widely attacked. Even if Europeans of Columbus's time had had the scientific knowledge to test for diseases, the only way to have avoided infecting innocent aboriginal peoples would have been to have stayed at home in Spain.

Critics also seem to have discounted the devastation of Europe in the previous century brought on by the Plague. Estimates are that *one third* of Europeans died as a result of this epidemic that scholars believe originated in the Gobi Desert in the early 1300s. The Black Death, as bubonic plague was known, had been brought to Europe from Asia. Much *less fashionable* than the moral indictment against Western nations for carrying disease to the New World is the counterclaim against Asia — and equally absurd.

No small part of the denunciation of Columbus and his successors in our times is an update of the *leyenda negra* — the Black Legend — that Protestant countries applied to the Catholic Spaniards. As the gifted writer G. K. Chesterton put it, many of the English histories of Spanish exploration and conquest reflected “the desire of the white man to despise the Red Indian and the flatly contradictory desire of the Englishman to despise the Spaniard for despising the Red Indian.”

Not all the Spaniards despised. Father Antonio de Montesinos addressed outraged settlers on the island of Hispaniola in 1511, barely a decade after Columbus's last voyage:

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. This voice says that you are in mortal sin and live and die in it because of the cruelty and tyranny that you use against these innocent peoples. Tell me, by what right or justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible slavery? By what authority do you wage such detestable wars on these peoples who lived mildly and peacefully in their own lands, in which you have destroyed countless numbers of them with unheard of murder and ruin? ...Are these Indians not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as you love yourselves?

And Montesinos was not as alone as his words would indicate.

Bartolome de Las Casas became the leading Spanish cleric *opposing* harsh measures against the Indians. He even went so far, in his famous *Confessionario*, to advise priests to deny absolution to any settlers who owned or abused aboriginal peoples. Las Casas engaged in a lengthy debate with the leading scholar of his day, Aristotle scholar Juan Gines de Sepulveda of Valladolid. Sepulveda argued that the Indians were what the great philosopher had termed “slaves by nature.” Las Casas disputed this and argued that the Indians, because they had been denied access to the Scriptures, were not fully morally culpable for the horrors of cannibalism and human sacrifice. For his unwavering advocacy of the cause of the Indians, Las Casas was called *defensor de los indios*.

Montesinos and Las Casas were not entirely voices crying in the wilderness. Both were active in pressing the Spanish monarchs to approve measures to help the Indians. But it was a long way from Spain to the New World. Speculation about the nature of the Indians — were they fully human? — led such Spanish thinkers as the Dominican friar Francisco de Vitoria to write extensively on the nature of human rights. He deserves to be ranked along with Suarez and Grotius as founders of modern international law. Among Vitoria's firm principles were these:

*Every Indian is a man and thus capable of attaining salvation or damnation.*

*The Indians may not be deprived of their goods or power on account of their social backwardness.*

*Every man has the right to the truth, to education...*

*By natural law, every man has the right to his own life and to physical and mental integrity.*

*The Indians have the right not to be baptized and not to be forced to convert against their will.*

Critics have pointed out that these morally sophisticated principles were rarely honored in Latin America. That may be true, but where else were such principles even enunciated and defended? And it should be remembered that these leading thinkers were churchmen, not governors. Few of today's critics would argue for the state to be run by the church. Still, might the criticism of Spanish conduct in Latin America be not that it was too Catholic, but that it was not Catholic enough?

We can see in these impassioned writings and sermons by Spanish Christians the same moral earnestness and reasoned appeals that would be echoed by American evangelicals three hundred years later in their crusade against Negro slavery in the South. We shouldn't be surprised. They read the same Bible.

Rare is the European and virtually nonexistent is the Asian, African, or Arab writer who can be found to anguish about the condition and treatment of subject peoples. Is it possible that the Spaniards are being pilloried in history not because they were without conscience but because their consciences led them to cry out against the conduct of their own countrymen? The most stinging indictments of Spanish conduct remain those written in Spanish by Spanish witnesses.

The treatment of criminals and heretics at the time gives some idea of the level of public sensibility. In most of the kingdoms of Europe, a convicted traitor would be sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. This process involved hanging the unfortunate man until he was nearly unconscious. Pulled down, the victim would be disemboweled and his entrails burned before him. Finally, his body would then be pulled apart by four horses hitched to his extremities. Heretics fared little better. Burned at the stake, a slow and excruciating process of execution, they could consider themselves blessed if friends had secreted bags of gunpowder beneath their death robes to hasten their tortured end.

These medieval practices show a civilization that had not yet developed the sense of justice and mercy that was to come later. It is anachronistic and vindictively selective to indict European explorers and colonizers for failing to meet our modern standards of human rights.

## II. THE ScRAMBLE FOR EMPIRE

Pope Alexander VI, a member of the notorious Borgia clan, had been supported for election as pontiff by Ferdinand and Isabella. Not surprisingly, therefore, the bull he promptly issued 4 May 1493 divided the world between Spain and Portugal on terms highly favorable to Spain. Prompted by Portuguese protests, and eager to keep their lines of communication with their newfound lands clear, the Spanish agreed to push the line of demarcation 1,175 miles west in the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494. Thus, Portugal would be able to claim Brazil as well as vast territories in Africa, India, and the East Indies. This might have ended contention in Catholic Europe had other strong-willed monarchs not seen their opportunities. France's King Francis I was unimpressed. He noted that the "sun shone for him as for others:" and he wittily replied to the pope's carving up by saying he would like to see Adam's will, "to learn how he had divided up the world!" (Cenu Indians in the Americas were even less reverent Their reaction to the news that the pope had divided up the world: "The Pope must have been drunk!")

But that very sober decision by the pope had vast ramifications for Americans hundreds of years later. It meant, among other things, that Spain and Portugal would not contend for mastery of the North American continent.

As news of Columbus's discoveries sped throughout Europe-aided by the recent invention of the printing press-rulers realized that they would also have to seek new trading routes to the Indies or be forced to see that lucrative traffic monopolized by Spain and Portugal. Continuing their drive eastward, the Portuguese succeeded in 1498 in reaching India by an all-water route. The voyage of Vasco da Gama returned to Lisbon in 1499 with the true spices and real contact with the rulers of India that Columbus had markedly failed to achieve. Only two of da Gama's four ships-the San Gabriel and the Berrio-made it back, and only 55 of 170 seamen survived the arduous trip, but the foundations of Portugal's empire-the first and the last of European states to rule beyond the waves-were laid.

John Cabot tried to do for England's Henry VII what Columbus had done for Spain's monarchs. Cabot-like Columbus a native of Genoa persuaded the notoriously stingy first Tudor king to back his attempt to find a Northwest Passage to the Indies. In 1497, Cabot's little ship Matthew landed in North America at what he called the New Found Land. Although he stayed less than a month, established no permanent settlements, and brought back no riches, Cabot's claim would form the basis of later English dominance of the continent. Attempting for a second time in 1498 to reach the fabled Indies via North America, Cabot and all hands disappeared.

Gradually, Europeans realized that the New World was not a part of Asia at all, but an entirely new land mass, two new continents. What should it be called? An Italian adventurer provided the answer. Amerigo Vespucci was the son of a wealthy family from Florence. The Vespuccis were connected to the powerful Medici family that produced rulers of the Florentine Republic and popes. Amerigo wrote lurid reports of his voyages to South America. "I was more skilled than all the shipmasters of the world," Vespucci boasted shamelessly. He vastly exaggerated the full extent of his travels, conveniently leaving out of his accounts any reference to the brave captains under whom he sailed.

But Amerigo could spin a tale. One of his stories told of a band of native women and girls who came down to the shore, along the coast of today's Brazil. Amerigo's captain decided to charm these naked women by sending his handsomest young sailor onto the beach to talk to them and offer them gifts. Charmed they may have been, but Amerigo related in vivid terms how one large female suddenly clubbed the young sailor to death and how the Portuguese crew watched in horror as these *Amazons* proceeded to roast and eat the young sailor's body! Amerigo was the first European writer since Columbus to describe the plants and animals and people of the New World in such vibrant and unforgettable detail. Europe was both horrified and fascinated by such stories. Small wonder that when a German mapmaker, Martin Waldseemuller, decided to publish a book of engravings in 1507, he placed a large AMERICA on his map of the southern continent. Very quickly the name of this adventurous scamp was taken up as the name for both new continents.

France was not to be left out. In 1524, the cultured Italian Giovanni da Verrazano succeeded in getting backing from King Francis I and a consortium of bankers to seek a passageway to *Cathay*—as China was then known-by sailing west. Verrazano sailed the little *Dauphine* (Princess) up the coast of North

America identifying the broad outlines of the continent. Although he failed to penetrate the natural harbors—Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and New York—he confirmed that the North American continent was a new world and not just a promontory of Asia. He did, however, sail around New York's Staten Island, describing the narrows that today bear his name. He misidentified the Outer Banks of North Carolina as an isthmus leading to the Pacific, but he kept detailed navigational records that aided significantly in mapmaking.

Verrazano hoped to establish a New France in this New World, a colonial empire that would stretch from Florida to Newfoundland. He braved a mutiny on his second voyage to the Americas, fooling his men into going the distance to Brazil. There, he was able to obtain a valuable cargo of rare woods to compensate his backers for the lack of Chinese goods. His final voyage, in 1528, ended in tragedy as he came ashore on an island we presume to be Guadeloupe. He was set upon by warlike Caribs in sight of his brother, Girolamo, and his boat crew. The Caribs promptly hacked him to pieces and ate him. His early death and his failure to locate any sea route to China caused Francis I and the French to lose interest for a time. But his explorations did have the effect of turning English and French attentions once again toward a Northwest Passage to the Orient.

More than merely unimpressed, Francis I was also distracted. At one point, he was even imprisoned. Still, he was able to give his support to the vitally important voyages of Jacques Cartier. The father of New France took a northerly course of discovery toward North America in 1534, in his flagship *La Grande Hermine* (The Big Weasel) after an Atlantic crossing of barely three weeks. He spent his days exploring Newfoundland, the Labrador, and Prince Edward Island. The great Gulf of St. Lawrence—the gateway to Canada—he named for the Roman Christian martyr. His men deftly avoided icebergs and feasted on polar bear. Cartier's skill as a mariner is unsurpassed. He never lost a ship. He never lost a sailor at sea. In his three visits to North America, he entered and left fifty uncharted harbors without incident. His title was *Capitaine et Pilote de Roy*. King Francis could make him a captain, but it was this hardy Breton sailor's own skill that made him a *pilot*. As a tribute to Cartier's seamanship and his fairness as a skipper, sailors from St. Malo (a seaport in Brittany, in Northwest France) were eager to ship with him. Although Cartier's discoveries—including the fur-rich interior of Quebec (from the Huron word for "narrowing of the river")—would form the solid basis for the French empire in America, the immediate results of his voyages were meager. He brought back cargoes of pyrite-fool's gold—and quartz, hardly the diamonds he had hoped for. He fell for tall tales of fabulous riches in a kingdom of the Saguenay told him by Donnacona, a chieftain of the Hurons (and he kidnapped the unfortunate Indian to let him tell his story to the king). Soon, France would be embroiled in religious warfare. Francis I's successor, Henry II, had no interest in a Canadian venture despite the fact that furs and fish could have vastly enriched his realm. And, for a century, cynical Frenchmen dismissed anything phony as a *diamant de Canada* ("a diamond from Canada").

Meanwhile, Spain quickly followed up Columbus's discoveries with major action on land and sea early in the sixteenth century. From their base on the island of Hispaniola that Columbus discovered, Spanish ships ranged throughout the Caribbean. Explorer Ponce de Leon (called an *adelantado*—advancer) sought out new lands, sailing along the peninsula he named *Florida* (actually, *Pascua Florida*—flowery Easter) in 1513. From there, he advanced to the Florida Keys and to Yucatan, in Mexico. When Vasco Nunez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama, also in 1513, he was the first European to see the Pacific Ocean.

A generation after Columbus, another foreign mariner was about to add luster to the annals of Spanish exploration and discovery. Ferdinand Magellan was a Portuguese. "God gave the Portuguese a small country to live in but a wide world to die in" goes the old adage, and Magellan was to dramatize it by sailing around the world. His great voyage of *circumnavigation* almost ended before it began. Rebuffed by the king of Portugal, just as Columbus had been, Magellan sought and received support from Spain's ruler, Emperor Charles V. As his ships were being outfitted for the journey in a shipyard in Seville, he made the mistake of leaving his family banners flying from the stern of his ship while it was being overhauled. The Spanish flags had been taken down for repainting. Magellan was a nobleman whose family flag clearly showed his Portuguese origins. This was taken as a great affront by the fiercely proud people of Seville. A mob rushed in, threatening to lynch Magellan on the spot. With sword points at his throat, he coolly informed the leaders of the mob that the incoming tide threatened to swamp his ship—a vessel owned by Charles V. If the emperor's ship was lost, *they* would be held responsible. Finally, the mob retreated. Magellan would show this courage and self-command time and again throughout his voyage.

Setting out in 1519 with a flotilla of five creaking ships with crews numbering 250, Magellan was bound for the Spice Islands (modern-day Indonesia) by going west. There he expected to find supplies of dove, peppercorn, and nutmeg. Virtually unavailable any other place on earth, their scarcity made their trade highly lucrative.

Magellan planned to find a strait at the extreme southern tip of South America. But soon, he was in danger. Wintering over on the coast of Argentina, the men began to grumble. Three of his ships mutinied in Port San Julian. He had received word warning him that the Spanish captains, who hated him, planned to kill him. Captains Cartagena, Mendoza, and Quesada accused Magellan of violating royal instructions in taking them so far south. Magellan had told them he would rather die than turn back. He sent his man Espinosa to the *Victoria* with a message to Captain Mendoza ordering him to cease his defiance and obey orders. Mendoza laughed when he read the letter, which proved a mistake. Espinosa immediately grabbed Mendoza by the beard and stabbed him to death—exactly as Magellan had commanded him. Magellan then subdued another mutinous ship, the *Concepcion*, with naval gunfire and boarded her, taking Captain Quesada as prisoner. The revolt soon collapsed.

Magellan had Mendoza's body quartered—gruesomely cut into four parts—and "cried" (exhibited) through the fleet as a warning to everyone against mutiny. Quesada was hanged and Cartagena was spared—for the moment. Soon, however, Captain Cartagena was found to be stirring up new discontent, along with a priest. Magellan had the two men tried and marooned. Abandoned on the shores of Argentina, they would die of exposure, starvation, or Indian attack. They were last seen "kneeling at the water's edge, bawling for mercy."

Pressing on, after the loss of one of his ships, Magellan finally entered "the strait that shall forever bear his name." In October and November of 1520, Magellan carefully made his way through the hazards of these uncharted waters. Strong currents and sudden storms make it one of the most dangerous passages on earth, even today. The Strait is anything but *straight*; it is a maze of treacherous waters and dangerous rocks. Magellan's task was like the threading of a dozen needles. Magellan had to retrace his steps,

searching in vain for one of his four remaining ships. He did not know that the *San Antonio* had headed back to Spain.

His fleet now reduced to three ships, Magellan headed out into sea he named *Pacific*. Ahead of him lay open waters. Magellan and his men prayed regularly and well they might. Though they did not realize it, they faced a journey more than twice the distance faced by Columbus. Here, Magellan proved his mettle. Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian member of the crew, kept a detailed journal and wrote of him: "He endured hunger better than all the rest...and more accurately than any man in the world, he understood dead reckoning and celestial navigation:

Pigafetta tells us of the privations of the voyage to Guam:

We were three months and twenty days without any kind of fresh food. We ate biscuit which was no longer biscuit but powder of biscuit swarming with worms. It stank strongly of the urine of rats. We also ate some ox hides that covered the top of the main yard to prevent the yard from chafing the shrouds. Rats were sold for one-half ducado [about \$1.16 in gold] apiece and even then we could not get them.

The expedition would not have survived at all had Magellan not first hugged the coast of Chile before striking out across the Pacific. Pigafetta realized this: "Had not God and his blessed mother given us so good weather, we would all have died of hunger." The trip was three times longer than anyone could have expected. No reliable charts or maps existed.

Finally landing on Guam 6 March 1521, Magellan found his three ships overwhelmed by swarms of natives who, though friendly, carried off much of the cargo of trade. The ships stayed only long enough to resupply and then made for the Spice Islands. Within a week, Magellan had reached the Philippines in the region of Leyte Gulf. The king of Cebu persuaded Magellan that he had converted from Islam to Christianity and sought the aid of the Spaniards in a battle with a neighboring island of Mactan. Magellan's men pleaded with him not to go, but he felt a duty to aid a fellow Christian. When he came ashore, he left his three ships anchored too far out to give him assistance. He and a small, loyal party, including Pigafetta, were soon overwhelmed by Mactanese warriors using poisoned arrows and scimitars. Magellan covered the retreat of his men, but was cut down, pitching face down in the sand. Pigafetta faithfully records:

When they wounded him, he turned back many times to see whether we were all in the boats. Then, seeing him dead, we wounded made the best of our way to the boats, which were already pulling away. But for him, not one of us ... would have been saved.

Magellan was mourned by Pigafetta as "our mirror, our light, our comfort and our true guide", But his mission had not ended. Captain Juan Sebastian del Cano took command of the *Victoria*, abandoning both the *Concepcion* and the *Trinidad*. Sailing ever westward, del Cano cleared the Cape of Good Hope, only to face on the homeward leg the imprisonment of nearly half his crew by the Portuguese at the Cape Verde Islands. Limping back into Seville on 8 September 1522, Captain del Cano commanded only eighteen sea-weary men of the *Victoria*. As they had promised, the men immediately walked barefoot to the cathedral, clad only in long shirts and each one bearing a candle to do penance and to give thanks for their survival. Thus ended, nearly three years after they set sail, the first voyage of circumnavigation of

the earth. Spain was unchallenged as the leading sea power of the world. Magellan's historic voyage coincided with, even as it symbolized, Spain's new command of the seas.

Her ability to exercise control over her American empire depended entirely on *admiralty*—the ability to control the sea.

There followed, quickly, the incredible Spanish military campaigns against the Aztecs in Mexico by Hernan Cortes (1521) and the Incas of Peru by Francisco Pizarro (1535). These conquistadors (conquerors) used methods of cruelty and deception to bring down the two great native empires. The advanced cultures dwarfed in numbers the tiny expeditionary forces of Spanish warriors who boldly advanced on their capitals. But the native rulers were seemingly unprepared for the determination and ruthlessness of their conquerors.

The Aztec practice of human sacrifice stunned the conquerors. Each year, thousands of victims would be taken to the top of magnificent pyramids and their hearts would be cut out and offered up to the Aztec gods. In the case of the Aztecs, Cortes appeared to many of the tribes they held in bondage as one of their deities, *Quetzalcoatl*. Cortes shrewdly took advantage of this to lead a revolt against the imperial Aztecs. The Spaniards, mounted on horseback and armored, could attack native forces almost with impunity, but even with this advantage they might have been swallowed up by the sheer numbers of their foes. That these tiny forces could impose their will on such cultures can only be attributed to their sheer nerve and will.

Pizarro will forever be remembered as the man who took the Inca emperor Atahualpa hostage, demanding roomfuls of gold and silver in ransom. When the ransom was paid in full, Pizarro accused Atahualpa of fomenting a revolt and had him garroted. History records the image of the "weeping Inca" against the name of Francisco Pizarro. That Atahualpa had recently killed his own brother in a civil war hardly mitigates the evil of Pizarro's deed. Few could have mourned when Pizarro was himself murdered in 1541.

In a period of less than twenty years, the shocking brutality of Cortes and Pizarro added vast regions of Central and South America to the burgeoning Spanish empire. Soon, however, a new Latin American civilization would arise on the ashes of the old. This new culture would grow and enrich and ennoble the world into our own time.

But Spain would soon see a potent rival. Cold, remote, and small in territory, population, and resources, England was vastly overshadowed by Spain and the other continental powers in the 1500s. In a matter of decades all that would change.

### III. THE RISE OF ENGLAND

Just as Spain's war with the Moors had caused her to fall behind Portugal in the fifteenth century, England in the sixteenth century found domestic affairs a barrier to effective exploration and colonization. King Henry VIII succeeded to his father Henry VII's throne in 1509. Henry VIII was young, athletic, well educated, and charming. Soon he married his brother Arthur's widow, the Spanish princess Catherine of



Aragon. Catherine was deeply religious, like her parents, the famed *reyes catolicos* Ferdinand and Isabella.

With such a connection, Henry VIII might have been expected to lead a bold, adventurous program of exploration. But it was not so. It was matters at home that occupied him. In twenty years of marriage, Queen Catherine gave the king no sons and only one daughter, Mary. Although a woman could legally inherit England's throne, it was thought to be a dangerous prospect.

Desperate for a male heir to steady his insecure Tudor family dynasty, Henry began to cast about for a way to end his marriage. He appealed to the pope to grant him an annulment. An *annulment* would mean that the marriage of King Henry and Queen Catherine had never been valid. It was awkward, to say the least, because Henry had had to ask the pope for a special dispensation to marry his brother's widow in the first place. The pope, who refused Henry's increasingly urgent pleas, may have been influenced by the threats made against him and church lands in Italy by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who just happened to be Queen Catherine's *nephew*.

Henry knew that *two* could play that game. He seized Catholic Church lands in England and redistributed them to his nobles to buy their support. He broke with Rome and created his own national church, which he called the Church of England—*Anglican*. Henry's obedient parliament soon confirmed him as "Supreme Head of the Church in England." Boldly, he retained the title "Defender of the Faith" that the pope had given him a few years before when he violently, even obscenely, attacked the Reformer Martin Luther in a widely read pamphlet.

King Henry brooked no interference. He sent the famous Sir Thomas More and John Cardinal Fisher—both highly revered Catholics—to the block. More, author of *Utopia*, was a leading humanist scholar. In an act of little more than judicial murder, the two were beheaded for opposing the king's divorce and remarriage to Lady Anne Boleyn.

But Henry was soon disappointed by his new wife. Their marriage lasted only three years and produced yet another daughter. He soon had Queen Anne framed, tried, and sent to the Tower of London on a charge of adultery with five different men, including her own brother. Henry's only mercy was to import from France an executioner who used a supposedly painless silver sword to sever the beautifully thin neck of Anne Boleyn. Her death left young Princess Elizabeth without a mother.

Desperate for an heir, the king—to wed again—the very moment the Tower's cannon boomed the signal that Anne's head was off. The third wife proved the charm. Jane Seymour provided the frantic king with his long sought boy.

Henry was devastated when Queen Jane died, mere weeks after their son's birth. He was to marry three more wives, but the increasingly diseased, indulgent king sired no more children.

Europe was in the throes of the Protestant Reformation when King Henry VIII died in 1547. His son, Edward VI, always sickly, was only nine when his father died. Edward VI reigned only for six years but

he never ruled. His arch—Protestant Privy Council—a body of powerful nobles suppressed the Catholic Church in England. The famous Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* was issued in the young king's name.

King Edward VI died in 1553 at age fifteen. Now, the devoutly Catholic daughter of King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, Mary Tudor, came to the throne. Queen Mary I attempted to bring England back into the Catholic fold. When her attempts at persuasion failed, she resorted to force. She began to burn "heretics" at the stake. Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer was sent to the Tower of London. His "sonorous phrases" had formed the basis for the *Book of Common Prayer*. He had written the Anglican Church's statement of belief, the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Now, in 1556, he was tortured and forced to recant his Protestant beliefs. Queen Mary was not satisfied that Cranmer had returned to the Catholic Church. She condemned him to death by burning. Cranmer was executed at Oxford. There, he cast the hand that had signed the recantation into the flames first, dramatically saying: "This is that hand that hath offended."

Other leading Anglicans were executed during the brief, increasingly stormy reign of the queen who came to be known as Bloody Mary. Queen Mary was hated by the people of England. Her marriage to Spain's King Philip II only deepened their suspicion of her, even though the deeply Catholic Philip tried to persuade Mary to end her bloody persecutions of Protestants. Philip knew they were only turning the English people against their queen. Philip did succeed in having the Princess Elizabeth released from the Tower of London, where she was in grave danger of being murdered. When Philip left England to return home to Spain, Mary thought she was pregnant. Mary *prayed* she was pregnant. But it was only a cancerous tumor that caused her belly to swell. She died, childless, friendless, alone, and unmourned, in 1558 at age forty-two.

When she received word of her half-sister's death, twenty-five-year-old Princess Elizabeth fell to her knees and recited in Latin the words of the Psalm: "This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes"

Although she suppressed the public celebration of the Catholic Mass, Queen Elizabeth was unwilling to search out secret Catholics. "I have no window to look into men's souls," she famously said. Despite a number of plots against her life—encouraged by the pope and framed by Jesuit priest—Elizabeth continued to rely on the loyalty of her subjects, including not a few great Catholic noble families. In turn, Elizabeth wanted no religious turmoil in England. She ran the Church of England as a Protestant monarch, but she wanted to stop arguments *among* the fractious Protestants. After breaking from the Catholic Church, Lutherans and Calvinists disputed with Baptists and with each other over the meaning of communion and baptism. Elizabeth cleverly glossed over such theological disputes. About the Lord's Supper, she said:

*Christ was the word that spake it.  
He took the bread and break it;  
And what his words did make it  
That I believe and take it.*

Elizabeth had an amazing knack for politics and public relations. She turned her greatest liabilities—that she was a woman and unmarried—into her great strengths. She cultivated her image as "the virgin Queen," and fostered a cult of personality that dubbed her "Gloriana." English arts and letters flourished under her

rule. Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Spencer made everlasting contributions of world literature. Elizabeth created a heightened sense of English nationalism and remained highly popular throughout her long reign (1558-1603). She looked and acted the part, dressing extravagantly and displaying herself before the people as she went forward on as many as twenty-five "royal progresses"—visits to great estates around the country. These visits served a dual purpose; they were also a shrewd way of avoiding the cost of maintaining a splendid court, since her hosts were expected to feed and house Elizabeth and her hundreds of nobles and retainers. To keep France and Spain at bay, she held out for nearly twenty years the prospect of her hand in marriage. To undermine their power, she financed rebellions against Spanish rule in the Netherlands and gave aid to the French Protestants, the Huguenots. One of the most remarkable personalities in history, Elizabeth relied on her people's affection to secure her throne: "There is no jewel, be it of never so high a price, which I set before this jewel; I mean your love," she told Parliament.

Queen Elizabeth encouraged the explorations of Sir Humphrey Gilbert (Newfoundland) and the colonization schemes of Sir Walter Raleigh (in the land he named *Virginia* in her honor). After the pope issued a decree absolving English Catholics from obedience to her in 1570 (thus inviting her overthrow or assassination), Elizabeth waged a cold war against Spain. Excitement over the discoveries in the northern voyages of Sir Martin Frobisher faded when the ore he brought back from Canada proved to be, like that of Cartier, worthless.

Still, the idea of an English greatness at home as well as beyond the seas would not die. Shakespeare's immortal writings fired men's imagination:

*This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands,—  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.*

Francis Drake resolved to equal Magellan's great feat and challenge Spain's rule of the seas in the process. Sailing in his flagship, the *Golden Hind*, he led his flotilla southwest to the coast of Argentina. Drake had to contend, as Magellan had, with mutiny. Master Doughty, who had soldiered with Drake in Ireland, was convicted and executed at Puerto San Julian—the same place Magellan had suppressed his mutineers. Drake continued on through the Strait and then headed north. He raided the Chilean coast, seizing silver and gold and capturing Spanish vessels laden with rich cargoes.

Drake led his "sea dogs" on a merry adventure. Spanish writers long considered him no more than a pirate, Spanish grandees (the noblemen) called him *El Draque* (The Dragon), but documents unveiled in the last century from Spanish archives showed that his prisoners uniformly praised his humanity and good nature. He did not, however, hesitate to burn Spanish towns and loot magnificent Catholic churches.

Chasing the Spanish treasure ship *Cacafuego*, he took time to grab another prize that yielded a golden crucifix and a clutch of emeralds that would later appear in Queen Elizabeth's crown. A Spanish prisoner wrote sympathetically of Drake that "he has a fine countenance, ruddy of complexion and fair beard. He has the mark of an arrow wound in his right cheek ... in one leg he had the ball of an arquebus...He read the Psalms and preached..." (Apparently not dwelling long on that part of the Good Book that says, "Thou shalt not steal.")

Drake explored the coast of California before setting off across the Pacific. By duplicating Magellan's feat, Drake gave a great boost to English self-confidence. The *Golden Hind* returned to London in November 1580, following three years at sea. She off-loaded silver into the Tower of London by night. Queen Elizabeth showed her great favor by knighting Drake on the deck of his flagship, in 1581. This act of open defiance of Spain's Philip II prompted the king to commence plans for an invasion of England.

Drake was to play a crucial role in his famous raid on Cadiz in 1587. He burned the city and the fleet that Philip II was then preparing for his invasion, a daring exploit known to history as "singeing the beard of the king of Spain." He delayed for a year the fateful clash. The decade of mounting tension between England and Spain came to a head when Elizabeth's ministers lured her captive cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots, into a plot against the queen's life. Brought to trial and beheaded, Mary Stuart became in death what she never was in life, a martyr to the Catholic cause. Elizabeth spat defiance. She played the part of warrior queen to the hilt:

I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of England, too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms: to which, rather than any dishonor should grow by me, I myself will take up arms.

Supported by Pope Sixtus V, who renewed the excommunication of Elizabeth and subsidized his costs, Spain's King Philip II in 1588 assembled the greatest war fleet in history—the Armada. One hundred thirty ships— great galleons, galleases, galleys, and merchant ships—and thirty thousand men (of whom three-quarters were soldiers primed for the invasion) proceeded up the English Channel. They were set upon by the English sea dogs—Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher. The Armada was greatly hampered by ineffective leadership. Philip II had insisted that the duke of Medina Sidonia assume command. Brave and honest as he was, the duke was a soldier, completely inexperienced in the ways of the sea. The duke could not rely on the support of English Catholics who, in the main, were energetic in their defense of their island against their fellow Catholics from Spain.

Drake and his fellows set upon the great and ponderous ships of the Armada with fire ships. Less maneuverable, burdened by horses and cattle and great masses of supply, the Spanish ships were almost helpless against the fierce English warships. When a great storm came up, the Spanish Armada was dispersed. Many of the ships were wrecked on the forbidding coasts of Scotland and Ireland. The victory of the English against the Armada broke the back of Spain's sea power, and the empire began its centuries-long decline. This clash marked the transfer of admiralty—command of the seas—from great Spain to little England. English sea dogs could go where they wished with confidence. From this time until 1941—with one important local exception—it was England that "ruled the waves." That temporary

exception—the waters off Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781—would have the greatest consequences for America.

Dominance over the seas assured that England in the next century would be able to send more and more colonists to North America without fear of Spanish interference. It gave the English a sense of national destiny. They knew the battering storm had as much to do with the wreck of the Armada as did English fighting skill. "God blew and they were dispersed," read the official medallion Elizabeth ordered struck to commemorate England's great victory.

And the English believed it.

## The Aztecs and Cortes – Primary Source

### NATIVE AMERICAN ACCOUNTS

*Source 10 from Miguel Leon-Portilla, ed., The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico, trans. Lysander Kemp: (Boston: Beacon Press :1962) pp. viii-ix, 30, 92-93, 128-144.*

#### 10. Cortes's Conquest of Tenochtitlan.

Year 1-Canestalk. The Spaniards came to the palace at Tlayacac. When the Captain; arrived at the palace, Motecuhzoma sent the Cuetlaxteca to greet him and to bring him two suns as gifts. One of these suns was made of the yellow metal, the other of the white. The Cuetlaxteca also brought him a mirror to be hung on his person, a gold collar, a great gold pitcher, fans and ornaments of quetzal feathers and a shield inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

The envoys made sacrifices in front of the Captain. At this, he grew very angry. When they offered him blood in an "eagle dish," he shouted at the man who offered it and struck him with his sword. The envoys departed at once....

When the sacrifice was finished, the messengers reported to the king. They told him how they had made the journey, and what they had seen, and what food the strangers ate. Motecuhzoma was astonished and terrified by their report, and the description of the strangers' food astonished him above all else.

He was also terrified to learn how the cannon roared, how its noise resounded, how it caused one to faint. and grow deaf. The messengers told him: "A thing like a ball of stone comes out of its entrails: it comes out shooting sparks, and raining fire. The smoke that comes out with it has a pestilent odor, like that of rotten mud. This odor penetrates even to the brain and causes the greatest discomfort. If the cannon is aimed against a mountain, the mountain splits and cracks open. If it is aimed against a tree, it shatters the tree into splinters. This is a most unnatural sight, as if the tree had exploded from within."

The messenger also: "Their trappings and arms are all made of iron. They dress in iron and wear iron casques on their heads. Their swords are iron; their bows are iron; their, shields are iron; their spears are iron. Their deer carry them on their backs wherever they wish to go. These deer, our lord, are as tall as the roof of a house.

"The strangers' bodies are completely covered, so that only their faces can be seen. Their skin is white, as if it were made of lime. They have yellow hair, though some of them have black. Their beards are long and yellow, and their mustaches are also yellow. Their hair is curly, with very fine strands.

"As for their food, it is like human food. It is large and white, not heavy. It is something like straw, but with the taste of a cornstalk, of the pith of a cornstalk. It is a little sweet, as if it were flavored with honey; it tastes of honey, it is sweet-tasting food.

"Their dogs are enormous, with flat ears and long, dangling tongues. The color of their eyes is a burning yellow; their eyes flash fire and shoot off sparks. Their bellies are hollow, their flanks long and narrow. They are tireless and very powerful. They bound here and there, panting, with their tongues hanging out. And they are spotted like an ocelot."

When Motecuhzoma heard this report, he was filled with terror. It was as if his heart had fainted, as if it had shriveled. It was as if he were conquered by despair....

Then the Captain marched to Tenochtitlan. He arrived here during the month called Bird, under the sign of the day 8-Wind. When he entered the city, we gave him chickens, eggs, corn, tortillas and drink.

We also gave him firewood, and fodder for his deer. Some of these gifts were sent by the lord of Tenochtitlan, the rest by the lord of Tlatelolco.

Later the Captain marched back to the coast, leaving Don Pedro de Alvarado--The Sun--in command.

During this time, the people asked Motecuhzoma how they should celebrate their god's fiesta. He said: "Dress him in all his finery, in all his sacred ornaments."

During this same time, The Sun commanded that Motecuhzoma and Itzcohuatzin, the military chief of Tlatelolco, be made prisoners. The Spaniards hanged a chief from Acolhuacan named Nezahualquenzin. They also murdered the king of Nauhtla, Cohualpopocatzin, by wounding him with arrows and then burning him alive.

For this reason, our warriors were on guard at the Eagle Gate. The sentries from Tenochtitlan stood at one side of the gate, and the sentries from Tlatelolco at the other. But messengers came to tell them to dress the figure of Huitzilopochtli. They left their posts and went to dress him in his sacred finery: his ornaments and his paper clothing.

When this had been done, the celebrants began to sing their songs. That is how they celebrated the first day of the fiesta. On the second day they began to sing again, but without warning they were all put to death. . . . They ran in among the dancers, forcing their way to the place where the drums were played. They attacked the man who was drumming and cut off his arms. Then they cut off his head, and it rolled across the floor.

They attacked the celebrants, stabbing them, striking them, with their swords. They attacked some of them from behind, and these fell instantly to the ground with their entrails hanging out. Others they beheaded: they cut off their heads, or split their heads to pieces.

They struck others in the shoulders, and their arms were torn from their bodies. They wounded some in the thigh and some in the calf. They slashed others in the abdomen, and their entrails all spilled to the ground. Some attempted to run away, but their intestines dragged as they ran; they seemed to tangle their feet in their own entrails. No matter how they tried to save themselves, they could find no escape....

The Sun treacherously murdered our people on the twentieth day after the Captain left for the coast. We allowed the Captain to return to the city in peace. But on the following day we attacked him with all our might, and that was the beginning of the war.

The Spaniards attempted to slip out of the city at night, but we attacked furiously at the Canal of the Toltecs, and many of them died. This took place during the fiesta of Tecuilhuitl. The survivors gathered first at Maztintamalco and waited for the stragglers to come up.

Year 2-Flint. This was the year in which Motecuhzoma died. Itzcohuatzin of Tlatelolco died at the same time.

The Spaniards took refuge in Acueco, but they were driven out by our warriors. They fled to Teuhcalhueyacan and from there to Zoltepec. Then they marched through Citlaltepec and camped in Temazcalapan, where the people gave them hens, eggs and corn. They rested for a short while and marched on to Tlaxcala.

Soon after, an epidemic broke out in Tenochtitlan. . . . It began to spread during the thirteenth month and lasted for seventy days, striking everywhere in the city and killing a vast number of our people. Sores erupted on our faces, our breasts, our bellies; we were covered with agonizing sores from head to foot.

The illness was so dreadful that no one could walk or move. The sick were so utterly helpless that they could only lie on their beds like corpses, unable to move their limbs or even their heads. They could not lie face down or roll from one side to the other. If they did move their bodies, they screamed with pain.

A great many died from this plague, and many others died of hunger. They could not get up to search for food, and everyone else was too sick to care for them, so they starved to death in their beds.

Some people came down with a milder form of the disease; they suffered less than the others and made a good recovery. But they could not escape entirely. Their looks were ravaged, for wherever a sore broke out, it gouged an ugly pockmark in the skin. And a few of the survivors were left completely blind.

*[Here the account describes Cortes's siege of Tenochtitlan, a siege that was successful due in part to bickering among the Aztecs themselves (in which several leaders were put to death), in part to the panic caused by Cortes's cannon, and in part to a number of nearby Indian peoples whom the Aztecs had dominated turning on their former masters and supporting the Spanish. Of course, the devastating smallpox epidemic and general starvation due to the siege also played important roles.]*

Broken spears lie in the roads; we have torn our hair in our grief.

The houses are roofless now, and their walls are red with blood.

Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas, and the walls are splattered with gore.

The water has turned red, as if it were dyed, and when we drink it, it has the taste of brine.

We have pounded our hands in despair against the adobe walls, for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.

The shields of our warriors were its defense, but they could not save it.

We have chewed dry twigs and salt grasses; we have filled our mouths with dust and bits of adobe; we have eaten lizards, rats and worms. . . .

Cuauhtemoc was taken to Cortes along with three other princes. The Captain was accompanied by Pedro de Alvarado and La Malinche.

When the princes were made captives, the people began to leave, searching for a place to stay. Everyone was in tatters, and the women's thighs were almost naked. The Christians searched all the refugees. They even opened the women's skirts and blouses and felt everywhere: their ears, their breasts, their hair. Our people scattered in all directions. They went to neighboring villages and huddled in corners in the houses of strangers.

The city was conquered in the year 3~House. The date on which we departed was the day I-Serpent in the ninth month. . . .

*[The account next describes Cortes's torture of the remaining Aztec leaders in an attempt to find where the Aztecs' treasures were hidden.]*

When the envoys from Tlatelolco had departed, the leaders of Tenocntitlan were brought before the Captain, who wished to make them talk. This was when Cuauhtemoc's feet were burned. They brought him in at daybreak and tied him to a stake.

They found the gold in Cuidahuactanco, in the house of a chief named Itzpotonqui. As soon as they had seized it, they brought our princes--all of them bound--to Coyoacan.



About this same time, the priest in charge of the temple of Huitzilopochtli was put to death. The Spaniards had tried to learn from him where the god's finery and that of the high priests was kept. Later they were informed that it was being guarded by certain chiefs in Cuauhchichilco and Xaltocan. They seized it and then hanged two of the chiefs in the middle of the Mazatlan road....

They hanged Macuilxochitl, the king of Huitzilopochco, in Coyoacan. They also hanged Pizotzin, the king of Culhuacan. And they fed the Keeper of the Black House, along with several others, to their dogs.

And three wise men of Ehecatl, from Tezcoco, were devoured by the dogs. They had come only to surrender; no one brought them or sent them there. They arrived bearing their painted sheets of paper. There were four of them, and only one escaped; the other three were overtaken, there in Coyoacan....

### **1. Selections from Cortes's Letters.**

. . . According to our judgment, it is credible that there is everything in this country which existed in that from whence Solomon is said to have brought the gold for the Temple, but, as we have been here so short a time, we have not been able to see more than the distance of five leagues inland, and about ten or twelve leagues of the coast length on each side, which we have explored since we landed; although from the sea it must be more, and we saw much more while sailing.

The people who inhabit this country, from the Island of Cozumel, and the Cape of Yucatan to the place where we now are, are a people of middle size, with bodies and features well proportioned, except that in each province their customs differ some piercing the ears, and putting large and ugly objects in them, and others piercing the nostrils down to the mouth, and putting in large round stones like mirrors, and others piercing their under lips down as far as their gums, and hanging from them large round stones, or pieces of gold, so weighty that they pull down the nether lip, and make it appear very deformed. The clothing which they wear is like long veils, very curiously worked. The men wear breech-cloths about their bodies, and large mantles, very thin, and painted in the style of Moorish draperies. The women of the ordinary people wear, from their waists to their feet, clothes also very much painted, some covering their breasts and leaving the rest of the body uncovered. The superior women, however, wear very thin shirts of cotton, worked and made in the style of rochets. Their food is maize and grain, as in the other Islands, and potuyuca, as they eat it in the Island of Cuba, and they eat it broiled, since they do not make bread of it; and they have their fishing, and hunting, and they roast many chickens, like those of the Tierra Firma, which are as large as peacocks.

There are some large towns well laid out, the houses being of stone, and mortar when they have it. The apartments are small, low, and in the Moorish style, and, when they cannot find stone, they make them of adobes, whitewashing them, and the roof is of straw. Some of the houses of the principal people are very cool, and have many apartments, for we have seen more than five courts in one house, and the apartments very well distributed, each principal department of service being separate. Within them they have their wells and reservoirs for water, and rooms for the slaves and dependents, of whom they have many. Each of these chiefs has at the entrance of his house, but outside of it, a large court-yard, and in some there are two and three and four very high buildings, with steps leading up to them, and they are very well built; and in them they have their mosques and prayer places, and very broad galleries on all sides, and there they keep the idols which they worship some being of stone, some of gold, and some of wood, and they honour and serve them in such wise, and with so many ceremonies that much paper would be required to give Your Royal Highnesses an entire and exact description of all of them. These houses and mosques wherever they exist, are the largest and best built in the town, and keep them very well adorned, decorated with feather work and well-woven stuffs, and with all manner of ornaments. Every day, before they

undertake any work, they burn incense in the said mosques, and sometimes they sacrifice their own persons, some cutting their tongues and others their ears, and some hacking the body with knives; and they offer up to their idols all the blood "which flows, sprinkling it on all sides of those mosques, at other times throwing it up towards the heavens, and practising many other kinds of ceremonies, so that they undertake nothing without first offering sacrifice there.

They have another custom, horrible, and abominable, and deserving punishment, and which we have never before seen in any other place, and it is this, that, as often as they have anything to ask of their idols, in order that their petition may be more acceptable, they take many boys or girls, and even grown men and women, and in the presence of those idols they open their breasts, while they are alive, and take out the hearts and entrails, and burn the said entrails and hearts before the idols, offering that smoke in sacrifice to them. Some of us who have seen this say that it is the most terrible and frightful thing to behold that has ever been seen. So frequently, and so often do these Indians do this, according to our information, and partly by what we have seen in the short time we are in this country, that no year passes in which they do not kill and sacrifice fifty souls in each mosque; and this is practiced, and held as customary, from the Isle of Cozumel to the country in which we are now settled. Your Majesties may rest assured that, according to the size of the land, which to us seems very considerable, and the many mosques which they have, there is no year, as far as we have until now discovered and seen, when they do not kill and sacrifice in this manner some three or four thousand souls. Now let Your Royal Highnesses consider if they ought not to prevent so great an evil and crime, and certainly God, Our Lord, will be well pleased, if through the command of Your Royal Highnesses, these peoples should be initiated and instructed in our Very Holy Catholic Faith, and the devotion, faith, and hope, which they have in their idols, be transferred, to the Divine Omnipotence of God: because it is certain, that, if they served God with the same faith, and fervour, and diligence, they would surely work miracles. <sup>[L]</sup>~~[SEP]~~It should be believed, that it is not without cause that God, Our Lord, has permitted that these parts should be discovered in the name of Your Royal Highnesses, so that this fruit and merit before God should be enjoyed by Your Majesties, of having instructed these barbarian people, and brought them through your commands to the True Faith. As far as we are able to know them: we believe that, if there were interpreters and persons who could make them understand the truth of the Faith, and their error, many, and perhaps all, would shortly quit the errors which they hold, and come to the true knowledge; because they live civilly and reasonably, better than any of the other peoples found in these parts.

To endeavour to give to Your Majesties all the particulars about this country and its people, might occasion some errors in the account, because much of it 'we have not seen, and only know it through information given us by the natives; therefore we do not undertake to give more than what may be accepted by Your Highnesses as true. Your Majesties may, if you deem proper, give this account as true to Our Very Holy Father, in order that diligence and good system may be used in effecting the conversion of these people, because it is hoped that great fruit and much good may be obtained; also that His Holiness may approve and allow that the wicked and rebellious, being first admonished, may be punished and chastised as enemies of Our Holy Catholic Faith, which will be an occasion of punishment and fear to those who may be reluctant in receiving knowledge of the Truth; thereby, that the great evils and injuries they practise in the service of the Devil, will be forsaken. Because, besides what we have just related to Your Majesties about the men, and women, and children, whom they kill and offer in their sacrifices, we have learned, and been positively informed, that they are all sodomites, and given to that abominable sin. In all this, we beseech. Your Majesties to order such measures taken as are most profitable to the service of God, and to that of Your Royal Highnesses, and so that we who are here in your service may also be favoured and recompensed...

. . . Along the road we encountered many signs, such as the natives of this province had foretold us, for we found the high road blocked up, and another opened, and some pits, although not many, and some of the city streets were closed, and many stones were piled on the house tops. They thus obliged us to be cautious, and on our guard.

I found there certain messengers from Montezuma, who came to speak with those others who were with me, but to me they said nothing, because, in order to inform their master, they had come to learn what those who were with me had done and agreed with me. These latter messengers departed, therefore, as soon as they had spoken with the first, and even the chief of those who had formerly been with me also left.

During the three days I remained there I was ill provided for, and every day was worse, and the lords and chiefs of the city came rarely to see and speak to me. I was somewhat perplexed by this, but the interpreter whom I have, an Indian woman of this country whom I obtained in Putunchan, the great river I have already mentioned in the first letter to Your Majesty, was told by another woman native of this city, that many of Montezuma's, people had gathered close by, and that those of the city had sent away their wives, and children, and all their goods, intending to fall upon us and kill us all; and that, if she wished to escape, she should go with her, as she would hide her. The female interpreter told it to that Geronimo de Aguilar, the interpreter whom I obtained in Yucatan, and of whom I have written to Your Highness, who reported it to me. I captured one of the natives of the said city, who was walking about there, and took him secretly apart so that no one saw it, and questioned him; and he confirmed all that the Indian woman and the natives of Tascaltecal had told me. As well on account of this information as from the signs I had observed, I determined to anticipate them, rather than be surprised, so I had some of the lords of the city called, saying that I wished to speak with them, and I shut them in a chamber by themselves. In the meantime I had our people prepared, so that, at the firing of a musket, they should fall on a crowd of Indians who were near to our quarters, and many others who were inside them. It was done in this wise, that, after I had taken these lords, and left them bound in the chamber, I mounted a horse, and ordered the musket to be fired, and we did such execution that, in two hours, more than three thousand persons had perished.

In order that Your Majesty may see how well prepared they were, before I went out of our quarters, they had occupied all the streets, and stationed all their men, but, as we took them by surprise, they were easily overcome, especially as the chiefs were wanting, for I had already taken them prisoners. I ordered fire to be set to some towers and strong houses, where they defended themselves and assaulted us: and thus I scoured the city fighting during five hours, leaving our dwelling place which was very strong, well guarded, until I had forced all the people out of the city at various points, in which those five thousand natives of Tascaltecal and the four hundred of Cempoal gave me good assistance...