Chapter 1

The Early Empire

INTRODUCTION

We have seen that the word 'Britain' reflects a long history of conquest, colonization, and consolidation. As British influence expanded overseas this process continued on a larger scale, and the acquisition of an empire became an important feature of British identity. Some features of this imperial identity would remain remarkably constant, based as they were on the geography of the British Isles. The ocean was England's means of communication, trade, and warfare with the outside world, and England's first empire was an empire of the sea.

The Portuguese led European overseas exploration and trade in the fifteenth century, and English sailors often joined Portuguese voyages to west Africa, Asia, and Brazil. But by the sixteenth century the greatest colonial power was Spain, whose conquests in the Caribbean and central/south America were vast; Spain then acquired control of the Portuguese empire when it incorporated Portugal itself between 1580 and 1640. The Dutch were active, too, dominating the East Indies spice trade and ousting the Portuguese from most of the west African coast by the end of the sixteenth century.

England's ventures were modest by comparison: a brief exploration of the north-east North American seaboard by John Cabot in 1497; summer settlements in Newfoundland for the north Atlantic fishery; and exploration/privateering voyages against the Spanish by men like Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 encouraged further expansion, but the Dutch presence in south-east Asia forced the English East India Company to obtain footholds in south Asia to gain access to the valuable spice trade.

Meanwhile, the united Spanish/Portuguese monarchy proved unable to prevent incursions in its traditional areas of influence. The expansion of Dutch and English influence in Africa was a case in point. Portuguese exploration and trade with Africa flourished in the fifteenth century, and there were a chain of Portuguese outposts along the African coasts, trading for gold, ivory, spices, and slaves. But these small settlements led a precarious existence: isolated, devastated by disease, and dependent on the goodwill of neighbouring African leaders. After its conquest by Spain, Portugal saw its overseas interests neglected in favour of Spanish colonies, and the Dutch and

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English (among others) were quick to take advantage of this situation. An English trading post at Cormantine in west Africa was augmented by the seizure of Cape Coast Castle from the Dutch in 1664. By this time the slave trade was driving European expansion in west Africa; Portugal's domination of the trade to the Spanish American colonies—Spain had no base of its own in Africa—declined during its struggle for independence from Spain in the early seventeenth century. Spain was forced to turn to the Protestant maritime powers, Holland and England, to maintain its supply of African slaves. This ready market, plus that of its own plantation colonies in the West Indies and North America, allowed several English chartered companies and a large number of individual traders to build up England's share of the slave trade.

England's first successful plantation in North America was Virginia, refounded (after several false starts) in 1607. Modelled on the plantations owned by English and Scots in Ireland, the Virginia settlement—like all of Britain's early settlements in the Americas—was based on British royal patronage. Groups of merchants, aristocrats, and gentry obtained grants of land from the Crown which gave permission to settle colonists and begin farming. The same process characterized British expansion in the West Indies where islands claimed by Spain, such as Barbados, were colonized by the British during the 1620s and 1630s. Britain also took the Spanish colony of Jamaica by force in 1655. By the end of the seventeenth century British plantations were growing a wide variety of crops including tobacco and sugar. In return for the granting of land, the British government required the colonists to trade exclusively with Britain and one another, and to use only British shipping. Even after most of the merchant venturers had relinquished control, and the colonies became virtually self-contained settlements, the restrictions on non-British trade and transport remained. This economic exclusiveness—known as protectionism—was a prominent characteristic of the early British empire.

England's other trans-Atlantic colonies were not always founded for purely commercial reasons. Newfoundland was occupied only during the fishing season. English Puritans, Quakers, and Catholics established settlements in what is now the north-eastern United States, attempting to create godly communities based on particular social and theological principles. The first of these colonies was at Plymouth in 1620. But these idealistic settlements took place within the usual context of international rivalry and economics. They were bulwarks of Englishness between the Spanish territories to the south, and New France (later Quebec) to the north. They were also reinforcements against the Dutch, whose creation of 'New Netherland' around the Hudson River had threatened to divide areas of influence that England regarded as its own.

The seventeenth century featured several wars between Britain and the Netherlands, and a British victory in 1664 renamed New Amsterdam as New York, giving Britain control of the entire north-eastern seaboard (see Map 1).

By 1700 there were eleven English colonies along this coast, from Maine to the Carolinas. France, however, retained a strong inland presence from its bases in New France and Acadia. To counter this, and to claim a larger share of the profitable fur trade, Charles II chartered the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 to exploit all of the lands drained by rivers flowing into the Bay: a third of the North American continent. From bases established in the hinterland, it was hoped, England could circumvent the French settlements and find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean and the riches of Asia. The inevitable clash with France in North America, in the Pacific, and elsewhere, would dominate the eighteenth-century empire.

1.1 AN EMPIRE OF THE SEA

In the earliest English voyages of exploration we can see close connections between the English Crown, seaborne trade, and imperial expansion. King Henry VII despatched John Cabot in 1497 to investigate the Atlantic coast of what is now Canada, but Cabot's findings were minimal (Extract 1). It was during the sixteenth century that explorers, fishermen, and traders enhanced England's knowledge of the overseas world. By Queen Elizabeth's reign and the time of Shakespeare, the framework for an imperial identity was already in place: maritime power, the quest for prestige, and a sense of Protestant destiny (Extract 2). The defeat of the Spanish naval armada, and the decline of Portuguese influence at the hands of the Dutch in the sixteenth century, provided England with opportunities for expansion.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, England's imperial activities became more systematic as chartered companies of merchant adventurers began exploiting overseas resources and, for the first time, established territorial claims (with local consent) around their small trading outposts in Asia and Africa. Many of these companies were short-lived but others, notably the East India Company (EIC) established in 1600, would become wealthy and influential (Extract 3). The EIC is a good example of a monopolistic company whose charter prohibited trading by any other organization within its huge territory in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In other parts of the empire, especially in North America and the West Indies, the Crown still controlled the framework for trade, but too many people were involved for monopolies to be enforced. The relationship between trade and settlement was also different in various parts of the early empire. The plantations of North America and the West Indies required settlement, but the fur trade of the Hudson's Bay Company could be conducted mainly through existing indigenous networks. In Asia and west Africa, too, the English did business with existing economic and political systems.

The early modern empire is often called 'mercantilist' because of the prominent role of the State in encouraging commerce for the benefit of the nation and the Crown. After the disruptions of the Civil War and Interregnum of 1642–60, one of the first acts of Charles II was to strengthen the Crown's control of imperial commerce (Extract 4). England would monopolize the transportation and importation of colonial produce through its chartered companies in the East, and the enforced used of English domestic shipping in the Atlantic, and in return overseas settlements would enjoy exclusive access to English markets and goods. The seventeenth century 'Laws of Trade', which included the new Navigation Act, codified this policy for the first time and culminated in the creation of a Board of Trade in 1696 to oversee and regulate colonial affairs.

The key was the identification of empire with the State. Imperial commerce brought revenue to the Crown and gave England exclusive access to its own supplies of valuable imports like spices, tobacco, and sugar. These imports produced customs and excise revenues, filling royal coffers depleted by war. The protectionist system also generated an immense network of patronage, allowing monarchs to reward their friends and raise additional funds. Historian Hilary Beckles explains how the West Indian colonies became the 'hub' of English trans-Atlantic commerce during this period (Extract 5).

Schemes for North American plantations also developed during Elizabethan times. In the wake of the explorations (and privateering depredations) of men like Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth made small but significant challenges to Spain's domination of the Americas. Under the patronage of Raleigh and others, Richard Hakluyt collected accounts of English voyages to the New World, and promoted the establishment of English settlements in North America (Extract 6). These would be plantations like the West Indian ones, and the growing of tobacco and other products would make them profitable (Extract 7). But they were also islands of English Protestantism in a New World dominated by Spanish and French Catholicism. John Smith, an early explorer of the area he named 'New England', called on his countrymen to challenge Spanish supremacy in the Americas and claimed that, by founding an empire in New England, England itself would be restored through a renewal of its spirit of Protestant enterprise and an expanding maritime trade (Extract 8).

1 A Venetian

There is no surviving account by John Cabot himself about his explorations in North America. Cabot was originally from Venice, and this letter home from a Venetian in London gives one of very few descriptions of Cabot's activities; the letter was written on 23 August 1497.

That Venetian of ours who went with a small ship from Bristol to find new islands has come back and says he has discovered mainland [*terra firma*] 700 leagues away, which is the country of the Grand Khan [*Gram Cam*], and that he coasted it for 300 leagues and landed and did not see any person; but he has brought here to the king certain snares [*luzi*] which were spread to take game and a needle for making nets [*uno agoda far rede*], and he found certain notched [or felled] trees [*al'boti tajati*] so that by this he judges that there are inhabitants. Being in doubt he returned to his ship; and he has been three

months on the voyage; and this is certain. And on the way back he saw two islands, but was unwilling to land, in order not to lose time, as he was in want of provisions. The king here is much pleased at this; and he [Cabot] says that the tides are slack [*le aque è stanchi*] and do not run as they do here. The king has promised him for the spring ten armed ships as he [Cabot] desires and has given him all the prisoners to be sent away, that they may go with him, as he has requested; and has given him money that he may have a good time until then. And he is with his Venetian wife and his sons at Bristol. His name is Zuam Talbot and he is called the Great Admiral [*el gran armirante*] and vast honour is paid to him and he goes dressed in silk, and these English run after him like mad, and indeed he can enlist as many of them as he pleases, and a number of rogues as well. The discoverer of these things planted on the land which he has found a large cross with a banner [*bandiera*] of England and one of St. Mark, as he is a Venetian, so that our flag [*confalone*] has been hoisted very far afield.

[*Source*: David B. Quinn, ed., *New American World: a documentary history of North America to 1612* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), vol. 1, p. 96.]

2 William Shakespeare

Playwright William Shakespeare wrote this speech for the character of John of Gaunt, in *Richard II* (1597), proclaiming the English rejection of royal tyranny and England's identity as a maritime power. The speech became one of the best-known expressions of English nationalism.

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,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed, and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry

Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son:
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land
Dear for her reputation through the world [. . .]

[*Source*: John M. Lothian, ed., William Shakespeare, *Richard II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 59–60.]

3 East India Company Charter

Queen Elizabeth I granted this charter to the East India Company in 1600. Note the powers of land disposal and revenue collection that were granted, and the ambitious mandate stretching from Asia and Africa across the Pacific. The EIC was never able to exploit such an extensive monopoly and would concentrate its activities on south and south-east Asia.

We greatly tendering the Honour of our Nation, the Wealth of our People, and the Encouragement of them, and others of our loving Subjects in their good Enterprizes, for the Increase of our Navigation, and the Advancement of lawful Traffick, to the Benefit of our Common Wealth, . . . go give and grant unto our said loving Subjects, . . . That they and every of them from henceforth be, and shall be one Body Corporate and Politick, in Deed and in Name, by the Name of *The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading into the East-Indies*, . . . capable in Law to have, purchase, . . . and retain, Lands, Rents, Priviledges, Liberties, Jurisdictions, Franchises and Hereditaments of whatsoever Kind, Nature and Quality so ever they be . . . And also to give . . . and dispose Lands . . . and to do and execute all and singular other Things. [. . .]

And further, all such the Apprentices, Factors, or Servants of them and of every of them, which hereafter shall be employed, by The Said *Governor and Company*, in the said Trade of Merchandize, of or to the *East-Indies*, beyond the Seas, or any other the Places aforesaid, in any Part of the said East-Indies, or other the Places aforesaid, shall and may, by the Space of Fifteen Years, from the Feast of the Birth of our Lord God last past, before the Date thereof, freely traffick and use the Trade of Merchandize, by Seas, in and by such Ways and Passages already found out and discovered, or which hereafter shall be found out and discovered, as they shall esteem and take to be fittest, into and from the said East-Indies, in the Countries and Parts of Asia and Africa, and into and from all the Islands, Ports, Havens, Cities, Creeks, Towns, and Places in Asia and Africa, and America, or any of them, beyond the Cape of Bona Esperanza [*Good Hope*] to the Streights of Magellan, where any Trade or Traffick of Merchandize may be used or had, and to and from every of them. [. . .]

And by virtue of our Prerogative Royal, which we will not in that Behalf have argued, or brought in Question, we straitly charge, command and prohibit . . . all the Subjects of us . . . that none of them, directly or indirectly, do visit, haunt, frequent or trade, traffick or adventure, by way of Merchandize, into or from any of the said East-Indies, or into or from any the Islands, Ports, Havens, Cities, Towns or Places aforesaid, other than The said Governor and Company . . . and such particular Persons as now be, or hereafter shall be of that Company, their Agents, Factors and Assigns, during the said Term of Fifteen Years, unless it be by and with such Licence and Agreement of the said Governor and Company.

[*Source*: A. F. Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse, eds, *'The Empire of the Bretaignes', 1175–1688: The Foundations of a Colonial System of Government*, vol. 1 of *Select documents on the constitutional history of the British Empire and Commonwealth* (hereafter *SDBE*) (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 234, 235–6, 237.]

4 Navigation Act 1660

The *Navigation Act* of 1660 revived and reinforced earlier Acts designed to promote English commerce and to protect it from competition with other European countries.

For the increase of shipping and encouragement of the navigation of this nation, wherein, under the good providence and protection of God, the wealth, safety and strength of this kingdom is so much concerned: Be it enacted that . . . no goods or commodities whatsoever shall be imported into or exported out of any lands, islands, plantations or territories to his Majesty belonging or in his possession, or which may hereafter belong unto or be in the possession, of his Majesty, his heirs and successors, in Asia, Africa or America in any other ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, but in such ships or vessels as do truly and without fraud belong only to the people of England or Ireland, dominion of Wales or town of Berwick upon Tweed, or are of the built of and belonging to any the said lands, islands, plantations or territories, as the proprietors and right owners thereof, and whereof the master and three fourths of the mariners at least are English. [. . .]

And it is further enacted . . . That no goods or commodities whatsoever, of the growth or manufacture of Africa, Asia, America, or of any part thereof, or which are described or laid down in the usual maps or cards of those places, be imported into England, Ireland, or Wales, islands of Guernsey and Jersey, or town of Berwick upon Tweed, in any other ship or ships, vessel or vessels whatsoever, but in such as do truly and without fraud belong only to the people of England or Ireland, dominion of Wales, or town of Berwick

upon Tweed or of the lands, islands, plantations or territories in Asia, Africa or America, to his Majesty belonging, as the proprietors and right owners thereof, and whereof the master, and three fourths at least of the mariners are *English* . . . [. . .]

No sugars, tobacco, cotton wool, indicoes, ginger fustick, or other dying wood, of the growth, production or manufacture of any English plantation in America, Asia or Africa, shall be shipped, carried, conveyed or transported from any of the said English plantations to any land, island, territory, dominion, port or place whatsoever, other than to such other English plantations as do belong to his Majesty, his heirs and successors, or to the Kingdom of England, or Ireland, or principality of Wales, or town of Berwick upon Tweed, there to be laid on shore . . . [. . .]

[*Source*: Madden and Fieldhouse, *Empire of the Bretaignes*, pp. 386–9.]

5 Hilary McD. Beckles

Eric Williams, the historian who became the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, described the West Indian islands as 'the hub of Empire'. Certainly by the end of the seventeenth century commentators on Empire such as Charles Davenant, Josiah Child, and Dalby Thomas judged the West Indian islands to be Britain's most profitable overseas investment. Eighteenth-century analysts of colonial trade and economic growth developed this argument in relation to profitability in the sugar plantation economy. For Adam Smith, the place of sugar among colonial produce was clear: 'the profits of a sugar plantation in any of our West Indian colonies are generally much greater than those of any other cultivation that is known either in Europe or America'. 'The Sugar colonies', noted Arthur Young, 'added above three million [pounds] a year to the wealth of Britain.' In our own time, however, there has been widespread agreement that the sugar colonies were dismal social failures.

In 1600 England's interests in these 'small scraps of land' seemed 'more an opposition program' characterized by erratic, but violent, assault upon Spanish settlements and trade than the projection of a clearly defined policy of colonization. Raiding and plundering became the norm, and represented what seemed to be the extent of English capabilities, attracting considerable capital from the investing community. English merchants thus proved themselves ready to invest in long-distance projects, even in politically volatile areas, once the returns were good.

During the twenty years of war with Spain, 1585–1604, there was 'no peace

beyond the line', and the value of prize money brought to England from the Caribbean ranged between £100,000 and £200,000 per year. Privateering, linked directly to contraband trades, continued to be important well into the century. It had an impact on everyday life in Jamaica (which came into English possession following Cromwell's Western Design of 1655–56 on Spanish possessions in the West Indies), especially as returns contributed to local financing of the agricultural economy. The Elizabethan state, for tactical political reasons, had not wished publicly to support such Caribbean operations, but individual adventurers were confident that they had the means to solve any problem which might be encountered in the Americas, and they could call on financially experienced courtiers and gentlemen to organize and invest in these ventures.

In these approaches to colonization, the English followed the Dutch, who had formulated ground-plans to trade and settle in the Caribbean. The Guiana coasts, located between Spanish settlements on the Orinoco and Portuguese possessions on the Amazon, attracted English as well as Dutch attention. In 1604, nine years after Ralegh's effort, Charles Leigh attempted a settlement on the Wiapoco. There were others: Harcourt's attempt (1609–13), Ralegh's (1617–18), and Roger North's (1619–21). An important outcome of these operations was the opportunity to survey the Windward and Leeward Islands, which the Spanish had left neglected and undefended.

The Spanish had attached little economic value to the Lesser Antilles because the islands could not yield large quantities of precious metals, and the English who first became involved in individual islands also encountered determined opposition from the Kalinagos (Caribs) similar to that which had discouraged the Spaniards. The turning-point was Thomas Warner's visit to St Christopher (St Kitts) in 1622. Warner was a participant in North's Guiana project, and considered St Christopher ideally suited for the establishment of tobacco plantations. A group of mariners, led by John Powell, touched at Barbados in 1625 *en route* from the Guianas, and made similar observations. Warner and Powell returned to England to seek financial backing for a novel type of English colonizing activity [. . .].

Failed attempts at a Guiana settlement marked the beginning of a new approach by England to Caribbean colonization. The financial collapse of the Virginia Company in 1624 had resulted in a management takeover by the Crown which signalled a greater determination to convert commercial enterprises into permanent settlement. The furthering of agricultural settlements financed by joint-stock companies, syndicates, and individuals symbolized the beginning of a conceptual triumph over the long-standing tradition of piracy. At the same time, it brought to the centre of the colonizing mission powerful groups of nobles and gentry who saw this as a new arena in which to compete for royal patronage, and some became participants in a 'patent war' for control of overseas territories. For example, on

2 July 1625 James Hay, Earl of Carlisle, was issued a grant by Charles I of the 'Caribbean Islands', and on 25 February 1628 the Earl of Pembroke obtained a grant from the King for the same territories. A violent and bloody struggle ensued between settlement parties despatched to the islands by both nobles, and it was only further royal intervention which settled the conflict in favour of Carlisle.

In the next decade the Caribbean islands experienced a veritable 'swarming of the English' as more settlers established themselves in the West Indies than in any single mainland colony. This was in spite of the political and constitutional chaos which resulted from clashes between rival patents. What survived these conflicts, significantly, were the three principles that constituted the legacy of the failed Virginia Company: the option of a permanently settled community; the production for export of agricultural crops; and the idea that propertied Englishmen in far-flung colonies had an inalienable right to self-government. The aggressive promotion and defence of this legacy made the islands a place which held out greater prospects of glamour, excitement, danger, and quick profit than any mainland colony.

Given the opportunity, these earliest English colonial sponsors would probably have followed their Spanish enemies into establishing some sort of feudal system, by subjecting the aboriginal population and establishing themselves as lords living on tributes, as they preferred the search for gold and silver to agricultural production for the export trade. By the 1620s these opportunities were no longer available. Hopes of easy gold and the myth of Ralegh's El Dorado had subsided. It was clear that successful colonization in the Caribbean would be based on agriculture and trade.

The English established colonies at St Christopher in 1624, Barbados in 1627, Nevis in 1628, and Montserrat and Antigua in 1632. Previous to the campaign of 1655–56, when Oliver Cromwell added Jamaica to the list of English possessions, these small islands were the backbone of England's seaborne Empire, and the primary location of capital accumulation in the Americas. The economic importance of these islands far surpassed that of Puritan New England, but that is not to say that Puritans were not interested in the West Indies. Individual Puritans, including members of the prominent Winthrop and Downing families, spent some time in the West Indies, but collectively Puritans never attained the political power necessary to promote the West Indies as a location for New Jerusalem evangelism. Even at Providence Island, off the coast of Nicaragua, where they financed a settlement and secured political control, the culture of piracy and smuggling, as well as cruel exploitation of unfree labour, transcended considerations of building a religious utopia and rendered their community indistinguishable from those of other European settlers in neighbouring islands.

By 1640 the English had gained a demographic advantage in the Caribbean over other European nations. The islands attracted more settlers than main-

land colonies up to 1660, which suggests that they were perceived as the destinations that held the best prospects for material and social advancement. The white population grew rapidly up to about 1660 when it reached 47,000, constituting some 40 per cent of all the whites in Britain's transatlantic colonies. Gemery's estimates suggest that of the total of 378,000 white emigrants to America between 1630 and 1700, 223,000 (about 60 per cent) went to the colonies in the wider Caribbean.

Economic depression and political turmoil of the 1620s and early 1630s, and the effective marketing of the colonies as places of opportunity for all classes, constituted a winning formula for pro-emigration agents. The population of Barbados in particular rose sharply during the 1630s, advancing sevenfold between 1635 and 1639. No other colony rivalled Barbados as a destination for settlers during this period. The West Indies also forged ahead of the mainland colonies in the expansion of economic activities. Investment and trade increased in direct relation to population growth, and West Indian capitalists were able to secure in the early years the greater share of labourers leaving both Ireland and Britain for America.

The organization of staple production—tobacco and cotton—in the formative years depended upon the labour of thousands of British indentured labourers. Unlike the islands acquired by the Spanish in the Greater Antilles, the Lesser Antilles lacked a large indigenous population which could be reduced to servitude. In the absence of a native labour force such as had been exploited by the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru, the obvious alternative supply of workers was found through the importation of indentured servants. This meant—as it also did in the Chesapeake—that the producer who commanded most servants was the individual most likely to succeed. [. . .]

Reports from the West Indies during the second half of the century indicate the steady advance of sugar cultivation, although sugar monoculture was certainly not the case in these islands. Contests for the best lands in Jamaica between sugar farmers, cash-crop producers, and cattlemen remained as intense as that between agriculturalists and contraband traders for control of official policy with respect to the colony's development. Piracy and contraband also remained attractive in Jamaica as a means of wealth accumulation, despite the ascendancy of the agricultural trades which the mercantilist intellectuals considered to be the only sustainable source of wealth. The cultivation of cacao, which had been pursued on Jamaica by the Spaniards, was persisted in by some English planters, and it was the profits made from cacao that made it possible for some of them to become involved with sugar production. Efforts were also made to cultivate sugar on the four Leeward islands of Antigua, Montserrat, Nevis, and St Christopher, but none of these became a major sugar producer in the seventeenth century despite the fact that the planters in all these areas were lured by the Barbados model. Less suitable agricultural terrain, and the high cost of constructing the mill,

the boiling house, and the curing house that was necessary on every sugar plantation, go some way towards explaining the limited advance of sugar production into the Lesser Antilles. The more weighty disincentive, however, would have been the close location of these islands to the Caribbean settlements of other European powers. Their consequent exposure to attack by European rivals made them altogether more risky places for the high capital investment that sugar required than Barbados and Jamaica. Instead of the monocrop production of sugar that came to characterize Barbados after the 1650s, the Lesser Antilles persisted with more mixed economic activity that included the production of indigo, tobacco, ginger, cotton, domesticated cattle, and fish as well as sugar.

The reorganization of economic activity in Barbados and the Leewards is generally referred to as 'The Sugar Revolution'. The cultivation of sugar cane on large plantations on Barbados steadily displaced the growing of tobacco, cotton, and indigo on smaller farms, and supplemented these activities on the other islands. Sugar planting, with its larger labour- and capital-equipment needs, stimulated demand for bigger units. Landowners enclosed on tenants, and small freeholders were bought out, and pushed off. As a result, land prices escalated and there was a rapid reduction in the size and output of non-sugar producers. In most islands some small-scale farmers continued to occupy prime lands, maintaining a cash-crop culture on the margins of plantations. But small farmers found it difficult to compete as tobacco and cotton prices fell and their operations often proved unprofitable. By the 1680s the 'sugar islands' had lost their reputation as hospitable places for propertyless European migrants, while the progress of sugar cultivation on the island of Barbados effected a more rapid and more total manipulation of the natural environment than occurred anywhere else in the Atlantic that came under English control during the course of the seventeenth century. [. . .]

Englishmen had entered the Caribbean rather tentatively, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century they were confident and in effective control. The first enemy, the Spanish, had early become reconciled to the English presence in the Lesser Antilles, and later surrendered Jamaica without much of a fight. The Dutch had consolidated a considerable commercial empire after 1621, when their West India Company was formed and 'parented' pioneering English settlers. By 1650 the English, now feeling secure and ambitious, bit the Dutch hand that had fed them, first in 1652–54 and then in a series of trade wars in 1665–67 and 1672–74. Turning to the French, the English assaulted settlers and harassed traders in the wars of 1666–67 and 1689–97. Finally, in 1713 they succeeded in crushing French resistance and captured the prime prize: the *Asiento* contract to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies.

The English developed the islands as major economies in their own right, but also as part of the Atlantic trading system. The islands were valuable to

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the economic viability of the mainland colonies, with commodity trade between the two being of vital importance to English merchants. Trading connections in rum, foodstuffs, construction materials, sugar, and slaves contributed to the perception of the islands as the 'hub of Empire'. While English merchants had established global trading networks, the West Indies were central to their operations, and were represented as such in the first depictions of what came to be called 'the English [after 1707, the British] empire in America'. The islands absorbed more slaves over time, and produced a more lucrative commodity than any other region in colonial America. The Atlantic system, as an economic order centred on the slave-plantation complex, was therefore revolutionized in the seventeenth century. The sugar estate was the hub of this network in the movements of labour, capital, and management. The West Indies thus occupied a special place in the development of what ultimately became the British Empire.

[*Source:* Hilary McD. Beckles, 'The "Hub of Empire": The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century', in Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 1 of *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), hereafter *OHBE*, pp. 218–23, 225–6, 239.]

6 Richard Hakluyt

Richard Hakluyt published this *Discourse of Western Planting* in 1585, before the defeat of the Spanish Armada, when England was concerned about the power of the Spanish empire. The *Discourse* also promoted the economic and cultural advantages of colonization.

1. That this westerne discoverie will be greately for thinlargement of the gospell of Christe whereunto the Princes of the refourmed relligion are chefely bounde amongest whome her ma^{tie} ys principall.

2. That all other englishe Trades are growen beggerly or daungerous, especially in all the kinge of Spayne his Domynions, where our men are dryven to flinge their Bibles and prayer Bokes into the sea, and to forsweare and renownce their relligion and conscience and consequently theyr obedience to her Ma^{tie}.

3. That this westerne voyadge will yelde unto us all the commodities of Europe, Affrica, and Asia, as far as wee were wonte to travell, and supply the wantes of all our decayed trades.

4. That this enterprise will be for the manifolde imploymente of nombers of idle men, and for bredinge of many sufficient, and for utterance of the greate quantitie of the commodities of our Realme.

5. That this voyage will be a great bridle to the Indies of the kinge of Spaine and a meane that wee may arreste at our pleasure for the space of tenne weekes or three monethes every yere, one or twoo hundred saile of his subjectes shippes at the fysshinge in Newfounde lande.

6. That the mischefe that the Indian Threasure wrought in time of Charles the later Emperor father to the Spanishe kinge, is to be had in consideration of the Q. moste excellent Ma^{tie}, leaste the contynuall commynge of the like threasure from thence to his sonne, worke the unrecoverable annoye of this Realme, whereof already wee have had very dangerous experience.

7. What speciall meanes may bringe kinge Phillippe from his high Throne, and make him equal to the Princes his neighbours, wherewth all is shewed his weakenes in the west Indies.

8. That the lymites of the kinge of Spaines domynions in the west Indies be nothinge so large as ys generally ymagined and surmised, neither those partes w^{ch} he holdeth be of any such forces as ys falsly geven oute by the popishe Clergye and others his fautors, to terrifie the Princes of the Relligion and to abuse and blynde them.

9. The Names of the riche Townes lienge alonge the sea coaste on the northe side from the equinoctialle of the mayne lande of America under the kinge of Spayne.

10. A Brefe declaracion of the chefe Ilands in the Bay of Mexico beinge under the kinge of Spaine, wth their havens and fortes, and what commodities they yelde.

11. That the Spaniardes have executed most outragious and more then Turkishe cruelties in all the west Indies, whereby they are every where there, become moste odious unto them, whoe woulde joyne wth us or any other moste willingly to shake of their moste intollerable yoke, and have begonne to doo it already in dyvers places where they were Lordes heretofore.

12. That the passage in this voyadge is easie and shorte, that it cutteth not nere the trade of any other mightie Princes, nor nere their Contries, that it is to be perfourmed at all tymes of the yere, and nedeth but one kinde of winde, that Ireland beinge full of goodd havens on the southe and west sides, is the nerest parte of Europe to yt, w^{ch} by this trade shall be in more securitie, and the sooner drawen to more Civilitie.

13. That hereby the Revenewes and customes of her Ma^{tie} bothe outwardes and inwardes shall mightely be inlarged by the toll, excises, and other dueties w^{ch} wthoute oppression may be raised.

14. That this action will be greately for thincrease, mayneteynaunce and safetie of our Navye, and especially of greate shippinge w^{ch} is the strengthe of our Realme, and for the supportation of all those occupacious that depende upon the same.

15. That spedie plantinge in divers fitt places is moste necessarie upon

these luckye westerne discoveries for feare of the daunger of being prevented by other nations w^{ch} have the like intentions, wth the order thereof and other reasons therwthall alleaged.

16. Meanes to kepe this enterprise from overthrowe and the enterprisers from shame and dishono^{r}.

17. That by these Colonies the Northwest passage to Cathaio and China may easely quickly and perfectly be searched oute aswell by river and overlande, as by sea, for proofe whereof here are quoted and alleaged divers rare Testymonies oute of the three volumes of voyadges gathered by Ramusius and other grave authors.

18. That the Queene of Englande title to all the west Indies, or at the leaste to as moche as is from Floride to the Circle articke, is more lawfull and righte then the Spaniardes or any other Christian Princes.

19. An aunswer to the Bull of the Donacion of all the west Indies graunted to the kinges of Spaine by Pope Alexander the vith whoe was himselfe a Spaniarde borne.

20. A brefe collection of certaine reasons to induce her Ma^{tie} and the state to take in hande the westerne voyadge and the planting there.

21. A note of some thinges to be prepared for the voyadge w^{ch} is sett downe rather to drawe the takers of the voyadge in hande to the presente consideracion then for any other reason for that divers thinges require preparation longe before the voyadge, wthoute w^{ch} the voyadge is maymed.

[*Source*: Roberta Marx Delson, ed., *Readings in Caribbean History and Economics: An Introduction to the Region* (New York, London and Paris: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1981), pp. 33–6.]

7 Ralph Lane

Ralph Lane, one of the colonists from the first (abortive) attempt to establish an English settlement in Virginia, reported to Richard Hakluyt on 3 September 1585 with an optimistic account of the colony's prospects.

In the meane while you shall understand that since sir Richard Greenvils departure from us, as also before, we have discovered the maine to bee the goodliest soile under the cope of heaven, so abounding with sweete trees, that bring such sundry rich and most pleasant gummes, grapes of such greatnes, yet wild, as France, Spaine nor Italy hath no greater, so many sortes of Apothecarie drugs, such severall kindes of flaxe, and one kind like silke, the same gathered of a grasse, as common there as grasse is here. And now within these few dayes we have found here a Guinie wheate, whose eare

yeeldeth corne for bread, 400. upon one eare, and the Cane maketh very good and perfect suger, also Terra Samia, otherwise Terra sigillata. Besides that, it is the goodliest and most pleasing territorie of the world (for the soile is of an huge unknowen greatnesse, and very wel peopled and towned, though savagelie) and the climate so wholesome, that we have not had one sicke, since we touched land here. To conclude, if Virginia had but Horses and Kine in some reasonable proportion, I dare assure my selfe being inhabited with English, no realme in Christendome were comparable to it. For this alreadie we find, that what commodities soever Spaine, France, Italy, or the East parts do yeeld unto us in wines of all sortes, in oiles, in flaxe, in rosens, pitch, frankenscence, currans, sugers, & such like, these parts do abound with y^{e} growth of them all, but being Savages that possesse the land, they know no use of the same. And sundry other rich commodities, that no parts of the world, be they West or East Indies, have, here we finde great abundance of. The people naturally most curteous, & very desirous to have clothes, but especially of course cloth rather than silke, course canvas they also like wel of, but copper carieth y^{e} price of all, so it be made red. Thus good Master Hakluyt and master H. I have joyned you both in one letter of remembrance, as two that I love dearely well, and commending me most hartily to you both, I commit you to y^{e} tuition of the almighty.

[*Source*: Quinn, *New American World*, vol. 3, p. 293.]

8 Captain John Smith

Captain John Smith explored what is now the north-eastern coast of the United States, and promoted the area as a site for English colonization; it was he who named this region 'New England'. As in Hakluyt's writings, rivalry with Spain is a prominent theme of Smith's argument.

It would bee an historie of a large volume, to recite the adventures of the Spanyards, and Portugals, their affronts, and defeats, their dangers and miseries; which with such incomparable honour and constant resolution, so farre beyond beleefe, they have attempted and indured in their discoveries and plantations, as may well condemne us, of too much imbecillitie, sloth, and negligence: yet the Authors of those new inventions, were held as ridiculous, for a long time, as now are others, that doe but seek to imitate their unparalleled vertues. And though we see daily their mountaines of wealth (sprong from the plants of their generous indevours) yet is our sensualitie and untowardnesse such, and so great, that wee either ignorantly beleeve nothing; or so curiously contest, to prevent wee knowe not what future events; that wee

either so neglect, or oppresse and discourage the present, as wee spoile all in the making, crop all in the blooming; and building upon faire sand, rather then rough rockes, judge that wee knowe not, governe that wee have not, feare that which is not; and for feare some should doe too well, force such against their willes to be idle or as ill. And who is he hath judgement, courage, and any industrie or qualitie with understanding, will leave his Countrie, his hopes at home, his certaine estate, his friends, pleasures, libertie, and the preferment sweete England doth afford to all degrees, were it not to advance his fortunes by injoying his deserts? whose prosperitie once appearing, will incourage others; but it must be cherish- || ed as a childe, till it be able to goe, and understand it selfe; and not corrected, nor oppressed above its strength, ere it knowe wherefore. A child can neither performe the office, nor deedes of a man of strength, nor indure that affliction He is able; nor can an Apprentice at the first performe the part of a Maister. And if twentie yeeres bee required to make a child a man, seven yeares limited an apprentice for his trade; if scarce an age be sufficient to make a wise man a States man; and commonly, a man dies ere he hath learned to be discreet: If perfection be so hard to be obtained, as of necessitie there must bee practice, as well as theorick: Let no man much condemne this paradox opinion, to say, that halfe seaven yeeres is scarce sufficient, for a good capacitie, to learne in these affaires, how to carrie himselfe: and who ever shall trie in these remote places the erecting of a Colony, shall finde at the ende of seaven yeares occasion enough to use all his discretion; and, in the Interim all the content, rewards, gaines, and hopes will be necessarily required, to be given to the beginning, till it bee able to creepe, to stand, and goe, yet time enough to keepe it from running, for there is no feare it will grow too fast, or ever to any thing; except libertie, profit, honor, and prosperitie there found, more binde the planters of those affaires, in devotion to effect it; then bondage, violence, tyranny, ingratitude, and such double dealing, as bindes free men to become slaves, and honest men turne knaves: which hath ever bin the ruine of the most popular || commonweales; and is verie unlikelie ever well to begin in a new.

Who seeth not what is the greatest good of the Spanyard, but these new conclusions, in searching those unknowne parts of this unknowne world? By which meanes hee dives even into the verie secrets of all his Neighbours, and the most part of the world: and when the Portugale and Spanyard had found the East and West Indies; how many did condemn themselves, that did not accept of that honest offer of Noble Columbus? who, upon our neglect, brought them to it, perswading our selves the world had no such places as they had found; and yet ever since wee finde, they still (from time to time) have found new Lands, new Nations, and trades, and still daily dooe finde both in Asia, Africa, Terra incognita, and America; so that there is neither Soldier nor Mechanick, from the Lord to the begger, but those parts afforde

them all imploiment; and discharge their Native soile, of so many thousands of all sorts, that else, by their sloth, pride, and imperfections, would long ere this have troubled their neighbours, or have eaten the pride of Spaine it selfe.

Now he knowes little, that knowes not England may well spare many more people then Spaine, and is as well able to furnish them with all manner of necessaries. And seeing, for all they have, they cease not still to search for that they have not, and know not; It is strange we should be so dull, as not maintaine that which wee have, and pursue that wee knowe. Surely I am sure many would taste it ill, to bee abridged of the titles and honours of their predecessors: when if but truely they would judge themselves; looke how inferior they are to their noble vertues, so much they are unworthy of their honours and livings: which never were ordained for showes and shadowes, to maintaine idlenesse and vice; but to make them more able to abound in honor, by heroycall deeds of action, judgement, pietie, and vertue. What was it, They would not doe both in purse and person, for the good of the Commonwealth? which might move them presently to set out their spare kindred in these generous designes. Religion, above all things, should move us (especially the Clergie) if wee were religious, to shewe our faith by our workes; in converting those poore salvages, to the knowledge of God, seeing what paines the Spanyards take to bring them to their adulterated faith. Honor might move the Gentrie, the valiant, and industrious; and the hope and assurance of wealth, all; if wee were that we would seeme, and be accounted. Or be we so far inferior to other nations, or our spirits so far dejected, from our auncient predecessors, or our mindes so upon spoile, piracie, and such villany, as to serve the Portugall, Spanyard, Dutch, French, or Turke (as to the cost of Europe, too many dooe) rather then our God, our King, our Country, and our selves? excusing our idlenesse, and our base complaints, by want of imploiment; when heere is such choise of all sorts, and for all degrees, in the plan- || ting and discovering these North parts of America.

[*Source*: John Smith, 'A Description of New England', in *Travels and works of Captain John Smith: President of Virginia and Admiral of New England 1580–1631* (Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1910), pp. 348–50.]

SLAVERY

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I.2 SLAVERY

By the time England entered the African slave trade, the European bondage of non-European peoples was already well established. The Portuguese were the first to establish extensive trading contacts with west Africa, where slavery was already practised and could be encouraged in order to meet the growing European demand for colonial labour. This coincided with the decline, through disease and extermination, of the indigenous peoples of the West Indies, and the discovery in the Americas that the indigenous population could not always provide an adequate labour supply.

Another crucial factor was the introduction of sugar cultivation to British (and other) colonies in the West Indies. Plantations had experimented with a variety of crops, but by the later seventeenth century sugar was becoming dominant in the Caribbean: in Jamaica in 1671 there were 57 sugar plantations; by 1684 there were 246. Sugar was a highly labour-intensive crop, and such was the demand for slaves that several nations launched expeditions to compete with Portuguese slavers on the west African coast; the voyages of John Hawkins (Extract 9) were the first such ventures by England. Portugal was in a dominant position at first, and its coastal bases, or 'factories', sprang up to co-ordinate the collection of slaves from the interior and their sale to European traders. After ousting Portugal from many of these bases during the sixteenth century, the Dutch and their African allies expanded the trade, and England began establishing factories of its own. The first of these was established at Cormantine in 1651; a larger outpost, Cape Coast Castle, was won from the Dutch in 1664, a year after the Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa (later refounded as the Royal African Company) had its charter renewed and expanded. The new charter included the first specific mention of slaving as an aspect of England's African operations. Captains employed by the Company would sail for west Africa with a supply of trade goods, exchange these with an African leader for slaves at one of the factories (Extract 10), and take the notorious 'Middle Passage' across the Atlantic to the West Indies or North America, where the slaves would be sold in exchange for tobacco or sugar for the return trip to England (Extract 11). Many English sailors died of disease or malnutrition on these voyages, but mortality was much higher among the slaves confined below decks (Extract 12). The Royal African Company took 89,200 slaves from the African coast between 1673 and 1689 of which about 20,000 died during the crossing.

In the seventeenth century, the Company sold the vast majority of its slaves to Jamaica and Barbados; only later would the North American colonies begin to import slaves in large numbers, and they tended to buy them from the West Indies rather than directly from Africa (Extract 13). In the

meantime, Britain supplemented its own colonial trade through obtaining a monopoly, the *asiento*, on trade with Spain's colonies, including the slave trade. These economic developments were directly related to an increasing identification of Africans with slavery; this, in turn, prompted Europeans to justify themselves by referring to alleged African social and cultural inferiority. England's white colonists had once made a distinction between Christian and non-Christian Africans: only non-Christians could be enslaved. But by the mid-seventeenth century, blacks in the colonies had to prove their status as free men (Extract 14). This was an important shift in identity. Hakluyt had envisioned free settlements invigorated by hardworking and patriotic Protestantism, but by the end of the seventeenth century, many of Britain's colonies were already deeply divided by race (Extract 15).

9 Sir John Hawkins

Sir John Hawkins, later treasurer of the Royal Navy, sailed to west Africa in 1562 on the first documented English slaving expedition. Note that his potential market was the Spanish West Indies.

Master John Hawkins having made divers voyages to the Iles of the Canaries, and there by his good and upright dealing being growen in love and favour with the people, informed himselfe amongst them by diligent inquisition, of the state of the West India, whereof hee had received some knowledge by the instructions of his father, but increased the same by the advertisements and reports of that people. And being amongst other particulars assured, that Negros were very good marchandise in Hispaniola, and that store of Negros might easily bee had upon the coast of Guinea, resolved with himselfe to make triall thereof, and communicated that devise with his worshipfull friendes of London: namely with Sir Lionell Ducket, Sir Thomas Lodge, M. Gunson his father in law, sir William Winter, M. Bromfield, and others. All which persons liked so well of his intention, that they became liberall contributors and adventurers in the action. For which purpose there were three good ships immediately provided: The one called the *Salomon* of the burthern of 120. tunne, wherein M. Hawkins himselfe went as Generall: The second the *Swallow* of 100. tunnes, wherein went for Captaine M. Thomas Hampton: and the third the *Jonas* a barke of 40. tunnes, wherein the Master supplied the Captaines roome: in which small fleete M. Hawkins tooke with him not above 100. men for feare of sicknesse and other inconveniences, whereunto men in long voyages are commonly subject.

With this companie he put off and departed from the coast of England in the moneth of October 1562. and in his course touched first at Teneriffe, where hee received friendly intertainment. From thence he passed to Sierra Leona, upon the coast of Guinea, which place by the people of the countrey is called Tagarin, where he stayed some good time, and got into his possession, partly by the sworde, and partly by other meanes, to the number of 300 Negros at the least, besides other merchandises which that countrey yeeldeth. With this praye hee sayled over the Ocean sea unto the Iland of Hispaniola, and arrived first at the port of Isabella: and there hee had reasonable utterance of his English commodities, as also of some part of his Negros, trusting the Spaniards no further, then that by his owne strength he was able still to master them. From the port of Isabella he went to Puerto de Plata, where he made like sales, standing alwaies upon his guard: from thence also hee sayled to Monte Christi another port on the North side of Hispaniola, and the last place of his touching, where he had peaceable traffique, and made vent of the whole number of his Negros: for which he received in those 3 places by way of exchange such quantitie of merchandise, that hee did not onely lade his owne 3 shippes with hides, ginger, sugars, and some quantities of pearles, but he fraighted also two other hulkes with hides and the like commodities, which hee sent into Spaine. And thus leaving the Iland, he returned and disemboqued, passing out by the Ilands of the Caycos, without further entring into the bay of Mexico, in this his first voyage to the West India. And so with prosperous successe and much gaine to himselfe and the aforesayde adventurers, he came home, and arrived in the moneth of September 1563.

[*Source*: Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), vol. 1, pp. 45–7.]

10 Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano was one of the most famous black abolitionists of the eighteenth century. Having purchased his freedom after a lifetime of slavery, he published his memoirs in 1789 in hopes of drawing attention to slavery's evils. This account of his capture in west Africa shows the combination of indigenous and European factors involved; Equiano had several African masters before being sold to a British trader on the coast.

My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister who was the only daughter. As I was the youngest of the sons I became, of course, the greatest favourite with my

mother and was always with her; and she used to take particular pains to form my mind. I was trained up from my earliest years in the art of war, my daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins, and my mother adorned me with emblems after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up till I was turned the age of 11, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner. Generally when the grown people in the neighbourhood were gone far in the fields to labour, the children assembled together in some of the neighbours' premises to play, and commonly some of us used to get up a tree to look out for any assailant or kidnapper that might come upon us, for they sometimes took those opportunities of our parents' absence to attack and carry off as many as they could seize. One day, as I was watching at the top of a tree in our yard, I saw one of those people come into the yard of our next neighbour but one to kidnap, there being many stout young people in it. Immediately on this I gave the alarm of the rogue and he was surrounded by the stoutest of them, who entangled him with cords so that he could not escape till some of the grown people came and secured him. But alas! ere long it was my fate to be thus attacked and to be carried off when none of the grown people were nigh. One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both, and without giving us time to cry out or make resistance they stopped our mouths and ran off with us into the nearest wood. [. . .]

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew, and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair and the language they spoke (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. [. . .]

When I recovered a little I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not, and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass, but being afraid of him I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which

instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted such any liquor before. Soon after this the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair.

[*Source*: Paul Edwards, ed., *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African, Written by Himself* (London: Heinemann, 1967; first publ. 1789), pp. 15–16, 25–6.]

11 Invoice, Royal African Company ship *Swallow*

Table 1 overleaf is an invoice for goods to be traded for slaves from the Royal African Company's ship *Swallow* in 1679. Table 2 shows to whom the slaves were sold at the British West Indian colony of Nevis.

[*Source*: Donnan, *Documents of the Slave Trade*, vol. 1, pp. 256–7.]

12 Captain Phillips

The disease and suffering experienced by slaves aboard the *Hannibal* in 1693–4 were typical of such voyages. Note Captain Phillips' observations about the transfer of smallpox from the immune Europeans to the non-immune Africans.

Having bought my compliment of 700 slaves, *viz.* 480 men and 220 women, and finish'd all my business at Whidaw, I took my leave of the old king, and his cappasheirs, and parted, with many affectionate expressions on both sides, being forced to promise him that I would return again the next year, with several things he desired me to bring him from England; and having sign'd bills of lading to Mr. Peirson, for the negroes aboard, I set sail the 27th of July in the morning, accompany'd with the *East-India Merchant*, who had bought 650 slaves, for the island of St. Thomas, with the wind at W.S.W. [. . .]

Having completed all my business ashore in fourteen days that I lay here, yesterday in the afternoon I came off with a resolution to go to sea. Accordingly about six in the evening we got up our anchors, and set sail for Barbadoes, being forc'd to leave the *East-India merchant* behind, who could not get ready to sail in nine or ten days; which time I could not afford to stay, in respect to the mortality of my negroes, of which two or three died every day, also the small quantity of provisions I had to serve for my passage to Barbadoes . . .

Table 1: Invoice of goods laden abord the 'Swallow' Capt. Evan Seys Commander for accompt of the Royall African Company of England Bound for New Callabar their to take in 220 Negroes And consigned unto said Capt. Evans Seys.

				l.	*s.*	*d.*
Iron 2000 barrs wt. 25 tons at £15:5:0				381	5	0
Copper barrs. 5 chests						
	barrs	cwt. qr. lb.				
44	200	2 : 0 : 06				
45	200	2 : 0 : 07				
46	200	2 : 0 : 06				
47	200	2 : 0 : 08				
48	200	2 : 0 : 07				
1,000		10 : 0 : 06 at £6:3		65	07	1
Cowries, 3 barrells						
		cwt. qr. lb.				
130		2 : 0 : 14	Tare 20			
131		2 : 0 : 04	,, 19			
160		2 : 0 : 21	,, 22			
		6 : 1 : 11	,, 61			
tare		2 : 05				
		5 : 3 : 06 net at £3:7		19	08	10
Beeds, 1 chest						
29	26 bunches white wt. 76 at 13 *d.* £4:02:4					
	17 ditto christall wt. 48 ,, 15 *d.* £3:00:—			7	02	4
Manelloes 1 bunch black						
		cwt. qr. lb.				
5,000 rings wt. 1		2 : 25 net at £3:5		5	11	11
For customs and all other charges				7	00	6
1 box 2 scarlett laced coates } for presents £5:08:5						
2 white hatts laced }			£2:05	7	13	5
Negroe Provitions						
1 hhd. and 1 Runlett qt. 76 galls. fine spiritts			£11:10			
6 hhds. beanes			7:05			
1 hhd. flour			3:10			
1 hhd. pease			1:15			
2 puncheons and 1 barrell			6:10			
1 barrell qt. 1 tobacoe			2:19			
1 barrell qt. 7 gross pipes			0:09			
1 hhd. vineger			3:05			
1 hhd. salt			1:02			
22½ stock fish at £6-3 and 1 puncheon beef, £3:5			9:00	47	13	0
				539	2	2

Table 2: Accompt of Sales of 71 Negroes Sould out of the Shipp 'Swallow' Capt. Evan Says Commander For Accompt of the Royall African Company of England.

		MEN	WOMEN	BOYS	GIRLS	LBS. OF SUGAR
Sir W. Stapleton at 3000		4			1	15,000
George Cruff	S			1		2,800
James Walker		4	3	1		26,600
Moses Leavermore 2 at 3800, 1 at 2800		1	1	1		10,400
Edward Parsons		3	1	2		19,200
John Pope	S		0	1		2,800
John Chapman				0	1	2,000
John Williams		1				3,500
Thomas Weekes		1	1	1		9,500
John Syms		2	1			10,800
Humphrey Heywood			2			7,000
Nath. Harris		3	1			14,000
Joseph Crisp		2	7		2	32,200
David Howels		2	2			13,800
Walter Clarke		1				3,500
Hurly Welch			1			3,500
John Wighall		1				3,200
Hurly Jackman			1			1,700
Robert Ellin			1			1,200
Phillip Sullivan		1				1,080
John Jeffries		1				3,500
Edward Harris			1			3,000
Capt. Evan Seys		1				2,560
William Meede		3	6			8,181
		31	29	7	4	199,721
Allowed by the Ma'r for the overplus of his Fr'tt etc.						736
						200,457

Men	31		
Women	29		
Boys	7		
Girls	4		
	—	36	
	71	—	
	3	104	commission
	16	6	freight
	—	—	
	91	10	
	6 dead		
	—		
	97		

Note that the 2 boys and 2 girls marked with S the mast'r pretended was his and his mates for which noe Fr'tt or commiss'n was allowed him.

WILL'M FREEMAN
HENRY CARPENTER
ROBERT HELMES

We spent in our passage from St. Thomas to Barbadoes two months eleven days, from the 25th of August to the 4th of November following: in which time there happen'd much sickness and mortality among my poor men and negroes, that of the first we buried 14, and of the last 320, which was a great detriment to our voyage, the royal African company losing ten pounds by every slave that died, and the owners of the ship ten pounds ten shillings, being the freight agreed on to be paid them by the charter-party for every negroe deliver'd alive ashore to the African company's agents at Barbadoes; whereby the loss in all amounted to near 6560 pounds sterling. The distemper which my men as well as the blacks mostly die of, was the white flux, which was so violent and inveterate, that no medicine would in the least check it; so that when any of our men were seiz'd with it, we esteem'd him a dead man, as he generally proved. I cannot imagine what should cause it in them so suddenly, they being free from it till about a week after we left the island of St. Thomas. And next to the malignity of the climate, I can attribute it to nothing else but the unpurg'd black sugar, and raw unwholesome rum they bought there, of which they drank in punch to great excess, and which it was not in my power to hinder, having chastis'd several of them, and flung overboard what rum and sugar I could find [. . .] . . .

The negroes are so incident to the small-pox, that few ships that carry them escape without it, and sometimes it makes vast havock and destruction among them: but tho' we had 100 at a time sick of it, and that it went thro' the ship, yet we lost not above a dozen by it. All the assistance we gave the diseased was only as much water as they desir'd to drink, and some palm-oil to anoint their sores, and they would generally recover without any other helps but what kind nature gave them.

One thing is very surprizing in this distemper among the blacks, that tho' it immediately infects those of their own colour, yet it will never seize a white man; for I had several white men and boys aboard that had never had that distemper, and were constantly among the blacks that were sick of it, yet none of them in the least catch'd it, tho' it be the very same malady in its effects, as well as symptoms, among the blacks, as among us in England, beginning with the pain in the head, back, shivering, vomiting, fever, etc. But what the small-pox spar'd, the flux swept off, to our great regret, after all our pains and care to give them their messes in due order and season, keeping their lodgings as clean and sweet as possible, and enduring so much misery and stench so long among a parcel of creatures nastier than swine; and after all our expectations to be defeated by their mortality. No gold-finders can endure so much noisome slavery as they do who carry negroes; for those have some respite and satisfaction, but we endure twice the misery; and yet by their mortality our voyages are ruin'd, and we pine and fret our selves to death, to think that we should undergo so much misery, and take so much pains to so little purpose.

[*Source*: Donnan, *Documents of the Slave Trade*, vol. 1, pp. 408–10.]

13 Peter Kalm

Swedish botanist Peter Kalm toured the American colonies and published an account of his travels in 1770 including the following observations about the labour supply in Pennsylvania. After discussing free and indentured labour, he turns to a third type: slaves.

The *negroes* or blacks constitute the third kind. They are in a manner slaves; for when a negro is once bought, he is the purchaser's servant as long as he lives, unless he gives him to another, or sets him free. However, it is not in the power of the master to kill his negro for a fault, but he must leave it to the magistrates to proceed according to the laws. Formerly the negroes were brought over from Africa, and bought by almost everyone who could afford it, the Quakers alone being an exception. But these are no longer so particular and now they have as many negroes as other people. However, many people cannot conquer the idea of its being contrary to the laws of Christianity to keep slaves. There are likewise several free negroes in town, who have been lucky enough to get a very zealous Quaker for their master, and who gave them their liberty after they had faithfully served him for a time.

At present they seldom bring over any negroes to the English colonies, for those which were formerly brought thither have multiplied rapidly. In regard to their marriage they proceed as follows: in case you have not only male but likewise female negroes, they may intermarry, and then the children are all your slaves. But if you possess a male negro only and he has an inclination to marry a female belonging to a different master, you do not hinder your negro in so delicate a point, but it is of no advantage to you, for the children belong to the master of the female. It is therefore practically advantageous to have negro women. A man who kills his negro is, legally, punishable by death, but there is no instance here of a white man ever having been executed for this crime. A few years ago it happened that a master killed his slave. His friends and even the magistrates secretly advised him to make his escape, as otherwise they could not avoid taking him prisoner, and then he would be condemned to die according to the laws of the country, without any hopes of being saved. This leniency was granted toward him, that the negroes might not have the satisfaction of seeing a master executed for killing his slave. This would lead them to all sorts of dangerous designs against their masters and to value themselves too much.

The negroes were formerly brought from Africa, as I mentioned before, but now this seldom happens, for they are bought in the West Indies, or American Islands, whither they were originally brought from their own

country. It has been found that in transporting the negroes from Africa directly to these northern countries, they have not such good health as when they come gradually, by shorter stages, and are first carried from Africa to the West Indies, and from thence to North America. [. . .]

The price of negroes differs according to their age, health and ability. A full grown negro costs from forty pounds to a hundred of Pennsylvania currency. There are even examples that a gentleman has paid a hundred pounds for a black slave at Philadelphia and refused to sell him again for the same money. A negro boy or girl of two or three years old, can hardly be gotten for less than eight or fourteen pounds in Pennsylvania money. Not only the Quakers but also several Christians of other denominations sometimes set their negroes at liberty. This is done in the following manner: when a gentleman has a faithful negro who has done him great services, he sometimes declares him independent at his own death. This is however very expensive; for they are obliged to make a provision for the negro thus set at liberty, to afford him subsistence when he is grown old, that he may not be driven by necessity to wicked actions, or that he may fall a charge to anybody, for these free negroes become very lazy and indolent afterwards. But the children which the free negro has begot during his servitude are all slaves, though their father be free. On the other hand, those negro children which are born after the parent was freed are free. The negroes in the North American colonies are treated more mildly and fed better than those in the West Indies. They have as good food as the rest of the servants, and they possess equal advantages in all things, except their being obliged to serve their whole lifetime and get no other wages than what their master's goodness allows them. They are likewise clad at their master's expense. On the contrary, in the West Indies, and especially in the Spanish Islands, they are treated very cruelly; therefore no threats make more impression upon a negro here than that of sending him over to the West Indies, in case he will not reform. It has likewise been frequently found by experience that when you show too much kindness to these negroes, they grow so obstinate that they will no longer do anything but of their own accord. Therefore a strict discipline is very necessary, if their master expects to be satisfied with their services.

[*Source*: Willie Lee Rose, ed., *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America* (New York, London and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 47–9.]

14 Fernando

Fernando, a black servant in a Virginian household, found that his claim to be an indentured servant, and his identity as a Christian, were insufficient to prevent him from being declared a slave by the county court in 1667. Unfortunately the record of his appeal to the General Court was destroyed.

Whereas Fernando a Negro sued Capt. [John] Warner for his freedome pretending hee was a Christian and had been severall yeares in England and therefore ought to serve noe longer than any other servant that came out of England accordinge to the custome of the Country and alsoe Presented severall papers in Portugell or some other language which the Court could not understand which he alledged were papers From severall Governors where hee had lived a freeman and where hee was home. Wherefore the Court could find noe Cause wherefore he should be free but Judge him a slave for his life time, From which Judgement the said Negro hath appealled to the fifth day of the next Generall Court.

[*Source*: Warren M. Billings, ed., *The Old Dominion in the Seventeenth Century: A Documentary History of Virginia, 1606–1689* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 169.]

15 Winthrop D. Jordan

In scanning the problem of *why* Negroes were enslaved in America, certain constant elements in a complex situation can be readily, if roughly, identified. *It may be taken as given* that there would have been no enslavement without economic need, that is, without persistent demand for labor in underpopulated colonies. Of crucial importance, too, was the fact that Africans in America were relatively powerless. In themselves, however, these two elements will not explain the enslavement of Indians and Negroes. The pressing need in America was labor, and Irish, Scottish, and English servants were available. Most of them would have been helpless to ward off outright enslavement if their masters had thought themselves privileged to enslave them. As a group, though, masters did not think themselves so empowered. Only with Indians and Africans did Englishmen attempt so radical a deprivation of liberty—which brings the matter abruptly to the most difficult and imponderable question of all: what was it about Indians and Negroes which

set them apart from Englishmen, which rendered them *different*, which made them special candidates for degradation?

To ask such questions is to inquire into the *content* of English attitudes, and unfortunately there is little evidence with which to build an answer. It may be said, however, that the heathen condition of Negroes seemed of considerable importance to English settlers in America—more so than to English voyagers upon the coasts of Africa—and that heathenism was associated in some settlers' minds with the condition of slavery. Clearly, though, this is not to say that English colonists enslaved Africans merely because of religious difference. In the early years, the English settlers most frequently contrasted themselves with Negroes by the term *Christian*, though they also sometimes described themselves as *English*. Yet the concept embodied by the term *Christian* embraced so much more meaning than was contained in specific doctrinal affirmations that it is scarcely possible to assume on this basis that Englishmen set Negroes apart because they were heathen. The historical experience of the English people in the sixteenth century had made for fusion of religion and nationality; the qualities of being English and Christian had become so inseparably blended that it seemed perfectly consistent to the Virginia Assembly in 1670 to declare that 'noe negroe or Indian though baptised and enjoyned their owne Freedome shall be capable of any such purchase of christians, but yet not debarred from buying any of their owne nation.'

From the first, then, the concept embedded in the term *Christian* seems to have conveyed much of the idea and feeling of *we* as against *they*: to be Christian was to be civilized rather than barbarous, English rather than African, white rather than black. The term *Christian* itself proved to have remarkable elasticity, for by the end of the seventeenth century it was being used to define a kind of slavery which had altogether lost any connection with explicit religious difference. In the Virginia code of 1705, for example, the term sounded much more like a definition of race than of religion: 'And for a further christian care and usage of all christian servants, *Be it also enacted* . . . That no negroes, mulattos, or Indians, although christians, or Jews, Moors, Mahometans, or other infidels, shall, at any time, purchase any christian servant, nor any other, except of their own complexion, or such as are declared slaves by this act.' By this time 'Christianity' had somehow become intimately and explicitly linked with 'complexion.' The 1705 statute declared 'That all servants imported and brought into this country, by sea or land, who were not christians in their native country . . . shall be accounted and be slaves, and as such be here bought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to christianity afterwards.' As late as 1753 the Virginia slave code anachronistically defined slavery in terms of religion when everyone knew that slavery had for generations been based on the racial and not the religious difference.

It is worth making still closer scrutiny of the terminology which Englishmen employed when referring both to themselves and to the two peoples they enslaved, for this terminology affords the best single means of probing the content of their sense of difference. The terms *Indian* and *Negro* were both borrowed from the Hispanic languages, the one originally deriving from (mistaken) geographical locality and the other from human complexion. When referring to the Indians the English colonists either used that proper name or called them *savages*, a term which reflected primarily their view of Indians as uncivilized. In significant contrast, the colonists referred to *negroes*, and by the eighteenth century to *blacks* and to *Africans*, but almost never to African *heathens* or *pagans* or *savages*. Most suggestive of all, there seems to have been something of a shift during the seventeenth century in the terminology which Englishmen in the colonies applied to themselves. From the initially most common term *Christian*, at mid-century there was a marked shift toward the terms *English* and *free*. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term of self-identification appeared—*white*.

So far as the weight of analysis may be imposed upon such terms, diminishing reliance upon *Christian* suggests a gradual muting of the specifically religious elements in the Christian-Negro distinction in favor of secular nationality: Negroes were, in 1667, 'not in all respects to be admitted to a full fruition of the exemptions and impunities of the English.' As time went on, as some Negroes became assimilated to the English colonial culture, as more 'raw Africans' arrived, and as increasing numbers of non-English Europeans were attracted to the colonies, English colonists turned increasingly to what they saw as the striking physiognomic difference. In Maryland a revised law prohibiting miscegenation (1692) retained *white* and *English* but dropped the term *Christian*—a symptomatic modification. By the end of the seventeenth century dark complexion had become an independent rationale for enslavement: in 1709 Samuel Sewall noted in his diary that a 'Spaniard' had petitioned the Massachusetts Council for freedom but that 'Capt. Teat alledg'd that all of that Color were Slaves.' Here was a barrier between 'we' and 'they' which was visible and permanent: the black man could not become a white man. Not, at least, as yet.

What had occurred was not a change in the justification of slavery from religion to race. No such justifications were made. There seems to have been, within the unarticulated concept of the Negro as a different sort of person, a subtle but highly significant shift in emphasis. A perception of Negro heathenism remained through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth and even the twentieth century, and an awareness, at very least, of the African's different appearance was present from the beginning. The shift was an alteration in emphasis within a single concept of difference rather than a development of a novel conceptualization. Throughout the colonies the

terms *Christian, free, English,* and *white* were for many years employed indiscriminately as synonyms. A Maryland law of 1681 used all four terms in one short paragraph.

Whatever the limitations of terminology as an index to thought and feeling, it seems likely that the English colonists' initial sense of difference from Africans was founded not on a single characteristic but on a cluster of qualities which, taken as a whole, seemed to set the Negro apart. Virtually every quality in 'the Negro' invited pejorative feelings. What may have been his two most striking characteristics, his heathenism and his appearance, were probably prerequisite to his complete debasement. His heathenism alone could not have led to permanent enslavement since conversion easily wiped out that failing. If his appearance, his racial characteristics, meant nothing to the English settler, it is difficult to see how slavery based on race ever emerged, how the concept of complexion as the mark of slavery ever entered the colonists' minds. Even if the English colonists were most unfavorably struck by the Negro's color, though, blackness itself did not urge the complete debasement of slavery. Other cultural qualities—the strangeness of his language, gestures, eating habits, and so on—certainly must have contributed to the English colonists' sense that he was very different, perhaps disturbingly so. In Africa these qualities had for Englishmen added up to *savagery*; they were major components in that sense of *difference* which provided the mental margin absolutely requisite for placing the European on the deck of the slave ship and the African in the hold.

The available evidence (what little there is) suggests that for Englishmen settling in America, the specific religious difference was initially of greater importance than color, certainly of much greater relative importance than for the Englishmen who confronted Negroes in their African homeland. Perhaps Englishmen in Virginia, tanning seasonally under a hot sun and in almost daily contact with tawny Indians, found the Negro's color less arresting than they might have in other circumstances. Perhaps, too, these first Virginians sensed how inadequately they had reconstructed the institutions and practices of Christian piety in the wilderness; they would perhaps appear less as failures to themselves in this respect if compared to persons who as Christians were *totally* defective. Perhaps, though, the Jamestown settlers were told in 1619 by the Dutch shipmaster that these 'negars' were heathens and could be treated as such. We do not know. The available data will not bear all the weight that the really crucial questions impose.

Of course once the cycle of degradation was fully under way, once slavery and racial discrimination were completely linked together, once the engine of oppression was in full operation, then there is no need to plead lack of knowledge. By the end of the seventeenth century in all the colonies of the English empire there was chattel racial slavery of a kind which would have seemed familiar to men living in the nineteenth century. No Elizabethan

Englishman would have found it familiar, though certain strands of thought and feeling in Elizabethan England had intertwined with reports about the Spanish and Portuguese to engender a willingness on the part of English settlers in the New World to treat some men as suitable for private exploitation. During the seventeenth century New World conditions had enlarged this predisposition, so much so that English colonials of the eighteenth century were faced with full-blown slavery—something they thought of not as an institution but as a host of ever present problems, dangers, and opportunities.

[*Source*: Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 50–4.]