AMERICAN HISTORY

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This textbook is a narrative with primary sources covering American history before 1877. The following account of early American history seeks to incorporate various methods of writing about the past, ranging from politics and foreign policy, to economics and demography, to the concerns of scholars of race and gender. This textbook is fairly unique, because normally one set of scholars will write a narrative of the period and another set of scholars will put together an anthology of documents for this era; rarely does the same scholar who constructs a narrative also include a document anthology as a part of his or her textbook. By using roughly 150 small document excerpts with my narrative, I intend to show students the kinds of documents a historian uses to construct a story about the past (even though the number used here is only a small sample of relevant primary source material).

Ideally, students should question some or all of the conclusions drawn from the assigned documents, and debate for themselves how representative these documents are for the varied and conflicting interests present among different historical actors. My hope also is that after reading these documents, students will become curious enough to seek out longer excerpts of the writings of the authors selected here in order to further an engagement with the source material. Students may even be inspired to seek out other sources not excerpted here, in order to gain a greater or varied perspective on the events from different writers or thinkers who nonetheless described similar issues or events in the past.

One of the most challenging aspects of teaching history arises from trying to convince students that the subject of history is a constant argument, and that conceptions regarding history are directly relevant to the contested political, economic, and social debates of the present. Hopefully the story and primary documents presented here allow for teachers and students to assess one event—such as the American Revolution—from the multiple vantage points of wealthier patriots, poorer slaves, frontier whites, women, or others. What historians constantly refer to as “critical thinking,” then, arises from an understanding among students that the past is debatable, and that representations made about it often come from different social, economic, gendered, or racial experiences (or prejudices). Every teacher and historian hopes that his or her students will learn to question all received forms of wisdom, and develop a healthy skepticism for ideas dictated to them by figures of authority, regardless of political orientation.
Even though I have only been teaching students for just shy of ten years (and therefore cannot claim that this book represents decades of experience), the ideas and arguments contained herein have been greatly shaped by the constant challenge of making the past relevant to those who sit in my classroom. While I am solely responsible for the quality and accuracy of what follows, this textbook would have not been brought to press without the work of University Readers, Seidy Cruz, and her production team, to whom I am very grateful.

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The roughly fifty million people in the fifteenth century, estimated to have lived from modern-day Alaska south to Chile, represented a diverse group of human beings. They are known to English-speakers as “native Americans,” but that label is artificial, and masks the significant diversity of tribes, family arrangements, languages, and economic structures possessed by these people. Literally thousands of tribal groups once existed throughout the Americas, some consisting of nothing larger than extended families of only a few hundred members, while other groups, such the Incans, included thousands of people. Because history is written by the victors—in addition to the more important fact that 99 percent of these “natives” did not possess or leave behind systems of writing intelligible to Europeans—a picture of the Americas when the natives outnumbered Europeans can never fully be told. In spite of this, however, scholars are able to recover some aspects of the social, economic, and political life of these diverse peoples with the aid both of archaeology and oral traditions handed down by natives and recorded later by their descendants who spoke European languages. One should not forget that European explorers themselves wrote and said much regarding these people, but of course those sources are not the same as if the natives themselves left behind written documents.

Historians generally group native tribes into four groups, based on their mode of economic production (how they made a living): hunter-gathering, fishing, hunting, and sedentary farming. Among the first three categories of economic organization, life was lived on a much smaller, simpler scale than among those natives who practiced sedentary farming. Often the non-farming tribes combined elements of hunting, fishing, and gathering, though some tribes clearly spent more time doing one activity over the others. For example, many of the coastal natives in what is now California lived in small thatched huts; they fished and picked berries for their survival, as well as occasionally hunted small animals. These tribal bands were not large and could be easily conquered or controlled by other rival tribes (or later Europeans).

Many of the natives in what became the American Plains and Prairies, such as the Apache or Navajo, were more focused on hunting bison and other larger land animals; with the help of dog-pulled sleds, these natives generally lived a more nomadic (or wandering) existence than the gathering and hunting groups in California. Later on, these hunters would adopt the horse and become fierce warriors against European expansion. All of these groups that lived so close to the land generally exhibited a much more egalitarian social structure: There were not any large landowners, bureaucrats, or kings among them, and the men did not necessarily treat women as badly as the Europeans did. This last aspect—that of gender equality—has
often been noted with admiration by recent scholars, as it was with some early explorers and European thinkers who cast the “noble savage” in a light representing a simplicity, kindness, and gentleness that had long been lost in the much more developed and militarized European world.

The sedentary farming mode of production necessarily led to the most developed, largest, and strongest native American tribes. These might be thought of more correctly in European terms as “empires.” This is because having a surplus of crops derives from more advanced farming techniques, enabling a society to devote time to craft making for trade, and intellectual and military training for the domination of other, weaker tribes. Such “empires” are no longer living “hand to mouth,” as it were. There were many smaller groups of sedentary farmers in North America, such as the Powhatans in modern-day Virginia, the Pueblo in present-day New Mexico, and the Iroquois in what is now New York State. In what became the United States, there were large settlements of cliff dwellers in the Southwest, as well as the mound dwellers in the area around present-day St. Louis. The mound dwellers even constructed a large city, Cahokia, in the period between 600 and 1400, but such groups eventually succumbed to climate changes or attacks from invaders, and were no longer extant by the time of the arrival of Columbus in the 1490s. At the time of the Europeans’ arrival in the new world, therefore, there were really only two groups of natives that most resembled a European “empire,” as recognized by men like Columbus. These two groups were the Aztecs of central Mexico and the Incas of the Northern Andean region in South America.

By 1325, the Aztecs had established a large city named Tenochtitlan, the site of Mexico City today, with an alliance of other tribes in the valley. From this urban center, the Aztecs dominated trade in the region, and established relations with various tributary tribes, or bands, who owed the Aztecs labor or materials (or both), in return for various exotic items, most notably bronze jewelry and tools. In the Aztec empire, great social inequalities developed, where the local landowning gentry, priests, or chiefs could live off of the wealth generated by the lower orders, supposedly in exchange for protection from outside threats or from internal lawlessness and crime. In this way, the social structure of the Aztecs most resembled that of the Europeans, with their feudal hierarchies and priestly classes. The Aztecs believed that the “war god” needed to be appeased frequently; in 1502, thousands of people were sacrificed by having their still-beating hearts ripped from their chests at the coronation of their new ruler, Motecuhzoma (known as Montezuma in Spanish). But other, more positive signs of Aztec power can be seen in their development of a largely pictorial writing system (known as the Aztec codices) and in their study of astronomy. Their urban capital, Tenochtitlan, may have been home to as many people as some contemporary European cities, and it was replete with garbage collectors, latrines, and forms of mass transit. (The Spaniards also noted prostitutes and beggars among the urban populace). Further south, in the Andes of South America, lived the Incas. Under the reign of Pachacutec in 1438, these natives began to move out from the town of Cuzco (in modern-day Peru) to build an empire with a well-disciplined fighting force using wooden, stone, and bronze weapons. At its height, the Incan empire stretched from what is now Colombia over a thousand miles south to present-day Argentina. Although they lacked a formal writing system, they did maintain a census using ceramics, which they also used for other communication as well (such ceramics are impossible for Westerners to decipher, however). In addition, Incan engineers built roads and fortifications throughout the Andean
region, and which still exist today. As with the Aztecs, the Incans supervised or controlled numerous subordinate tribes for tributary purposes and maintained a constant stream of recruits for their military.

For all of their innovations and power, however, the most advanced groups of natives such as the Aztecs or the Incans suffered from two serious disadvantages from the Europeans, or indeed even from other Eurasians and East Asians: They were highly susceptible to viruses derived from distant travel and contact with livestock, and they had not developed the use of iron and steel. Regarding diseases, scientists and scholars posit that not only the relative isolation of various tribes (even the most advanced did not travel as widely as the average Eurasian) but also their lack of contact with livestock such as the cow, rabbit, and horse made the natives highly susceptible to a whole range of Eurasian diseases, such as smallpox, influenza, and yellow fever. The biological disadvantage of the native peoples may have been responsible for a devastating collapse in their population by as much as a 90 percent decline. Such a demographic collapse significantly weakened the ability of natives to fight back against the European military and demographic onslaught initiated by Columbus.

The story of native contact with Europeans is not merely a simple story of biological extermination and military conquest, however. First of all, without some degree of native support, Europeans such as Cortés or the English settlers in Jamestown could not have survived in this strange new world. And for centuries after their initial contact with the natives, English settlers lived in near constant fear of native American reprisals and attacks, thus testifying to the enduring military and economic power of some tribes. As we will see, certain North American tribes, such as the Iroquois, maintained an ability to play off different European powers against each other into the eighteenth century, particularly once it was clear that Europeans wanted native consumer items such as beaver fur or deer peltry. Other tribes learned to use European tactics of warfare to their advantage: for example, Apache warriors in the American Plains mastered the use of the European horse, and for a time fought back against white expansion into the North American West. Elsewhere in the Americas, Europeans and natives produced racially mixed offspring who developed a taste for native customs and commodities such as drinking hot chocolate, and the existence of this new mestizo race testifies to the fact that native culture was hardly eradicated in Latin America. The nature and pace of European domination of the natives was uneven, therefore, and as late the nineteenth century, it would be possible for thousands of natives to avoid direct contact with the deleterious consequences of European invasion.

But the invasion was real, and the man who instigated the European assault on native Americans, Christopher Columbus, personally embodied many of the disparate economic, social, and political forces of the 1400s, which pushed Europeans out into the Atlantic Ocean in search of wealth. Western Europe in the 1400s was suffering from the effects of too many mouths to feed as population growth resumed after the Black Death; its appetite had also been whetted by various spices, silks, and other rare luxury items from Asia, brought to them via the Middle East and Italy. In the most basic sense, then, Europeans were hungry for more stuff, as it were, but they also possessed a militaristic society (which some would trace back to the Romans) that empowered various knights to take risks or commit violent depredations on foreign powers and peoples. So Europeans possessed the power to act on their desire for foreign goods. This power can be seen in the success Isabella and Ferdinand of Castile and Aragon,
respectively, who oversaw the Christian reconquest of Muslim-controlled Granada by an army of dedicated Christian warriors in 1492. Elsewhere on the Iberian peninsula, the Portuguese had been honing their skills as sailors in the Eastern Atlantic and extreme northwest Africa since the 1400s, laying the foundations for the maritime daring and experimentation so pivotal for European success. And so the Western European world of Christopher Columbus was one of militarism, navigational enterprise, and a deep desire to find new trade goods to consume or land to conquer. Columbus, as a sailor possessing an amazing degree of self-confidence, somehow managed to convince Isabella to take a chance on his bold belief that the world was in fact smaller than generally thought (meaning Asia was only 3,000 miles west of Spain, and not 7,000 miles). He claimed that he knew how to sail west to Asia, and win for the Spanish crown far more wealth than even the Portuguese had managed to bring home in their expeditions to Africa. Willing to take a chance (the Portuguese rejected Columbus’ ideas), the Spanish monarchs agreed to finance the famous voyage of the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria, all of which set sail on August 3, 1492.

Columbus’ main discovery was that by sailing into the Atlantic Ocean, south-southwest, he would eventually find prevailing trade winds which would literally kick his ship across the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly, when leaving from the Caribbean, if one tacked north-northeast, one would find prevailing winds to take a ship back to Europe. Columbus was a daring and self-confident sailor, but nothing more. He never really knew where he was going, constantly asking Caribbean natives where was the Emperor of China, and he died never knowing where he had been. He did not bring back much in the way of material or bullion wealth from the Caribbean islands he encountered. Columbus and the men he left behind did manage to kill and oppress the natives, but without much financial success, and for this Columbus was severely reprimanded. He died in 1506 not having produced much immediate success, though he laid the foundation for a dramatic transfer of wealth, peoples, plants, and diseases referred to as the Columbian exchange. Columbus unleashed a demographic and economic revolution which, while dramatic, was also heavily one-sided in terms of winners and losers. The native population never recovered from the aforementioned smallpox, typhoid, yellow fever, and other European diseases, in addition to succumbing to European military technology. The natives did learn to use the horse or even cattle from Europeans, but only sporadically. On the other hand, Europeans gained amazing new sources of commodity and crop wealth. This can be seen in the introduction of new staple crops such as corn and the potato to Europe, while Europeans were also able to grow old-world crops—such as sugar and tobacco—in amounts previously unknown to them since disease had cleared the natives from the land. In many ways, Europeans after Columbus discovered more wealth from the Americas than they ever could have hoped to receive from Asia.

Within forty years of Columbus’ voyages, the Spanish moved into the mainland of what is now Latin America with the help of Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro. Cortés, using divide-and-conquer methods among subordinate, oppressed tribes of the Aztecs, moved from the Mexican seacoast up to the mountains and seized the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in 1521. As noted above, Cortés was helped immeasurably not just with native soldiers, but also with European steel weapons and European diseases. Grafting themselves onto the existing empire, the Spaniards often took native mistresses and did to some extent create a new race of “Americans” of mixed native and Spanish ancestry. Yet those New World subjects with the largest amount of white blood (or who appeared to have the largest amount) were still held in
the highest esteem, especially if they were born in Spain and not in Mexico. A similar story of conquest would play out in Peru, led by Francisco Pizarro, who more or less repeated Cortés’ tactics in the defeat of the Incan empire by the 1540s. The successes of both men brought about the beginning of the tremendous extraction of silver and gold (primarily silver) from Mexico and Peru, which was the basis of the astounding growth of the Spanish Empire. Ultimately, this reliance upon bullion extraction proved precarious for the empire (they had all their eggs in one basket, so to speak) as well as deleterious to domestic industry (it became cheaper to rely on bullion flows to buy consumer goods from foreigners than to produce manufactured goods in Spain). As a result, Spain would fall into decline by the 1700s. Their meteoric rise also led other Western European powers to try to move in on Spanish America. This often led Spanish kings to arrogantly threaten war with Spanish enemies, in particular with Protestant England.

The English had, by the late 1500s, begun to attempt to compete with the Spaniards, and would eventually succeed in their attempts to carve out a New World empire. As the sixteenth century drew to a close, numerous English “seadogs” or pirates, such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, had taken great pleasure in raiding Spanish treasure fleets laden with gold, silver, or slaves from the New World. As time wore on, the Spanish king Philip also wanted to wage war against the English because they were now dominated by Protestant “heretics.” The 1500s had seen tens of thousands of Protestants reject the dominant Roman church over issues of papal authority, as well as over the need for sacraments in Christian ceremonies. Philip of Spain saw himself as the defender of the Catholic faith in his crusade against the English, in addition to fearing the economic competition from this rising power to the northwest. But Philip overstretched in his attempted naval invasion of England in 1588—an event known simply as “the Armada.” In this battle, daring English sailors sent burning fire ships into the Spanish fleet, while a stiff, northern “Protestant wind” literally dashed Philip’s naval flotilla (in addition to his dreams of conquering the English) along the rocky coast of Ireland. For the English, the year 1588 represented a major shot in the arm for nationalists, such as Richard Hakluyt, who were convinced their island nation could now take on the greatest empire in the world. And Hakluyt believed this battle against Spain would be waged not only in Europe, but in the Americas as well.

Slowly, various Englishmen began to dream not merely of an empire derived from the extraction of bullion, but also from the planting of colonies which would produce all of the necessary goods to make England self-sufficient, to make England the market to the rest of Europe. These ideas, later associated with mercantilist thinkers, were not widespread in 1588, but they would gain currency among the English in the next century and helped to chart the course for English, and later British, dominance, in what historians refer to as an Atlantic world of commerce. England’s first attempt at building a new world colony, Roanoke in present-day North Carolina, failed miserably due to lack of preparation and squabbling with the natives. The colonists simply vanished into the woods when Walter Raleigh returned for them in 1587. But that defeat could not stop the desire for other Englishmen to make good on their dreams of North American empire.
Documents:

1. **Spanish Letter of Christopher Columbus to Luis de Sant’Angel** … (1493)

   The following excerpt comes from the first letter sent by Columbus to the Spanish crown, indicating he had “discovered” what he thought was part of Asia. The letter is addressed to the finance minister to King Ferdinand, Luis Sant’Angel, an early supporter of Columbus. In this letter, Columbus describes the docility of the natives he encountered on small islands that now comprise the Bahamas, in addition to extolling the potential wealth Spain might take from these islands.

   I write to you so that you may know that in thirty three days I passed over to the Indies (Caribbean) with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Lords, gave me. I have found many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number. And, of them all, I have taken possession for their Highnesses … In the island of [Hispaniola] there are many spiceries and great mines of gold and other metals. The people of this island, and of all the others that I have found and seen, or not seen, all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bring them forth. … They have no iron or steel, nor any weapons; nor are they fit thereunto; not because they be not well-formed people and of fair stature, but that they are most wondrously humble and simple. They have no other weapons than the stems of reeds in their seedling state, on the end of which they fix little sharpened stakes. Even these, they dare not use. … Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts. And whether it be a thing of value, or one of little worth, they are straightaway content with whatever may be given them in return. I forbade that anything so worthless as fragments of broken platters, and pieces of broken glass, and strap-buckles, should be given them; although when they were able to get such things, they seemed to think they had the best jewel in the world. For it was amazing for those sailors to get in exchange for a strap, gold to the weight of two and a half ounces. … And in conclusion, to your Highnesses I shall give them as much gold as they may need, with very little aid which their Highnesses will give me; spices and cotton at once, as much as their Highnesses will order to be shipped, and as much as they shall order to be shipped of mastic … and aloe-wood … and slaves as many as they shall order to be shipped. …

2. **Declaration Concerning the Indies from King Ferdinand of Spain, 1510.**

   After the death of his wife, Isabella, and after both monarchs’ involvement in Columbus’ expeditions, Ferdinand composed several justifications for Spanish imperialism in the Americas, such as the one below. This document reveals how the man who helped to reconquer and unify various parts of the Iberian peninsula in the name of Catholicism also justified New World expansion in similar terms.

   Of all these nations [including the Americas], God our Lord gave charge to one man, called St. Peter, that he should be Lord and Superior of all the men in the world, that all should obey him, and that he should be head of the whole human race, wherever men should live. … And he commanded him to place his seat in Rome, as the spot most fitting to rule the world from. …
So their Highnesses, Kings, and Lords of these islands and land of Tierra-firme by virtue of this donation: and some islands and indeed almost all of those whom this has been notified, have received and served their Highnesses, as lords and kings, in the way that subjects out to do—with good will, without any resistance … when they were informed of the aforesaid facts [regarding the rule of the Pope]. … And also they [the native] received and obeyed the priests whom their Highnesses have joyfully and benignantly received them, and also have commanded then to be treated as their subjects and vassals. … [We ask other tribes] to take the time to consider what we have said to you and acknowledge the Church as your ruler. … If you do so, you will do well … if you do not do this, and maliciously make delay in it, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can. … We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command. …

3. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun, General History of Things in New Spain (1582)

De Sahagun was an early Spanish missionary to the Aztec people of Mexico and one of the leading scholars of the language of the Aztecs, Nahuatl. In this account he recounts the brutality of the Spanish conquistadors, and relates material he learned from the perspective of the native peoples of Mexico, with whom he conducted extensive interviews.

In 1519 … at the town of Cholula [in Mexico], there arose from the Spaniards a cry summoning all the [native American] noblemen, lords, war leaders, warriors, and common folk; and when they had crowded into the temple courtyard, then all the Spaniards and their allies blocked the entrances and every exit. There followed a butchery of stabbing, beating, killing of the unsuspecting Cholulans armed with no bows and arrows, protected by no shields … with no warning, they were treacherously, deceitfully slain …

Later … in Tenochtitlan … the people of the city rose in tumult, alarmed as if by an earthquake, as if there were a constant reeling of the face of the earth. Shocked, terrified, Moctezuma himself wept in the distress he felt for his city. Everyone was in terror; everyone was astounded, afflicted. Many huddled in groups, wept in foreboding for their own fates and those of their friends. Others, dejected, hung their heads. Some groups exchanged tearful greetings; others tried mutual encouragement. … Eventually, the Spaniards took Moctezuma hostage, and finally strangled him. Then the Spanish charged the crowd with their iron lances and hacked us with their iron swords. … The blood of the young warriors ran like water; it gathered in pools … [but the Spanish did not win and had to flee].

But at about the same time that the Spanish had fled from Mexico … there came a great sickness, a pestilence, the smallpox. It spread over the people with great destruction of men … It was after all this happened that the Spanish came back [in 1521] … Tenochtitlan held out against their siege for 75 days. Finally the Spanish took the city, destroying it and killing hundreds of thousands of Aztec citizens. Many of them were already sick and starving … There was hunger. Many died of famine. … The enemy pressed about us like a wall … they herded us … the brave warriors were still hopelessly resisting [but to no avail.]

As a young man, de las Casas had witnessed the brutality of Columbus on the island of Hispaniola; in later years, de las Casas tried to right the wrongs done to natives by establishing a kind of commune in Venezuela, where natives might receive fair treatment as well as pay for their work. But this experiment failed when some of the whites instigated fights with other tribes over access to slave labor. De las Casas then devoted his life to the Church by becoming a member of the Dominican order. He would continue to be an advocate for native rights throughout the 1500s, until his death in 1566.

God has created all these numberless people [the natives of the New Word] to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity … free from hate and revenge as any in the world … Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tiger, and lions which had been starving for many days … they [have for forty years] afflicted, tormented, and destroyed [the natives] with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of … The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practice strange cruelty among the natives. [These Christians] penetrated into the country and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold …

5. *From The Conquest of New Spain, by Bernal Díaz, in reference to Malinche (native American mistress to Cortés), circa 1570.*

*Taken from the famous chronicle of Cortés’ conquest of Mexico by Díaz, this account of Cortés’ onetime native mistress (who also gave birth to a son by him) reveals how some natives were able to survive and even prosper under Spanish rule, if they went along with the desires of the conquistadors. Malinche is considered by many to be the mother of the “mestizo” race in Mexico, even if she is viewed as an opportunist by others.*

I should like to give an account of Doña Marina (Malinche) who had been a great lady and leader [of the native people] since her childhood … The Indians of Xicalango gave the child [Malinche] to the people of Tabasco, and the Tabascans gave her to Cortez. … After the conquest of Mexico I passed through various places with Cortez and Doña Marina. Cortes always took her with him, as she proved such an excellent person, and good interpreter in all the wars against the natives in New Spain. … And while Cortes was in the town of Coatzacoalcos, he summoned all of the leaders … and Doña Marina’s mother and her half brother were among them … but the woman and her son were very much afraid of Doña Marina, thinking that she had come to put them to death, and they wept. When Doña Marina saw her mother and her half-brother in tears, she comforted them, saying that they need have no fear … she then gave them many golden jewels and some clothes. Then she sent them back to their town, saying that God had been very gracious to her [Malinche] in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and giving her a son by her lord and master Cortes, also in marrying her to such a gentleman as her husband Juan Jaramillo … she would rather serve her
husband and Cortes than anything else in the world, ... This was the great beginning of our [Spanish] conquests, and thus, praise be to God, all things prospered with us. I have made a point of telling this story, because without Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

6. **John Heckewelder, “Indian Tradition of the First Arrival of the Dutch on Manhattan Island in 1610” (1841).**

Heckewelder, the native American missionary active during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was most familiar with the Delaware and Mohegan tribes of the mid-Atlantic and Ohio Valley regions. In the early 1600s, he recorded this oral tradition of the first contact between Europeans and natives in what became New York City. It was often European missionaries who preserved such accounts, and it is important to note the native relationship to European technology and trade goods described by missionaries like Heckewelder.

A great many years ago ... some Indians who were out fishing saw at a great distance something remarkable floating on the water, and such as they had never seen before. ... At length the spectators concluded that this wonderful object was moving towards the land, and that it must be an animal or something else that had life in it; it would therefore be proper to inform all the Indians on the inhabited islands of what they had seen, and put them on their guard. Accordingly they sent off a number of runners and watermen to carry the news to their scattered chief that they might send off in every direction for the warriors, with a message that they should come on immediately. These arriving in numbers, and having themselves viewed the strange appearance, and observing that it was actually moving towards the entrance of the river or bay; concluded it to be a remarkably large house in which the Mannitto (Supreme Being) was present, and that he probably was coming to visit them. By this time the chiefs were assembled at York island, and deliberating in what manner in which they should receive their Mannitto on his arrival... All the idols or images were put in place, and a grand dance was supposed not only to be an agreeable entertainment for the Great Being, but it was believed that it might, with the addition of a sacrifice, contribute to appease him if he was angry with them. ... Other runners ... after arriving declare that it is positively a house full of human beings, of quite a different color from that of the Indians, and dressed differently from them; that in particular one of them was dressed entirely in red, who must be the Mannitto himself. ...The house ... at last stops, and a canoe of smaller size comes on shore with the red man, and some others in it ... The chiefs and wise men, assembled in council, form themselves into a large circle, towards which the man in red clothes approaches with two others. He salutes them with a friendly countenance, and they return the salute after their manner. The natives are lost in admiration ... A large jug is brought out by one of the Mannitto's servants, from which an unknown substance is poured out into a small cup or glass ... he hands it to the native chief standing next to him. The chief receives it, but only smells the contents and passes it on to the next chief, who does the same. The glass or cup thus passes through the circle, without the liquor being tasted by any one, and is upon the point of being returned to the Manitto, when one of the Indians, a brave man a great warrior suddenly jumps up and harangues the assembly for returning the cup. ... He then took the glass, and bidding the assembly a solemn farewell, at once drank up its contents ... He soon began to stagger, and at last fell prostrate on the
ground. His companions began to bemoan his fate ... and they think he has expired. He wakes again, jumps up and declared, that he has enjoyed the most delicious sensations, and that he never before felt himself so happier as after he had drunk the cup. He asks for more, his wish is granted; the whole assembly then imitate him, and all become intoxicated.

7. Richard Hakluyt, A Discourse Concerning Western Planting (1584).

Hakluyt, an English minister, was fascinated with the prospects of New World trade and exploration and did all he could to be a propagandist for English overseas empire when many in that country questioned its profitability. This excerpt also demonstrates the Protestant worldview that Catholic Spain should be stopped in her efforts to use wealth from the New World to dominate European politics and pervert “true” religion.

A brief collection of certain reasons to induce her majesty [Queen Elizabeth I] to take in hand the Western voyage and the planting there:

1. The soil yieldeth all the several commodities of Europe and of all kingdoms [England might bypass foreign sources of goods] ...
4. The passage is to be performed at all times of the year. ...
6. This enterprise may stay the Spanish King from flowing all over the face of the earth of America, if we seat and plant there in time. ...
11. At the first traffic with the people of those parts, the subjects of this realm will change many cheap commodities of these parts for commodities easily produced over there. ...
21. Many soldiers and servitors, in the end of wars ... may there be unladen, to the common profit and quiet of this realm. ...

It remains to be considered by what means and by whom this great work may be performed of enlarging the glorious gospel of Christ, and reducing infinite multitudes of these simple people that are in error into the right and perfect way of their salvation ... Now the Kings and Queens of England have the name of defenders of the faith, by which title I think they are not only charged to maintain and patronize the faith of Christ, but to enlarge it [among the natives].

It is also true that many thousands of our idle people within the realm, which, having no way to be on work [could be employed in Western plantations]. Whereas if this voyage could be set in execution ... many could be employed in planting of sugar canes, as the Portuguese have done in Madeira; in maintenance and increasing of silk worms for silk; ... in gathering of cotton whereof there is plenty ... in dressing of vines whereof there is great abundance of wine ... in fishing, salting, and drying of ling, cod, salmon, herring ...

And entering into consideration of the way this King Philip [of Spain] may be abased, I mean first to being with the West Indies, as there to lay a chief foundation for his overthrow. With the removal of this strongest hold [in the Caribbean] the mightiest and strongest walls fall flat to earth; so this prince, spoiled or intercepted for a while of his treasure ... and the people revolt in every foreign territory of his, and cut the throats of the proud, hateful Spaniards ...