

## **“HOW THE WEST WAS WON”: CHRISTIAN EXPANSION BEFORE AND AFTER THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION**

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### *Abstract*

It is certainly more than a truism to say that Protestant Reformation theology has impacted Christian faith and practice in a myriad of ways, including giving rise to a vibrant Protestant missiology. Yet, what remains relatively unexplored in the context of the Reformation and Christian mission is the impact of Reformation political theology on empire-building; specifically, the connection between Protestant mission and the extension of European political hegemony over distant lands, which began in the early modern period. This study attempts to show first that the Reformation reframing of the relationship between church and state failed to challenge the “theology of empire” inherent in Roman Catholicism, and second, that Protestant imperial expansion was equally buttressed by a religious ideology which assumed an equivalence between colonization and the fulfillment of the Great Commission. In the case of Christian expansion into the Americas both before and after the Reformation, the results were disastrous for indigenous peoples and their cultures. This assessment calls for a rethinking of Christianity’s historical relationship to empire, its modes of propagation in the modern period, and the nature of its mission in the twenty-first century.

*Keywords:* Protestant Reformation, imperialism, mission, Roman Empire, Protestantism, Luther, missionary, American Indian, indigenous, natives

### *Introduction*

It is certainly more than a truism to say that Protestant Reformation theology has impacted Christian faith and practice in a myriad of ways, including giving rise to a vibrant Protestant missiology. Yet, what remains relatively unexplored in the context of the Reformation and Christian mission in North American scholarship is the impact of Reformation political theology on empire-building; specifically, the connection between Protestant mission and the extension of European political hegemony over distant lands, which began in the early modern period.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, very few studies have endeavored to investigate how

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<sup>1</sup>Earlier versions of this article were presented in April 2017 at the West Coast Religion Teachers Conference at Walla Walla University in College Place, WA, and in November 2017 at the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies

Reformation political theology facilitated the maintenance of an often tacit, yet durable, partnership between state and church in the common purpose of political and religious expansion.<sup>2</sup>

A deeper examination of the issues reveals, however, that the propagation of Protestant Christianity across the global frontier, for the greater measure of the “age of Reformation”—not unlike its Roman Catholic counterpart—was coterminous with, and made possible *only* by Western geo-political expansion. This expansion, moreover, was accompanied by the violence of conquests, population holocausts, and the expropriation of indigenous lands—some of the inevitable inconveniences of empire-building.

This study attempts to show first, that the Reformation reframing of the relationship between church and state, seen especially in the political philosophies of Martin Luther and John Calvin, failed to challenge the “theology of empire” inherent in Roman Catholicism, and second, that Protestant imperial expansion was equally buttressed by a religious ideology which assumed an equivalence between colonization and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.<sup>3</sup> Drawing upon Christian expansion in the ancient Roman Empire as the exemplar, in this article I compare Spanish Catholic and English Protestant expansion into the Americas in order to demonstrate that both forms of Christian colonization were anchored by the same ideological moorings and proved equally disastrous for native populations.

*The Ancient Model: Roman Imperialism and Christian Expansion*

The year 312 CE is of high significance in Western Christian history because it marked not only the year of Constantine’s vision and “conversion,” but also, as Peter Brown has remarked, the culmination of the “conversion of Christianity” itself.<sup>4</sup> It was this Constantinian *renovatio*, above all else,

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(ASRS) in Boston, MA. I very much appreciated the helpful feedback and suggestions that I received from the participants at both conferences. The focus of this article is the period from the late fifteenth century through to the end of the nineteenth century. Other periods will be brought into the discussion where deemed relevant.

<sup>2</sup>See the valuable analysis in Carla G. Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 33–65.

<sup>3</sup>If this thesis holds true, then Christian imperialism in the modern period proves to be little different from other iterations of religious imperialism, such as the great Islamic expansions which occurred from the middle of the first millennium CE. For a detailed comparison of Christian and Muslim imperialisms, see Sohail H. Hashmi, *Just Wars, Holy Wars, and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, Muslim Encounters and Exchanges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Eleanor Harvey Tejirian and Reeva S. Simon, *Conflict, Conquest, and Conversion: Two Thousand Years of Christian Missions in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup>Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750*, Library of World Civilization (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), 82.

says Joseph Bryant, “which ultimately ‘prepared’ the Church for its fateful partnership in the affairs of empire.”<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Constantine’s vision was the Greek phrase τούτῳ νικά, “by this, conquer”—that is, by the symbol of the cross.<sup>6</sup> Though many of his contemporaries saw him as the embodiment of the New Testament Paul—a man whose visionary encounter with Christ marked the most significant turning point in his life—Constantine would come to represent, at once, two oppositional characterizations to later generations. For Christians he becomes the great Benefactor of the faith, while for “pagans” he is an adversary and a destroyer of Rome’s ancient traditions.<sup>7</sup> While the image of the real Constantine no doubt lies somewhere between these two opposing views,<sup>8</sup> it is clear that his re-formation of the Roman order, meant, *inter alia*, the introduction and normalization of coercive measures in Christian

<sup>5</sup>Joseph M. Bryant, “The Sect-Church Dynamic and Christian Expansion in the Roman Empire: Persecution, Penitential Discipline, and Schism in Sociological Perspective,” *British Journal of Sociology* 44.2 (1993): 304. Cf. Michael Azkoul, “Sacerdotium et Imperium: The Constantinian *Renovatio* according to the Greek Fathers,” *TS* 32.3 (1971): 431–464.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Oliver Nicholson, “Constantine’s Vision of the Cross,” *VC* 54.3 (2000): 309–323; E. H. Brookes, “The Conversion of Constantine and the Establishment,” *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 35 (1970): 31–34.

<sup>7</sup>A history of controversy surrounds the life and legacy of Constantine. Perhaps no historical account has contributed more to the image of Constantine as both a model of probity, virtue, and beneficence, and as a persecutor of traditional religions than the *Vita Constantini* (*Life of Constantine*) written by Constantine’s contemporary Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea. On the one hand, Eusebius aggrandizes the character, piety, and accomplishments of Constantine (e.g., *Vit. Const.* 1.39–43), while at the same time omitting or minimizing historical facts which might otherwise bring the emperor into disrepute. For Eusebius, Constantine is the exemplary emperor who not only benefits the Church through his generosity, but he also does so by suppressing pagan religious practices and destroying pagan temples (e.g., *ibid.*, 2.44–61; 3.1.5; 4.23). Though Eusebius exaggerates even on this latter point, before the end of the fourth century a more sinister portrait of Constantine would emerge in some circles: for many, he becomes a symbol of tyranny and oppression, and the destroyer of Rome’s ancient religious traditions. For an assessment of Eusebius’s view of Constantine and of Constantine’s legacy more generally, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 261–275; Scott Bradbury, “Constantine and the Problem of Anti-Pagan Legislation in the Fourth Century,” *CP* 89.2 (1994): 120–139.

<sup>8</sup>While Constantine undoubtedly privileged Christianity, he was also ruthless towards “heretics” and other Christian dissidents. Far from summarily destroying traditional religious practices, Constantine appears to have been more tolerable to pagan religions than has often been assumed. For a more nuanced evaluation of Constantine’s relationship to Christianity and Paganism, see John Curran, “Constantine and the Ancient Cults of Rome: The Legal Evidence,” *GR* 43.1 (1996): 68–80. See also the essays in Edward L. Smither, ed., *Rethinking Constantine: History, Theology and Legacy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); and Charles M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, 2nd ed., Roman Imperial Biographies (New York: Routledge, 2013).

proselytization.<sup>9</sup> The violence which Christians once suffered under the Roman yoke would become, from Constantine forward, a major implement in the conversion of non-Christians.

Constantine's vision was nothing short of a universal Roman-Christian Empire; the mission of Caesar and that of Christ had become convergent.<sup>10</sup> As Anthony Pagden remarks, with Constantine's conversion, "the ancient dream of universality transformed the pagan ambition to civilize the world into the analogous objective to convert literally all its inhabitants to Christianity."<sup>11</sup> The conversion of nearly half the population of the Roman Empire to the Christian faith by the end of the fourth century was, to a great extent, the result of coercive measures employed by Christian emperors, ecclesiastical hierarchies, and laity alike.<sup>12</sup> In due course, the Roman Empire and the Christian faith would become synonymous; by the middle of the first millennium CE, to be Roman was to be Christian and to be Christian was to be Roman.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the "triumph of Christianity"<sup>14</sup> and the reiteration of the cross as a symbol of violence and domination adumbrated the partnership of sword and crucifix, of confiscation and conversion, that would mark the course of Christian history.

With the conversion of Constantine the Great, the kingdom of God had effectively been taken from the Jews and given to another—imperial Rome and its successors—in perpetuity. Under Christendom, it appeared a new Israelite theocracy was constituted: in the Caesars, the kings of Israel were reified, and in the papal ecclesiology, a new priesthood ordained. There were no shortage of theologians in the Patristic period, no less in the age of European expansion, who accepted implicitly and sought to justify the belief that God had entrusted to the Roman Empire and its successors the fulfillment of the Great Commission by force of arms, and that the kingdom of God would be ushered

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<sup>9</sup>See, Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1–31; idem, *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D. 100–400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 86–101; H. A. Drake, "Lambs into Lions: Explaining Early Christian Intolerance," *Past & Present* 153.1 (1996): 3–36; idem, "Intolerance, Religious Violence, and Political Legitimacy in Late Antiquity," *JAAR* 79.1 (2011): 196, 220.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 275. According to MacMullen, from Constantine onwards, "The two forces, ecclesiastical and imperial, have been seen working together, sometimes the one at the behest of the other, sometimes contrariwise, but always in agreement about the one essential, to rid God's world of nonbelievers" (*Christianity and Paganism*, 30).

<sup>11</sup>Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 29.

<sup>12</sup>Bryant, "Sect-Church Dynamic," 304. Cf. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 86, 89; Drake, "Religious Violence," 195–196.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Tejirian and Simon, *Conflict, Conquest, and Conversion*, xi.

<sup>14</sup>The oxymoron of this juxtaposition is self-evident.

in under the imperial aegis of Rome.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when Augustine argued that God had committed “to the Romans the task of uniting the world prior to the coming of Christ,” he echoed the sentiments of many of his contemporaries.<sup>16</sup>

The expectation of a universal Christian empire provided an essential ideological basis for Christian expansion in the modern period, as Catholic and Protestant states competed to outdo one another for imperial possessions in far-flung territories.<sup>17</sup> In effect, the desire to spread respective brands of the Christian faith to the ends of the earth became a major impulse behind the greatest imperial expansion the world has ever witnessed. Consequently, internecine conflicts between the main divisions of Christianity were a defining feature of the European quest for worldwide dominion.<sup>18</sup>

Significantly, Christian imperialism in the modern period continually looked for analogy and legitimation in the ancient Roman model. As Pagden underscores,

[T]he theoretical roots of the modern European overseas empires reached back into the empires of the Ancient World. It was, above all, Rome which provided the ideologues of the colonial systems of Spain, Britain and France with the language and political models they required, for the *Imperium romanum* has always had a unique place in the political imagination of Western Europe.<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, the legacy of Rome in the conception of British expansion was always somewhat of a quandary, as the morality of “empire” was never a

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Michael Walzer, “The Triumph of Just War Theory (and the Dangers of Success),” *Social Research* 69.4 (2002): 926.

<sup>16</sup>Pagden, *Lords of All*, 30. For the prevalence of the same ideology in the early modern context, see Arthur H. Williamson, “An Empire to End Empire: The Dynamic of Early Modern British Expansion,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68.1–2 (2005): 227–256.

<sup>17</sup>The “Age of Discovery” is generally considered to extend from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Though one of many catalysts for overseas exploration, religious motivations were an indispensable reason for global discovery. This was particularly so in view of the Muslim threat to Eastern Europe, which intensified after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman Turks. Following the close of the Silk Road by the Turks, European nations were forced to find alternate routes to the lucrative eastern trade. The quest for new trade routes was a major impetus that drove global exploration and eventuated in the “discovery” of the Western Hemisphere. For an overview of this period, see David Arnold, *The Age of Discovery, 1400–1600*, 2nd ed., Lancaster Pamphlets (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 12; Susan Juster and Linda Gregerson, “Introduction,” in *Empires of God: Religious Encounters in the Early Modern Atlantic*, ed. Susan Juster and Linda Gregerson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 2–3; Ward Churchill, “Perversions of Justice: Examining the Doctrine of US Rights to Occupancy in North America,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 21.2 (1995): 321.

<sup>19</sup>Pagden, *Lords of All*, 11.

settled question.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, despite the moral disquiet in some circles, the exemplar of Rome became firmly fixed in the British imperial imagination.

*The New Roman Empire and Catholic Expansionism*

Las Casas and the “Black Legend”

It was in 1492 that Christopher Columbus made his fateful voyage to the Americas and, according to his son Fernando, “took possession of it in the name of the Catholic Sovereigns with appropriate ceremony and words,” becoming the first European to set foot in the New World.<sup>21</sup> But, less than two decades later, a population catastrophe was well underway in the recently expropriated territories. The social reformer and contemporary of Luther, Bartolomé de Las Casas, was among the few to challenge Spanish self-proclaimed sovereignty over the Western Hemisphere. Throughout his long career, Las Casas would make numerous appearances before the Spanish court. He lobbied for more humane treatment of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and campaigned vociferously against what he called the “destruction of the Indies” by Spanish conquistadors—conquerors.

Las Casas published numerous works that indicted Spanish cruelty in the Americas, giving rise to what became known as the “Black Legend.” His most famous pamphlet, *A Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, described the horrific violence perpetrated against the natives, which, as he says, he witnessed with his own eyes.<sup>22</sup> According to Las Casas, the natives are docile as sheep, while the Spanish, like wolves, lions, and tigers, have done nothing more than “tear them to pieces, kill them, martyr them, afflict them, torment them, and destroy them by strange sorts of cruelties.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup>The complexities in early British Protestant imperial expansion are explored in Norman Vance, “Anxieties of Empire and the Moral Tradition: Rome and Britain,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18.2 (2011): 246–261. See further Christopher Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Louis B. Wright, *Religion and Empire: The Alliance Between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558–1625* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976).

<sup>21</sup>Fernando Colón, *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959), 59, as cited in Patricia Seed, “Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49.2 (1992): 183; emphasis added.

<sup>22</sup>See Robert Ellsberg, “Las Casas’ Discovery,” *America* 207.13 (2012): 12–17. Cf. Daniel Castro, *Another Face of Empire: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Indigenous Rights, and Ecclesiastical Imperialism*, Latin America Otherwise (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 105–114; Daniel R. Brunstetter, “Sepúlveda, Las Casas, and the Other: Exploring the Tension between Moral Universalism and Alterity,” *The Review of Politics* 72.3 (2010): 409–435.

<sup>23</sup>Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Spanish Colonie, or Briefe Chronicle of the Acts and Gestes of the Spaniards in the West Indies, called the New World*, trans. by M. M. S. (London: Brome, 1583), A1–A3. An excerpt of this work reprinted in Ania Loomba

In Columbus's own account of his first voyage, he reported that he found in the Americas "very many islands inhabited by countless people";<sup>24</sup> and Amerigo Vespucci, writing to the Spanish court some ten years later, said, "I have found a continent in the southern section, with more towns and animals than Europe, Asia or Africa."<sup>25</sup> But within a few short decades, according to Las Casas, that vast population was being threatened with extinction:

We are able to yield a good and certain account that there is within the space of the said 40 years, by those said tyrannies and devilish doing of the Spaniards, done to death unjustly and tyrannously more than twelve millions of souls, men, women, and children. And I verily do believe and think not to mistake therein, that there are dead more than fifteen millions of souls.<sup>26</sup>

While the population density of the Americas prior to the arrival of the Spanish is not known with certitude (current estimates range from 75–145 million),<sup>27</sup> what is clear is that a veritable population catastrophe occurred thereafter, the precipitous "reduction of native populations by up to 90 percent in some regions and complete depopulation in others."<sup>28</sup> By 1535, on the Island of Hispaniola, one of the first to be discovered by Columbus, there

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and Jonathan Burton, *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), 111–113. Cf. Patricia Seed, "Are These Not Also Men?": The Indians' Humanity and Capacity for Spanish Civilisation," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25.3 (1993): 629–652.

<sup>24</sup>Consuelo Varela, *Textos y documentos completos: Relaciones de viajes, cartas y memorials* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1982), 140, as cited in Luis N. Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 4.

<sup>25</sup>Amerigo Vespucci, *Mundus Novus* (Augsburg: Johann Otmar, 1504), in Henry Vignaud, *Americ Vespuce, 1451–1512* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1917), 305, as cited in Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 6–7.

<sup>26</sup>Loomba and Burton, *Early Modern England*, 112.

<sup>27</sup>See, David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 266–268.

<sup>28</sup>Wolfgang Gabbert, "The Longue Durée of Colonial Violence in Latin America," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 37.3 (2012): 255. Wilbur R. Jacobs writes, "[W]e must now accept the fact that the dismal story of Indian depopulation after 1492 is a demographic disaster with no known parallel in world history" ("The Tip of an Iceberg: Pre-Columbian Indian Demography and Some Implications for Revisionism," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31.1 [1974]: 128). Scholars continue to debate whether wars or diseases played the greater role in the catastrophic decline of native numbers. For a representative discussion on the subject, see further David S. Reher, "Reflections on the Fate of the Indigenous Populations of America," *Population and Development Review* 37.1 (2011): 172–177; Massimo Livi Bacci, "The Demise of the American Indians," *Population and Development Review* 37.1 (2011): 161–165; idem, "The Depopulation of Hispanic America After the Conquest," *Population and Development Review* 32.2 (2006): 199–232; William M. Denevan, "Estimating the Aboriginal Population of Latin America in 1492: Methodological Synthesis," *Publication Series (Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers)* 5.1 (1976): 125–132.

was no further need for missionary activity among the Taino Indians, as all of the roughly three million indigenous inhabitants, according to Las Casas's estimate, were completely wiped out by Spanish depredation and diseases.<sup>29</sup> Las Casas was convinced that the "Spanish conquerors of the Americas were driven by their quest for God, gold, and glory."<sup>30</sup> As Cortés famously declared in 1521 on the cusp of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec capital: "The main reason for which we came to these parts is to extol and preach faith in Christ, although that is accompanied by honor and profit. . . . Let us go forth, serving God, honoring our nation, giving growth to our king, and let us become rich ourselves; for the Mexican enterprise is for all these purposes."<sup>31</sup>

#### Papal Donation and Imperial Legitimation

The justifications for Spanish right to rule the Indies were many, but the most important and enduring, as Luis Rivera reminds us, "was the language related to God—*theology*—that served to rationalize avarice and ambition. . . . It was religion that attempted to sacralize political dominion and economic exploitation."<sup>32</sup> The papal bull *Inter caetera*, issued by Pope Alexander VI in May 1493, epitomized this legitimation of political ambition by religious edict. In this historic document, the pope, writing to the Spanish monarchs, proclaimed: "[A]ll the mainlands and isles found or to be found, discovered or to be discovered . . . by the authority of Almighty God, granted unto us in Saint Peter, and by the office which we bear on earth as Vicar of Christ, we give, grant, and assign . . . to you, your heirs and successors."<sup>33</sup> The bull

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Gabbert, "Colonial Violence," 255; Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 75–77; Jacobs, "Tip of an Iceberg," 127. Stannard, following the Berkeley School, estimates the pre-contact population of Hispaniola at eight million. See *American Holocaust*, 72, 74–75, 266–268.

<sup>30</sup>Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, xv, 259.

<sup>31</sup>Joaquín F. Pacheco, Francisco de Cárdenas, and Luís Torres de Mendoza, eds., *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los Archivos del Reino y muy especialmente del de Indias*, 31 vols. (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1864–1884), 26:21–22, as cited in Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 262.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., xv. Cf. Robert Craig, "Christianity and Empire: A Case Study of American Protestant Colonialism and Native Americans," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 21.2 (1997): 1–5.

<sup>33</sup>Alexander VI, *Inter caetera*, in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies to 1648*, ed. Frances G. Davenport (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 62. The full English text is in *ibid.*, 61–63. The full Latin text can be found in *ibid.*, 59–61. See also Marin Fernández de Navarrete, *Collección de los viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles, desde fines del s. XV*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guaranía, 1945), 2:45, as cited in Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 12, 23–26. Cf. Seed, "Taking Possession," 200–202; V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, African Systems of Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 32–38; Castro, *Another Face of Empire*, 22–23.

makes clear that the papal designations as God’s representative on earth and as the Vicar of Christ grant him the authority over all temporal powers and domains and, as such, the right to “give, grant, and assign” any possession on earth as he wills it. The bull further granted to the Spanish sovereigns the full and exclusive right to convert the native inhabitants to the “true faith.”<sup>34</sup> Throughout much of the sixteenth century, the Spanish crown would appeal repeatedly to the papal donation for legitimation of their right to the newly discovered and expropriated lands.

Official doctrine, deriving from at least the thirteenth century, had declared that papal authority extended “not only over Christians but also over infidels since the faculty received by Christ from the Father was absolute . . . and [since] all honor and principality and dominion and jurisdiction have been taken away from the infidels and transposed to the faithful.”<sup>35</sup> Christians, by virtue of being Christians, were endowed with the universal right to take possession of all newly discovered lands “heretofore not subject to the actual temporal domination of any Christian lord.”<sup>36</sup> In lands discovered by Catholic Christians, dispossession would be achieved in part through systematic wars of extermination, in addition to the destructive force of Old World diseases; and conversion would be relentlessly pursued by the priests of zealous religious orders.<sup>37</sup>

In the lengthy *Requerimiento*, a document Spaniards were required to read to native leaders prior to taking control of their lands, the following sentiments are observed:

I beg and require of you . . . to recognize the church as lady and superior of the universe and to acknowledge the Supreme Pontiff, called Pope, in her name, and the king and queen . . . as lords and superiors . . . if you do not do it . . . then *with the help of God* I will undertake powerful actions against you. I will make war on you everywhere and in every way that I can. I will subject you to the yoke of obedience of the church and of your Highnesses. I will take you personally and your wives and children, and make slaves of you, and as such sell you off . . . and *I will take away your property* and cause you all the evil and harm I can.<sup>38</sup>

Notably, the document demands the recognition of the pope and political sovereigns as overlords and finds sanction from God himself. In principle, the *Requerimiento* stipulates voluntary submission to subjection, conversion, and colonization, or forced submission by war and conquest in the name of God,

<sup>34</sup>Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 25; Castro, *Another Face of Empire*, 9, 21–23.

<sup>35</sup>Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 27. Rivera quotes Cardinal Enrique de Segusa of Osita. The papal bull of 1493 was only one in a series of declarations from at least the thirteenth century which sought to define the relationship between the “faithful” and “infidels.” See further Churchill, “Perversions of Justice,” 321–324.

<sup>36</sup>Alexander VI, *Inter caetera*, 62. Cf. de Navarrette, *Collección*, 2:45, as cited in Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 12; Castro, *Another Face of Empire*, 22–23.

<sup>37</sup>See Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 57–95.

<sup>38</sup>Lewis Hanke, “The ‘Requerimiento’ and Its Interpreters,” *Revista de Historia de América* 1 (1938): 24–26; emphasis added. Seed, “Taking Possession,” 203–204.

the pope, and the Christian sovereigns. The Spanish were good on the threats stipulated; in the face of native resistance or delay in compliance, the result would be war, enslavement, and expropriation.

Most peculiar, however, as Lewis Hanke points out, this document was rarely ever read to natives directly, and, when it was, it was incomprehensible to indigenous peoples who understood neither the language nor the legal pretensions of the Spaniards. Often, it was muttered on approaching ships or at night over a village of unsuspecting indigenes, before commencing the slaughter.<sup>39</sup> What remains clear from all dealings of Catholic Spaniards with “infidels” is that Christian mission went hand-in-hand with imperial takeover of indigenous lands and sovereignty.

*The Church-State Nexus: The Political Theologies of  
Martin Luther and John Calvin*

Martin Luther himself had denounced papal pretensions to universal sovereignty as deriving from Satan. As David Whitford writes, Luther “became convinced that the papacy,” as the full embodiment of Antichrist, “had neglected its true calling and had maliciously attempted to despoil the Roman Empire.”<sup>40</sup> Significantly, what Luther condemned was the papal usurpation of temporal authority and its design to overthrow the Roman Empire; he never ventured to question the historical relationship between the Christian religion and the Roman Empire—that is, the legitimacy of the Roman Empire as a *Christian* state. The conception of Christendom as a religious-political union was a postulate which was never in question by the magisterial reformers. Rather, what was at stake for Luther, Calvin, and those who followed in their “magisterial” tradition was the question of how best to (re)define the relationship between the political and religious organs of the Christian state; and their answers were invariably influenced by Augustine’s framing of this relationship over a millennium before.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 33–34, as cited in Seed, “Taking Possession,” 204.

<sup>40</sup>David M. Whitford, “The Papal Antichrist: Martin Luther and the Underappreciated Influence of Lorenzo Valla,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 61.1 (2008): 50.

<sup>41</sup>Augustine was born in 354 CE and lived and wrote at a time when the Christian Church had ceased to be persecuted, but had become the legally “established” religion of the Roman Empire. In his *City of God*, written nearly a century after Constantine’s death, Augustine formulated the concept of the “two cities”—one heavenly the other earthly—as a means of describing, at least in part, the nature of the relationship between the Church and the State. Augustine envisioned the Roman Empire as a Christian theocracy where both the civil and religious arms of the Empire were divinely constituted and mutually inclined. But they were also distinct in nature and function and were ordained to different provinces, one spiritual, the other temporal, and therefore, in principle, should not come into conflict. Yet Augustine also maintained that the civil government was to be under the tutelage of the religious, even defending the Church’s precepts and employing civil power to convert or punish heretical

As far as Luther was concerned, the Roman Empire was God’s instrument, the scope of his kingdom on earth, which was now under threat by the usurping antichristian papacy. In order to save Christendom from papal tyranny, on the one hand, Luther distinguished sharply between the province of the church and that of the state: the church and the state are separate and distinct, each with its respective sphere of authority, and neither is to encroach on the rights of the other.<sup>42</sup> Yet, on the other hand, and departing significantly from Augustine, Luther advocated an Erastian relationship between the church and the state wherein the state would exercise “supreme and absolute authority over the Church,” a model reminiscent of the Caesaropapism of the now defunct Eastern Roman Empire.<sup>43</sup> In Luther’s Erastian view, most pronounced in his *Address to the Nobility of German Nation* written in 1520 and summarized by Duncan B. Forrester, “the secular government may organize the external polity of the Church as seems most convenient to it . . . and the temporal authorities, if Christian, may even be recognized as ‘bishops’ with authority over the external affairs of the visible Church.”<sup>44</sup> It is this latter view which, in principle, came to define the relationship between church and state in the Reformed tradition.

Like Luther, John Calvin’s political theory also resembles Augustine’s in its fundamentals. Calvin advanced the separation of church and state based on the differences in their character and function—the former ruling in the spiritual arena, while the latter is master of the temporal sphere. But Joseph Gatis draws attention to the fact that Calvin did not envision a separation between *religion* and the state.<sup>45</sup> Calvin maintained that both entities—church and state—were divinely instituted; consequently, both are religious in nature.

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dissidents. On this basis, papal arrogation of supreme authority over spiritual and temporal matters during the medieval period was consistently sustained, justifiably so or not, by recourse to Augustine’s political philosophy. See further, Robert W. Dyson, *St Augustine of Hippo: The Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy*, Continuum Studies in Philosophy 5 (London: Continuum, 2007), 142–179; Frederick W. Loetscher, “St. Augustine’s Conception of the State,” *CH* 4.1 (1935): 16–42; Ronald Christenson, “The Political Theory of Persecution: Augustine and Hobbes,” *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 12.3 (1968): 419–438.

<sup>42</sup>Jesse Couenhoven, “Law and Gospel, or the Law of the Gospel? Karl Barth’s Political Theology Compared with Luther and Calvin,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 30.2 (2002): 183–184.

<sup>43</sup>James Wood, “Christianity and the State,” *JAAR* 35.3 (1967): 263. The Erastian principle describes a relationship between church and state in which the former serves the interest of the latter. Erastus (1524–1583) believed that the church was an arm of the state and should be subordinated to its purposes. See further, G. Joseph Gatis, “The Political Theory of John Calvin,” *BSac* 153.612 (1996): 452.

<sup>44</sup>Duncan B. Forrester, “Martin Luther and John Calvin,” in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), 287. Cf. Wood, “Christianity and the State,” 263.

<sup>45</sup>Gatis, “John Calvin,” 449.

Therefore, the relationship between the two should be mutually reinforcing.<sup>46</sup> Calvin envisioned a Christian republic that was essentially theocratic, where God ruled through both the civil and religious government.<sup>47</sup>

Consequently, Calvin maintained that the civil government should actively support and defend the jurisprudence of the church: “[T]his office is specially assigned them by God, and indeed it is right that they [civil magistrates] exert themselves in asserting and defending the honour of him whose vicegerents they are, and by whose favour they rule.”<sup>48</sup> While Calvin’s view involves reciprocity between church and state, and it is therefore neither Erastian nor “ecclesiocratic,”<sup>49</sup> in effect, his church-state approach is not consequentially different from that of Catholicism. In Calvin’s Geneva, it is the civil magistrate that enforces the church’s confession and punishes heretics.<sup>50</sup> In Tudor and Stuart England, strongly influenced by Calvinist theology, the duty of the crown was “to *conserve and maintain* the Church . . . in the unity of the True religion, and in the Bond of Peace.”<sup>51</sup> This, of course, meant (contrary to what Calvin prescribed) that within its dominion the English Crown exercised supremacy over the established church. Thus, in the long run, both Calvin’s and Luther’s political philosophies may have had the unintended consequence of “making the state a watchman over the church.”<sup>52</sup>

Even before Calvin had published his momentous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536, both in Germany and England, the civil government had already assumed authority in ecclesiastical matters. The Act of Supremacy of 1534, for example, declared Henry VIII the “Supreme head of the Church of England.”<sup>53</sup> While Calvin condemned Henry VIII’s assertion of spiritual authority as “blasphemous,” and denounced the civil authorities of Germany for the same reason,<sup>54</sup> the power vacuum created in the wake of a diminished

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 449, 451.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 449, 453.

<sup>48</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.20.9. This view is reflected in a host of Reformation writers such as the Scottish reformers, John Knox, Christopher Goodman, and John Ponet. See further, Gatis, “John Calvin,” 454–455, 462–463.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 452.

<sup>50</sup>Eberhard Busch, “Church and Politics in the Reformed Tradition,” in James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, eds., *Church, Word, and Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 179. Cf. Couenhoven, “Political Theology,” 186; Gatis, “John Calvin,” 450.

<sup>51</sup>Preamble of the *Thirty Nine Articles of Religion*, 1562, as cited in Charles W. Prior, “Ecclesiology and Political Thought in England, 1580–c. 1630,” *The Historical Journal* 48.4 (2005): 862; emphasis original.

<sup>52</sup>Couenhoven, “Political Theology,” 186.

<sup>53</sup>Though briefly repealed in 1555, since 1559 this act has defined the office of the British monarch.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. Gatis, “John Calvin,” 452, 455.

Roman Catholic influence certainly paved the way for Protestant states to assert control over the established churches. The assertion and exercise of both ecclesiastical and political authority by Protestant civil hierarchies was but another chapter in the age-long drama in which Christendom's priests and princes vied for supremacy.

Thus, while Luther contested the church-sponsored state model of governing the Roman Empire and Calvin advanced a reciprocal, egalitarian relationship between church and state, what resulted from the Protestant Reformation was, in fact, a state-sponsored church model of governance, with the union of *empire* and *religion* remaining firmly in place. The Reformation's inversion of the church-state dialectic did not alter the historical paradigm of the Christian kingdom—*Christendom*—which began with Constantine.

As Protestant empires looked beyond their borders following on the heels of Catholic global expansion, the two-pronged nature of the kingdom of God remained firmly fixed in the collective consciousness of colonial explorers and missionary pioneers alike. As Roy Pearce underscores, "For the Pilgrim as for the Puritan, religion and empire, christianization and civilization, divine order and natural order, were known to be one."<sup>55</sup> Not only so, but the religion of Christ which had given a priori legitimation for Catholic seizure of heathen lands, now provided justification for the establishment of a Protestant kingdom of God on distant shores and the consequential dispossession of the native inhabitants. Here again, Christian mission and the extension of European political hegemony were simultaneously advanced by the Protestant movement.

*Protestant Expansionism and the Western Frontier*

The belated arrival of Protestants to the New World brought with it the polemics of Las Casas's *Black Legend*, which had been waging between English Protestants and Spanish Catholics for almost a century.<sup>56</sup> From Las Casas's writings, every good Protestant knew of the countless tyrannies of the Spanish against the natives, and "popery," which had supported Spanish avarice, was denounced with relish. English Protestants not only used Las Casas's *Very Brief Account* as a rallying call for colonization,<sup>57</sup> but also imagined their incipient colonial venture to be more humanitarian, and thus morally superior to

<sup>55</sup>Roy H. Pearce, "The 'Ruines of Mankind': The Indian and the Puritan Mind," *JHI* 13.2 (1952): 202. Juster and Gregerson write, "whichever direction one draws the causal and affiliative links, religion and empire were the constitutive forces of nation building, economic expansion, and identity formation in the early modern era" (*Empires of God*, 3).

<sup>56</sup>Gabbert, "Colonial Violence," 254–255; E. Shaskan Bumas, "The Cannibal Butcher Shop: Protestant Uses of Las Casas's 'Brevisima relación' in Europe and the American Colonies," *Early American Literature* 35.2 (2000): 107–136; Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 55–112.

<sup>57</sup>Bumas writes, "From its first English translation in 1583, *Very Brief Account* was used as a call for English colonization, and later a justification of that colonization" ("The Cannibal Butcher Shop," 107). See further Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 54–76.

that of their Spanish counterpart.<sup>58</sup> As Katherine Quinsey writes, “British colonial enterprise of the late sixteenth century was fueled by Protestant religious imperatives, blurring economic and spiritual motives, but with the common aim of proving themselves Not-Spanish, Not-Catholic—Protestant British saviors of oppressed natives, exemplars of moderation and tolerance.”<sup>59</sup>

Aspirations of tolerance were not to last, however, as Protestants adopted many of the strategies of their Catholic rivals. Like the papal bulls which aimed to legitimize Spanish hegemony over the New World, English sovereigns, as head of church and state, issued charters known as letters patents, authorizing their respective representatives to take possession of indigenous lands. In 1578, in the first English attempt at New World settlement, Queen Elizabeth I issued a letters patent to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, authorizing him to “discover . . . such remote, barbarous, and heathen lands, countreys, and territories not possessed by any Christian prince or people nor inhabited by Christian people and the same to have, holde, occupy and enjoy . . . all the soyle [soil] of all such lands, countreys and territories . . . and all Cities, Castles, Towns and Villages, and places in the same.”<sup>60</sup> Upon arriving in Newfoundland four years later, Gilbert appropriately took possession of the region by authority of the English monarch. A cursory examination of the patent to Gilbert reveals its unmistakable similarity to Alexander’s *inter Caetera* of 1493.<sup>61</sup> Inasmuch as the pope asserted his authority to “give, grant, and

<sup>58</sup>By the turn of the twentieth-century, however, when British Protestantism had carved out a world empire consisting of some “400 million culturally and racially diverse people”—an empire upon which “the sun never sets”—the idealism of a benign Christian imperialism had long proven to be deeply misguided. See Sarah J. Butler, *Britain and Its Empire in the Shadow of Rome: The Reception of Rome in Socio-political Debate from the 1850s to the 1920s*, Cultural Memory and History in Antiquity (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 1; Matthew Jennings, *New Worlds of Violence: Cultures and Conquests in the Early American Southeast* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), xi.

<sup>59</sup>Katherine M. Quinsey, “‘No Christians Thirst for Gold!’: Religion and Colonialism in Pope,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 32.3 (2006): 562–563. The Rev. John Eliot of New England was among the major proponents of a British colonization which stood in contradistinction to that of the Spanish. In differentiating British Protestantism in New England, Eliot wrote: “The Southern Colonies of the Spanish Nation have sent home from this American Continent, much Gold and Silver, as the Fruit and End of their Discoveries and Transplantations: That (we confess) is a scarce Commodity in this Colder Climate [. . . but this Bible represents] Fruits of our poor Endeavours to Plant and Propagate the Gospel here; which upon a true account, is as much better than Gold, as the Souls of men are more worth then the whole World. This is a Nobler Fruit (and indeed in the Counsels of All-disposing Providence, was an higher intended End) of *Columbus* his Adventure” (Preface of John Eliot’s Algonquin Bible, as cited in Bumás, “The Cannibal Butcher Shop,” 110). Cf. Hodgkins, *Reforming Empire*, 55–76.

<sup>60</sup>Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 16 vols., ed. Edmund Goldsmid (Edinburgh: E. & G. Godsmid, 1885–1890), 8:17–23, as cited in Seed, “Taking Possession,” 185–186.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 189, 201.

assign . . . to you, your heirs and successors [that is, to the Spanish],” so, too, Elizabeth asserted her authority to “graunt, and declare, that all such contries so hereafter to be possessed and inhabited . . . shall be of the allegiance to us, our heires, and successours.”<sup>62</sup> Her patent, as Patricia Seed has noted, mirrors the papal bull in “form and substance.”<sup>63</sup>

In discussing the nature of Elizabeth’s patent, Seed notes the total lack of acknowledgement of indigenous agency—a deliberate *elision*, as she puts it—as it is the “soyle” [soil] of the land that is designated to be held, occupied, and enjoyed. No mention is made of the inhabitants of the land, except, as in Alexander’s papal bull, where the said territories may already be “possessed by any Christian prince or people.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the idea that native “infidels” possessed no sovereign right to the lands they inhabited is tacitly but palpably demonstrated by Elizabeth’s patent. As Seed states, “It was the Christian (European) *prince* who had a right to the land. And the dominion of the Christian sovereign was justified simply by his or her possession of Christianity, not by the desire to spread it.”<sup>65</sup> In short, for the British sovereigns, the possession of the Christian religion itself authorized the expropriation of indigenous lands. Just as in church-state Catholic imperial expansion, so in Protestant state-church colonial aggression, religion functioned to “legitimate the power of the state.”<sup>66</sup>

Inherent in this legitimation was the assumption of a God-given, and thus superior, Christian religion, whose expansion into the Americas was, to quote John L. O’Sullivan, a nineteenth century editor of the *Democratic Review*, “the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”<sup>67</sup> And as the multiplying millions of newcomers became more palpable on the continent, visions of a continental European takeover led increasingly to the corollary rhetoric of the demise and/or extermination of the autochthonous population. As one anonymous voice wrote in the *American Whig Review* in 1846:

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 189. The Oath of Citizenship which every naturalized citizen of Canada is required to swear still reflects the intent and wording of this original patent: “I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen” (“Oath of Canadian Citizenship,” [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation\\_gr9/blms/9-2-4e.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/foundation_gr9/blms/9-2-4e.pdf)).

<sup>63</sup>Seed, “Taking Possession,” 201.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 186. Cf. Castro, *Another Face of Empire*, 23.

<sup>65</sup>Seed, “Taking Possession,” 189; emphasis original.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 189. Rivera writes that for European colonial powers, “The Christian religion becomes the official ideology for imperial expansion” (*A Violent Evangelism*, 25).

<sup>67</sup>John L. O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” *Democratic Review* 17 (1845): 5–6, as cited in Roger Cushing Aikin, “Paintings of Manifest Destiny: Mapping the Nation,” *American Art* 14.3 (2000): 78. See also Fred M. Kimmey, “Christianity and Indian Lands,” *Ethnohistory* 7.1 (1960): 44–60. For a more recent assessment of the moral right of the United States to occupancy in North America, see Churchill, “Perversions of Justice,” 319–351.

“We are Anglo-Saxon Americans; it was our ‘destiny’ to possess and to rule this continent—we were bound to do it! We were a chosen people, and this was our allotted inheritance, and we must drive out all other nations before us!”<sup>68</sup>

In the face of American westward progress, such sentiments were very common. In 1857, for example, Massachusetts politician Caleb Cushing, a strong advocate of westward expansion, exulted in the inevitability of American progress when he stated the following: “It happens that men, nations, races, may, must, will perish before us. That is inevitable. There can be no change for the better save at the expense of that which is. Out of decay springs fresh life.”<sup>69</sup> And no less than John Quincy Adams had declared earlier in 1811, “The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by *one* nation, speaking *one* language, professing *one* general system of religion and political principles, and accustomed to *one* general tenor of social usages and customs.”<sup>70</sup> And Thomas Jefferson even

<sup>68</sup>“Our Relations with Mexico,” *American Review: A Whig Journal* 4 (1846): 14, as cited in Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 236–237. Well into the twentieth-century, the expansion of European Christianity was predicated on ideologies of a universal *corpus Christianum* mandated by Providence and imbued with visions of a New Israel conquering indigenous Canaanites. Nowhere else was this European-Israelite casuistry more clearly articulated and demonstrated than in the annexation of the “New World” by Christian empires; and, in the case of American society, its expansion into the western frontier. For English Protestants, planting the Gospel in foreign lands meant “planting colonies of godly people,” even if this meant, ultimately, the extermination of the indigenous inhabitants. See further Paul Stevens, “‘Leviticus Thinking’ and the Rhetoric of Early Modern Colonialism,” *Criticism* 35.3 (1993): 44–61. According to Stevens, “There is hardly any early modern colonizing text in English that does not . . . appeal to the authority of the master narrative of Israel in Canaan” (*ibid.*, 453). Cf. Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2008); Ofri Ilany, “From Divine Commandment to Political Act: The Eighteenth-Century Polemic on the Extermination of the Canaanites,” *JHI* 73.3 (2012): 443–445; Alfred A. Cave, “Canaanites in a Promised Land: The American Indian and the Providential Theory of Empire,” *American Indian Quarterly* 12.4 (1988): 277–297; Williamson, “Empire to End Empire,” 227–256. For a good discussion of colonialism as differentiated from imperialism, see Ronald J. Horvath, “A Definition of Colonialism,” *Current Anthropology* 13.1 (1972): 45–57.

<sup>69</sup>“Honorable Caleb Cushing’s Welcome Home—Demise of the Boston *Times*,” *New York Times*, 24 April 1857, as cited in John M. Belohlavek, “Race, Progress and Destiny: Caleb Cushing and the Quest for American Empire,” in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Robert W. Johannsen, Sam W. Haynes, and Christopher M. Morris, Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures 31 (Arlington, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1997), 21.

<sup>70</sup>John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 31 August 1811, St. Petersburg, in *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, 7 vols., ed. Worthington C. Ford (New York: Macmillan, 1913–1917), 4:209, as cited in Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 182; emphasis added. Cf. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 87.

earlier had entertained visions of an "extensive" American "empire of liberty" covering "the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws."<sup>71</sup>

Such lofty visions of a singular Protestant empire on western shores nonetheless overshadowed the grim reality of the means of its accomplishment: Protestant continental dominion would ultimately be grasped at the expense of the indigenous population.

#### Population Catastrophe in North America

Until quite recently, American historians have habitually characterized North America as a "pristine wilderness" with relatively few inhabitants; this view still prevails in public discourses. In more recent studies, however, the early twentieth-century anthropological estimates of one to two million pre-Columbian Indians have been radically revised to suggest that as many as eighteen million indigenous people inhabited the continent prior to the arrival of Europeans, with up to twelve to fifteen million living in the borders of the present United States.<sup>72</sup> By comparison, in 1620 at the founding of the first permanent English settlement in present-day Massachusetts, Old England had a population of about five million.<sup>73</sup>

Lenore Stiffarm and Phil Lane outline, in great detail, the motivations behind the historically low estimates of the indigenous population of North America, indicating that by 1900 the attrition rate of the total native population rested firmly in the upper ninetieth percentile, by most estimates.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup>See Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 79–80. For similar sentiments characterizing American westward expansion, see Shane Mountjoy, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion*, Milestones in American History (New York: Chelsea House, 2009).

<sup>72</sup>See especially Lenore A. Stiffarm and Phil Lane, Jr., "The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival," in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes, Race and Resistance (Boston: South End, 1992), 23–53. Stannard writes, "One after another [scholars] have confirmed the general principle that the populations of individual locales were much higher in pre-Columbian times than heretofore suspected" (*American Holocaust*, 266–268). Cf. Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America*, Native American Historic Demography (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1983). Russell Thornton conservatively suggests that roughly seven million native Indians resided in pre-contact North America. See *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492*, The Civilization of the American Indian 186 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 36, 133. See also John D. Daniels, "The Indian Population of North America in 1492," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 49.2 (1992): 310; Churchill, "Perversions of Justice," 335–336, esp. 335n56.

<sup>73</sup>Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 223. Jacobs writes, "There is even the possibility that in the late fifteenth century the Western Hemisphere may have had a greater population than Western Europe" ("Tip of an Iceberg," 123–124).

<sup>74</sup>Stiffarm and Lane, "Native North America," 23–25, 28–31, 37. Stiffarm and

More than forty years ago, historian Francis Jennings concluded much the same when he challenged the oft-repeated thesis of a sparsely populated American wilderness:

European explorers and invaders discovered an *inhabited land*. Had it been a pristine wilderness then, it would possibly still be so today, for neither the technology nor the social organization of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had the capacity to maintain, of its own resources, outpost colonies thousands of miles from home. . . . They did not settle a virgin land. *They invaded and displaced a resident population.*<sup>75</sup>

Behind the population displacement in North America lies a dismal account of wars and diseases, which were unleashed against indigenous peoples over the course of several centuries.

#### War and Disease

From the moment British Protestants began to colonize the lands which provided rich supplies of fur and other exports by way of the lucrative trade with native peoples, the demand for ever greater tracts of land for agricultural production intensified conflicts with indigenous populations. The land drive quickly materialized into a deliberate strategy of dispossession, which, in turn, became linked to genocidal policies.<sup>76</sup>

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Lane argue further that the tendency to minimize pre-colonial indigenous population amounts to nothing less than a deliberate distortion to justify “Euroamerican hegemony over the continent,” and to avoid the moral dissonance vis-à-vis the founding of American Christian civilization and the demise of a sizable native population (ibid., 23–25). See further Lilian Friedberg, “Dare to Compare: Americanizing the Holocaust,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 24.3 (2000): 12, 18–21; Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 266–268; Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2006), 1–18.

<sup>75</sup>Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, Norton Library Paperpack (New York: Norton, 1976), 15, as cited in Stiffarm and Lane, “Native North America,” 23–24; emphasis added. Cf. Jacobs, “Tip of an Iceberg,” 128.

<sup>76</sup>The question of “genocide” as a fitting description of the demise of native populations in the Americas, Australia, and elsewhere is now settled among serious genocide scholarship. For example, Stannard notes that “The destruction of the Indians of the Americas was, far and away, the most massive act of *genocide* in the history of the world” (*American Holocaust*, x; emphasis added). Stannard, of course, is referring to the destruction of native populations in all the Americas—including North America. See further Gregory D. Smithers, “Rethinking Genocide in North America,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 330; Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander L. Hinton, eds., *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Raymond Evans, “‘Crime without a Name’: Colonialism and the Case for ‘Indigenocide,’” in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses, War and Genocide 12 (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 133–147; Churchill, *Matter of Genocide*, 97–128; Friedberg, “Dare to Compare,”

Ironically, the devastation of native population by Catholic Spaniards which British Protestants had decried so vehemently, and which in part served to legitimize their own colonizing enterprise, would repeat itself in North America. In comparing British imperial expansion into North America to that of the Spanish further south, historian David Stannard writes, "[T]he British wasted little time in exterminating the indigenous people. The English and later the Americans, in fact, destroyed at least as high a percentage of the Indians they encountered as earlier had the Spanish, probably higher; it was only their means and motivation that contrasted with those of the conquistadors."<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Ben Kiernan's assessment of U.S. settler policies is worth quoting at length:

U.S. policies toward Indians did not mandate genocide, but it was practiced when considered necessary. Its frequency increased with the spread and intensity of war, expansion, and agrarianism. . . . Repeatedly, American tactics included threatening genocide, offering bounties for Indian scalps, and exacting massively disproportionate revenge for Indian atrocities. Seizure of Indian lands often meant massacring their inhabitants, and settlers' extensive and later intensive cultivation of these lands rarely allowed Indian survivors a subsistence, provoking bitter resistance, sometimes to the end, resulting in genocide.<sup>78</sup>

Colonial wars against native Indian tribes continued for nearly four centuries. Not until 1890 when most of the indigenous tribes had been reduced to bare numbers were the so-called Indian Wars ended by the American government.<sup>79</sup>

The numerous wars of extermination across the entire spectrum of settler colonies of North America led George Washington's first Secretary of War, Henry Knox, to report to the president in 1790, "It is a melancholy reflection, that our modes of population have been even more destructive to the Indian natives than the conduct of the conquerors of Mexico and Peru. The evidence of this is the *utter extirpation of nearly all the Indians* in the most populous parts of the Union."<sup>80</sup> Still, by an incredible twist of logic, the devastation of indigenous populations in colonial America was overwhelmingly interpreted as evidence of divine favour for the benefit of the spread of Christian civilization.

As early as 1620, James I of England issued a patent for the Plymouth colony in which he celebrated the demise of native populations by smallpox as Providential favour to the English:

Within this late yeares there hath by God's Visitation rained a Wonderful Plague . . . to the utter Destruction, Devastacion and Depopulation of the

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353–380; Carroll P. Kakel, *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 2014); Michael Freeman, "Puritans and Pequots: The Question of Genocide," *The New England Quarterly* 68.2 (1995): 278–293.

<sup>77</sup>Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 222–223.

<sup>78</sup>Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 309.

<sup>79</sup>Stiffarm and Lane, "Native North America," 36.

<sup>80</sup>Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 248; emphasis added.

whole Territorye, so that there is not left for many Leagues together in a Manner any [person] that doe claim or challenge . . . the appointed time has come in which the Almighty God in his great Goodness and Bountie towards Us and our People hath thought fit and determined that those large and goodly Territoryes, deserted as it were by their naturall inhabitants should be possessed and enjoyed.<sup>81</sup>

Like Elizabeth's patent before, James envisions the lands of the natives to be "possessed and enjoyed," firmly believing that the destruction of the indigenes was attributable to the unleashing of God's "wonderful plague."<sup>82</sup> In the face of indigenous death by disease, this sentiment was common among colonial settlers, such as in 1629, when John Winthrop, one of the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, declared that "God hath consumed the Natives *with a great plague* in those parts soe as there be few inhabitants left."<sup>83</sup> Also, in 1634, Winthrop was exultant that almost no one in the English settlement had died from recent outbreaks of diseases, whereas "for the natives, they are nearly all dead of the smallpox, *as the Lord hath cleared our title to what we possess.*"<sup>84</sup> The massive loss of Indian lives in general or the fact that the devastation was the result of European-introduced diseases was of no concern for James I or Winthrop; what mattered was the deserted lands *to be possessed.*<sup>85</sup>

James's celebration of the demise of the natives of New England might be overlooked if only for the fact that, at least initially, many Old World diseases had been unwittingly introduced among the Indians by the newcomers. But such celebratory overtones take on quite a different meaning in light of documented cases where European diseases were deliberately introduced among Indian populations for precisely the purpose of "clearing the land." Or, at a minimum, introduced pathogens greatly assisted colonial settlers in overcoming weakened and decimated indigenous peoples.

Lillian Friedberg, for instance, has indicated that "there is evidence to suggest that the introduction of diseases to the Native populations of North America was anything but an incidental by-product of westward expansion."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Ebenezer Hazard, *Historical Collections; Consisting of State Papers, and Other Authentic Documents; Intended as Materials for an [sic] History of the United States of America*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1792–1794) 1:105, as cited in Seed, "Taking Possession," 208.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 109.

<sup>83</sup>John Winthrop, "Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England and for Encouraging such Whose Hearts God Shall Move to Join with Them in It," in *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America 1580–1640*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995), 137. Cf. Smithers, "Rethinking Genocide," 329.

<sup>84</sup>John Winthrop to Sir Nathaniel Rich, 22 May 1634, in *Letters from New England*, ed. Everett Emerson (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 155–156, as cited in Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 109; emphasis added. Cf. Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 227.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. Seed, "Taking Possession," 208.

<sup>86</sup>Friedberg, "Dare to Compare," 359.

To the contrary, the direction of Lord Jeffrey Amherst to Colonel Henry Bouquet in 1763 regarding the distribution of smallpox-infected blankets to the Ottawa and Lenape peoples may indicate the not-so-uncommon practice of utilizing germs as weapons of mass destruction by colonial settlers: "You will do well to Inoculate the Indians by means of Blankets as well as to try Every other method that can serve to extirpate this Execrable Race."<sup>87</sup> The report came back to Amherst ten days later: "[W]e gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect."<sup>88</sup>

The devastation which followed of as much as a hundred thousand Indians in the Ohio River Valley by smallpox around this time indicates that the "desired effect" may well have been achieved.<sup>89</sup> With the help of a devastating biological agent and a ruthless "take no prisoners" policy, Amherst was well aided in his military campaign to extirpate what he called "the vilest race of beings that ever infested the earth, and whose riddance from it must be esteemed a meritorious act, for the good of mankind."<sup>90</sup> The same tactic is documented to have been used against the Mandans in South Dakota between 1836 and 1840, as well as potentially other instances.<sup>91</sup> As Friedberg concludes, "the annihilation of the Indian population by way of disease was neither arbitrary nor incidental to the aims of the European settler population and its government."<sup>92</sup>

Yet, as European colonists saw it, the Indians had been duly compensated for the loss of their lives, land, and independence by the two great gifts of Europe: civilization and Christianity. The 1823 landmark ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* sums up this premise most astutely. In advancing his final decision regarding land possession rights in the United States, Justice Marshall summarized a crucial logic behind his ruling:

On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe were eager to appropriate to themselves so much of it as they could respectively acquire. Its vast extent offered an ample field to the ambition and enterprise of all; and the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an apology for considering them as a people over whom *the superior genius of Europe* might claim an ascendancy. The potentates of the old world found no difficulty in *convincing themselves* that they made *ample compensation* to the inhabitants of the new, by bestowing on them *civilization and Christianity*, in exchange for unlimited independence.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup>Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 245; Friedberg, "Dare to Compare," 359; Stiffarm and Lane, "Native North America," 31–34; Churchill, *Matter of Genocide*, 154.

<sup>88</sup>Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 245.

<sup>89</sup>Stiffarm and Lane, "Native North America," 32; Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 245.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Stiffarm and Lane, "Native North America," 32–33.

<sup>92</sup>Friedberg, "Dare to Compare," 359.

<sup>93</sup>*Johnson v. M'Intosh*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.), 573, as cited in Robert J. Miller, "Christianity, American Indians, and the Doctrine of Discovery," in *Remembering Jamestown: Hard Questions about Christian Mission*, ed. Amos Yong and Barbara

The pairing of *civilization* and *Christianity* in Justice Marshall's ruling reveals in clear terms the convergence of *empire* and *religion* in Protestant continental takeover. It is evident, however, that the "compensation" to which Justice Marshall refers was far from a fair exchange, for the Indians neither solicited nor desired Europe's civilization or Christianity.

Yet an instrumental, but often overlooked, link in the civilizing and Christianizing endeavour was the Protestant mission. Missionaries lived and laboured among the Indians and extended great efforts to convert the natives to the Christian faith. Despite their good intentions, however, Protestant missions were part of a web of forces that coordinated the destruction of Native American peoples and their cultures.

#### Protestant Missions

Among early English settlers, conversion of native peoples was among the ostensible justifications for colonization, and one which was genuinely pursued in many quarters. Indeed, missionary efforts, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, organized in Virginia in 1701, were established for the purpose of converting indigenous peoples to the Christian faith.<sup>94</sup> Missionary societies built churches and established schools for education in religious and civil matters. Many such efforts were characterized by a genuine, sacrificial, if often misguided, effort to "uplift" the heathen Indians from "savagery."<sup>95</sup>

John Eliot, a Puritan clergyman and a leading figure in seventeenth century New England, was one of many such conscientious individuals who established schools and churches for the benefit of Indian communities.<sup>96</sup> Yet, even for Eliot, as for those who came after him, the civilizing mission preceded that of the Christianizing. Eliot believed that the natives "should first be Civilized, by being brought from their scattered and wild course of Life, unto civil Cohabitation and Government, before they could . . . be betrusted with the sacred Ordinances of Jesus Christ."<sup>97</sup>

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Brown Zikmund (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 61; emphasis added. Cf. Blake A. Watson, *Buying America from the Indians: Johnson v. McIntosh and the History of Native Land Rights* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 272–295; Newcomb, *Promised Land*, 73–87.

<sup>94</sup>Cf. Gerald J. Goodwin, "Christianity, Civilization and the Savage: The Anglican Mission to the American Indian," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 42.2 (1973): 94–95.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. Goodwin, "Civilization and the Savage," 93; Tink Tinker, "The Romance and Tragedy of Christian Mission among American Indians" in *Remembering Jamestown*, 20–21; Robert J. Miller, "Christianity, American Indians, and the Doctrine of Discovery," in *Remembering Jamestown*, 58–59.

<sup>96</sup>See Norman E. Tanis, "Education in John Eliot's Indian Utopias, 1646–1675," *History of Education Quarterly* 10.3 (1970): 308–323.

<sup>97</sup>John Eliot, *A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England* (London: M. Simmons, 1655), 1–2, as cited in Joshua D. Bellin, "Apostle of Removal: John Eliot in the Nineteenth Century," *The New*

The goal of the civilizing mission, as Eliot believed it, was to transplant hunter-gathering Indians into settled societies of farmers and ranchers with English manners and customs and short hair—in a word, to remake them as Englishmen.<sup>98</sup> To this end, he founded towns of "Praying Indians" far removed from Indian tribal communal structures and way of life, as well as from the "contamination" of white settlement. Still, the good intentions of Eliot and others were overshadowed by the cultural destruction which resulted from such practices, no less than from colonial wars, and Draconian means employed to remove indigenous peoples from areas of white settlement.<sup>99</sup> Of the fourteen Christian Indian towns planted by Eliot, only four remained following King Phillip's war of 1675.<sup>100</sup> "Before his death in 1690," Norman Tanis opines, "John Eliot saw that his work had failed completely."<sup>101</sup> Indeed, according to a Massachusetts committee report in 1848, Eliot's Praying Indians were said to be "practically extinct."<sup>102</sup> And the remnants of other New England Indian tribes familiar to Eliot in the seventeenth century were already confined to reservations before the eighteenth century.<sup>103</sup>

Other efforts at conversion were not as conscientious as Eliot's, as many such aims were achieved under the threat of war. In the 1650s, the Narragansett Indians, who were allied with the English at the time, reported to Roger Williams of the Massachusetts Bay colony that they were fearful of being "forced from their religion, and for not changing their religion, be invaded by war."<sup>104</sup> The Wampanoag Indians were also fearful that they too would be "forced to be Christian Indians."<sup>105</sup> Both tribes were decimated by war in the 1670s.

From the perspective of Native Americans, missionaries, however well intentioned, were emissaries of Euro-American colonialism, active participants with government in the destructive process of what George Tinker calls "cultural genocide."<sup>106</sup> For missionaries like Alfred Riggs, who worked among the Dakota people in the nineteenth century, "the present policy of the Government even the U.S. agencies are in a sense missionary enterprises" in much the same way as Protestant missions "among the Indians have been

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*England Quarterly* 69.1 (1996): 5.

<sup>98</sup>Cf. Juan A. Ortega y Medina, "An Analysis of the Missionary Methods of the Puritans," *The Americas* 14.2 (1957): 128; Craig, "Protestant Colonialism," 15–16.

<sup>99</sup>Cf. Bellin, "Apostle of Removal," 3, 5; Tanis, "Indian Utopias," 320–321.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>102</sup>Bellin, "Apostle of Removal," 3.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup>Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 236.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup>Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 4–8. Cf. Craig, "Protestant Colonialism," 22, 29.

recognized as official agencies for the civilization of the wild peoples the Government holds as its wards.”<sup>107</sup>

To this end, missionaries supported government-instituted removal agendas and served to pacify native resistance in light of such policies.<sup>108</sup> Among the Dakota people, for instance, missionaries praised the confinement of indigenous tribes to “reservations”—or what in Robert Craig’s opinion amounts to nothing less than concentration camps—as such policies greatly assisted their civilizing and evangelizing work.<sup>109</sup> The banning of indigenous languages, tribal names, religious traditions, and cultural practices and the enforcement of Christianity as the official religion on reservations were all supported by the majority of missionary insiders laboring among Indian communities. In Craig’s words, “[I]ndigenous people were systematically robbed of their language, culture and traditions—all in the name of progress, civilization and Christianity.”<sup>110</sup> The irony of all of this, as Craig sees it, is that “Protestant missionaries in particular believed that what they were doing was on behalf of and for the benefit of indigenous people.”<sup>111</sup>

In the end, however, one cannot separate American empire-building from the Christian religion. Rather than a disinterested effort to convert native peoples in colonial and national America, the hallmarks of Euro-American interactions with indigenous peoples were displacement and dispossession.<sup>112</sup> As it turns out, the “west” was won for Christianity largely through political and religious conquest.<sup>113</sup>

### Conclusion

In view of the evidence presented in the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that Protestant political theology, as it relates to empire-building, is comparable to that of Catholicism. In the Western Hemisphere, both anticipated the appropriation of indigenous lands, and, to that end, both effected the destruction of Native American peoples and their cultures. It may be correct to say that the Protestant Reformation has given rise to a vibrant and distinct Protestant missiology. But standing in tension with this thesis is the

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 13, 30.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 28, 30. Moreover, the blight of residential schools in the United States and Canada, which in part were intended to ‘kill the Indian and save the man,’ are well documented. For examples, see Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005); Jeremy Patzer, “Residential School Harm and Colonial Dispossession: What’s the Connection?” in *Colonial Genocide*, 166–185; Alexander S. Dawson, “Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States,” *Latin American Perspectives* 39.5 (2012): 80–99.

<sup>111</sup>Craig, “Protestant Colonialism,” 30.

<sup>112</sup>Cf. Stannard, *American Holocaust*, 105, 112.

<sup>113</sup>Cf. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 9; Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism*, 199–234.

argument that the propagation of the Christian faith, both before and after the Reformation, was undertaken in tandem with European political expansion, was achieved largely by force of arms, and resulted in untold injury to indigenous peoples and their cultures. When forced to confront this past, what defense can be posited against the charge that the Christian religion, not unlike other expressions of religious imperialism (both ancient and modern), has been propagated largely through conquest? In this respect, how has Christian propagation proven to be different from, say, Islam, which incontrovertibly reached its farthest extent through military expansion? I have argued here that the history of Christianity's entrance into the Americas has invited, rather than refuted, such a comparison.<sup>114</sup>

From this perspective, then, the Reformation, which challenged papal supremacy over temporal authority and transformed, yet again, the relationship between the ecclesiastical and the political organs of Christendom, did little to disrupt the historical dalliance between Christianity and Western imperial ambitions. Briefly stated, the Reformation *failed* to alter the relationship between European imperialism and Christian mission. Rather, as the most potent ideology of the Western imperial project, the Christian religion provided moral authorization for conquest and unrestrained ambition.

The assessment of Christian expansion in the Reformation era presented herein problematizes the synonymy between Christianity's *raison d'être* and imperial agendas, and calls for a rethinking of Christianity's historical relationship to empire, its modes of propagation in the modern period, and the nature of its mission in the twenty-first century. A reformation which undoes the Constantinian *renovatio* by disentangling the Christian mission from imperial aspirations, and one which restores the antithesis between the Church and the world, is yet to be realized among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is important for evangelicals and all Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists, if we are to truly comprehend the Gospel Commission, to be both cognizant and honest regarding the uglier aspects of the history of Christian propagation, and, in light of this, reimagine what the proclamation of the *good news* really entails from the social location of a truly disestablished Christianity. For while some very limited (and long overdue) attempts have been made by secular authorities to address some of the historical grievances of the indigenous peoples of this continent,<sup>115</sup> the Christian churches in North America, variously "denominationalized," still have "somehow avoided recognition of their participation in this history of destruction and oppression."<sup>116</sup> Seventh-day Adventists, in particular, whose self-identity is

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<sup>114</sup>For the comparison of Christianity and Islam in the context of Christian mission in the Middle East, see again Harvey and Simon, *Conflict, Conquest, and Conversion*, 1–44.

<sup>115</sup>The recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), established in 1996 by the Canadian government is such an example. See "TRC Findings," *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>.

<sup>116</sup>Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 9.

wrapped up in a narrative of pilgrims discovering a “sparsely populated wilderness,” which provides refuge for the woman fleeing persecution from the Old World (Rev 12), would do well to reevaluate this narrative in light of the history of oppression of the indigenous peoples of this continent.

As a final thought, how significant is it that the relationship between Christianity and empire—specifically, the correlation between Christian mission and the extension of European political control over vast tracts of the earth in the modern period—finds no emphasis in the fine points of Seventh-day Adventist eschatology? Has the greatest imperial expansion, which has taken place in world history and has so profoundly shaped the geopolitical dynamics of the modern world, found no expression in the prophetic vision? As ardent students of Bible prophecy, it may be time for the exegetical lenses of Seventh-day Adventists to move beyond the narrow confines of a “papal Rome” in their prophetic interpretations in order to see the broader framework and history—the *longue durée*—of the *Roman Empire* in its ancient and modern imperial expressions, even if it means seeing *ourselves* in that image. For as historian Neville Morley reminds us, “the Roman Empire is still ruling us, and we need to understand our rulers and their system to liberate ourselves.”<sup>117</sup> For now, Christian mission remains in the service of empire; the final break still awaits another Luther.

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<sup>117</sup>Neville Morley, *The Roman Empire: Roots of Imperialism* (London: Pluto, 2010), 13.