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"So Long as the Sunne and Moone Endureth": Religion and Empire in England, 1576-1614

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“SO LONG AS THE SUNNE AND MOONE ENDURETH:”
RELIGION AND EMPIRE IN ENGLAND, 1576-1614

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Sharon Sauder
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Approved, December 2000

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ABSTRACT

When England joined its European neighbors in colonizing the Americas during the sixteenth century, it adopted religious language to describe and promote its imperial objectives. Unlike early colonizers such as Spain and Portugal, however, England offered a distinctly Protestant view of its mission. Indeed, competition with Catholic nations served to motivate many reluctant English people to support overseas activity. Yet, England’s religious rhetoric was more than a simple reflection of Protestant faith; rather it was carefully designed to provide a framework for the English people to think about their future as a nation. Although a well-defined ideology of empire had not materialized by the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, England’s concern with its posterity and international standing indicate that empire was on its way into the English imagination.

England’s first permanent steps toward global significance began in the late sixteenth century as expansionists such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Ralegh, Richard Hakluyt, and Thomas Harriot urged the royal household and the merchant community to embrace overseas settlement. Their pamphlets and travel accounts represent some of the first propaganda pieces advocating colonization. Unfortunately for these eager adventurers, England’s initial colonizing efforts met a variety of crippling challenges.

In 1607 English settlers arrived in Jamestown and formed what would become the first permanent English settlement in the Americas. At this point, the supporters of colonization dropped their earlier strategy of targeting only merchants and the crown and implored a wider audience to contribute to England’s transcontinental welfare. To reach the common citizens, the Virginia Company of London enlisted many clergymen to promote England’s overseas endeavors. The sermons that followed closely linked religion with England’s activity in Virginia, building on the foundation of propaganda laid in the late sixteenth century. Although English religious rhetoric shifted over the years from promotion of colonization to protection of existing settlements, it continued to subtly direct England’s imperial agenda and shape English national identity.
“SO LONG AS THE SUNNE AND MOONE ENDURETH:”
RELIGION AND EMPIRE IN ENGLAND, 1576-1614
Introduction

If the English clergymen, sea captains, and merchant investors advocating overseas colonization in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries knew that their ideas were being studied in the twenty-first century, they would be overjoyed. Most of these men believed they were living in a momentous age and undertaking projects that would affect their descendants for centuries. Indeed, English ministers such as Robert Gray assured prospective participants and supporters of colonization in 1609 that by laboring “for the advancement of Gods glorie, the renowne of his Maiestie, and the good of your Countrie…all posterities shall blesse…and Uphold your names and memories so long as the Sunne and Moone endureth.” The fact that historians are still intrigued by early English colonization efforts at least partially fulfills Gray’s promise.¹

No historian has devoted more attention to these early organizers and explorers than David Quinn. For nearly sixty years he composed, edited, and compiled material on European expansion, handling French, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese sources with the same skill as English documents. His interpretations invariably formed the prevailing opinion on his chosen subjects, and his work has enabled further investigation by countless scholars. In this study, I rely heavily on his five-volume documentary history of European expansion into North America, New American World.²

² David B. Quinn, ed., New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612, 5 vols. (New York, 1979). The secondary works particularly important to this study are: Set Fair for
My work departs slightly from Quinn in its close reading of the sermons sponsored by the Virginia Company during the early Jamestown years. To Quinn, these sermons are “long-winded” and only of “intermittent interest,” and he includes none in his documentary history.³ Using these early-seventeenth-century sermons in addition to Elizabethan propaganda pieces, I chart the direction of English rhetoric regarding colonization from 1576 to 1614. For the first half of this period, I examine propaganda extolling the economic benefits, recounting the religious imperative, and defending the legality of overseas settlement.⁴ By the second part of this era, however, my focus shifts exclusively to religious rhetoric, largely because the bleak situation in Jamestown made economic arguments for colonization difficult to sustain, but also, in part, because the rise of a Protestant national identity during the late Elizabethan era increasingly seemed to fuel many English aspirations toward empire.⁵

This religious rhetoric was more than a simple reflection of Protestant faith; rather, it was carefully designed to provide a framework for the English people to

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⁴ Although it may appear that I use the words “rhetoric” and “propaganda” interchangeably, my intention is to distinguish between the two. I consider “rhetoric” to be a broader term, encompassing all images, stories, allusions, and conclusions that an individual might use to advance the cause of English colonization. “Propaganda” usually refers to a specific sermon or pamphlet clearly written at the behest of colonizing officials.
⁵ Louis B. Wright, Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625 (Chapel Hill, 1943), 84. Wright argues that English Protestant identity was forged partially in response to Spanish Catholic success overseas.
think about their future as a nation. Scholars debate about equating late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century writing on overseas expansion with notions of empire, but as John Parker noted, religious language during this period was aggressively evangelical and constructed to persuade reluctant Englishmen that it was their moral and spiritual duty to support colonization. Such exhortations hardly constituted a well-defined ideology of empire, but the concern with England's posterity and international standing suggests that the desire to see English influences spread across the globe dominated the thoughts of at least some of these men.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I endeavor to capture the imperial impulse that shaped the life ambitions of a handful of English adventurers and clergymen during the 1570s and 1580s. Their pamphlets and travel narratives presented desperate pleas for public and private support and offered carefully honed religious, economic, and legal arguments for the necessity of colonization. Led by eager expansionists such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert, Sir Walter Ralegh, and Edward Hayes and relying on the research and brains of men such as the two Richard Hakluyts and Thomas Harriot, this group targeted the royal household and the merchant community, making little effort to interest the general populace in their exploratory projects. To place these promoters in their historical context, I also provide some

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6 Perry Miller, "The Religious Impulse in the Founding of Virginia: Religion and Society in the Early Literature," *William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser.*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October, 1948), 492-522. Miller views the religious rhetoric surrounding the Jamestown settlement as an extension of prevailing English theology. In acknowledging the movement's "militant Protestantism," however, he recognizes the publicists' effort to connect religion with broader national concerns.

7 John Parker, *Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620* (Amsterdam, 1965), 197, 236-237. Despite his expression of ideas that apparently indicate an awareness of empire, Parker is one of the scholars who firmly believes that Englishmen do not move out of their medieval, geographic outlook into a sense of empire until 1620. Louis Wright places the development of imperial consciousness in the Elizabethan era in *Religion and Empire.*
background on the English voyages sponsored by King Henry VII between 1497 and 1508.

The second chapter describes the formation of the Virginia Company of London and chronicles the travails of the 1607 settlement at Jamestown. As the colony struggled simply to survive, Virginia Company officials enlisted the aid of numerous Church of England clergymen, trusting that religious motives would secure support for colonization in the absence of concrete economic successes. These ministers apparently relished their new responsibility, assigning tremendous spiritual significance to the Jamestown experiment. Unlike their Elizabethan predecessors, they appealed to a wide audience, imploring not only merchants but common citizens to do their part for the welfare of England and, specifically, the settlers in Virginia. By 1614, however, the flood of sermons had begun to recede in the face of Jamestown’s increased economic vitality.

Together the two chapters trace the development of colonization from an idea based largely on scattered travels and information borrowed from published sources to a permanent settlement experiencing the vagaries of life in the New World. Behind each stage of growth lay secular and religious propaganda, carefully promoting an imperial agenda, while subtly shaping English national identity.
Chapter One

Elizabethan Imperialism in an Age of Rhetoric

What enterpryse in the worlde can sownde
more plawsibell then this?
whereby God shalbe glorified, here majestie reape honor,
and her Countrye and people inestymable benefit.¹

Edward Hayes posed this question at a crucial juncture in his 1586 treatise on the colonization of Newfoundland. Having presented what he considered to be an airtight case for English colonial expansion, he summarized his argument into this (paraphrased) rhetorical question, “What cause could possibly be worthier than one that invokes God, Queen Elizabeth, and the people of England?” Indeed, Hayes had employed all the conventional reasons for colonization: the territory already belonged to England because it was “firste founde and discovered” by John and Sebastian Cabot; the journey to Newfoundland was relatively easy; the new land would relieve England of its excess population, who, in turn, could find employment and escape the “unlawfull and dishonest practyzes” that had ensnared many; the region promised to provide numerous commodities for both domestic and commercial use; settling Newfoundland would be a strike against France and Spain; and finally, true Protestant Christianity could be brought to the “Infydells,” thus bringing “glory to god, and [to her Majesties] Domynyons of Englannde more then her predecessors.”²

Although Hayes was known for personally concocting speculative schemes, his plan for settling Newfoundland reflected the foreign policy concerns of his chief benefactor, William Cecil, ennobled Lord Burghley in 1571. As one of Queen Elizabeth’s most intimate advisors (first Secretary of State and later Lord Treasurer), Burghley argued that England should avoid territorial conflict with Spain, opting instead to expand into the Newfoundland area where Spain claimed no jurisdiction. Hayes composed his treatise in part to provide Burghley with the necessary information to present his case effectively at court.³

Yet Hayes was not governed solely by the will of Burghley. The colonization of Newfoundland had occupied Hayes’s mind since he first joined Sir Humphrey Gilbert in promoting and financing overseas expeditions in 1578. Gilbert and Hayes shared similar backgrounds, both having been born into wealthy families. As younger sons, however, they both dabbled in academic fields before attaching themselves to the Elizabethan court. After several years of organizing exploratory voyages, they had come to share similar ideas about England’s western enterprise, and both dedicated themselves to transferring their personal visions to the nation. In 1583 Hayes traveled with Gilbert on the first voyage intended to initiate settlement in Newfoundland. Gilbert’s death on the return trip undoubtedly saddened Hayes and

³Quinn notes that Burghley’s foreign policy was opposed at court by another intimate advisor of Elizabeth’s, Sir Francis Walsingham, appointed Secretary of State when Burghley was named Lord Treasurer. Walsingham advocated an aggressive foreign policy and urged the creation of North American bases from which to attack Spanish ships. David Beers Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 1481-1620 (New York, 1974), 230, 232, 235-236; Penry Williams, The Later Tudors: England, 1547-1603 (Oxford, 1995), 262; John Guy, Tudor England (Oxford, 1988), 280.
over the next few years prompted him to compile data and write several pamphlets encouraging colonization in an effort to keep his friend's vision alive.\(^4\)

Hayes's 1584 and 1586 proposals were not unique for their time. Led by Gilbert, Christopher Carleill, Sir George Peckham, and the two Richard Hakluyts, a small group of ardent expansionists had already prepared similar essays to encourage royal and parliamentary support, as well as merchant investment, for various overseas projects. Without approval from the crown and financial backing from the merchant community, colonization was doomed. To convince often skeptical merchants and members of the royal household that overseas settlement would supply personal and national benefits, authors such as Hayes produced elaborate rhetorical devices, appealing to as many motivations as possible, including benevolence, greed, power, and retaliation. Legal and religious concerns about claiming or holding title to the land were probably genuine but generally useful only as additional persuasive tools.\(^5\) Ultimately, this propaganda came to define English imperialism in the late sixteenth century. As actual settlement attempts proved disastrous, these persistent and often persuasive treatises sustained colonization efforts.

Rhetoric, however, did not always characterize English colonization. Following Columbus's 1492 expedition to the West Indies, the other European powers scrambled to imitate the Spanish. The globe suddenly seemed to hold countless opportunities for exploration and expansion, and King Henry VII wanted to


ensure that England would obtain its rightful share of the new land and commercial trade. No pleas for royal support or detailed lists of benefits to colonization were necessary to convince him that overseas ventures should be a priority for England.  

Henry VII knew that Bristol fishermen had already acquired considerable knowledge about the north Atlantic in their ever-widening search for abundant cod. He also realized that Bristol merchants had developed a lucrative cod and cloth trade with Portugal, despite the Portuguese fishing industry's extensive presence in the Atlantic. Although competition between the two countries certainly existed, English and Portuguese merchants and sailors frequently shared knowledge about Atlantic islands and sea routes.  

Drawing on this accumulated insight, Henry VII commissioned John Cabot (Venetian by nationality) in 1496 to "conquer, occupy, and possess" any "town, city, castle, island, or mainland whatsoever, newly found by them." Cabot's first attempt to follow this injunction yielded no results, but in May 1497 he embarked on a second voyage that reached the land later known as Newfoundland. Upon his arrival, he "hoisted the royal standard, and took possession for the King," erecting a cross and

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6 Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 93.
8 Letters patent granted to John Cabot and his sons, March 5, 1496, in Quinn, ed., New American World, I, 94. Such strong language in the letters patent prompted Anthony Pagden to suggest that this early phase of English expansion was "based upon conquest" and "conceived and legitimized using the language of warfare." Likewise, Juricek pointed out the tendency for early English letters patent to license violent behavior toward Indians. Quinn and many others have noted the similarities between Henry VII's letters patent and Spanish and Portuguese grants. Anthony Pagden, Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500-1800 (New Haven, 1995), 63; Juricek, English Claims in North America, 346; Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 93.
two banners (one for the Pope and one for Henry VII), representing "Christian overlordship and English sovereignty."9

The following year Cabot left England hoping to uncover additional territory for his adopted homeland, but he never returned. A series of sea captains, including Cabot's son Sebastian, sought to fulfill Cabot's original charter by exploring the western Atlantic and the North American coast. After Sebastian Cabot's 1508 sojourn, which supposedly reached Florida and sent people ashore, the English might well have held more knowledge about North America than any other European power.10

After the death of Henry VII in 1509, England's participation in the scramble for the New World slowed considerably. Indeed, from mid-century to the late 1570s, "the English were more interested in trying to colonize parts of Ireland... than in planning colonies in America." To solidify England's control over its neighboring island, Henry VIII and his heirs authorized the construction of military and civilian outposts and sponsored promotional literature to attract settlers. Despite its general failure, this propaganda served as a forerunner to the essays supporting North American colonization composed ten years later.11

The promise of a Northwest Passage lured English attention away from Ireland and redirected it toward the western hemisphere around 1576. Although Sir Humphrey Gilbert had initiated discussion about a possible northwest route to Asia in 1566 (he had composed a treatise and petitioned the queen for "privileges to promote

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10 Ibid., 139-142, 194.
the discovery of a Northwest Passage”), actual plans to explore the northern territories did not commence until Martin Frobisher undertook his first expedition in 1576.\textsuperscript{12} After two additional voyages in the succeeding years, Frobisher had uncovered several strains of ore supposedly containing gold and captured several Eskimos but failed to locate a passage to Asia.

The eventual failure of this quest to reach the East Indies via the “Northern seas” would have been difficult to predict after reading Gilbert’s persuasive pamphlet. Hearkening back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, he offered linguistic, political, and geographical arguments for America to be considered an island, emphasizing that if America was an island, there must be a northern route around it. To underscore the importance of locating this passage, he sought to discredit other geographical plans that attempted to prove the existence of a northeast route to the Indies. Such a passage would surely be more lucrative than the one he was advocating and therefore had to be eliminated from competition.\textsuperscript{13}

After assuring his readers that the Northwest Passage existed, Gilbert provided what he considered to be the most compelling reason to search for a shortcut to Asia in the final chapter entitled, “What commodities woulde ensue, this passage once discovered.” Not only would the English obtain “great aboundance of gold,

\textsuperscript{11} David Beers Quinn, \textit{Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584-1606} (Chapel Hill, 1985), 13.
\textsuperscript{12} Quinn, “Northwest Passage Theories: The English Discussion, 1565-1580,” in Quinn, ed., \textit{New American World}, IV, 188.
\textsuperscript{13} Sir Humphrey Gilbert, “A discourse of a discoverie for a new passage to Cataia,” London, 1576, in Quinn, ed., \textit{New American World}, III, 9-23; Quinn notes that many commentators from the Elizabethan period were quick to draw comparisons between colonization in the Americas and the empire-building of the ancient Romans. This interest in antiquity reflected the humanistic education predominating at English academic institutions. In the capable hands of a Humphrey Gilbert or Richard Hakluyt, the intellectual tradition of renaissance humanism created excellent propaganda. Quinn, “Renaissance Influences in English Colonization,” in Quinn, \textit{Explorers and Colonies}, 97-116.
silver, precious stones, Cloth of golde, silkes, all maner of Spices, [and] Grocery wares,” but they would also be able to sell their merchandise “far better cheape, then either the Portingal, or Spaniarde doth, or may doe” because of the reduced traveling time. He viewed the East as a magical place, possessing unimaginable wealth. By tapping into these riches, England could quickly become Europe’s dominant power.14

Although Gilbert’s discourse is similar to the writings of Hakluyt, Hayes, and others, it varies in ways that are instructive about the rhetoric of Elizabethan imperialism. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of his work is the complete absence of religious motivation for exploring the New World. Unlike many comparable pamphlets, Gilbert mentioned nothing about God’s manifest destiny for England to dominate North America or God reserving portions of the new territory for England. Likewise, he refrained from statements about God protecting Protestant England and thwarting Catholic Spain and France. Instead, he asserted that Spain and Portugal had not already sought and discovered the Northwest Passage because they were afraid that England’s location would enable it to reap most of the trade benefits.15

Judging from some of his other compositions laced with religious rhetoric, it would be incorrect to assume from this document that Gilbert was irreligious. In this instance, the absence of religious language suggests that religion was not the most persuasive tool for the moment. Rather than viewing Gilbert’s writing and the entire imperial project simply as expressions of the age of faith, they must be seen as

15 Gilbert, “A discourse of discoverie,” in Quinn, ed., New American World, III, 22; Louis Wright offers a different argument, stating that Gilbert and his colleagues believed that “God had especially reserved certain portions of North America for the English, and hence had thwarted the Spanish and French in their efforts to push northward.” Wright, Religion and Empire, 22-23.
carefully constructed weapons designed to achieve certain ends, in this case exploration of the northern territories of the New World.

The other noticeable omission from Gilbert’s treatise is any discussion of land claims. Although he entertained the idea that England could establish an outpost on the North America mainland and that “we might inhabite some parte of those Countreys, and settle there suche needie people of our Countrie, which now trouble the common welth,” he included no information about the legality of his proposed venture.  

Perhaps he felt that since settlement was not his objective, claiming the land was less important. Another answer, however, could simply be that despite Sebastian Cabot’s efforts earlier in the century, Frenchman Jacques Cartier had forged the most recent path, thus making English claims to the passage more difficult to sustain. Regardless, Gilbert’s work can be used to suggest that colonization supporters were not governed by establishing the legality of land claims; rather they adopted legal arguments only in response to particular situations.

With religion and legality playing only minor roles in Gilbert’s pamphlet, his emphasis on economics stands out. Perhaps because this document was written to attract investors as well as convince the queen to back the proposal, he focused on the commodities to be acquired and the eastern markets that would broaden English commerce. The pursuit of wealth served as his designated instrument to capture the audience’s interest.

Gilbert’s discourse was unique in its timing and presentation, but it was certainly not the only report seeking support for Northwest Passage ventures. Following Frobisher’s return from each of his three voyages, various crew members
took up the pen to describe the accomplishments of the journey and to garner
sponsorship of future quests. Dionyse Settle, who accompanied Frobisher on his
second voyage (1577), recorded the events of that trip in great detail.

Although Settle had to admit the crew’s inability to locate the “passage to
Cataia,” he highlighted the exploration of “those people and countries…which in his
[Frobisher’s] first voyage the yeare before he had found out.” Seeking to reassure
investors that the journey was productive, he insisted that many adventurers had
accumulated “sufficient commoditie.” Further into his report, however, he concluded
that “all is not gold that glistereth,” a proverb evidently unheeded by Frobisher who
returned home with a shipload of worthless stone.\(^{17}\) In addition to describing the
terrain and potential commodities of the lands they scoured, Settle devoted most of
his attention to describing the Inuits, three of whom were captured and taken back to
England. Like most of his Elizabethan contemporaries, he referred to natives only in
negative terms, such as “altogether voyde of humanitie” and “devourers of mans
fleshe.” While discussing various native customs, he consistently emphasized the
Inuits’ supposed “fiercenesse and crueltie,” to highlight English superiority.\(^{18}\)

Despite attempting to create positive images of England and the Frobisher
missions, Settle used very little religious language to justify English intrusion into
North America and hesitated to register a claim to the territory. As in Gilbert’s
treatise, settlement was not a motivation for the voyage, which perhaps accounts for
Frobisher’s failure to establish sovereignty over the newly “discovered” land. Settle

\(^{17}\) Dionyse Settle, “A true reporte of the last voyage…by Capteine Frobisher,” (London, 1577), in
Quinn, ed., \textit{New American World}, IV, 208, 210; “The Abuses of Captayn Furbisher against the
even tacitly acknowledged the Inuits’ right to name their own country, by refusing to re-name the new territory after the “lacke of understanding the Peoples language” prevented him from including proper names in his report. He referred to God infrequently, and the few religious references scattered throughout the pamphlet did not suggest that God had divinely ordained their exploratory endeavors.19

Even before the Frobisher journeys were completed, Sir Humphrey Gilbert had trained his mind on the next project. Having initiated renewed interest in the New World, he began to advocate actual colonization. Recognizing that mobilization for settlement would require different planning and persuasive efforts than his Northwest Passage proposal, he enlisted the help of the elder Richard Hakluyt. Hakluyt earned his living as a lawyer, but by the 1570s his interest in maps and navigation enabled him to free-lance as a geographical consultant. His fascination with charting unknown worlds was not purely academic, however. Much to the delight of Gilbert, he had also become quite adept at identifying the commercial benefits that the new regions promised.20

As Gilbert hoped, Hakluyt took his assigned task very seriously. Beginning with advice about where to plant “the first seate,” Hakluyt proceeded to elaborate on the climate, water, animals, grains, stone, and timber “without which no Citie may

19 Settle, “A true reporte of the last voyage,” in Quinn, ed., New American World, IV, 216; Thomas Ellis, one of the reporters on Frobisher’s third voyage, included significantly more references to God. Almost all of these examples, however, are in the parts of his text detailing dangerous navigational passages. This invocation of the deity in the middle of an ocean crossing supports Wright’s argument that because of their vulnerability to the elements, seamen maintained “a healthy respect for a divinity.” Wright added later that Frobisher’s third voyage was also the first to include a government-sponsored chaplain, perhaps another reason why Ellis’s account is laced with religious exclamations. Thomas Ellis, “A true report of the third voyage,” (London, 1578), in Quinn, ed., New American World, IV, 219-225; Wright, Religion and Empire, 1, 12.
bee made nor people in civill sorte be kept together.” Trade, planting, and commodity production needed to begin upon arrival, thus making appropriate settlement decisions particularly crucial.21

Hakluyt’s New World survival guide also included information about the natives. Although he considered them savages, he encouraged prospective settlers to establish “familiaritie” with them so the English might “discover al the naturall commodities of their countrey,...all their wantes,...strengthes,...weaknesses, with whome they are in warre, and with whome considerate in peace.” Such knowledge, he argued, would not only benefit the English in their dealings with Indians but enable trade and commodity production to increase quickly, rendering England less dependent on Spain and France.22

Several months after Hakluyt composed these notes, Gilbert was awarded an “extraordinarily vague” patent to “discover, finde, search out, and view such remote, heathen and barbarous lands...not actually possessed of any Christian prince.”23 Patterning her language after the letters patent of her grandfather’s era, Elizabeth felt justified in claiming any “unoccupied” land. Despite her endorsement of Gilbert, she appears to have been slightly reluctant to throw her full support behind overseas colonization. In fact, Gilbert wrote to Secretary of State Sir Francis Walsingham a

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few months after receiving his patent, thanking him for “procuringe me her majestes favor and lycence for performaunce of this my sea voyage.” 24

Lacking definite direction, Gilbert’s first expedition produced little except confusion. Too many of his associates engaged in “piratical activities,” leading to a revocation of his charter in 1579. Later that year, after posting bond for his sailors to exercise “good behaviour towards her Majestes subjectes, and the subjectes of other Princes with whom her Majestye is in league...and [to] not robbe nor spoile eanye duringe the said viadge,” he returned to seafaring in an attempt to redress some of the earlier problems. By 1581 his “good faith was still in doubt,” but he was able to regain his charter from the Privy Council. 25

Meanwhile, Anthony Parkhurst began his campaign for the colonization of Newfoundland. Having accompanied his fishing ships from Bristol to Newfoundland several times between 1575 and 1578, carefully recording information about the region each time, he was well-prepared to defend the region’s merits. 26 In a 1577 letter he listed fifteen reasons why settlement in this part of North America would be lucrative for both England and the fishermen who already made it their home for part of each year. The following year he commented on the “true state and commodities of Newfoundland” in a letter to the elder Richard Hakluyt, highlighting many of the same reasons for settling the area.

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Parkhurst approached the possibility of colonization with an entrepreneurial spirit. As expected, fishing topped his list of valuable commodities already in existence, but he emphasized that the trade “might be made twyse, ye[a] thryse, as good as yet yt ys [if the] cuntry wer inhabited.” Colonists could produce salt, thus reducing import costs and increasing the amount of dried fish they could market. Ultimately for Parkhurst, Newfoundland contained unlimited promise for economic development.27

Parkhurst’s letter is persuasive, largely because he had visited the area before writing about it. One glaring omission, however, is his failure to discuss how England could claim rights to the land. Newfoundland in the late sixteenth century was truly an international community, attracting fishermen from England, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Indeed, the Newfoundland trade had become the “first regular trade between Europe and the New World.” Settling the land certainly “would secure English dominance of the fishing grounds,” but the international ramifications of excluding foreign fishermen could be devastating. For Parkhurst, however, the economic world ruled the political one, thus making legal title to land less important than the financial gains to be acquired.28

Perhaps because of his connections to Hakluyt, Parkhurst’s pleas for colonization in Newfoundland eventually overlapped with Gilbert’s passion for settling the New World. By 1583 Gilbert had returned his attention to Newfoundland, having arranged the necessary details with investors, merchants, and members of the royal government. This voyage demanded near-perfection from

Gilbert in order for him to atone for the disastrous 1579 excursion and to justify the Privy Council's decision to restore his patent. Upon his arrival in North America on August 3, 1583, Gilbert enjoyed a warm welcome from the English fishermen already in the area. Two days later he engaged in a land-claiming ceremony that has been interpreted and reinterpreted by scholars for decades. Calling together his crew, fellow travelers, and the "Maisters and principall Officers of the Shippes, as well Englishmen as Spaniardes, Portingalls, and of other nations," he read aloud from his royal commission, which permitted him to possess any land not already occupied by another European principality. Gilbert's words were translated for the international audience and then he proceeded to take "possession of the sayd land in the right of the Crowne of England by digging of a Turfe and receiving the same with an Hasell wande, delivered unto him, after the manner of the lawe and custome of England."

Following this symbolic act of possession, he further instructed the crowd that they were now subject to the laws of England, particularly the three that he installed on the spot: public religion had to conform to the Church of England standards, any person "convicted of any practise against her Majestie" was to be judged a traitor, and anyone speaking "dishonourably of her Majestie" was to lose his ears, ships, and goods. ²⁹

Scholars have quibbled about nearly every aspect of this ceremony. Some contend that this symbolic act indicated England's reliance on agricultural symbols (in this case the "Turfe" and "Hasell wande") as the basis for its land claims. ³⁰

³⁰ Patricia Seed, Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640 (Cambridge, 1995), 16-40. In her recent work on European colonization, Seed argues that the English,
Juricek suggested that Elizabeth required possession, not simply visual discovery, to legitimate land claims. Furthermore, he argued that Gilbert’s elaborate ceremony was perhaps an act of appeasement or compensation for failing to establish any New World settlement after holding a charter for five years. Perhaps the greatest significance of Gilbert’s action, however, was the role it played in the subsequent rhetoric of colonization. Previously, the Cabot voyages provided the primary justification for English settlement efforts. Now Gilbert’s seizure of Newfoundland could be added to the list.

This high point in the colonization project quickly collapsed as Gilbert perished on the return trip to England. The sudden loss of the movement’s primary instigator threatened to scuttle settlement plans. Colonization no longer appeared as easy as its promoters suggested. During this crucial time, rhetoricians had to be their most reassuring and convincing, carefully luring the disenchanted government and citizenry back into supportive positions.

Several authors, such as Sir George Peckham and Edward Hayes, combined their duties, writing narratives of Gilbert’s voyage to Newfoundland and arguing for a return trip at the same time. Christopher Carleill’s *A breef and sommarie discourse upon the entended voyage to the hethermoste partes of America* was actually written

French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch each performed distinctive ceremonies or rituals to signify their claim to New World territory. These ceremonies reflected deeply rooted cultural traditions within their respective countries, but they appeared unintelligible to other European observers. For example, Seed contends that to the English the construction of fences and hedges around property implied ownership, but to the French, Spanish, or Dutch fences were meaningless. Seed’s work founders in two particular areas. First, she fails to discuss to whom the various ceremonies were directed. If these ceremonies of possession were intended to declare to the European world that the land had been claimed, certainly the ruling monarchs and sea captains would have taken great care to ensure the universal intelligibility of their message. Second, Seed lacks enough evidence for her strong assertions. English representatives such as John Cabot planted a cross and a banner bearing Henry
before Gilbert’s venture and contained his own plans to establish a colony in Nova Scotia or Maine, but its reception was tempered by the circumstances surrounding Gilbert’s death. Attempting to win back apprehensive investors, Carleill began his pamphlet by detailing earlier voyages and trade networks that England had established all over the globe. He contended that trade and settlement in America would procure the same benefits as the traffic with Muscovia, Turkey, Spain, and Portugal, only Englishmen would have a shorter route and better travel conditions to get to America.32

For the “godlie mynded” or Puritans, Carleill ensured that parents and masters in America could determine the religion of their children and servants rather than being forced to comply with a state policy. Later in the paper he also appealed to the audience’s sense of “Christian charitie,” citing two ways in which the New World would enable English citizens to demonstrate such benevolence: “reducyng the savage people, to Christianitie and civilitie” and opening up new land for “our poore sorte of people” to settle and begin better lives.33

Although he offered religious motivations for colonization, Carleill’s work was not governed by divine rhetoric. Instead, he asserted that “Merchandizyng” was “the matter especially looked for” by potential investors. In other words, the most persuasive arguments generally involved the production and marketing of a particular commodity or a significant increase in trade. Consequently, he devoted most of his

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33 Ibid., 29, 31.
tract to discussion of what commodities could be grown or manufactured in different parts of the new region. Likewise, he reminded readers that American colonies would be another trade outlet for “our Englishe Clothes.” Both of these incentives to English commerce would eliminate some of England’s dependence on countries such as Denmark.\textsuperscript{34}

Economic motivations appeared in Sir George Peckham’s account as well, although only after religious and legal justifications for colonization had been fully presented. Beginning with a brief synopsis of Gilbert’s voyage, he quickly shifted to a short rebuke of Englishmen for failing to enlarge the queen’s dominions and slumbering rather than awakening “thousands of soules to knowe theyr Creator,” which the Spanish subjects had faithfully accomplished. His favorable portrayal of Spanish proselytizing efforts undoubtedly stemmed from his own Catholicism. As a Catholic in Elizabethan England, he occupied a precarious position, repeatedly needing to verify his loyalty to England to atone for his unsanctioned religious beliefs. Although his desire to found a colony primarily for Catholics illustrated his commitment to his faith, he recognized the expediency of adopting a more universal religious tone.\textsuperscript{35}

Speaking in general evangelical terms, Peckham maintained that planting a colony was absolutely essential to missionary efforts. Without it, he asserted, “Christian Religion can take no roote.” In general he advocated amicable relations between missionary and Indian, but if the Indians rejected the message, Christians were permitted to seize their towns and villages and to use the “Lawe of Armes” to

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 29-30.
\textsuperscript{35} Quinn, \textit{England and the Discovery of America}, 371-373.
attack or defend against transgressors. Although his conclusions are clouded by his sense of superiority over the Indians, Peckham clearly regarded religious pursuits as a divine calling requiring sacrifice. His appeal was not to the casually benevolent individual whom Carleill sought.

Before launching into a description of the trade and planting that the Americas could offer, Peckham outlined the legal title England held to the territory. Based largely on the right of first discovery, his justification relied heavily on two series of voyages. First, he invoked Madocke ap Owen Gwyneth, a royal Welshman who supposedly crossed the ocean in 1170 and planted himself in North America. To support this shaky argument, he also included the Cabot discoveries, ultimately concluding that “any of the foresayde titles is as much, or more then any other Christian Prince can pretende to the Indies before suche time as they had actuall possession thereof.” Despite this discussion about land rights, Peckham probably assigned greater authority to religious than to legal reasons for colonizing.

In addition to touting the proliferation of the usual furs, fish, crops, and wood products as economic reasons for investment, Peckham emphasized that planting in the Americas was not difficult, despite the contrary reports circulating in England. As a further reassurance to investors, he specifically stated that individual settlement “may be doone without the aide of the Princes power and purse.”

In contrast to Peckham’s narrative that summarized Gilbert’s voyage and then presented a much longer treatise on the importance of colonization, Edward Hayes’s

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37 Ibid., 48-49.
38 Ibid., 54.
account included only a few introductory remarks before moving on to the “story.”
These remarks primarily emphasized the legal precedent for Gilbert’s taking possession of Newfoundland. In addition to the usual claims to first discovery, however, Hayes introduced a religious twist to the English right to land. To him, it seemed probable that “God hath reserved [everything north of Florida] to be reduced unto Christian civility by the English nation.” He argued that if God were not limiting the Spanish, there would be no other reason for their failure to expand northward.39

With the death of Gilbert, his half brother Sir Walter Ralegh assumed the position of leading proponent and organizer of overseas expansion. Unlike Gilbert, who had mobilized support for a Northwest Passage search before turning his attention to Newfoundland, Ralegh aspired to settle territories further south. Consequently, the push to colonize Newfoundland slowed considerably.

Ralegh’s overseas aspirations received a great boost in September 1583 when Secretary of State Francis Walsingham enlisted the help of the younger Richard Hakluyt, a cousin of the man who had aided Gilbert, to assist in garnering royal and financial support. Walsingham had already employed Hakluyt to gather information and “cultivate opinion” for Carleill’s proposed colony. Because Carleill hoped to settle as close to the St. Lawrence River as possible (an area already controlled by the French), Walsingham appointed the Reverend Hakluyt chaplain of the embassy in France to secure inside access to France’s plans for North America. After faithfully

attending to Carleill’s cause, Hakluyt turned his attention toward more southerly regions of the New World where Ralegh sought to establish a plantation.  

Hakluyt returned to England in July 1584 after ten months of absorbing French, Spanish, and Italian documents relating to European expansion. His excellent education, intense commitment to research and collection, and fascination with navigation and geography (perhaps fostered by his cousin) enabled him to not only support Ralegh and Carleill, but form the foundation for his comprehensive 1589 volume on European exploration, Principall navigations, as well.

Between July and September 1584 Hakluyt drafted a report of his findings entitled, Discourse of Western Planning. Perhaps borrowing from his cousin’s work written around the same time, he offered twenty-one reasons why England should establish an American colony. Intended only for the Queen, this essay was careful to present a variety of compelling arguments, all concluding that England needed to expand.

Like Peckham and other earlier champions of overseas exploration, Hakluyt focused his attention on the Spanish, addressing their American presence in nearly half his points. Unlike Peckham, however, he perceived Spain’s conversion of Indians as a threat rather than a religious model. Appealing to the queen’s role as

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40 David B. Quinn and Alison M. Quinn, “Introduction,” in Quinn and Quinn, eds., Discourse of Western Planting (London, 1993), xvi-xxi.

leader of the Church of England, he first accused the Spanish government of forcing
Englishmen sailing through the Caribbean to “forswearer and renounce their religion
and conscience and consequently theyr obedience to her Majestie.” Hakluyt reported
that Spaniards were rampantly confiscating English trading ships and forcing crew
members to forsake their religious and cultural heritage. To retaliate, Hakluyt
suggested that an English colony would be beneficial because it could serve as a base
for similar raids on the Spanish fleet.43

In addition to describing direct attacks against the English, Hakluyt embraced
the “Black Legend” rhetoric, objecting to Spanish persecution of the native
inhabitants of the West Indies. Reasoning that these Indians had undoubtedly grown
weary of the “outragious” Spanish cruelties, he argued that Indians “woulde joyne
with us or any other moste willingly to shake of their moste intollerable yoke.”
Despite its untenable foundation, this opportunity for Elizabeth to aid suffering
individuals who would in turn be respectful and subservient residents seemed like a
resounding argument to convince the queen that colonization was worthwhile.44

Cutting to the heart of colonization controversy, Hakluyt offered another
article that probably pleased Elizabeth: “That the Queene of Englande title to all the
west Indies, or at the leaste to as moche as is from Florida to the Circle articke is
more lawfull and righte then the Spaniardes or any other Christian Princes.”45 As a
Protestant clergyman, Hakluyt discredited all Catholic authority. Because the
Spanish occasionally referred to the papal donation of Alexander VI as the

42 Richard Hakluyt, Discourse of Western Planting, 1584. Edited by David B. Quinn and Alison M.
43 Hakluyt, Discourse of Western Planting, 1584. Edited by Quinn and Quinn. 1993, 4, 12, 35-36.
44 Ibid., 4.
Spanish occasionally referred to the papal donation of Alexander VI as the legitimizing power behind their land claims, he nullified such territorial assertions, considering them an affront to any Protestant.

To confront this challenge, Hakluyt launched into a history of English exploration (beginning with Madock ap Owen Gwyneth) designed to verify that Elizabeth indeed held title to the northern half of the western hemisphere. The supposedly authentic information about Madock had only recently been publicized in Hakluyt’s time, perhaps accounting for Hakluyt’s unquestioning enthusiasm for this new evidence. Madock was a prince of North Wales in 1170 who, “being wearye of the civill warres and domesticall dissentions in his Contrie, made twoo voyadges oute of Wales and discovered and planted large Contries which he founde in the mayne Ocean south westwarde of Ireland.” For Hakluyt, this uncovering of the West Indies 322 years before Columbus solidified England’s claim to the territory.

Hakluyt further revealed his ideas about land claims and rightful ownership in his discussion of John and Sebastian Cabot. Since 1496, England’s claim to continental America had rested on their voyages because they “discovered this longe tracte of the firme lande two yeeres before Columbus ever sawe any parte of the continente thereof.” In addition to visual discovery, Hakluyt continued the Cabot saga to demonstrate possession as well. “This then was that Gabote [Sebastian] which firste discovered Florida for the Kinge of England, so that the Englishmen have more righte thereunto then the Spaniardes, yf to have righte unto a Contrie it sufficeth to have firste seene and discovered the same: Howbeit Gabota did more then see the

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46 Ibid., 88.
contrie, for he wente on lande on divers places, tooke possession of the same
daccordinge to his patente...and moreover he broughte home three of the Savages of
the Indies. In Hakluyt’s mind, acts such as these established English precedence
and invalidated any Spanish claims to the North American continent.

Having presented his case against Spain, Hakluyt devoted much of the
remaining report to trade and commerce issues. He cited fertile soil for the
cultivation of produce, new markets for the export of English wool, easily duped
natives who would exchange “cheape commodities of these partes, for thinges of
highe valour there not estemed,” and lack of import duties, thus reducing prices for
English consumers, as prime inducements to the creation of colonies.

Shortly after Hakluyt’s report went to the queen, Ralegh ordered a
reconnaissance voyage to assess the land along the coast of America. Following up
this trip led by Captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, England established its
first New World colony at Roanoke a year later. Unfortunately for the first settlers,
English perceptions of a colony’s needs had been formed almost solely by
propagandists in Europe and were insufficient for survival across the Atlantic.
Independent sponsors expected the colony to engage in privateering, despite the harsh
criticism of Gilbert when his men acted similarly seven years earlier. Consequently,
both the crown and the other investors failed to recognize the pressing concerns in
Roanoke, which eventually forced Ralph Lane and his men to abandon the colony
after only one year in Virginia.49

47 Ibid., 92.
48 Ibid., 115-120.
49 Quinn, Set Fair for Roanoke, 130-139; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony
(Totowa, NJ, 1984), 23-26; Quinn, North America from Earliest Discovery, 331-335.
But the expedition was not a total loss. Thomas Harriot, an accomplished scientist and mathematician, had accompanied the adventure-seeking settlers. Assisted by the additional research and sketches of the region by his fellow traveler John White, Harriot published a “book for the general reader,” *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, upon his return. Like Hakluyt and others who preceded him, Harriot portrayed an America overflowing with “Merchantable commodities,” such as cedars, furs, and iron, in addition to commodities “for victuall and sustenance of mans life.” He attempted to dispel doubts about colonization, listing the faults of the first colony and demonstrating how they could be corrected in the future.  

Recognizing that the support of England’s citizens for overseas settlement was almost as important to secure as the confidence of the crown, Harriot desperately sought to halt the flood of popular discontent resulting from the English failure at Roanoke.  

Although he did not raise compelling new arguments to encourage colonization, he did provide a new twist to the existing rhetoric. Previously, most authors relied very heavily on their polemical ability, in the absence of firsthand experience. As a result, their arguments were often sweeping and based largely on conjecture. Although still influenced by this framework, Harriot possessed personal observations of both the territory and a functioning colony, thus enabling him to make more grounded claims and to provide a more accurate assessment of colonial needs.  

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51 For more information on Harriot, see Quinn, “Thomas Harriot and the New World, in *Explorers and Colonies*, 239-256.
Unfortunately for the supporters of colonization, the second attempt to settle in the New World (1587) met with the same fate as the first. Originally intending to plant a colony in the Chesapeake area, the group first stopped at Roanoke hoping to find the fifteen men left behind from Sir Richard Grenville’s voyage the previous year. Finding only the mortal remains of one of these men, Governor John White decided to stay and repair the existing houses, after his ship’s pilot Simão Fernandes refused to transport the prospective colonists to the Chesapeake. Once again, however, the colony was forced to contend with dwindling support. When White returned to England for much-needed supplies in 1588, he and an enthusiastic Ralegh promoted investment in the colony, hoping to eliminate the colony’s dependence upon fluctuating support. The outbreak of war with Spain prevented White’s return to Roanoke until 1589, however, and by that time the settlers he had left behind were gone. Yet another attempt had failed to produce an English colony in North America.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite the setback in Virginia, New World colonization efforts were still very much alive. In 1586 Edward Hayes attempted to revive interest in Newfoundland.\textsuperscript{53} Employing many of the traditional arguments such as bringing glory to God, relieving the poor population, and becoming less dependent on neighboring European nations, he suggested three new reasons for settling in that region. First, he appealed to a sense of honor: “It shalbe honorable to wynne and possesse so riche a Territory as [it shalbe to convert] Infydells and plante Religion, which hathe not ben done in this later ag[e by Englishmen.]” He also contended that

conquering this territory and Christianizing the natives should not be extremely
difficult because “the people of the Countrye and Ilandes [are but a naked people.]”
His third reason for colonizing Newfoundland was to protect English business
interests, in this case, fishing. Fishermen and their property needed to be defended
against pirates, particularly during the fishing parties’ seasonal absences.54 Hayes’s
persistent arguments, combined with the work of Hakluyt and other propagandists,
fueled the colonization project through the next decade.55

Although Elizabethan imperialism had little to show for its efforts, various
propagandists who seemed to value colonization above everything else sustained its
ideology. These authors recited numerous motivations for colonization. Despite their
belief in the viability of these reasons, they tailored their presentation to specific
audiences. For example, religion and concerns about the legality of land claims made
their way into almost every treatise, but their marked absence in certain instances
suggests that promotion of colonization was based largely on economic rather than
legal or moral principles.

Elizabethan imperialism was indeed characterized and defined by rhetoric.
Philosophers, adventurers, preachers, merchants, and royalty all contributed what
they hoped were realistic images of the New World. Only in the next century would
permanent settlers evaluate these projections, but even after the view from overseas

53 See discussion on pages 5-6.
54 Hayes, “Consideracions to induce some noble [persons] to...possesse the New foun[de lande],” in
Quinn, ed., New American World, III, 125-127. According to Quinn, interest in Newfoundland was
well-directed if for no other reason than the region’s riches. He contends that the fishing industry in
Newfoundland likely brought more wealth into Europe than Spanish gold and silver from Central and
South America. Quinn, “Newfoundland in the Consciousness of Europe in the Sixteenth and Early
Seventeenth Centuries” in Explorers and Colonies, 301.
55 As Quinn astutely notes, Hayes was the only one of Gilbert’s original cadre of expansionists to be
involved in the Jamestown venture. Quinn, England and the Discovery of America, 243.
became available, colonization advocates continued to encourage a flood of rhetoric from England’s learned establishment.
Chapter Two

Imperialism Sustained: Religious Rhetoric of the Jamestown Colony

Our plant, we trust, is firmly rooted,
our armes and limmes are strong,
our branches faire,
and much desire to spread themselves abroad.¹

When Queen Elizabeth succumbed to illness in March 1603, proponents of English colonization held their collective breath. Although she needed some encouragement, Elizabeth usually approved their schemes for England’s expansion, and they fervently hoped that her successor, James VI of Scotland, would be as compliant. James, however, possessed his own vision of empire. While he had much to learn about English political culture, he believed that the union of his two kingdoms had been divinely ordained. “What God hath conjoined, then let no man separate,” he told the English parliament. “I am the husband, and the whole isle is my lawful wife.”² To the delight of merchants and investors throughout the country, this attitude easily translated into support for overseas ventures.

During James’s reign, England planted its first permanent settlement in the New World. Although the Jamestown colony struggled to survive, its very existence fulfilled the dreams of many sixteenth-century pamphlet writers. When the promoters’ promises failed to materialize after the first two years, however, advocates of colonization turned to England’s preachers to generate enthusiasm for the Virginia

experiment. While numerous individuals had employed religious language in the past, the new sermonizers adopted a particularly "aggressive, missionary spirit" that firmly attached religion to empire.

Ministers and learned laymen welcomed this new responsibility. Many hoped that a message connecting religion with nationalism and empire would inspire renewed dedication to the Church from ordinary English citizens. Others recognized that preaching in support of colonization would win favor from merchants as well as the crown. Regardless of their motive, these ministers outlined a powerful vision and justification for overseas expansion, demonstrating particular concern for the religious and national welfare of England’s posterity. Above all else, they emphasized that the task of empire-building involved more than consideration of England’s current problems. Instead, it also had to incorporate past experiences and be motivated by the needs of future generations.

Before the preachers swung into action around 1609, religious and secular goals had already been established for the Jamestown colony. Interest in establishing New World colonies had flared intermittently since the 1580s, but it gained strength again in 1605 when Captain George Waymouth returned from a month on the New England coast. Originally, he had been commissioned by the Earl of Southampton, Lord Thomas Arundell, to continue the quest for the Northwest Passage. Having failed in this objective, he sailed into New England territory and captured five Indians, perhaps hoping that human treasure would make up for his inability to tap

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into the lucrative East Indies trade. According to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the fort commander at Plymouth and a co-sponsor of Waymouth's voyage, this "accident must be acknowledged the means under God of putting on foot and giving life to all our Plantations."  

Upon his return to England, Waymouth and fellow ship captain Bartholomew Gosnold initiated discussion about attempting another plantation in Virginia. Eventually, Lord Chief Justice John Popham and Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, assumed control of the project, securing investors and the requisite gentry support. Waymouth’s Plymouth contacts, Gorges and several wealthy merchants, wholeheartedly supported the proposed colonization attempt, as did Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s sons, Sir John and Raleigh Gilbert.5

In the fall of 1605, Popham and Salisbury’s group petitioned James for the legal authority to claim English territory across the Atlantic. James delayed his response until April 1606, when he issued letters patent to the group, designating Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers as leaders. This charter created a royal council authorized to delineate the structure of government in the proposed colonies. To actually arrange the details of settlement, the charter established two companies, one to plant in “North Virginia” around Plymouth and the other to target “South Virginia” around the Chesapeake Bay. Both bodies submitted to rule by nominated councils.6

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3Louis B. Wright, Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625 (Chapel Hill, 1943), 87; John Parker, Books to Build an Empire: A Bibliographical History of English Overseas Interests to 1620 (Amsterdam, 1965), 197.
5David B. Quinn, North America from Earliest Discovery to First Settlements: The Norse Voyages to 1612 (New York, 1977), 441.
6Ibid., 441-442.
In these letters patent James set forth a distinctly religious mission, urging the
prospective settlers to propagate “Christian religion to such people, as yet live in
darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.”
Furthermore, he hoped that these men “may in time bring the infidels and savages,
living in those parts, to human civility, and to a settled and quiet government.”
Certainly much of this religious language simply conformed to the language of letters
patent in previous generations, but, despite its formulaic quality, it served as a
religious foundation for later ministers seeking to indicate the colony’s divine roots.7

By the time the settlers were ready to embark in December 1606, their minds
had been filled with orders and advice from both the crown and the newly created
Virginia Council. Conscientious planners prepared guidelines for everything from
finding a suitable landing spot to controlling social behavior to inheriting land.
Regarding religion, however, the eager adventurers undoubtedly felt confused. James
and the Council had commanded them to “use all good meanes to draw the salvages
and heathen people of the said several places...to the true service and knowledge of
God.” At the same time, however, the governing bodies advocated maintaining
adequate distance between Englishmen and Indians to cloak the settlers’ intention to
establish a plantation. Only a few individuals were supposed to negotiate with the
Indians, and no missionary had been assigned to the journey, leaving the average

7 Letters Patent to Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Somers and others, for two several Colonies and
Plantations, to be made in Virginia, and other parts and Territories of America, April 10, 1606, in
colonizer unsure how to employ “all good meanes” to bring salvation to his future neighbors.  

Confident that the abundant fish and furs in its region would ensure immediate success, the Plymouth Company went first, actually sponsoring a voyage to Pemaquid (territory belonging to the Abenakis) in August 1606 before the November and December instructions from the Council had been read. On November 10, however, Captain Henry Challons and his crew were captured by the Spanish in the Florida Strait. Two months after Challons departed from England, the Company had sent Thomas Hanham and Martin Pring, two Bristol seamen, to deliver supplies to Challons and his men at Pemaquid. Finding no trace of a colony, Pring and Hanham explored the area, particularly the Sagadahoc River, and headed back to England.  

Having been bested by the Spanish, the Plymouth Company launched another colonizing expedition in May 1607, heading for an area along the Sagadahoc River recommended by Hanham and Pring. Under the direction of George Popham and Raleigh Gilbert, the hundred settlers constructed a heavily armed fort (Fort St. George), after their arrival in August. Potential invaders proved to be the least of their worries, however, as an early winter, poor returns from fur trading, low supplies, and a devastating scurvy outbreak combined to attack the small group. Popham was one of the winter’s victims, and his death left Gilbert solely in charge of the colony. Two supply ships arrived in early 1608 and the settlement at Fort St. George appeared

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to be reviving, but in June, Gilbert received word of his brother’s death and resolved to return to England. With no leadership and another brutal winter only five months away, the colonists decided to abandon their Sagadahoc experiment. The Plymouth Company never made another colonization attempt.10

A few weeks before the Plymouth colonists had departed for the New World in May 1607, their counterparts with the Virginia Company had just arrived at Cape Henry in the Chesapeake Bay. Despite the apparent thoroughness of the Virginia Council’s instructions, the settlers jettisoned most of the advice shortly after their arrival in April. Indeed, violence, pestilence, and scandal rocked the prospective colonists from the moment they landed.

Thrilled by having reached the New World and eager to escape their ships’ confines, a band of adventurers disembarked to explore Cape Henry. During the group’s first foray onto Virginia soil, the resident Chesapeake Indians attacked, injuring several members of the company. On the subsequent voyage up the James River, the settlers anticipated additional attacks but were greeted by feasting and dancing at best and threatening but ultimately nonviolent gestures at worst.11

Landing at Jamestown Island on May 13, the group immediately began constructing fortifications and keeping watch for their new neighbors. They did not have long to wait, as several curious Paspaheghs sailed by the first night the colonists were in residence. Several days later the local werowance arrived with a hundred bowmen and “made great signes to us to lay our Arms away.” The English refused to

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9 Quinn, *North America from Earliest Discovery*, 403.
comply and eventually interpreted the chief’s response to indicate that “he would give us as much land as we would desire to take.” The meeting dissolved when both sides grabbed weapons during a dispute over a stolen hatchet, and the Paspaheghs left “in great anger.” A week later Newport departed on a reconnaissance trip up the James River during which time he shared many friendly interactions with local Indians, including the Tidewater’s “paramount chief” Powhatan, but upon his return in mid-June, relations at Jamestown between the settlers and the Paspaheghs had continued to deteriorate. Constant tension and suspicion between the two groups frequently resulted in bloodshed. The charge to attract the Indians to a “true knowledge of God” and a “settled, quiet government” had evaporated quickly from the settlers’ minds.12

Disease also wasted no time in altering the colonists’ plans. During the first three months in Virginia, only a few men perished from illness. By August, however, a barrage of epidemics ravaged the colony, claiming at least one victim nearly every day. According to George Percy, a gentleman who survived the early Jamestown years, undiscriminating and unmerciful bacteria were not even the settlers’ worst enemy. “Our men were destroyed with cruel diseases as Swellings, Flixes, Burning fevers, and by Warres, and some departed suddenly, but for the most part they died of meere famine. There were never Englishmen left in a forreigne Countrey in such miserable as wee were in this new discovered Virginia.” While most scholars agree that a combination of disease, contaminated water, and inadequate food caused the large

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number of deaths, many agree with Percy that had the Indians not provided “Bread, Corne, Fish, and Flesh in great plenty” few would have survived.  

As if survival were not difficult enough, the fledgling colony reeled from dissension among its leaders. Although the details of the conflicts are unclear, several men were charged with committing “hainous matters” and removed from the Council, and Edward Maria Wingfield, the President of the company, was stripped of his office. The desperate times undoubtedly contributed to these disagreements and the intensity of the colony’s response, but regardless of the sources of these problems, the Virginia Company could ill afford anything that would cast Jamestown in a negative light.  

Death and treachery were certainly not the images that the investors wanted to circulate in England. Consequently, while the newly planted “Virginians” were suffering, the word in England was much more positive. On the anniversary of King James’s accession, March 24, 1609, the Bishop of London’s chaplain Richard Crakanthorpe mounted the pulpit at Paul’s Cross and delivered an address that included glowing remarks about the Jamestown venture. Although he was not directly sponsored by the Virginia Company, his sermon served the investors’ interests. First, he credited the king’s “most wise and religious direction and
protection” for initiating the project, a fact that certain ship captains and merchants surely would have disputed. In case James’s approval was insufficient for the assembled body to support England’s expansion, he reminded the people that the new land not only yielded enough food to sustain the transplanted Englishmen, but contributed goods that were in short supply in the mother country as well.\footnote{Richard Crakanthorpe, “A Sermon at the solemnizing of the Happie Inauguration of our most gracious and religious Soveraigne” (London, 1609) in Brown, ed., \textit{Genesis of the United States}, I, 256; Paul’s Cross sermons generally commemorated religious or national holidays and usually acted as “the mouthpiece of the administration.” During the first decade of the seventeenth century, the sermons were usually highly puritan and anti-Catholic. Millar Maclure, \textit{The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642} (Toronto, 1958), 10, 14, 90; Wright, \textit{Religion and Empire}, 96.}

As a final indication that the Virginia settlement was a “happy and glorious work,” Crakanthorpe cited the spreading of religion and civility to the Indians as the crowning achievement of the colony. “This being the honourable and religious intendment of this enterprise, what glory! What honour to our Sovereign!” he exclaimed. Furthermore, he surmised, “what comfort to those subjects who shall be means of furthering of so happy a work, not only to see a New Britain in another world, but to have also those as yet heathen barbarians and brutish people, together with our English, to learn the speech and language of Canaan.” Despite Crakanthorpe’s enthusiastic suppositions, the starving settlers doubtlessly did not view their situation as a “happy and glorious work,” nor had they been able to feed themselves from the land or convert Indians to the “language of Canaan.”\footnote{Richard Crakanthorpe, “A Sermon at the solemnizing of the Happie Inauguration of our most gracious and religious Soveraigne” (London, 1609) in Brown, ed., \textit{Genesis of the United States}, I, 256; Paul’s Cross sermons generally commemorated religious or national holidays and usually acted as “the mouthpiece of the administration.” During the first decade of the seventeenth century, the sermons were usually highly puritan and anti-Catholic. Millar Maclure, \textit{The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642} (Toronto, 1958), 10, 14, 90; Wright, \textit{Religion and Empire}, 96.}

Despite their inaccuracy, Crakanthorpe’s words carried additional weight because they closely followed the publication of Robert Johnson’s \textit{Nova Britannia}, a widely circulated tract expounding the glories of the Virginia plantation. From Johnson’s discourse, it is clear that not all English citizens believed that God had
ordained the New World settlement. News about the colony’s struggles had scudded across the ocean. In fact, Johnson himself admitted that before he heard the company’s treasurer, Thomas Smyth, deliver a private speech “touching the publike utilitie of this noble enterprise,” he was skeptical of the wisdom of England’s latest colonization effort. Having been convinced of the error in his thinking, Johnson proceeded to contribute money and dedicated himself to writing *Nova Britannia*, the substance of which summed up Smyth’s persuasive oration.17

Using a mixture of religious and political arguments, Johnson endeavored to not only illustrate the benefits of colonization but to elicit an immediate outpouring of support. First, he appealed to his readers’ sense of nationalism. Under Elizabeth, the nation had strengthened its collective identity, a movement that continued under James, despite his Scottish heritage. Consequently, Johnson began by encouraging everyone to participate in the Virginia enterprise because the king had granted them many “gratious priviledges.” Their aid to England’s overseas expansion would enable “the honor of our King and enlarging of his kingdome.”18

A corollary to the nationalism that thrived on reflected glory from the king was, of course, the shared defeat when the country suffered humiliation. Johnson warned that without the people’s complete backing, the Jamestown colony would fold, leaving England to bear the world’s scorn. England was already well behind other European powers in the rush to claim land in the Americas. Yet another failure at colonization would only further diminish the nation’s international standing.19

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The international power that caused Johnson the most anxiety was Spain. Although England and Spain had healed some of the hostilities that occupied the pamphlet writers of the 1580s, tensions still plagued their relationship, particularly regarding New World activities. As a result, Johnson emphasized that a primary motive for succeeding in Virginia was to prevent the Spanish from acquiring any more territory. The current group of settlers and adventurers should be viewed as heroes, he insisted, but the source of their glory rested in their ability to confront Spain. Johnson seemed mystified by the fact that no one had halted the Spanish advance earlier, and he urged his readers to atone for England’s previous colonization failures by ensuring that Virginia would be a strong success.20

In addition to its dominant geopolitical position, Spain posed a threat because it embraced Catholicism and gave allegiance to the Pope. Writing only three years after the hysteria surrounding Guy Falkes and the Gunpowder Plot, Johnson knew that most Englishmen would rally around an anti-Catholic cause. For this reason, he opened his treatise with a scathing critique of the Spanish reliance on papal bulls as their legal authority to occupy land in the Americas. Everyone else acknowledged England’s entitlement to North America based on sixteenth-century exploration, he declared. Only Spain with its heathenish devotion to the pope still challenged England’s claim.21

Catholics were also among those whom Johnson accused of ridiculing the project. Indeed, perhaps because he too had been dubious about the viability of the Jamestown settlement, he concentrated considerable attention on winning over those

20 Ibid., 236, 247.
readers who still harbored doubts. His first rebuttal to the colony’s scoffers evoked Christopher Columbus. Despite opposition, Columbus persistently pursued financial backing for his exploratory voyage, ultimately providing rich rewards for his Spanish benefactors.22

Even this harmless reference to Spain’s success appeared to be too much for Johnson. He quickly altered his line of reasoning from an appeal to nationalism to a focus on religion. Moving past Columbus, he called to mind Caleb and Joshua from the Bible, two Israelite leaders who alone advocated settlement in the “Promised Land,” after scouting the territory and finding a large population already entrenched. Like Caleb and Joshua’s belief that God had promised land to the Israelites, Johnson firmly stated that “God hath reserved [Virginia] in this last age for England.” Today’s Englishmen, he said, must stand like Caleb and Joshua even when the devil tempts their countrymen, including some who have been to Virginia, to disregard or deride the project.23

Despite the “papists and evil magistrates” who Johnson believed were undermining the plantation, he frequently reiterated his conviction that the colony would advance the kingdom of God. For Johnson, advancing the kingdom of God meant converting Indians, but it also entailed providing work for the poor and bringing material benefit to England. He was convinced that everyone from those he labeled “idle” to those he called “honest, wise, and painefull” could identify with at least one of these options to promote God’s kingdom, and he passionately implored

21 Ibid., 235; Parker, “Religion and the Virginia Company,” in Andrews, Canny, and Hair, eds., The Westward Enterprise, 252-254.
22 Ibid., 238.
23 Ibid., 238, 240-241.
his readers to offer themselves or their money to the enterprise. Lest his followers become too excited, however, he cautioned that “art, industry, and patience” were needed for individual benefit from the colony. “Golde and silver [do] not raine from heaven,” he warned, instead “heavenly providence” will provide “the chief meanes of [your] wealth.”

As he wrapped up his exhortation, Johnson connected his religious ideas to his understanding of empire. Our forefathers failed to capitalize on the New World, he reminded his audience, but by “Divine Providence” England had been given a second chance. Now it was incumbent upon the existing English population to support the current group of national and religious heroes who were striving to make Virginia a successful settlement. To fail them would be a sin against God, the nation, and England’s posterity.

Johnson and Crakanthorpe’s combined encouragement for the Jamestown colony unleashed a flood of sermons expressing similar opinions. Virginia Company officials sponsored additional promotion, hoping that religious persuasion would galvanize the seemingly indifferent English populace. For the first official Company sermon on April 25, 1609, the investors selected William Symonds, preacher at Saint Savior’s, Southwark, and a recognized scholar. In keeping with his reputation, the sermon was submitted for publication only a week after its delivery, enabling an even wider audience to be reached with the call to support the overseas plantation.

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24 Ibid., 239, 242-244; Parker, *Books to Build an Empire*, 199.
25 Ibid., 247.
Symonds began the published version of his oration with a dedication to the “Adventurers” in Virginia, whom he referred to as the “Right Noble and Worthie Advancers of The Standart of Christ, among the Gentiles.” According to Symonds, these men and their endeavors represented the next stage in God’s redemptive history, a narrative that started with the biblical account of “the Flood, the burning of Sodom; the drowning of Pharaoh: the subduing of the Cananites by David and his Sonnes” and continued on through Constantine and the Protestant Reformation to the present mission in Virginia. Despite the magnitude of these earlier events, Symonds claimed that they were “done in a Corner, in comparison of that which is in hand.” “Now the Lord hath made bare his holy arme, in the sight of all the Gentiles; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” In other words, all of God’s activity in the world until the seventeenth century had been a mere prelude to England’s settlement at Jamestown. Surely, Symonds reasoned, no one would dare to interrupt God’s divine plan by refusing to assist in the colonization effort.27

Before delving into his sermon text, Symonds also seized the opportunity to juxtapose England’s virgin (the late Queen Elizabeth) with the “Great Whore” (the Virgin Mary). As part of their budding nationalism, many English people had begun to view their nation as the world’s Protestant champion, complete with their own virgin to replace the Catholic saint. Virginia represented the triumph over Catholicism that Symonds believed England and Protestantism ultimately were destined to have worldwide. Not only was the territory named after “our late Soveraigne Q. Elizabeth being a pure Virgin,” but James had also prohibited traitors and “Papists” from even entering, since he, according to Symonds, desired to “present

this land a pure Virgine to Christ.” “Lord,” he prayed, “finish this Good worke (settlement in Virginia) thou hast begun; and marry this land, a pure Virgine to thy Kingly sonne Christ Iesus; so shall thy name bee magnified: and we shall have a Virgin or Maiden Britaine.”

Just as the metaphor of the virgin enabled religious and empirical aims to unite, so did the concept of England as a chosen nation. Using Genesis 12, where God called Abram to “get thee out of thy Countrey, and from thy Kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will shew thee,” as his text, Symonds likened England to the biblical Israelites. God was summoning Englishmen to leave their country and move to a new place where divine work needed to be completed. In return, God had promised to make Abram “a great nation,” and Symonds felt assured that the same blessing applied to England today if it proceeded to settle obediently in Virginia.

Only two things would prevent God’s favor from falling upon England and its descendants if people faithfully responded to the call to minister overseas. First, Symonds warned against marrying with the Indians. A similar injunction had been given to “Abram’s posteritie,” and its violation led to the downfall of the Israelite people. Likewise, Symonds concluded that “the breaking of this rule, may breake the necke of all good successe of this Voyage.” Strict adherence to this law, however, should ensure that England would “grow into a Nation formidable to all the enemies of Christ.”

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28 Ibid., 285-286.  
29 Ibid., 287.  
30 Ibid., 290.
The second “perill is in offending God, and taking of Papists into your Company.” Symonds firmly believed that Catholic forces were seeking to subvert every English move and nothing seemed capable of convincing him otherwise. “Know them all to be very Assasines, of all men to be abhorred,” he instructed his audience.31

In addition to delivering these two warnings, Symonds sought to address some of the more common objections to colonization. The first protest that he reviewed involved the Indians and their rightful claim to the land: “The country...is possessed by owners, that rule, and governe it in their owne right: then with what conscience, and equitie can we offer to thrust them, by violence, out of their inheritance?” In response, Symonds justified the enterprise by reciting earlier actions of the “Great Princes, and Monarkes, of Assyria, Persia, Media, Greece and Rome.” More compelling in Symonds’s mind than this historical precedent, however, was the military weakness and religious heresy that he associated with the Indians. “Their God is the enemie of mankind that seeketh whom he may devour,” he insisted.32

While he marked Indian land as free for English dominance, Symonds expressed displeasure at the feeble efforts being made to convert Indians to Christianity. The ministry particularly drew his ire, and he actively exposed its “pretence of Zeale” to be mere hypocrisy when the men opted to “minde unprofitable questions at home, [rather] then gaining soules abroad.” Although he was careful to defend his own refusal to travel to Virginia, he labeled the others’ attitude a sin. Undoubtedly, the fact that Catholic powers had been very faithful in sending

31 Ibid., 290.
32 Ibid., 288-289.
missionaries to the New World galled Symonds. "[I]t is a shame that the Jesuites and Friers, that accompany every ship, should be so diligent to destroy souls, and wee not seeke the tender lambes, nor bind up that which is broken," he lamented.\(^3\)

Ministers were not the only Englishmen preferring the "sweetness" of England to the wilds of Virginia. To entice other adventurers, Symonds focused on the fruitfulness of the new territory. Virginia was the Promised Land, yielding "five hundred fold at one harvest" and overflowing with fish and game. Considering that people in England "doe swarme in the land, as young bees in a hive in June; insomuch that there is very hardly roome for one man to live by another," he could see no reason why England's residents would be reluctant to transplant their lives to a more roomy and prosperous location. "Let us be cheerfull to goe to the place that God will shew us to possesse in peace and plenty," he implored, "a Land more like the garden of Eden: which the Lord planted, than any part else of all the earth." For those barely subsisting at Jamestown, this description would have seemed ludicrous.\(^4\)

A few days after Symonds delivered his sermon, another Virginia Company man, the London preacher Robert Gray, penned a treatise that closely resembled Johnson’s *Nova Britannia*. Entitling his document *A Good Speed to Virginia*, Gray intended to refute concerns about the Virginia plantation and thereby encourage greater participation in the enterprise, much as Johnson, Crakanthorpe, and Symonds had already done.\(^5\)

Although his pamphlet did not begin as a sermon, Gray used a biblical text to order his arguments. Focusing on Joshua 17:14-18, he told the story of the Israelites

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\(^3\) Ibid., 291.
\(^4\) Ibid., 288-289.
claiming territory beyond their original allotment in the Promised Land because they had become a "great people." Gray suggested that England had also become overpopulated now that "Civell warres at home, and forreine wars abroad" no longer "cut off the overspreading branches of our people." Excess population and the resulting unemployment threatened to destroy the nation, he cautioned, so why not "seeke after such adventers whereby the Glory of God may be advanced, the teritories of our Kingdome inlarged, our people both preferred and employed abroad, our wants supplyed at home, his Maiesties customes wonderfully augmented, and the honour and renown of our Nation spread and propagated to the ends of the World?"

According to Gray, all these incentives would accompany a successful colony in Virginia. 36

Despite these reported advantages, the promoters of colonization had not managed to silence all objections. Gray began by tackling the question about Indian rights to the land. Unlike Symonds who appealed to historical precedent for his response, Gray emphasized that the English were not taking the territory by force but instead had been offered more land "than we shall bee able this long time to plant and manure" by the Indians themselves. His misinterpretation of Indian intent regarding the land did not improve his opinions about Indian culture. Like his fellow pamphleteers, he viewed the Indians as "barbarous and savage," worshiping the "divell," and wandering "up and downe like beasts." He echoed Crakanthorpe's

35 Wright, Religion and Empire, 92.
expression that “how happy were that man which could reduce this people from brutishness to civilitie, to religion, to Christianitie, to the saving of their souls.”

Additional concerns that Gray felt compelled to discuss included the position that expansion into Virginia should be dropped because it was an ill-fated project. Hearkening back to the failed attempts to settle at Roanoke in the 1580s, many Englishmen believed that regardless of the support it received, the Jamestown colony was destined to collapse. Gray labeled these fears “childish,” arguing that the intervening years had reshaped the goals, means, and management of the entire enterprise. He also chastised those who opposed the plantation because it required “heavie and burdensome” fundraising. Such people spent money thriftlessly and were eager to gouge even their neighbors, he complained, “but if it come to a publicke good, they grone under the least burden of charges that can bee required of them.” In his opinion, focusing on personal wealth at the expense of the “glorie of God, and the propagation of his Kingdome” was abominable and a sin against “God, the King, the Church, and the Commonwealth.”

Despite these strong words, Gray seemed to be most upset by the objection that “this age will see no profit of this plantation.” Stunned by the people’s “brutish...neglect and incurious respect of posteritie,” he begged these dissidents to evaluate where England would be without the careful stewardship of their forefathers. “We are not beasts,” he cried, “We sow, we set, we plant, we build, not so much for ourselves as for posteritie... They which onely are for themselves, shall die in themselves, and shall not have a name among posteritie.” Indeed, only those who

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37 Ibid., 298-299.
38 Ibid., 299-301.
have “employed their best endeavours in such vertuous and honourable enterprises, as have advanced the glorie of God, and inlarged the glorie and wealth of their Countrie” will live in the “records of eternitie.” Gray’s specific concern for England’s descendants set the tone for future justifications of the Virginia colony’s existence.

Joining Gray in the effort to halt the tide of criticism for England’s overseas settlement was Daniel Price, the chaplain to James I’s son Prince Henry. Speaking from the Paul’s Cross pulpit on May 28, 1609, Price labeled anyone who traduced the Virginia plantation a “persecutor and an adversary of Christ.” He predicted that these scoffers would be humbled when they realized that the Jamestown expedition was “like to be the most worthy voyage that ever was effected, by any Christian in discovering any country of the World.” Not only did the land promise to rival the world’s leading producers of everything from wood to grapes, but it offered the opportunity for spreading the Christian religion. “[W]hosoever hath a hand in this business, shall receive an unspeakable blessing...You will make...a savage country to become a sanctified country; you will obtain the saving of their souls, you will enlarge the bounds of this kingdom, nay the bounds of Heaven.”

Meanwhile in Virginia, the bounds of the kingdom were indeed increasing but simply because the settlers were venturing far from the fort in search of sustenance. Supply ships had arrived on several occasions since the colony’s establishment, but a permanent solution to the chronic food shortages still eluded the group. In the

39 Ibid., 300, 295-296.
40 Daniel Price, “Saules Prohibition staide: or the Apprehension, and Examination of Saule...” (London, 1609), in Brown, ed., Genesis of the United States, II, 313-315; Wright, Religion and Empire, 94.
summer of 1609, the company faced another setback as the newly appointed governor, Thomas Gates, was shipwrecked in Bermuda on his way to take command in Virginia. Although Gates would turn up six months later, everyone believed him to be lost in 1609, thus creating another leadership void in the colony.\textsuperscript{41}

After these new difficulties, the leaders of the Virginia Company published a tract in an effort to account for the failed productivity of the colony and to nullify renewed criticism of their enterprise. Before narrating the settlement’s miserable history, they reviewed its primary goals as stated in the early petitions and letters patents. Chief among its aims was “to preach and baptize into Christian Religion, and by propagation of the Gospell, to recover out of the armes of the Divell, a number of poore and miserable soules.” As part of this missionary activity, the leaders also hoped to gather the elect from “all corners of the earth” and to usher in the “Kingdome of Glory.”\textsuperscript{42}

Beyond the religious objectives, Virginia Company administrators also sought to ensure that the colony tended to the public good in addition to bringing “private commodity to the particular undertakers.” Serving the public good entailed providing settlement options for England’s surplus population and producing necessities that would relieve the country of its dependence on imports. Since the plantation endeavored to improve the lives of all English citizens, company officials thought it reasonable to expect contributions from average residents. Particularly now that the colony faced dire circumstances, they reminded their audience that “what was at first

but of conveniency, and for Honor is now become a case of necessity and piety...He that forsakes whome he may safely relieue, is as guilty of his death, as he that can swim and forsakes himself by refusing, is of his owne."43

Shortly after publishing this pamphlet, the council for Virginia appointed Thomas West, Lord De la Warr, as governor and captain general of the new colony. Before departing for the New World, the council, new governor, and additional voyagers gathered to hear a commissioning sermon by William Crashaw. Perhaps because he felt as though he were preaching to the choir, Crashaw assumed that he need not be responsible for overt recruitment, except to say that “the assistance of this businesse is a duty that lies on all men,” whether that assistance be in “countenance, person, purse, [or] prayer.”44

Rather than engage in recruiting, Crashaw opted to dispel discouragements to colonization, much as his fellow ministers had been doing throughout the previous year. To the doubts about the lawfulness of England’s claim to Virginia territory, he responded that the Indians had superfluous land and commodities, certainly enough to share with their new neighbors. In return the Englishmen “give to the Savages what they most need: Civilitie for their bodies and Christianitie for their soules.”45

Although everyone seemed to be discussing the colonists’ relations with the Indians, Crashaw identified the root of disinterest in the Virginia enterprise as the “ill reports of the countrey, by them that come from thence” and the apparent lack of

43 Ibid., 340, 351.
immediate profit. He attributed the negative rumors to “the vulgar and viler sort,” who traveled to Virginia seeking only “profit and pleasure.” When these troublemakers discovered they would be required to conform to strict discipline and “must labour or else not eate,” they sought to malign the project. Regarding profits, he accounted for the paucity of production by citing the colony’s leadership problems and the infrequency of supply ships. But, he reminded the naysayers, “profit is the least and last end aimed at in this voyage… the high and principall end being plantation, of an English Church and Common-wealth, and consequently the Conversion of heathen.”

Others complained that the journey to Virginia was too far, the “povertie of our proceedings” too great, and England’s international enemies too powerful. Undaunted, Crashaw argued that Virginia was relatively near England and furthermore had a very temperate climate. Even though the settlement appeared small, he assured the assembly that “God brings to passe great matters on small beginnings.” “Looke at the beginning of Rome,” he urged, “how poore, how meane, how despised it was; and yet on that base beginning grew to be the Mistresse of the World.” As for external threats, he rejected the notion that Spain, France, or even the Indians posed a problem. Instead, he announced that “this enterprize hath only three enemies: the Divell, the Papists, and the Players.” The devil opposed the project because the English sought to convert the “Heathens,” he explained, and “the Pope hates us because we have vowed to tolerate no Papists.” While he apologized to his

45 Ibid., 363; Parker, Books to Build an Empire, 203.
audience for even mentioning “so base a subject” as the players, he instructed his hearers to simply ignore the abuse heaped upon Virginia by “Idle persons” like players. If these men ridiculed “Princes and Potentates, Magistrates and Ministers, [and even] God and Religion, and all holy things,” they certainly would not spare the struggling Jamestown colony.47

Crashaw hoped that by ignoring these unruly critics, the people would recognize the blessings that colonization brought to their nation. Personal and national honor accompanied the propagation of Protestant religion; New World commodities would reduce England’s dependence on foreign trade and enrich the kingdom; and societal disorders could be corrected by providing an outlet for excess population. When all these ends had been achieved, Crashaw promised that “we shall eternize our owne names to all ensuring posteritie as being the first beginners of one of the bravest and most excellent exploits that was attempted since the Primitive times of the Church.” “Let all nations see...,” he admonished, “that the English Christians will not undertake a publike action which they will not prosecute to perfection.”48

As he began to close his exhortation, Crashaw reminded the prospective colonists to “looke not at the gaine, the wealth, the honour, the advancement of thy house that may follow and fall upon thee: but looke at those high and better ends that concerne the Kingdome of God...therefore principally looke to religion.” He warned them not to allow Catholics, Separatists, Brownists, or Atheists to reside with them at Jamestown. In fact, he recommended that atheism be made a capital crime.

48 Ibid., 367-369.
Swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and failure to attend daily prayers also warranted punishment, he believed, all offenses that later faced severe punishment under the *Lawes divine, morall and martiali*, compiled for Virginia in 1611. Keeping this rigid religious code would garner praise from future generations, he promised, but even failure would not thwart God's divine plan for empire. Should the present generation sin, "God will stirre up our children after us."49

Crashaw's confidence that successive generations would carry on the work of colonization if the current settlement failed was very nearly put to the test. In May 1610, Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers reappeared after their unexpected hiatus in Bermuda. Despite the seemingly miraculous nature of this event (since Gates and Somers had been presumed dead), the colony languished in such disrepair that Gates and Somers quickly decided to abandon the project. For the past half year (known as the "Starving Time") the settlers had suffered severe privation, forcing them to consume "horses, dogs, cats, rats, snakes, roots, old shoe leather, and even corpses." Of the five hundred people inhabiting the colony in the fall of 1609, only sixty remained when Gates and Somers arrived in the spring of 1610. According to the Virginia Council's report to the company in England, Jamestown looked like the "ruins of some auntient [fortification] with "the Indian as fast killing without as the famine and pestilence within."50


Just as the feeble settlers were preparing to return home (a mere two weeks after Gates and Somers had landed in Virginia), Lord De La Warr’s ship arrived carrying supplies. Gates deferred his leadership commission, and De La Warr took the opportunity to scold the colonists for their “many vanities and idleness” and ordered them back to the fort.\(^5\)

De La Warr’s appearance sustained the settlement briefly, but reversing the effects of violence, disease, and food shortage proved to be difficult. By 1611 survival conditions had improved, but fulfillment of the colony’s stated religious goals seemed as remote as ever. In February the Council circulated a letter defending its failure to pursue missionary activity because of “want of means to employ good men and want of just payment of the means which were promised, so disabling us thereby to set forth our supplies in due season.” No longer could the settlers justify their religious ineptitude by citing the lack of a minister. The Reverend Richard Buck had arrived at Jamestown with Gates and Somers in 1610 and agreed to continue serving under De La Warr. Nearly a year later, the young and eager Alexander Whitaker joined Buck in the clerical field.\(^5\)

As a friend of Crashaw’s, Whitaker was predictably an idealist when he envisioned his role in Virginia. Several months of service seemed to shake some of his ebullience, however. In a letter to Crashaw, he reported that the Indians were uncooperative in his proselytizing efforts and repeatedly capable of eluding capture, leading him to believe that they were “familiar with the divill” and that “great witches

[were] amongst them." Given the Indians' apparent alliance with the devil, Whitaker marveled that the land abounded with so many valuable resources. To reconcile this paradox, he reminded himself that Egypt, Canaan, and Sodom were fruitful even when the inhabitants had turned against God. Moreover, he suggested that perhaps God filled this territory with "the riches and beuty of Nature" and "excellent merchandize" so that it would attract Englishmen who would, in turn, introduce "the treasure of the Gospell" to the Indians.  

By the following year, Whitaker's public introspection had subsided. He concluded that "God himselfe of purpose suffers the divell to rage thus for a while, that those that are his might bee tried." In a tract entitled Good Newes from Virginia, he repeated his understanding that God had permitted the colony to suffer for a time, but ultimately the advance of God's kingdom was inevitable. Consequently, he urged his fellow subjects of the English crown to pledge their support to such an honorable work. "Remember that the Plantation is Gods, and the reward your countries," he reminded them.  

Whitaker's pamphlet marked a transition phase in the religious rhetoric surrounding the Jamestown colony. His predecessors in England had used religious arguments and metaphors to justify expansion and build an empire. Virginia was the Promised Land, ripe with necessary commodities and full of Indians who needed to be converted. God had reserved this parcel of land for his chosen people and it would

be a sin to ignore such a clear colonization imperative. Indeed, the Christianizing of Virginia was simply the next stage in God's worldwide plan of redemption. Although all of these religious reasons for encouraging overseas settlement sought to bring glory to God, they also focused on constructing an empire that would serve England's national needs both at the present moment and in the future.

For Whitaker, however, the situation was beginning to change. While economic and political stability remained elusive, Jamestown demonstrated promise of survival. Some settlers had already begun to experiment with growing tobacco and within the next few years the market would explode. This increasing success altered the religious language of the colony's promoters. Potential emigrants to Virginia no longer needed to be cajoled into leaving England with sweeping promises of fulfilling the Lord's work or converting Indians. Instead, the carrot more often became owning land or turning a profit. Whitaker's religious exhortations were reduced largely to moralizing about the accumulation of too much wealth and encouragement to pray for him as he attended to the Indians' spiritual state.\(^5^5\)

Certainly, religion still influenced and helped to fuel English nationalism. In turn, national loyalty continued to sustain and promote imperialism. Nevertheless, as the economic benefit of overseas empire became apparent, the religious imperative receded into the background.


Conclusion

Throughout the early Jamestown years, religion provided the Virginia Company with a “sense of purpose, an enthusiasm for something other than immediate profits.” To spread this vision to the general populace, the investors relied heavily on the clergy’s persuasiveness. Perhaps because of their extreme opposition to the spread of Spanish Catholicism, these Protestant clergymen seemed to understand the importance of a counter-empire better than others and, consequently, labored tirelessly to convince Englishmen that expansion was their imperial destiny.¹

By 1614, however, the volume of sermons and printed religious propaganda flooding out of England began to ebb. John Parker has attributed this shift to the continued mismanagement of the colony. He suggests that the decline began after the 1609-1610 “Starving Time,” when conditions in Jamestown appeared to be regressing and its survival was in severe doubt.² To ensure survival, the Virginia Company turned to a military model for society, establishing the Lawes Divine, Morall and Martiall between May 1610 and June 1611. This body of laws took great pains to codify the colonists’ religious behavior, but it diminished rhetoric about Virginia’s place in redemptive history.³

Two other factors offer an explanation for the decline in religious output from England around 1614. First, in Alexander Whitaker, Jamestown had its own clergyman with religious and imperial visions. His sermons, which frequently were

¹ John Parker, Books to Build an Empire, 197; Wright, Religion and Empire, 84-86.
² Parker, Books to Build an Empire, 205; Parker, “Religion and the Virginia Company,” in Andrews, Canny, and Hair, eds., The Westward Enterprise, 270.
published in England, provided first-hand accounts of life in the colony along with the message that God had ordained the English to settle and prosper in the New World. Learned but inexperienced ministers in the mother country began to rely on Whitaker’s testimony for their own understanding of England’s future as an overseas power.4

The second reason for the reduced volume of sermons from England is the economic upturn promised by the growth of tobacco cultivation. While the Virginia colony certainly had a long way to go to achieve economic stability and to reverse the effects of famine and conflict with Powhatan’s subjects, the introduction of tobacco gave the settlers a sense that survival and perhaps even prosperity could be ensured. By 1614, the English and Powhatans had negotiated a tentative peace, reassuring the prospective planters that their crops would not be burned during skirmishes with their neighbors. In the investors’ and settlers’ minds, Jamestown finally would be able to act as a colony should, providing the mother country with a lucrative trade and personally rewarding the participants. As the colony’s economic fortunes demonstrated signs of improvement, religious justifications for colonization became less crucial.5

To contend that publication of religious pamphlets was in decline is not to suggest that the Virginia Company or the new Virginians themselves were becoming less religious. The Company continued to sponsor occasional sermons, particularly

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5 For information on Virginia’s economic development, see Morgan, American Slavery, American Freedom, 79-130. For relations between the English and the Powhatans, particularly the peace of 1614, see Axtell, “The Rise and Fall of the Powhatan Empire,” in After Columbus, 208-210.
after the 1622 Powhatan uprising threatened the colony’s survival again. Likewise, the Reverend Samuel Purchas was just entering the colonization scene, publishing his *Purchas his Pilgrimage* in 1613. The subject of this treatise meandered over the globe, as Purchas sought to record the geography, religion, and culture of all the world’s regions known to Europe. He implicitly encouraged continued English Protestant expansion by emphasizing the dangerous spread of “the Paganisme of Anti-christian Poperie, and other Pseudo-Christian heresies.” Purchas’s pen also described Virginia and included a brief refutation of the “slanders and imputations as some haue conceiued or receiued against it.” Perhaps it was this section that prompted the Virginia Company to admit Purchas as an advisory member in 1622.6

Clearly, England’s religiosity was not in question, despite the decreased volume of religious language upholding colonization. Perhaps the clergymen of 1609-1614 could best be described as the preservationists of the English imperial impulse. Just as Edward Hayes, Richard Hakluyt, and Sir George Peckham released propaganda in the 1580s to preserve the colonization plans endangered by events such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s death, William Symonds, Daniel Price, and William Crashaw stepped into the pulpit to deliver messages designed to protect overseas settlement. In both eras their words were effective.

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