

A particular discourse concerning the great necessity and manifold commodities
that are like to grow to this Realm of England by the Western discoveries
lately attempted, Written in the year 1584



known as



DISCOURSE OF WESTERN PLANTING

[Excerpts]

1. *That* this western discovery will be greatly for the enlargement of the gospel of Christ whereunto the princes of the reformed religion are chiefly bound among whom her Majesty is principal.

. . . Then it is necessary for the salvation of those poor people who have sat so long in darkness and in the shadow of death that preachers should be sent unto them: But by whom should these preachers be sent? By them no doubt who have taken upon them the protection and defense of the Christian faith: now the Kings and Queens of England have the name of defenders of the faith: By which title I think they are not only charged to maintain and patronize the faith of Christ, but also to enlarge and advance the same. . . . Now the means to send such as shall labor effectually in this business is by planting one or two colonies of our nation upon that firm [land], where they may

remain in safety, and first learn the language of the people near adjoining (the gift of tongues being now taken away) and by little and little acquaint themselves with their manner and so with discretion and mildness distill into their purged minds the sweet and lively lines of the gospel: Otherwise for preachers to run unto them rashly without some such preparation for their safety, it were nothing else but to run to their apparent and certain destruction, as it happened to those Spanish friars that before any planting without strength and company landed in Florida, where they were miserably massacred by the Savages . . .

2. *That* all other English trades are grown beggarly or dangerous especially in all the king of Spain his dominions, where our men are driven to fling their Bibles and prayer books into the sea, and to forswear and renounce their religion and conscience, and consequently their obedience to her majesty.

We are now to consider the quality and condition of all the trades which at this day are frequented by our nation If any of our ships trading there [Barbary coast of north Africa] be driven upon the coast of Spain, and that proof may be made that we have been there, they make it a very sufficient cause of confiscation of ship and goods, and so they thrust our men into the Inquisition, charging them that they bring armor, munition, and forbidden merchandise to strengthen the Infidels against these parts of Christendom. . . . As for Flanders and the Low Countries, these eighteen years most

cruel civil wars have so spoiled the traffic there, that there is nothing but poverty and peril, and that which is worse, there is no hope of any speedy amendment. . . . And now after long hope of gain, the Hollanders as also the men of Depe are entered into their trade by the Emperor's permission, yea whereas at the first our men paid no custom, of late years contrary to their first privilege they have been urged to pay it [I]t behooves us to seek some new and better trade of less danger and more security, of less damage, and of more advantage. . . .

3. ***That* this western voyage will yield unto us all the commodities of Europe, Africa, and Asia as far as we were want to travel, and supply the wants of all our decayed trades.**

. . . The countries therefore of America whereunto we have just title as being first discovered by Sebastian Cabot at the cost of that prudent prince King Henry the Seventh from Florida northward to 67 degrees, (and not yet in any Christian prince's actual possession) being answerable in climate to Barbary, Egypt, Syria, Persia, Turkey, Greece, all the islands of the Levant sea [the Greek islands], Italy, Spain, Portugal, France,

Flanders, high Almayne [north Germany], Denmark, Estland [Baltic coast], Poland, and Muscovy, may presently or within a short space afford unto us for little or nothing and with much more safety either all or a great part of the commodities which the aforesaid countries do yield us at a very dear hand and with manifold dangers. . . .

4. ***That* this enterprise will be for the manifold employment of numbers of idle men, and for breeding of many sufficient and for utterance of the great quantity of the commodities of our Realm.**

. . . Truth it is that through our long peace and seldom sickness (two singular blessings of almighty God) we are grown more populous than ever heretofore: So that now there are of every art and science so many, that they can hardly live one by another: nay rather they are ready to eat up one another; yea many thousands of idle persons are within this Realm, which having no way to be set on work be either mutinous and seek alteration in the state, or at least very burdensome to the common wealth, and often fall to pilfering and thieving and other lewdness, whereby all the prisons of the land are daily pestered and stuffed full of them, where either they pitifully pine away, or else at length are miserably hanged [T]hese petty thieves might be condemned for certain years in the western part, especially in Newfound Land in sawing and felling of timber

for masts of ships and deal boards, in burning of the fires and pine trees to make pitch, tar, rosin, and soap ashes, in beating and working of hemp for cordage: and in the more southern parts in setting them to work in mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron In sum this enterprise will minister matter for all sorts and states of men to work upon: namely all several kinds of artificers, husbandmen, seamen, merchants, soldiers, captains, physicians, lawyers, divines, cosmographers, hydrographers, astronomers, historiographers, yea old folks, lame persons, women, and young children by many means which hereby shall still be ministered unto them, shall be kept from idleness, and be made able by their own honest and easy labor to find themselves without surcharging others. . . .

5. ***That* this voyage will be a great bridle to the Indies of the king of Spain and a mean that we may arrest at our pleasure for the space of ten weeks or three months every year one or two hundred sails of his subjects' ships at the fishing in Newfound Land.**

. . . the planting of two or three strong forts upon some good havens (whereof there is great store) between Florida and Cape Breton [Nova Scotia] would be a matter in short space of greater damage as well to his fleet as to his western

Indies, for we should not only often times endanger his fleet in the return thereof, but also in few years put him in hazard in losing some part of Nova Hispania [New Spain]

6. ***That* the mischief that the Indian treasure wrought in time of Charles the late Emperor father to the Spanish king,¹ is to be had in consideration of the Queen's most excellent majesty, least the continual comings of the like treasure from thence to his son, work the**

¹ King Charles I of Spain (reign: 1516-1556) became Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519, abdicating both reigns in 1556 to his son and brother, respectively. He died in 1558.

unrevocable annoy of this Realm, whereof already we have had very dangerous experience.

. . . With this great treasure did not the Emperor Charles get from the French king the kingdom of Naples, the Dukedom of Milan, and all other his dominions in Italy, Lombardy, Pyemont, and Savoy? with this treasure did he not take the Pope prisoner: and sacked the sea of Rome? With this

treasure did not he take the French king prisoner and maintain all the great wars with France since the year of our Lord 1540 to the year of our Lord 1560[?] . . . Charles the Emperor employed his treasure to the afflicting and oppressing of most of the greatest estates of Christendom. . . .

7. *What* special means may bring King Philip [II of Spain] from his high throne, and make him equal to the princes his neighbors, wherewithal is shown his weakness in the West Indies.

. . . the Spaniard pierced the Indies and planted here and there very thinly and slenderly without having the Indian multitude in subjection, or in their towns and forts any number to hold any of them against the meanest force of a prince: so as in truth the Spaniard is very weak there. . . . If you touch him in the Indies, you touch the apple of his

eye, for take away his treasure which is *nervus belli* [sinew (strength) of war], and which he has almost out of his West Indies, his old bands of soldiers will soon be dissolved, his purposes defeated, his power and strength diminished, his pride abated, and his tyranny utterly suppressed.

8. *That* the limits of the king of Spain's dominions in the West Indies be nothing so large as is generally imagined and surmised, neither those parts which he holds be of any such forces as is falsely given out by the popish [Roman Catholic] clergy and others his suitors, to terrify the princes of the religion and to abuse and blind them.

. . . he has no one town or fort in actual possession in all Nova Hispania to the north of the Tropic of Cancer, which stands in 23 degrees and a half, except the town of St. Helen and one or two small forts in Florida: for as it is in the map of Culiacan [west coast of Mexico] set out two years past with all diligence by Ortelius,

Saint Michael [San Miguel] is the furthest town northward on the backside of America, and Panuco, and Villa Sancti Jacobi [perhaps Santiago, Nueva León] are the most northerly colonies upon the Bay of Mexico



9. *The* Names of the rich Towns lying along the sea coast on the north side from the equinoctial [equator] of the main land of America under the king of Spain.

. . . In Florida the Spaniards have one town called Saint Helena where they have pearls, silver, and great store of victuals: The Floridians be a gentle sort of people, and use sometimes to head their arrows with silver. . . . All that part of America eastward from Cumana unto the River of St.

Augustine in Brazil contains in length along the sea side 2100 miles, in which compass and tract there is neither Spaniard, Portuguese, nor any Christian man but only the Caribes, Indians, and savages. In which places is great plenty of gold, pearl, and precious stones. . . .

10. *A Brief* declaration of the chief islands in the Bay of Mexico being under the king of Spain with their havens and forts and what commodities they yield.

. . . Thus you see that in all those infinite islands in the Gulf of Mexico whereof Cuba and Hispaniola are thought to be very near as big as England and Ireland, we read not of past two or three places well fortified, as Santa Domingo in Hispaniola and Havana in Cuba: I may therefore conclude this matter with comparing the Spaniards to a drum or an empty vessel, which when it is smitten upon yields a great and terrible sound and

that afar off, but come near and look into them, there is nothing in them, or rather like unto the ass who wrapped himself in a lion's skin and marched far off to strike terror into the hearts of the other beasts, but when the fox drew near he perceived his long ears and made him a jest unto all the beasts of the forest. In like manner we (upon peril of my life) shall make the Spaniard ridiculous to all Europe

11. *That* the Spaniards have exercised most outrageous and more than Turkish cruelties in all the West Indies, whereby they are everywhere there become most odious unto them who would join with us or any other most willingly to shake of their most intolerable yoke, and have begun to do it already in divers places where they were lords heretofore.

So many and so monstrous have been the Spanish cruelties, such strange slaughters and murders of those peaceable, lowly, mild, and gentle people together with the spoils of towns, provinces, and kingdoms which have been most ungodly perpetrated in the West Indies . . . I leave it to the deep consideration of the wise, what great matters may be brought about by our nation if her majesty (being a mighty prince at sea) would put in a foot in that enterprise, and assist the revolted Indians, Symerons, and Chichimici after one or two years planting there, and growing into acquaintance and familiarity with those oppressed nations. . . . [The Spanish] manifold practices to supplant us of England give us most occasion to bethink ourselves how we may abate and pull down their high minds . . .



Spanish attack an Indian village, de Bry engraving publ. 1655, based on Benzoni, *La Historia de Mondo Nuovo*, 1565

12. *That* the passage in this voyage is easy and short, that it cuts not near the trade of any other mighty princes, or near their countries, that it is to be performed at all times of the year, and needs but one kind of wind: that Ireland being full of good havens on the south and west side, is the nearest part of Europe to it, which by this trade shall be in more security, and the sooner drawn to more civility.²

In this voyage we may see by the globe that we are not to pass the burnt zone nor to pass through the frozen seas, but in a temperate climate . . . [I]t may be sailed in five or six weeks, whereby the

merchant need to expect two or three years for one return, as in the voyage of Sir Frances Drake, of Fenton and William Hawkins, but may receive two returns every year in the self same ships . . .

² Quinn notes that this chapter “demonstrates current English ignorance, at least among the educated class, if not necessarily among seamen, of the realities of Atlantic seafaring. Hakluyt himself never ventured beyond the Channel crossing.” [Quinn & Quinn, p. 165]

13. *That* hereby the revenues and customs of her Majesty both outwards and inwards shall mightily be enlarged by the toll excises, and other duties which without oppression may be raised.

. . . by planting and fortifying near Cape Breton, what by the strength of our ships being hard at hand & bearing the sway already among all nations that fish at Newfound Land, and what by the forts that there may be erected and held by our people, we shall be able to enforce them having no place else to repair to so convenient, to pay us such a continual custom as shall please us to lay

upon them: which imposition of two or three hundred ships laden yearly with sundry sorts of fish, traine oil, and many kinds of furs and hides, cannot choose but amount to a great matter being all to be levied upon strangers. And this not only we may exact of the Spaniards and Portuguese but also of the French men our old and ancient enemies. . . .

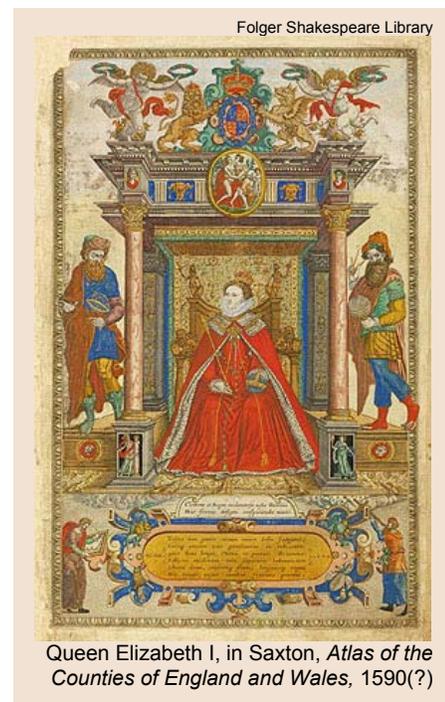
14. *That* this action will be for the great increase maintenance and safety of our navy, and especially of great shipping which is the strength of our Realm, and for the support of all those occupations that depend upon the same.

. . . there is a great hope the Country being as big as all Europe and nothing in fruitfulness inferior to it, as I have proved before at large in the third chapter, that we shall have two fleets as big as those of the king of Spain to his West Indies employed twice in the year at the least, especially after our fortifying in the country, the certain place of our factory being there established, whereby it must needs come to pass that our navy shall be mightily increase and maintained: which will not only be a chief strength and surety in time

of wars, as well to offend as defend, but will also by the maintainance of many masters, mariners, and seamen, whereby they their wives and children shall have their livings, and many cities, towns, villages, havens, and creeks near adjoining unto the seacoast, and the Queen's subjects, as brewers, bouchers, smiths, ropers, shipwrights, tailors, shoemakers, and other victuallers and handicrafts men inhabiting and dwelling near thereabouts shall also have by the same great part of their living. . . .

15. *That* speedy planting in divers fit places is most necessary upon these last lucky western discoveries for fear of the danger of being prevented by other nations which have the like intention, with the order thereof and other reasons therewith all alleged.

Having by God's good guiding and merciful direction achieved happily this recent western discovery, after the seeking the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, the second chief and principal end of the same is traffic, which consists in the vent [sale] of the mass of our clothes and other commodities of England, and in receiving back of the needful commodities that we now receive from all other places of the world. But forasmuch as this is a matter of great importance and a thing of so great gain as foreign princes will stomach at, this one thing is to be done without which it were in vain to go about this, and that is the matter of planting [colonies] and fortification . . . If we do procrastinate the planting, (and where our men have now presently discovered and found it to be the best part of America that is left and in truth more agreeable to our natures, and more near unto us than Nova Hispania), the French, the Normans, the Britons, or the Dutch, or some other nation will not only prevent us of the mighty Bay of St. Lawrence where they have gotten the start



of us already, though we had the same revealed to us by books published and printed in English

before them, but also will deprive us of that good land which now we have discovered. . . .

16. *Means* to keep this enterprise from overthrow and the enterprisers from shame and dishonor.

. . . what noble man, what gentleman, what merchant, what citizen or countryman will not offer of himself to contribute and join in the action, foreseeing that the same tends to the ample vent [sale] of our clothes, to the purchasing of rich commodities, to the planting of younger brethren,

to the employment of our idle people, and to so many noble ends, and great joining in contribution upon so happy beginnings gives ability to fortify, to defend all foreign force in divers commodious places even at the first. . . .

17. *That* by these colonies the Northwest passage to Cathay and China may easily quickly and perfectly be searched out as well by river and overland as by sea, for proof whereof here are quoted and alleged divers rare Testimonies out of the three volumes of voyages gathered by Ramusius and other grave authors.

. . . Fifthly, in the end of that second relation . . . [of Cartier] they of Canada say that it is the space of a moon (that is to say a month) to sail to a land where cinnamon and cloves are gathered, . . .

Seventhly the people of Florida at the River of May in 30 degrees signified to John Ribault and his company that they might sail in boats from thence through the country by river to Civola in twenty days: . . .

Eighthly . . . [the] captain of the Isle of Tercera in the year 1574 sent a ship to discover the northwest passage which arriving on the coast of America in 57 degrees of latitude found a great entrance very deep and broad without impediment of ice which

they passed above twenty leagues and found it always to tend towards the south, the land lay low and plain on either side, they would have gone further but their victualls drawing short, and being but one ship, they returned back

Twelfthly, the judgment of Gerardus Mercator that excellent geographer . . . these were his words . . . For there is no doubt but there is a straight and short way open into the west even to Cathay. Into which kingdom if they govern their voyage well, they shall gather the most noble merchandise of all the world and shall make the name of Christ to be known to many idolators and heathen people. . . .

18. *That* the Queen of England's title to all the West Indies or at the least to as much as is from Florida to the Arctic Circle is more lawful and right than the Spaniards' or any other Christian princes'.

. . . [W]e of England have to show very ancient and authentic chronicles written in the Welsh or British tongue, wherein we find that one Madock ap Owen Guyneth a prince of North Wales being weary of the civil wars and domestic dissensions in his country, made two voyages out of Wales & discovered and planted large countries which he found in the main Ocean southwestward of Ireland, in the year of our lord 1170. . . . And this is confirmed by the language of some of those

people that dwell upon the continent between the Bay of Mexico and the grand Bay of Newfoundland, whose language is said to agree with the Welsh in divers words and names of places by experience of some of our nation that have been in those parts. By this testimony it appears that the West Indies were discovered and inhabited 322 years before Columbus made his first voyage which was in the year 1492. . . .

19. *An answer* to the Bull of the Donation of all the West Indies granted to the kings of Spain by Pope Alexander the VI who was himself a Spaniard born.

. . . Pope Alexander VI by his unequal division has so puffed up and inflamed with pride his most ambitious and insatiable countrymen that they are grown to this high conceit of themselves that they

shall shortly attain to be Lords and only seigneurs of all the earth . . . yet God that sits in heaven laughs [at] them and their partitions to scorn, and He will abase and bring down their proud looks,

and humble their faces to the dust, yea He will make them at His good time and pleasure to

confess that the earth was not made for them only . . .

20. *A Brief* collection of certain reasons to induce her Majesty and the state to take in hand the western voyage and the planting there

1. The soil yields and may be made to yield all the several commodities of Europe, and of all kingdoms, dominions, and territories that England trades with, that by trade of merchandise comes into this Realm.³
2. The passage there and home is neither too long nor too short, but easy and to be made twice in the year.
3. The passage cuts not near the trade of any prince, nor near any of their countries or territories and is safe passage, and not easy to be annoyed by prince or potentate whatsoever.
4. The passage is to be performed at all times of the year . . .
6. This enterprise may stay the Spanish king from flowing over all the face of that waste firm of America, if we seat and plant there in time . . .
8. This new navy of mighty new strong ships so in trade to that Norumbega [Virginia] and to the coasts there, shall never be subject to arrest of any prince or potentate, as the navy of this Realm from time to time has been in the ports of the empire . . .
10. No foreign commodity that comes into England comes without payment of custom once twice or thrice before it come into the Realm, . . . and by this course to Norumbega foreign princes' customs are avoided . . .
12. By the great plenty of those regions the merchants and their factors shall lie there cheap, and shall return at pleasure without stay or restraint of foreign prince, . . . and so he shall be rich and not subject to many hazards, but shall be able to afford the commodities for cheap prices to all subjects of the Realm. . . .
16. We shall by planting there enlarge the glory of the Gospel and from England plant sincere religion, and provide a safe and a sure place to receive people from all parts of the world that are forced to flee for the truth of God's word.
17. If frontier wars there chance to arise, and if thereupon we shall fortify, it will occasion the training up of our youth in the discipline of war . . .
18. The Spaniards govern in the Indies with all pride and tyranny, and like as when people of contrary nature at the sea enter into galleys, where men are tied as slaves, all yell and cry with once voice *liberta, liberta*, as desirous of liberty or freedom, so no doubt whensoever the Queen of England, a prince of such clemency, shall sit upon that firm of America, and shall be reported throughout all that tract to use the natural people there with all humanity, courtesy, and freedom, they will yield themselves to her government and revolt clean from the Spaniard . . .
22. The fry [children] of the wandering beggars of England that grow up idly and hurtful and burdenous to this Realm, may there be unladen, better bred up . . .⁴
23. If England cry out and affirm that there is so many in all trades that one cannot live for another as in all places they do, this Norumbega (if it be thought so good) offers the remedy.

³ Knowledge of North American resources was still too elementary for such a conclusion to be anything but propagandist. [Quinn & Quinn, p. 187]

⁴ The proposed sending of the children of homeless persons to the colonies to be used as cheap labor was certainly attractive to the propertied classes: the Virginia Company was to send orphans *en masse* to Jamestown at a later date. [Quinn & Quinn, p. 189]