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Colonialism and the Historical Development of Capitalism

The first stage of the journey toward capitalism was marked by the conquest and pillage of America (sixteenth century), while the second stage was marked by the rise and affirmation of the bourgeoisies (seventeenth and eighteenth century). These elements of capitalism fused into a powerful mix, propelling European states toward the territorial conquest of the world. Based on this unique fusion of state and capital, capitalism became identified with the state, thus triumphing.[1]

What Western history calls "the great discoveries" initiated the first stage described above. In 1486, Bartholomew Diaz "discovered" and traveled around the Cape of Good Hope, and in 1492, Christopher Columbus "discovered" America. In 1498, Vasco da Gama arrived in India after a nine-month voyage around Africa. Thus began a great hunt after wealth in the form of trade and pillage, with which the church's missionary efforts became entangled. Following the return of Columbus with reports of the New World, the Council of Castile (established under Queen Isabella in 1480) met. Adam Smith characterized the action of Castile as follows: "The pious purpose of converting inhabitants to Christianity sanctified the injustice of the project. But the hope of finding treasures of gold there, was the sole motive which promoted them to undertake it . . . It was the sacred thirst of gold . . ."[2]

1. Arrighi, *Twentieth Century*, 11.
2. Cited in Beaud, *History of Capitalism*, 18.

Hernán Cortés, conqueror of Mexico, confessed: "We Spanish suffer from a sickness of the heart for which gold is the only cure."[3] In 1519, the pillage of the treasure of the Aztecs in Mexico began; and subsequently, in 1534, the pillage of the Incas in Peru. According to Columbus, "one who has gold does as he wills in the world, and it even sends souls to Paradise."[4] A staunch Catholic, Columbus's stated mission was conversion of the pagans to Catholicism. However, the pagans were killed or enslaved. Hans Konig's *Columbus: His Enterprise*, writes:

> We are now in February 1495 . . . Of the five hundred slaves, three hundred arrived alive in Spain, where they were put up for sale in Seville by Don Juan de Fonseca, the archdeacon of the town. "As naked as the day they were born," the report of this excellent churchman says, "but with no more embarrassment than animals . . ." The slave trade immediately turned out to be "unprofitable, for the slaves mostly died." Columbus decided to concentrate on gold, although he writes, "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."[5]

Mission and Economic System

Genoese capitalism prepared the way for future participation in the trade between Seville and Castile's colonial empire. The establishment of the Casa di San Giorgio in 1407 played an important role in the organization of the Genoese capitalist class in light of the political impasse between the power of money and the power of the sword. The Genoese predominance in trade underlined the course of sixteenth-century Spanish development. The Portuguese prince, Henry the Navigator, the most famous of the precursors and inspirers of the great discoveries, was obsessed with the idea of the Crusade. Queen Isabella of Castile was the most successful of the entrepreneurs of the discoveries and was the leader of a new crusade for expanding the territorial domain of Christian and Castilian power. The expulsion of the Jews took place during her reign. In the violent baptism of the Moors of Granada, the powers entrusted to the new Inquisition represented a reaction against the Muslim pressure. They intensified religious fervor and intolerance in Spain. The trans-oceanic expansion of Iberian

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 19.
5. Konig, *Columbus*, 82.

commerce in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was promoted by entrepreneurial agency that was held by an organic relationship of political exchange. It entailed an Iberian aristocratic component. In the fifteenth century, material expansion of the first Genoese systematic cycle of accumulation came along with Iberian rulers.[6]

Genoese capitalists sponsored an expedition across the Sahara in 1447 and two voyages along the West African coast in the 1450s in search of African gold. By 1519 the power of Genoese capital played a critical role in the election of Charles V, the king of Spain (1525), as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The German electoral princes would never have chosen Charles V if the Augsburg house of Fugger had not financially helped him. Genoese merchant bankers were in tandem with the Fuggers and the Weslers in Germany.[7] The Weslers took possession of Chile while the Fuggers did the same thing in Venezuela.

Las Casas reported about the German merchants: "They raged much more cruelly [at the Indians] under them than all the barbarians I have already mentioned [i.e., the Spaniards]; more bestially and furiously than the bloodiest tigers and the angriest wolves and lions. In their avarice and greed they were much more frantic and deluded than all those who came before, they devised even more abominable ways of extracting gold and silver, they set aside all fear of God and the king and all shame before men . . ."[8]

The Genoese merchants were capable of converting the intermittent flow of silver from America to Seville into a steady stream, making themselves indispensable to the king of Spain.[9] Beside Spain and Portugal, it is pivotal to bear in mind that the capital-owning families of Upper Italy and Upper Germany played a major role in the universal expansion of capital accumulation in the first phase of the capitalist world system.

From the seventeenth century on, slaves became the main trading commodity between Europe and Africa. Europe's conquest and colonization of North and South America and the Caribbean islands from the fifteenth century onward created an insatiable demand for African laborers, who were deemed more fit than indigenous people to work in the tropical conditions of the New World. The other European colonies soon adopted the system of sugar plantations successfully used by the Portuguese in

6. Arrighi, *Twentieth Century*, 119, 121.
7. Ibid., 122–23.
8. Duchrow, *Europe*, 5.
9. Arrighi, *Twentieth Century*, 126.

Brazil, which depended on slave labor. Sugar cultivation began on the Mediterranean islands, then later moved to the Atlantic islands. Then it crossed the Atlantic over to Brazil and the West Indies. Slavery followed the route of the sugar.[10]

In 1496, when not one ounce of the gold was left, the Spaniards cut out estates for themselves in which the Amerindians were still living. The Indians became their property. The Spaniards used a system known as *encomienda* instead of slave plantations. The *encomienda* differed from slave plantation in that the *encomienda* in Hispanic America was a direct creation of the Spanish Crown and its ideological justification was Christianization. The Spanish king assigned land and Indians (*repartimientos*) to the conquerors and entrusted them with evangelization (*encomienda*).

Although the stated goal was evangelization, the chief functions of *encomienda* were to supply a labor force for the mines and cattle ranches, to raise silk, and to supply agricultural products for the *encomenderos* and the workers in towns and mines. The *encomiendas* in Hispanic America were soon transformed into capitalist enterprises by legal reforms, degenerating in practice to slavery.[11] Pope Alexander VI acted as Supreme Liege Lord for the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors. Most of the Indians never converted to what Columbus called "our Holy Faith," but instead experienced cultural and racial genocide.

Economic development in Europe and underdevelopment in the colonized countries were two sides of the same coin, resulting from holy mission and colonialism. The Indian on the *encomienda* was more poorly treated than the slave, largely because of the insecure social situation. The Indians who worked on gold washing received a sixth of its value. This payment, called the *sesmo*, was made collectively to the Indians, not paid to individual Indians.[12] In the sixteenth century (1450–1640) a European capitalist world economy came to exist in an enlarged but weakened form, drawing its strength from colonial exploitation.

According to the model of world-system, slavery and feudalism were in the periphery, wage labor and self-employment in the core, and sharecropping in the semiperiphery. These three zones had different modes of labor control, so the flow of the surplus enabled the capitalist system to come into being.[13] The periphery (eastern Europe and

10. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 1:88.
11. Sanderlin, *Witness*, 3–4.
12. Wallerstein, *Modern World-System*, 1:94.
13. Ibid., 86–87.

Hispanic America) did forced labor (slavery and coerced cash-crop labor). The semiperiphery developed an in-between form (sharecropping) as a widespread alternative.[14]

Spain brought together the sword and the cross, by combining them with the economic search for gold and silver. Moving from the Caribbean areas to New Spain (Mexico) and later the Peruvian region, the Spanish encountered the societies of the Aztecs and the Incas. In spite of the fact that the Incas of the Peruvian area were at the time united as a theocratic empire with strong economic, political, and religious foundations, a devastating consequence of this encounter with the Spaniards meant social disintegration and deculturation. Consequently, many indigenous people (perhaps six million) died of malnutrition, dietary changes, new illness, armed conflict, and forced labor.[15] Capitalism flourished by establishing the division of labor and exploiting the innocent victims of the forced slavery within the framework of a world-economy. The church was an ideological weapon of death and violence in sanctioning colonialism.

Las Casas's Critique of the Colonial System

In the period of the colonial tragedy, we know the story of the Spanish Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566), who wrote his account of this painful chapter in the history of mission and colonialism. His book *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*[16] (written in 1542) is one of the major witnesses (published in 1552). Las Casas was born in 1484 in Seville and came to the newly discovered Indies. As a teenager he was involved in helping the family business there for which his father acquired some land from Columbus. He was given an *encomienda* and participated in expeditions to seize Indians as slaves.[17]

However, the *encomienda* system would later become a central target in Las Casas's rigorous critique and confrontation with the Spanish rule. Other Dominicans such as Pedro de Córdoba and Antonio de Montesinos had already begun to denounce this system of injustices. In response to the cruelty and abuse during the conquest in Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the Dominican vicar Pedro de Córdoba

14. Ibid., 103.
15. Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants*, 175.
16. Las Casas, *Devastation*.
17. Traboulay, *Columbus and Las Casas*, 48.

chose Antonio de Montesinos to deliver a powerful sermon condemning the perpetrators and the *encomienda* system. In the sermon he stated:

> Because of the cruelty and tyranny you use with these innocent people. . . . On what authority have you waged such detestable wars on these people, in their mild, peaceful lands . . . Know for a certainty that . . . you can no more be saved than Moors or Turks who have not . . . the faith of Jesus Christ.[18]

Las Casas was ordained as a priest in Rome in 1507, and returned to the New World. In 1514 he underwent a profound conversion from his previous colonial lifestyle and decided to give up his own *encomienda*. From then on he began to denounce the mistreatment of the indigenous, beginning with his first sermon (August 15 of the same year). The biblical text for his sermon on Pentecost Sunday, Ecclesiasticus 34:18, triggered a profound spiritual crisis. "Unclean is the offering sacrificed by an oppressor. . . . The Lord is pleased only by those who keep to the way of truth and justice. The Most High does not accept the gifts of unjust people . . . The one whose sacrifice comes from the goods of the poor is like one who kills his neighbor."[19]

Colonial Discourse and the Humanity of the Other

In the first half-century after the European arrival in the Americas at Hispaniola, Las Casas witnessed the barbarity of the conquistadors and colonists through their enslavement and genocide. His book depicts the unfair treatment that the indigenous people endured during the Spanish conquest of the Greater Antilles, particularly the island of La Hispaniola.

Spaniards behaved like ravening wild beasts, "killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples . . . never seen or heard before."[20] One of the massacres took place in a large city called Cholula, which had more than thirty thousand people. The Spaniards decided to perform a massacre—a chastisement in their language—only to make themselves feared.[21]

European modernity emerged with Columbus's voyage to the Amerindian territories. It developed through the period of Reformation, the

18. Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants,* 176.
19. Las Casas, *Only Way,* 20.
20. Las Casas, *Devastation*, 29.
21. Las Casas, *Indian Freedom*, 226–27.

Renaissance, the scientific revolution, and the Enlightenment. In the initial stage of modernity, the ideology of colonialism and conquest occupied a significant place for understanding the primitive accumulation of capital in relation to the industrial revolution in western Europe. The dialectic of colonialism was built upon the subjugation, oppression, and exclusion of the subaltern people in the periphery. This colonial dialectic was undertaken by political-military dominion and economic exploitation and by controlling the history of the colonized. In the dominating dialectics of colonialism the colonizer speaks, guides, and interprets for the colonized. The Spanish constructed the class of people known as Amerindians by dominating their culture and life, and by identifying them as subhuman. The alterity was created and established.

Christian religion served the empire by extending religious frontiers, upholding the political, economic interest of the empire. In this context it is essential to review Las Casas's confrontation with Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1489–1573), one of Spain's most important humanists.

Sepúlveda, a proponent of modernity, attempted to undertake the religious, intellectual justification for conquest by proposing the Christian doctrine of just war and the Aristotelian logic of slavery. Sepúlveda justified wars against Indians. His justification was that Indians had indulged idolatry and committed sins against nature. The Indians' supposed "natural rudeness" and "inferiority" supported the Aristotelian notion according to which some people were natural slaves by birth. He applied Aristotle's notion of natural servitude to a specific and entire race of people. The enslavement was created by European modernity.

Against the colonial claims, Las Casas's vision was rooted in the biblical God of mercy and justice. For Las Casas all humans were created equal. Against the logic of colonialism, Las Casas made the case that not all indigenous people are irrational, or natural slaves. In his *Apologética historia sumaria*, written after the debate with Sepúlveda, Las Casas insisted that the indigenous people had excellent, capable minds and were endowed by nature with the three kinds of prudence—monastic, economic, and political—precisely as named by Aristotle. As for political prudence, the Indians showed themselves as very prudent peoples governing their republic justly and prosperously. In terms of the rules of natural reason, they had even surpassed the most prudent of all, the Greeks and Romans.[22]

22. Ibid.

Evangelization and the Gospel of Peace

Las Casas's evangelization comes along with respect for the humanity of the Indians. According to Las Casas, God's free grace should be applied to every race and every tribe. God gave the Indians the mind and place to live in.[23] Las Casas wrote that they were very clean and docile, having intelligent minds and open to receiving Christian faith. In hearing the gospel, they were eager to participate in the sacraments of the church.[24] "Their society is the equal of that of many nations in the world renowned for being politically astute."[25] However, he also noted that there were some corrupt customs, which should be healed by the gospel.[26]

For Las Casas, true evangelization is to be undertaken in a way that divine providence leads the human to fulfill its natural purpose in a gentle, coaxing, and gracious way. This leads to a living faith under the universal command of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19–20). Paul, in his letter to the Romans (10:17), points to the Christian way of teaching people in a gentile, coaxing, and gracious way.[27]

The Spirit of Christ is a gentle Spirit (Luke 9:55–56; Isa 61:1). "He will not break the half-broken reed, nor snuff out the dimly burning wick" (Isa 42:3). Christ wanted to teach humility and compassion, which filled Christ and overflowed from him. The way of humility, peace, and rejection of worldliness draws people to moral life better than force of arms.[28]

Las Casas's concept of divine providence (or predestination, Rev 7) is connected with Paul's notion of the mystical body of Jesus Christ and the church. Divine providence must have been at work in the nations of the Indians, naturally endowing them with a capacity for doctrine and grace and graciously furnishing them with the time of their calling and conversion. The Indians underwent cruelties and injustices under the greedy Christians. God has remembered the Indians. The final judgment in Matt 25:31–46 is fundamental in the thought of Las Casas who acknowledges the dignity of the heathen.[29]

23. Las Casas, *Only Way*, 63.
24. Las Casas, *Devastation*, 29.
25. Las Casas, *Only Way*, 65.
26. Ibid., 66.
27. Ibid., 68.
28. Ibid., 79, 96.
29. Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, 259, 271.

Las Casas promotes the principle of evangelization for invitation to faith "not by war but by peace, by good will, kindness, generosity, credibility, by charity from the heart."[30] The Indians are scourged Christs who were killed untimely and innocently.[31] A few years before his death (July 18, 1566), Las Casas wrote his law will and treatment : "I testify that it was God in his goodness and mercy who chose me as his minister . . . on behalf of all those people out in what God calls the Indies. . . . For almost fifty years I have done this work, back and forth between the Indies and Castile . . . All that the Spaniards perpetrated against those [Indian] peoples . . . was in violation of the holy and spotless law of Jesus Christ . . . such devastation, such genocide of populations, have been sins, monumental injustice!"[32]

Postcolonial Interpretation and Liberative Discourse

There is a debate about the legacy of Las Casas. Some scholars argue that Las Casas's solidarity with Amerindians must be seen only in light of the discussion of human rights rather than in light of anticolonialism. According to their argument, Las Casas supported the missionary aspects of the colonial enterprise and acknowledged that God ordained the Spanish crown to the tutelage, bringing temporal and spiritual benefit to the natives in the New World. Las Casas never talked about the end of the colonial enterprise in the Americas.

Against this argument, other scholars vie with this colonial interpretation of Las Casas, emphasizing Las Casas's fight against the colonial policy and its dehumanizing economic system.

The different perspectives on the legacy of Las Casas in a postcolonial and liberative context bring us to examine a postcolonial hermeneutic. The postcolonial ethos undergirds a Third World perspective, considering "liberation as an emancipatory metastory" and also as a potent symbol for those whose rights are circumvented and put in abeyance.[33] The postcolonial ethos lays bare representation, identity, and a reading posture that emerges among the former victims of colonialism. It is connected to "the minority voices in the first world: socialists, radicals, feminists,

30. Ibid., 163.
31. Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, 95.
32. Las Casas, *Indian Freedom*, 9.
33. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics*, 15.

minorities."[34] A hybridized identity, which is a consequence of colonialism, is taken as "a wider and more complex web of cultural negotiation and interaction, forged by imaginatively redeploying the local and the imported elements."[35]

Following in the footsteps of Foucault, Edward Said made a groundbreaking contribution to promoting a postcolonial critique in terms of challenging colonialism and imperialism. His study of *Orientalism*[36] attempts to demystify Europe's cultural representation of the Orient that was undertaken during the colonial period. The colonialist knowledge and representations of the Orient created, represented, and colonized the Orient. The homogenization and essentialization of the Orient was an object of European ideology, discourse, and invention.[37] One can no longer sidestep empires and the imperial context in the studies of culture and imperialism. Imperialism or colonialism is undergirded by ideological formations as well as by forms of knowledge that are associated with Eurocentric domination.[38]

The postcolonial imagination forms cultural identities as contrapuntal ensembles, rather than essentializations, because "no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions."[39] Contrapuntal reading is a strategy of reading a text with an understanding of what is involved, for instance, when a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to maintaining a particular style of life in England. The contrapuntal reading of the text takes into account the process of imperialism as well as that of resistance on the part of those who were colonized.[40]

This reading perspective may become an important factor in the debate involved in the legacy of Las Casas, because it will illuminate his standpoint as a Spanish Catholic. Hardt and Negri argue that Las Casas's concept of equality was built on the Christian idea of conversion, caught in a Eurocentric view of the Americas. Their poignant argument that "Las Casas is really not so far from the Inquisition"[41] sounds unfortunate and controversial.

34. Ibid., 16.
35. Ibid., 16–17.
36. Said, *Orientalism*.
37. Ibid., 4–5, 104.
38. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.
39. Ibid., 52.
40. Ibid., 66, 194, 259.
41. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 116.

Unlike the postcolonial reading of Las Casas, Gutiérrez portrays Las Casas as the inspiration of liberation theology.[42] In confrontation with the Spaniards' exploitation of the Amerindians, Las Casas saw in the Indians the "other" who was different from Western culture. His respect for people of other cultures and religions separated evangelization from a way of subjugating or converting the Indian nations to European culture. The only way to authentic evangelization lies in persuasion and dialogue.[43] Throughout his life, the witness of Las Casas serves as a preeminent symbol of the spirit of liberation theology.

According to Gutiérrez, a logic of "natural servitude" held that those who were born as slaves by nature subject to those who were destined to dominate. The logic of so called "just war" was waged in the name of rectitude, justice, and utility by declaring that the colonizers provided a greater benefit to the supposed barbarians. The colonial claims of superiority, divine providence, and missionary evangelism became the religious, ideological midwife in collaboration with the rule of the Spanish empire. Military conquest formed the most efficacious method of converting Indians to Christianity. In contrast to colonial discourse, Las Casas advocated for a God who invariably sides with the otherness of the victim. In the struggle of Las Casas against colonialism, the right to life and freedom, the right to be different, and the perspective of the poor were inextricably connected in his experience of God in Jesus Christ who stands in solidarity with the Indian.

Appreciation and Critique

Postcolonial intellectuals are vigilant in unraveling the deep-seated layers of colonialist patterns of knowledge, power, dominion, and resistance through archaeological-genealogical excavation of the colonizing mind. Eurocentrism resides at the heart of European cultural and political economy which have been expanded throughout the many centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism.

The postcolonial act of deciphering residual colonialism implies a discursive and physical, even violent resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies and attitudes. It deconstructs their continual reembodiment in

42. Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*.

43. Ibid., 456.

the fields of politics, economics, history, and theological and biblical studies. It promotes an alternative way of perceiving and restructuring society.[44]

However, postcolonial reading tends to idealize hybridized identity, fixing their standpoint in a dualistic pattern of the colonizer and the colonized. The mechanism of the colonizer produces a mechanism of the colonized. The postcolonial reading tends to sidestep a critical analysis of the internal, domestic complexities of the periphery in the field of politics, economics, and culture. The role of indigenous leaders, upholding their interest in collaboration with the colonizer, can be seen in political, economic, and cultural interplay as well as discursive power and ideological-religious apparatus.

In contrast to Hardt and Negri, Las Casas himself insisted that the natives were not "undeveloped potential Europeans," and Christian conversion was not the only path to their freedom. The God on the side of the victim and the equality of humanity are at the heart of Las Casas. Las Casas's discourse against the *conquistadors* and the *encomenderos* must be apprehended as the potential for anticolonial discourse that can challenge Eurocentric representational logic of the other. For Las Casas the indigenous people were the subjects of their own history, and they were not subhumans.

La Casas's discourse, based on the God of the victim, was directed against the European sin of exclusion which totalized the different into the sameness built on the European logic of Enlightenment and exclusion. For Las Casas, equality, far from meaning modernity's logic of "sameness," denoted recognition of the other.

If equality leads to respect for the other, the sameness leads to totalization (or reduction) of the other to one's identity. The logic of sameness was rather the logic of enslavement and exclusion. Indigenous people could think and express their experience with God within their social, cultural context and various religious and linguistic circumstances. Self-respect for the local culture, tradition, and history must be held within the prophetic horizon of the biblical narrative. This is because understanding the history of colonialism is not to be measured by the standard of the interest of "here and now," but must be judged and evaluated in the context of its own time. In the conversation between the history of Las Casas and our present history, a prophetic component must be appreciated and incorporated into our social locality in protest to the neocolonial reality. At the same time, a critical distance can be taken from the limitations and

44. Said, *Orientalism*, 17.

setbacks of colonial history (even in the case of Las Casas). Thus, Las Casas remains inspirational for the sake of an appropriation of anticolonial solidarity with the other in the present social reality and history.

Mercantile Capital, Triangle Trade, and Christian Mission

In Spanish colonialism and mission in Latin America we have seen that the banking and commercial houses of Northern Italy and Northern Germany were allied with the imperial house of Hapsburg as a political and military support for their pursuit of profit. The military cost of extending this empire exceeded its economic capacity (over-stretching of the empire), because enormous profits in interest on their loans were paid to the banking houses. Furthermore, the Spanish economy had weakness and limitations in lavish wasting of riches stolen from the colonies. Since 1566 Holland had been rebelling more and more against the sovereign power of Spain owing to heavy tax burden and its attempt at re-Catholization.[45]

Mercantilism was the dominant school of thought throughout the early modern period (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century). It was a system of state-regulated exploitation through trade which was essentially the economic policy in the age of colonialism. It carefully regulated colonial trade with the principle of "buying cheap and selling dear."[46] The principal benefit of foreign trade was the carrying off of the surplus produce of the colonies and labor.

The discovery of America benefited Europe by opening a new and inexhaustible market to all the commodities of Europe. The savage injustice of the Europeans was ruinously and destructively perpetrated against colonies. Its trade theories acquired meaning as applied to the exploitation of a dependent colonial system.[47]

Mercantilism helped create infamous trade patterns such as the triangular trade in the North Atlantic, in which raw materials were imported to the metropolis and then processed and redistributed to other colonies. Triangular trade, or triangle trade, is a historical and economic term for trade among three regions. Firstly, the slave ships sailed from a European port with a cargo of manufactured goods to Africa. The slave ship, when it arrived in Africa, sold its cargo for slaves. Secondly, ships sailed from

45. Duchrow, *Europe*, 13.
46. Dobb, *Studies*, 209.
47. Ibid., 204.

Africa to the New World. Slaves were traded on the plantations in exchange for a cargo of raw materials, which were returned to Europe. This was the third leg to their home port to complete the triangle.[48]

The production of sugar cane for rum, molasses, and sugar, the trade in black slaves, and the extraction of precious metals established considerable sources of wealth for Spain throughout the sixteenth century. The flow of precious metals came to Europe in the sixteenth century, opening its civilization. Spain's acquisition of the Americas would later repeat itself in Britain's occupation of India and China or the French empire in Indochina. The English East India Company was created in 1600. England asserted itself as a maritime and colonial power by opposing Spain at the end of the sixteenth century, Holland in the seventeenth century, and France in the eighteenth century.

According to Adam Smith, the policy of Europe regarding colonies has done nothing for the prosperity of the colonies. The folly of hunting after gold and silver mines and the injustice of coveting the possession of a colony established the chimera project.[49] The monopoly of the colony trade has kept the rate of profit in British trade higher than its natural course, changing the direction of British trade.

The trading-capitalist phase of mercantilism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century based on monopolistic trading companies was supported by powerful nation-states such as Holland, England, and France. In England, mercantilism reached its peak during the Long Parliament (1640–1660). British mercantilism thus mainly took the form of efforts to control trade, and put a wide array of regulations in place by encouraging exports against imports.

Merchant and manufacturing capitalism developed considerably in Holland. Its strength rested on three pillars: the Dutch East India Company, the Bank of Amsterdam, and the merchant fleet. Six chambers of merchants gathered together in 1602 to form the Dutch East India Company. The company enjoyed a monopoly on trade with India, where it practiced the *mare clausum* (closed sea), forbidding India to the English, the Portuguese, and the French. In 1621 the Dutch West Indies Company was created. Holland defended the principle of the *mare liberum* (open sea) except in its own colonies, where it imposed the *mare clausum*.[50]

48. Frank, *Dependent Accumulation*, 14–17.
49. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 747, 760, 722.
50. Beaud, *History of Capitalism,* 25.

The Navigation Acts (1651) expelled foreign merchants from England's domestic trade. The Navigation Acts were a series of laws that restricted the use of foreign shipping for trade between England (after 1707 Britain) and its colonies, which started in 1651. Consequently, these were a factor in the Anglo-Dutch Wars, later, fueling the flames of the American Revolutionary War. The American colonies were forbidden to export woolen goods while tobacco and sugar were only exported to England or to other colonies.[51]

The transatlantic triangular trade operated during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. In the colonial phase regarding Europe's trade and the church's mission in Africa and Latin America, it is important to consider other prophetic voices along with Las Casas—for example, the Jesuits in Paraguay through the example of self-denial and asceticism (as the film *The Mission* shows), John Eliot (1604–90) in North America through his compassion for the Indians, the Herrnhuts in the eighteenth century, and the self-liberation of the slaves under Toussaint Louverture in French Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) between 1791 and 1798.[52]

However, the Protestant churches began to establish missionary societies along with trading companies. The ideological basis for the state-supported money-making economy finds its underpinning in Thomas Hobbes for mercantilism's absolutist phase and John Locke for its constitutional phase. Max Weber argued that capitalism has a special affinity with Protestantism, especially Calvinism, when it comes to the doctrine of election, the work ethic, thrift and Calvinist rationality in Holland, England, and especially Puritanism in the US. Weber's sociological study of the legacy of reformation deserves attention in regard to capitalist development and his analysis of disenchantment of the world and modernization. Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) can be seen as contemporaries of Las Casas (1484–1566).

51. Ibid., 205.

52. Duchrow, *Europe*, 18–20.