

# **STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING**

*The Definitive History of  
Racist Ideas in America*

Ibram X. Kendi



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CHAPTER 1

## Human Hierarchy

THEY WEATHERED BRUTAL WINTERS, suffered diseases, and learned to cope with the resisting Native Americans. But nothing brought more destruction to Puritan settlements than the Great Hurricane of 1635. On August 16, 1635, the hurricane—today judged to be perhaps Category 3—thundered up the Atlantic Coast, brushing Jamestown and passing over eastern Long Island. The storm's eye glanced at Providence to the east and moved inland, snatching up thousands of trees like weeds. In the seven-year-old Massachusetts Bay Colony, the hurricane smashed down English homes as if they were ants, before reaching the Atlantic Ocean and swinging knockout waves onto the New England shores.

Large ships from England transporting settlers and supplies were sitting ducks. Seamen anchored one ship, the *James*, off the coast of New Hampshire to wait out the hurricane. Suddenly, a powerful wave sliced the ship's anchors and cables like an invisible knife. Seamen slashed the third cable in distress and hoisted sail to cruise back out to a safer sea. The winds smashed the new sail into "rotten rags," recorded notable Puritan minister Richard Mather in his diary. As the rags disappeared into the ocean, so did hope.

Abducted now by the hurricane, the ship headed toward a mighty rock. All seemed lost. Richard Mather and fellow passengers cried out to the Lord for deliverance. Using "his own immediate good hand," God guided the ship around the mighty rock, Mather later testified. The sea calmed. The crew hurriedly rigged the ship with new sails. The Lord blew "a fresh gale of wind," allowing the captain to navigate

away from danger. The battered *James* arrived in Boston on August 17, 1635. All one hundred passengers credited God for their survival. Richard Mather took the deliverance as a charge "to walk uprightly before him as long as we live."<sup>2</sup>

As a Puritan minister, Richard Mather had walked uprightly through fifteen years of British persecution before embarking on the perilous journey across the Atlantic to begin life anew in New England. There, he would be reunited with his illustrious ministerial friend John Cotton, who had faced British persecution for twenty years in Boston, England. In 1630, Cotton had given the farewell sermon to hundreds of Puritan founders of New England communities, blessing their fulfillment of God's prophetic vision. As dissenters from the Church of England, Puritans believed themselves to be God's chosen piece of humanity, a special, superior people, and New England, their Israel, was to be their exceptional land.<sup>3</sup>

Within a week of the Great Hurricane, Richard Mather was installed as pastor of Dorchester's North Church near the renowned North Church of the new Boston, which was pastored by John Cotton. Mather and Cotton then embarked on a sacred mission to create, articulate, and defend the *New England Way*. They used their pens as much as their pulpits, and they used their power as much as their pens and pulpits. They penned the colonies' first adult and children's books as part of this endeavor. Mather, in all likelihood, steered the selection of Henry Dunster to lead colonial America's first college, Harvard's forerunner, in 1640. And Cotton did not mind when Dunster fashioned Harvard's curriculum after their alma mater, Cambridge, setting off an ideological trend. Like the founders of Cambridge and Harvard before them, the founders of William & Mary (1693), Yale (1701), the University of Pennsylvania (1740), Princeton (1746), Columbia (1754), Brown (1764), Rutgers (1766), and Dartmouth (1769)—the other eight colonial colleges—regarded ancient Greek and Latin literature as universal truths worthy of memorization and unworthy of critique. At the center of the Old and New England Greek library hailed the resurrected Aristotle, who had come under suspicion as a threat to doctrine among some factions in Christianity during the medieval period.<sup>3</sup>

James arrived in Boston on August 14, 1630. Puritans credited God for their survival. They came to New England as a charge "to walk uprightly."

Richard Mather had walked uprightly through persecution before embarking on the Mayflower to begin life anew in New England. He was an illustrious ministerial friend John Cotton, who had been persecuted for twenty years in Boston, gave the farewell sermon to hundreds of New England communities, blessing their fulfillment. As dissenters from the Church of England, they considered themselves to be God's chosen people, and New England, their Israel.

In Hurricane, Richard Mather was seated in the North Church near the renowned pulpit, which was pastored by John Cotton. He embarked on a sacred mission to create a New England Way. They used their pens as well as their power as much as their pens did. Companies' first adult and children's books were all likelihood, steered the selection of America's first college, Harvard's. They did not mind when Dunster fashions at their alma mater, Cambridge, setting the founders of Cambridge and Harvard apart. William & Mary (1693), Yale (1701), the College of Princeton (1746), Columbia (1754), Dartmouth (1769)—the other eight treated Greek and Latin literature as ungodly and unworthy of critique. At the Harvard Greek library hailed the resumption of suspicion as a threat to doctrine during the medieval period.<sup>3</sup>

In studying Aristotle's philosophy, Puritans learned rationales for human hierarchy, and they began to believe that some groups were superior to other groups. In Aristotle's case, ancient Greeks were superior to all non-Greeks. But Puritans believed they were superior to Native Americans, the African people, and even Anglicans—that is, all non-Puritans. Aristotle, who lived from 384 to 322 BCE, concocted a climate theory to justify Greek superiority, saying that extreme hot or cold climates produced intellectually, physically, and morally inferior people who were ugly and lacked the capacity for freedom and self-government. Aristotle labeled Africans "burnt faces"—the original meaning in Greek of "Ethiopian"—and viewed the "ugly" extremes of pale or dark skins as the effect of the extreme cold or hot climates. All of this was in the interest of normalizing Greek slaveholding practices and Greece's rule over the western Mediterranean. Aristotle situated the Greeks, in their supreme, intermediate climate, as the most beautifully endowed superior rulers and enslavers of the world. "Humanity is divided into two: the masters and the slaves; or, if one prefers it, the Greeks and the Barbarians, those who have the right to command, and those who are born to obey," Aristotle said. For him, the enslaved peoples were "by nature incapable of reasoning and live a life of pure sensation, like certain tribes on the borders of the civilized world, or like people who are diseased through the onset of illnesses like epilepsy or madness."<sup>4</sup>

By the birth of Christ or the start of the Common Era, Romans were justifying their slaveholding practices using Aristotle's climate theory, and soon the new Christianity began to contribute to these arguments. For early Christian theologians—whom Puritans studied alongside Aristotle—God ordained the human hierarchy. St. Paul introduced, in the first century, a three-tiered hierarchy of slave relations—heavenly master (top), earthly master (middle), enslaved (bottom). "He who was free when called is a slave of Christ," he testified in 1 Corinthians. "Slaves" were to "obey in everything those that are your earthly masters, not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." In a crucial caveat in Galatians 3:28, St. Paul equalized the souls of masters and slaves as "all one in Christ Jesus."

All in all, ethnic and religious and color prejudice existed in the ancient world. Constructions of races—White Europe, Black Africa, for instance—did not, and therefore racist ideas did not. But crucially, the foundations of race and racist ideas were laid. And so were the foundations for egalitarianism, antiracism, and antislavery laid in Greco-Roman antiquity. "The deity gave liberty to all men, and nature created no one a slave," wrote Alkidamas, Aristotle's rival in Athens. When Herodotus, the foremost historian of ancient Greece, traveled up the Nile River, he found the Nubians "the most handsome of peoples." Lactantius, an adviser to Constantine I, the first Christian Roman emperor, announced early in the fourth century: "God who creates and inspires men wished them all to be fair, that is, equal." St. Augustine, an African church father in the fourth and fifth centuries, maintained that "whoever is born anywhere as a human being, that is, as a rational mortal creature, however strange he may appear to our senses in bodily form or colour or motion or utterance, or in any faculty, part or quality of his nature whatsoever, let no true believer have any doubt that such an individual is descended from the one man who was first created." However, these antislavery and egalitarian champions did not accompany Aristotle and St. Paul into the modern era, into the new Harvard curriculum, or into the New England mind seeking to justify slavery and the racial hierarchy it produced.<sup>5</sup>

When John Cotton drafted New England's first constitution in 1636, *Moses his judicials*, he legalized the enslavement of captives taken in just wars as well as "such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us." The New England way imitated the Old England way on slavery. Cotton reproduced the policies of his British peers close and far away. In 1636, Barbados officials announced that "Negroes and Indians that come here to be sold, should serve for Life, unless a Contract was before made to the contrary."<sup>6</sup>

The Pequot War, the first major war between the New England colonists and the area's indigenous peoples, erupted in 1637. Captain William Pierce forced some indigenous war captives onto the *Desire*, the first slaver to leave British North America. The ship sailed to the Isla de Providencia off Nicaragua, where "Negroes" were reportedly

s and color prejudice existed in the races—White Europe, Black Africa, before racist ideas did not. But cruel racist ideas were laid. And so were man, antiracism, and antislavery laid. Deity gave liberty to all men, and wrote Alkidamas, Aristotle's rival in foremost historian of ancient Greece, and the Nubians "the most handsome" to Constantine I, the first Christian emperor in the fourth century: "God who them all to be fair, that is, equal." St. Ambrose in the fourth and fifth centuries, anywhere as a human being, that is, never strange he may appear to our motion or utterance, or in any fact whatsoever, let no true believer have is descended from the one man who the antislavery and egalitarian champion St. Paul into the modern era, into into the New England mind seeking hierarchy it produced.<sup>5</sup>

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"being . . . kept as perpetuall servants." Massachusetts governor John Winthrop recorded Captain Pierce's historic arrival back into Boston in 1638, noting that his ship was hauling "salt, cotton, tobacco and Negroes."<sup>7</sup>

The first generation of Puritans began rationalizing the enslavement of these "Negroes" without skipping a Christian beat. Their chilling nightmares of persecution were not the only hallucinations the Puritans had carried over the Atlantic waters in their minds to America. From the first ships that landed in Virginia in 1607, to the ships that survived the Great Hurricane of 1635, to the first slave ships, some British settlers of colonial America carried across the sea Puritan, biblical, scientific, and Aristotelian rationalizations of slavery and human hierarchy. From Western Europe and the new settlements in Latin America, some Puritans carried across their judgment of the many African peoples as one inferior people. They carried across racist ideas—racist ideas that preceded American slavery, because the need to justify African slavery preceded colonial America.

AFTER ARAB MUSLIMS conquered parts of North Africa, Portugal, and Spain during the seventh century, Christians and Muslims battled for centuries over the prize of Mediterranean supremacy. Meanwhile, below the Sahara Desert, the West African empires of Ghana (700–1200), Mali (1200–1500), and Songhay (1350–1600) were situated at the crossroads of the lucrative trade routes for gold and salt. A robust trans-Saharan trade emerged, allowing Europeans to obtain West African goods through Muslim intermediaries.

Ghana, Mali, and Songhay developed empires that could rival in size, power, scholarship, and wealth any in the world. Intellectuals at universities in Timbuktu and Jenne pumped out scholarship and pumped in students from around West Africa. Songhay grew to be the largest. Mali may have been the most illustrious. The world's greatest globe-trotter of the fourteenth century, who trotted from North Africa to Eastern Europe to Eastern Asia, decided to see Mali for himself in 1352. "There is complete security in their country," Moroccan

Ibn Battuta marveled in his travel notes, "Neither traveler nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence."<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Battuta was an oddity—an abhorred oddity—among the Islamic intelligentsia in Fez, Morocco. Hardly any scholars had traveled far from home, and Battuta's travel accounts threatened their own armchair credibility in depicting foreigners. None of Battuta's antagonists was more influential than the intellectual tower of the Muslim world at that time, Tunisian Ibn Khaldun, who arrived in Fez just as Battuta returned from Mali. "People in the dynasty (in official positions) whispered to each other that he must be a liar," Khaldun reported in 1377 in *The Muqaddimah*, the foremost Islamic history of the premodern world. Khaldun then painted a very different picture of sub-Saharan Africa in *The Muqaddimah*: "The Negro nations are, as a rule, submissive to slavery," Khaldun surmised, "because (Negroes) have little that is (essentially) human and possess attributes that are quite similar to those of dumb animals." And the "same applies to the Slavs," argued this disciple of Aristotle. Following Greek and Roman justifiers, Khaldun used climate theory to justify Islamic enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans and Eastern European Slavs—groups sharing only one obvious characteristic: their remoteness. "All their conditions are remote from those of human beings and close to those of wild animals," Khaldun suggested. Their inferior conditions were neither permanent nor hereditary, however. "Negroes" who migrated to the cooler north were "found to produce descendants whose colour gradually turns white," Khaldun stressed. Dark-skinned people had the capacity for physical assimilation in a colder climate. Later, cultural assimilationists would imagine that culturally inferior African people, placed in the proper European cultural environment, could or should adopt European culture. But first physical assimilationists like Khaldun imagined that physically inferior African people, placed in the proper cold environment, could or should adopt European physicality: white skin and straight hair.<sup>9</sup>

Ibn Khaldun did not intend merely to demean African people as inferior. He intended to belittle all the different-looking African and Slavic peoples whom the Muslims were trading as slaves. Even

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so, he reinforced the conceptual foundation for racist ideas. On the eve of the fifteenth century, Khaldun helped bolster the foundation for assimilationist ideas, for racist notions of the environment producing African inferiority. All an enslaver had to do was to stop justifying Slavic slavery and inferiority using climate theory, and focus the theory on African people, for the racist attitude toward dark-skinned people to be complete.

There was one enslavement theory focused on Black people already circulating, a theory somehow derived from Genesis 9:18–29, which said "that Negroes were the children of Ham, the son of Noah, and that they were singled out to be black as the result of Noah's curse, which produced Ham's colour and the slavery God inflicted upon his descendants," as Khaldun explained. The lineage of this curse of Ham theory curves back through the great Persian scholar Tabari (838–923) all the way to Islamic and Hebrew sources. God had permanently cursed ugly Blackness and slavery into the very nature of African people, curse theorists maintained. As strictly a climate theorist, Khaldun discarded the "silly story" of the curse of Ham.<sup>10</sup>

Although it clearly supposed Black inferiority, the curse theory was like an unelected politician during the medieval period. Muslim and Christian enslavers hardly gave credence to the curse theory: they enslaved too many non-Black descendants of Shem and Japheth, Ham's supposed non-cursed brothers, for that. But the medieval curse theorists laid the foundation for segregationist ideas and for racist notions of Black genetic inferiority. The shift to solely enslaving Black people, and justifying it using the curse of Ham, was in the offing. Once that shift occurred, the disempowered curse theory became empowered, and racist ideas truly came into being.<sup>11</sup>

CHAPTER 2

## Origins of Racist Ideas

RICHARD MATHER AND John Cotton inherited from the English thinkers of their generation the *old* racist ideas that African slavery was natural and normal and holy. These racist ideas were nearly two centuries old when Puritans used them in the 1630s to legalize and codify New England slavery—and Virginians had done the same in the 1620s. Back in 1415, Prince Henry and his brothers had convinced their father, King John of Portugal, to capture the principal Muslim trading depot in the western Mediterranean: Ceuta, on the northeastern tip of Morocco. These brothers were envious of Muslim riches, and they sought to eliminate the Islamic middleman so that they could find the southern source of gold and Black captives.

After the battle, Moorish prisoners left Prince Henry spellbound as they detailed trans-Saharan trade routes down into the disintegrating Mali Empire. Since Muslims still controlled these desert routes, Prince Henry decided to "seek the lands by the way of the sea." He sought out those African lands until his death in 1460, using his position as the Grand Master of Portugal's wealthy Military Order of Christ (successor of the Knights Templar) to draw venture capital and loyal men for his African expeditions.

In 1452, Prince Henry's nephew, King Afonso V, commissioned Gomes Eanes de Zurara to write a biography of the life and slave-trading work of his "beloved uncle." Zurara was a learned and obedient commander in Prince Henry's Military Order of Christ. In recording and celebrating Prince Henry's life, Zurara was also implicitly

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obscuring his Grand Master's monetary decision to exclusively trade in African slaves. In 1453, Zurara finished the inaugural defense of African slave-trading, the first European book on Africans in the modern era. *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* begins the recorded history of anti-Black racist ideas. Zurara's inaugural racist ideas, in other words, were a product of, not a producer of, Prince Henry's racist policies concerning African slave-trading.<sup>1</sup>

The Portuguese made history as the first Europeans to sail along the Atlantic beyond the Western Sahara's Cape Bojador in order to bring enslaved Africans back to Europe, as Zurara shared in his book. The six caravels, carrying 240 captives, arrived in Lagos, Portugal, on August 6, 1444. Prince Henry made the slave auction into a spectacle to show the Portuguese had joined the European league of serious slave-traders of African people. For some time, the Genoese of Italy, the Catalans of northern Spain, and the Valencians of eastern Spain had been raiding the Canary Islands or purchasing African slaves from Moroccan traders. Zurara distinguished the Portuguese by framing their African slave-trading ventures as missionary expeditions. Prince Henry's competitors could not play that mind game as effectively as he did, in all likelihood because they still traded so many Eastern Europeans.<sup>2</sup>

But the market was changing. Around the time the Portuguese opened their sea route to a new slave export area, the old slave export area started to close up. In Ibn Khaldun's day, most of the captives sold in Western Europe were Eastern Europeans who had been seized by Turkish raiders from areas around the Black Sea. So many of the seized captives were "Slavs" that the ethnic term became the root word for "slave" in most Western European languages. By the mid-1400s, Slavic communities had built forts against slave raiders, causing the supply of Slavs in Western Europe's slave market to plunge at around the same time that the supply of Africans was increasing. As a result, Western Europeans began to see the natural Slav(e) not as White, but Black.<sup>3</sup>

THE CAPTIVES IN 1444 disembarked from the ship and marched to an open space outside of the city, according to Zurara's chronicle. Prince Henry

oversaw the slave auction, mounted on horseback, beaming in delight. Some of the captives were "white enough, fair to look upon, and well proportioned," while others were "like mulattoes," Zurara reported. Still others were "as black as Ethiops, and so ugly" that they almost appeared as visitors from Hell. The captives included people in the many shades of the Tuareg Moors as well as the dark-skinned people whom the Tuareg Moors may have enslaved. Despite their different ethnicities and skin colors, Zurara viewed them as one people—one inferior people.<sup>4</sup>

Zurara made it a point to remind his readers that Prince Henry's "chief riches" in quickly seizing forty-six of the most valuable captives "lay in his own purpose; for he reflected with great pleasure upon the salvation of those souls that before were lost." In building up Prince Henry's evangelical justification for enslaving Africans, Zurara reduced these captives to barbarians who desperately needed not only religious but also civil salvation. "They lived like beasts, without any custom of reasonable beings," he wrote. What's more, "they have no knowledge of bread or wine, and they were without covering of clothes, or the lodgement of houses; and worse than all, they had no understanding of good, but only knew how to live in bestial sloth." In Portugal, their lot was "quite the contrary of what it had been." Zurara imagined slavery in Portugal as an improvement over their free state in Africa.<sup>5</sup>

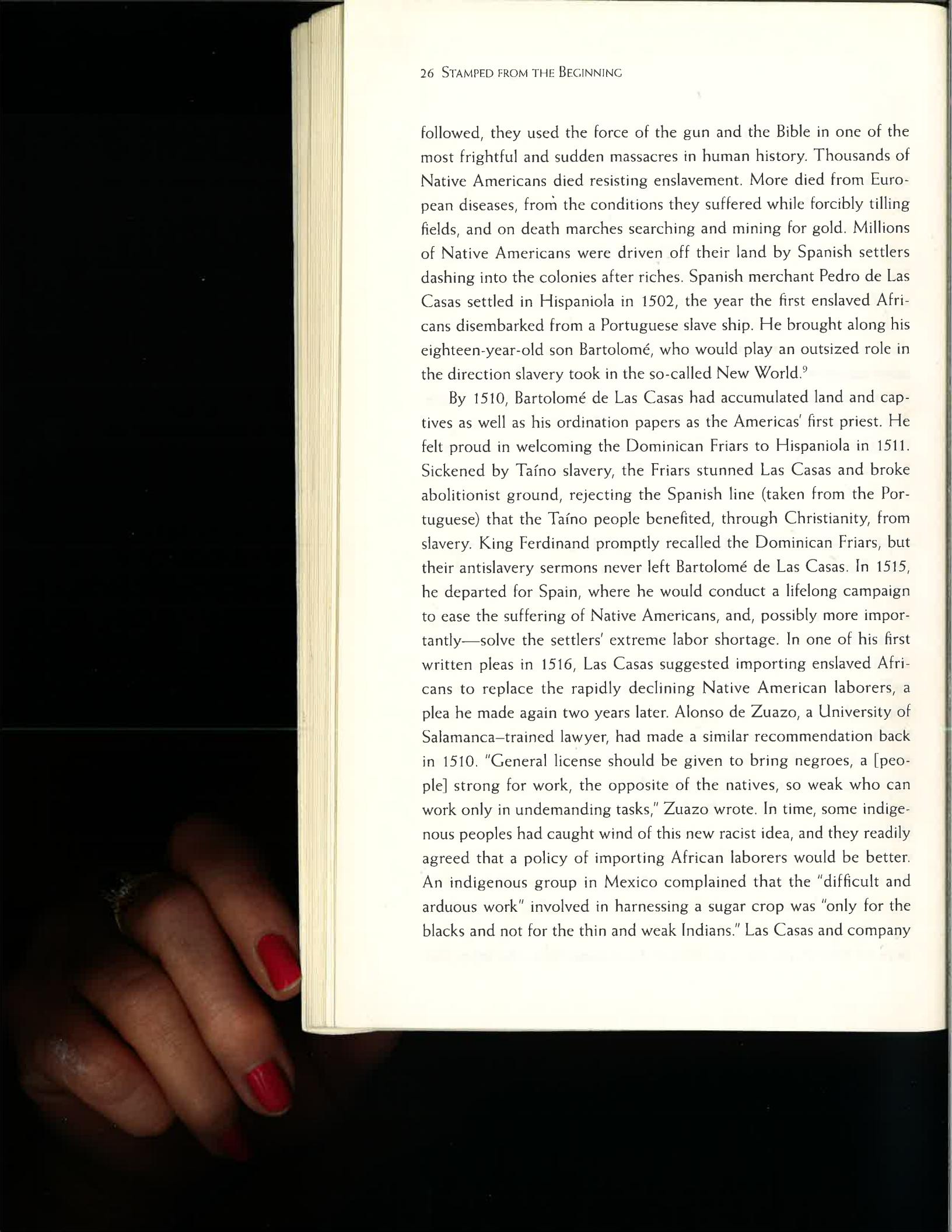
Zurara's narrative covered from 1434 to 1447. During that period, Zurara estimated, 927 enslaved Africans were brought to Portugal, "the greater part of whom were turned into the true path of salvation." Zurara failed to mention that Prince Henry received the royal fifth (*quinto*), or about 185 of those captives, for his immense fortune. But that was irrelevant to his mission, a mission he accomplished. For convincing readers, successive popes, and the reading European world that Prince Henry's Portugal did not engage in the slave trade for money, Zurara was handsomely rewarded as Portugal's chief royal chronicler, and he was given two more lucrative commanderies in the Military Order of Christ. Zurara's bosses quickly reaped returns from their slave trading. In 1466, a Czech traveler noticed that the king of Portugal was making more selling captives to foreigners "than from all the taxes levied on the entire kingdom."<sup>6</sup>

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Zurara circulated the manuscript of *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* to the royal court as well as to scholars, investors, and captains, who then read and circulated it throughout Portugal and Spain. Zurara died in Lisbon in 1474, but his ideas about slavery endured as the slave trade expanded. By the 1490s, Portuguese explorers had crept southward along the West African coast, rounding the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. In their growing networks of ports, agents, ships, crews, and financiers, pioneering Portuguese slave-traders and explorers circulated the racist ideas in Zurara's book faster and farther than the text itself had reached. The Portuguese became the primary source of knowledge on unknown Africa and the African people for the original slave-traders and enslavers in Spain, Holland, France, and England. By the time German printer Valentim Fernandes published an abridged version of Zurara's book in Lisbon in 1506, enslaved Africans—and racist ideas—had arrived in the Americas.<sup>7</sup>

IN 1481, THE PORTUGUESE began building a large fort, São Jorge da Mina, known simply as Elmina, or "the mine," as part of their plan to acquire Ghanaian gold. In due time, this European building, the first known to be erected south of the Sahara, became West Africa's largest slave-trading post, the nucleus of Portugal's operations in West Africa. A Genoese explorer barely three decades old may have witnessed the erection of Elmina Castle. Christopher Columbus, newly married to the daughter of a Genoese protégé of Prince Henry, desired to make his own story—but not in Africa. He looked instead to East Asia, the source of spices. After Portuguese royalty refused to sponsor his daring westward expedition, Queen Isabel of Spain, a great-niece of Prince Henry, consented. So in 1492, after sixty-nine days at sea, Columbus's three small ships touched the shores that Europeans did not know existed: first the glistening Bahamas, and the next night, Cuba.<sup>8</sup>

Almost from Columbus's arrival, Spanish colonists began to degrade and enslave the indigenous American peoples, naming them *negros da terra* (Blacks from the land), transferring their racist constructions of African people onto Native Americans. Over the years that



followed, they used the force of the gun and the Bible in one of the most frightful and sudden massacres in human history. Thousands of Native Americans died resisting enslavement. More died from European diseases, from the conditions they suffered while forcibly tilling fields, and on death marches searching and mining for gold. Millions of Native Americans were driven off their land by Spanish settlers dashing into the colonies after riches. Spanish merchant Pedro de Las Casas settled in Hispaniola in 1502, the year the first enslaved Africans disembarked from a Portuguese slave ship. He brought along his eighteen-year-old son Bartolomé, who would play an outsized role in the direction slavery took in the so-called New World.<sup>9</sup>

By 1510, Bartolomé de Las Casas had accumulated land and captives as well as his ordination papers as the Americas' first priest. He felt proud in welcoming the Dominican Friars to Hispaniola in 1511. Sickened by Taíno slavery, the Friars stunned Las Casas and broke abolitionist ground, rejecting the Spanish line (taken from the Portuguese) that the Taíno people benefited, through Christianity, from slavery. King Ferdinand promptly recalled the Dominican Friars, but their antislavery sermons never left Bartolomé de Las Casas. In 1515, he departed for Spain, where he would conduct a lifelong campaign to ease the suffering of Native Americans, and, possibly more importantly—solve the settlers' extreme labor shortage. In one of his first written pleas in 1516, Las Casas suggested importing enslaved Africans to replace the rapidly declining Native American laborers, a plea he made again two years later. Alonso de Zuazo, a University of Salamanca-trained lawyer, had made a similar recommendation back in 1510. "General license should be given to bring negroes, a [people] strong for work, the opposite of the natives, so weak who can work only in undemanding tasks," Zuazo wrote. In time, some indigenous peoples had caught wind of this new racist idea, and they readily agreed that a policy of importing African laborers would be better. An indigenous group in Mexico complained that the "difficult and arduous work" involved in harnessing a sugar crop was "only for the blacks and not for the thin and weak Indians." Las Casas and company

the gun and the Bible in one of the crescendos in human history. Thousands of died from enslavement. More died from European diseases they suffered while forcibly tilling land, searching and mining for gold. Millions were driven off their land by Spanish settlers and their families. Spanish merchant Pedro de Las Casas had accumulated land and captives as the Americas' first priest. He brought Dominican Friars to Hispaniola in 1511. Dominican Friars stunned Las Casas and broke the Spanish line (taken from the Portuguese) and benefited, through Christianity, from labor shortage. In one of his first letters, he recalled the Dominican Friars, but he left Bartolomé de Las Casas. In 1515, he would conduct a lifelong campaign against Africans, and, possibly more importantly, against Native Americans.

Las Casas suggested importing enslaved Africans to replace Native American laborers, a recommendation Alonso de Zuazo, a University of Salamanca professor, made a similar recommendation back in 1511. "It would be given to bring negroes, a [people] fit for the natives, so weak who can withstand them," Zuazo wrote. In time, some indigenous peoples accepted this new racist idea, and they readily agreed that bringing African laborers would be better. Some complained that the "difficult and dangerous" task of raising a sugar crop was "only for the weak Indians." Las Casas and company

birthing twins—racist twins that some Native Americans and Africans took in: the myth of the physically strong, beastly African, and the myth of the physically weak Native American who easily died from the strain of hard labor.<sup>10</sup>

ALTHOUGH LAS CASAS'S IDEAS were at first discounted, his treatises soon became a useful tool for Spain's growing empire and its investment in American slavery. Bishop Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal reported in 1531 that the "entire population . . . of Espanola, San Juan and even Cuba are demanding that they should have negroes to mine gold" and produce crops. Las Casas led the charge for the historic passage in 1542 of the "New Laws of the Indies for the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indians." That memorable year, he also finished and sent to Prince Philip II his classic, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, and issued his third memorial recommending that enslaved Africans replace Native Americans.

At some point after that, Las Casas read Gomes Eanes de Zurara's book. The more he read, the less he could square the African slave trade with the teachings of Jesus Christ. In *History of the Indies* (1561), released five years before his death, Las Casas regretted "the advice he gave the king" to import enslaved Africans. He saw in Zurara's writing evidence revealing the slave trade to "be the horror that it is." Las Casas lamented Zurara's attempt "to blur [the slave trade] with the mercy and goodness of God." Las Casas tried to close the door on African slavery, after opening it for so many Spanish slaveholders. He failed. A powerful reformer labeled a radical extremist in his last days—like every antiracist who came after him—Las Casas was condemned in Spain after his death, and his works were practically banned there. Catholic Spain's Protestant rivals published and republished his devastating *Account of the Destruction of the Indies*—in Dutch (1578), French (1578), English (1583), and German (1599)—in their quest to label the Spanish Empire corrupt and morally repugnant, all in their quest to replace Spain as Europe's superpower.<sup>11</sup>



DESPITE SPAIN'S RISE, Portugal remained the undisputed power of the African slave trade. And Gomes Eanes de Zurara's racist ideas remained Europe's undisputed defenders of slave trading until another man, an African, rose up to carry on the legacy. Around 1510, Al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, a well-educated Moroccan, accompanied his uncle on a diplomatic mission down into the Songhay Empire. Eight years later, he was enslaved on another diplomatic voyage along the Mediterranean Sea. His captors presented the learned twenty-four-year-old to the scholarly Pope Leo X in Italy. Before dying in 1521, the pope freed the youngster, converted him to Christianity, renamed him Johannes Leo, and possibly commissioned him to write a survey of Africa. He became known as Leo the African, or Leo Africanus. He satisfied Italian curiosity in 1526 with the first scholarly survey of Africa in Europe, *Della descrittione dell'Africa* (*Description of Africa*).

Leo Africanus described the etymology of Africa and then surveyed African geography, languages, cultures, religions, and diseases. His summation: "There is no Nation under Heaven more prone to Venery [sexual indulgence]." The Africans "leade a beastly kind of life, being utterly destitute of the use of reason, of dexterities of wit, and of all arts," Africanus wrote. "They . . . behave themselves, as if they had continually lived in a Forrest among wild beasts."

Leo the African did not ignore the elephant in the room. How do "I my selfe write so homely of Africa," he asked, when "I stand indebted [to Africa] both for my birth" and education? He considered himself to be a "historiographer" charged with telling "the plaine truth in all places." Africanus did not mind if Africans were denigrated. He believed he was describing Africans accurately.<sup>12</sup>

Leo Africanus established himself through *Della descrittione dell'Africa* as the world's first known African racist, the first illustrious African producer of racist ideas (as Zurara was the first illustrious European producer of racist ideas). Anyone can consume or produce racist ideas of African inferiority—any European, any Asian, any Native American, any Latina/o, and any African. Leo's African ancestry hardly

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shielded him from believing in African inferiority and European superiority, or from trying to convince others of this plain racist "truth."

Leo Africanus may have never visited the fifteen African lands he claims to have seen. He could have paraphrased the notes of Portuguese travelers. But veracity did not matter. Once the manuscript was finished in 1526, once it was published in Italian in 1550, and once it was translated into French and Latin in 1556, readers across Western Europe were consuming it and tying African people to hypersexuality, to animals, and to the lack of reason. It is not known what happened to Leo the African, the author of the most widely read and most influential book on Africa—next to Zurara's—during the 1500s. He made countless Europeans feel that they knew him, or rather, knew Africa.

Around the time Leo the African's text was making its way through Europe, and around the time Richard Mather's parents were born, the British began their quest to break the Portuguese monopoly on African slave-trading, eager to reap the benefits and grow their empire. In 1554, an expedition captained by John Lok, ancestor of philosopher John Locke, arrived in England after traveling to "Guinea." Lok and his compatriots Robert Gainish and William Towerson docked with 450 pounds of gold, 250 ivory tusks, and five enslaved African men. These three Englishmen established themselves as the new authorities on Africa and African people among curious British minds. Their opinions seemed to be shaped as much by the Portuguese and French as by their own observations. Sounding like Leo Africanus or Zurara, Gainish labeled Africans a "people of beastly living, without a God, law, religions, or common wealth." The five "beasts" that he and his shipmates brought back to England all learned English and were sent back to Africa to serve as translators for English traders.<sup>13</sup>

As English contact with Africans matured, so did the desire to explain the radical color differences. Writers like Gainish applied climate theory to the dark skins of Africa and the light skins of Europe. The popular theory made sense when looking at Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa. But what about the rest of the world? During

the final decades of the sixteenth century, a new genre of British literature adopted a different theory. Writers brought amazing stories of the world into Anglican homes, into the Puritan homes of Richard Mather and John Cotton, and into the homes of other future leaders of colonial America. And these worldly stories were as racist as they were amazing.

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#### CHAPTER 3

## Coming to America

EXPLORERS WROTE ABOUT their adventures, and their tales fascinated Europeans. This new travel literature gave Europeans sitting by their firesides a window into faraway lands where different-looking people resided in cultures that seemed exotic and strange. But the literary glimpses that explorers provided of African lands were usually overshadowed by the self-interests of the backers of the expeditions, who aimed most of all to fulfill their colonizing and slave-trading desires. Even a lonely abolitionist, French philosopher Jean Bodin, found his thoughts bogged down by tales connecting two simultaneous discoveries: that of West Africans, and that of the dark, tailless apes walking around like humans in West Africa. Africa's heat had produced hypersexual Africans, Bodin theorized in 1576, and "intimate relations between the men and beasts . . . still give birth to monsters in Africa." The climate theory of Africa's hot sun transforming the people into uncivil beasts of burden still held the court of racist opinion. But not much longer.<sup>1</sup>

For English travel writer George Best, climate theory fell apart when he saw on an Arctic voyage in 1577 that the Inuit people in northeastern Canada were darker than the people living in the hotter south. In a 1578 account of the expedition, Best shied away from climate theory in explaining "the Ethiopians blacknesse." He found an alternative: "holy Scripture," or the curse theory that had recently been articulated by a Dominican Friar in Peru and a handful of French intellectuals, a theory more enticing to slaveholders. In Best's whimsical interpretation of Genesis, Noah orders his White and "Angelike" sons to abstain from

sex with their wives on the Ark, and then tells them that the first child born after the flood would inherit the earth. When the evil, tyrannical, and hypersexual Ham has sex on the Ark, God wills that Ham's descendants shall be "so blacke and loathsome," in Best's telling, "that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the worlde."<sup>2</sup>

The first major debate between racists had invaded the English discourse. This argument about the cause of inferior Blackness—curse or climate, nature or nurture—would rage for decades, and eventually influence settlers to America. Curse theorists were the first known segregationists. They believed that Black people were naturally and permanently inferior, and totally incapable of becoming White. Climate theorists were the first known assimilationists, believing Black people had been nurtured by the hot sun into a temporary inferiority, but were capable of becoming White if they moved to a cooler climate.

George Best produced his curse theory in 1578, in the era between Henry VII and Oliver Cromwell, a time during which the English nation was experiencing the snowballing, conflicting passions of overseas adventure and domestic control, or, to use historian Winthrop Jordan's words, of "voyages of discovery overseas" and "inward voyages of discovery." The mercantile expansion abroad, the progressively commercialized economy at home, the fabulous profits, the exciting adventure stories, and the class warfare all destabilized the social order in Elizabethan England, a social order being intensely scrutinized by the rising congregation of morally strict, hyper-dictating, pious Puritans.

George Best used Africans as "social mirrors," to use Jordan's phrase, for the hypersexuality, greed, and lack of discipline—the Devil's machinations—that he "found first" in England "but could not speak of." Normalizing negative behavior in faraway African people allowed writers to de-normalize negative behavior in White people, to de-normalize what they witnessed during intense appraisals of self and nation.

PROBABLY NO ONE in England collected and read travel stories more eagerly than Richard Hakluyt. In 1589, he published his travel collection in *The Principall Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English*

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*Nation*. In issuing this monumental collection of nearly all the available documents describing British overseas adventures, Hakluyt urged explorers, traders, and missionaries to fulfill their superior destiny, to civilize, Christianize, capitalize, and command the world.<sup>3</sup>

The Puritans believed, too, in civilizing and Christianizing the world, but their approach to the project was slightly different from that of most explorers and expedition sponsors. For the others, it was about economic returns or political power. For Puritan preachers, it was about bringing social order to the world. Cambridge professor William Perkins rested at the cornerstone of British Puritanism in the late sixteenth century. "Though the servant in regard of faith and the inner man be equal to his master, in regard of the outward man . . . the master is above the servant," he explained in *Ordering a Familie*, published in 1590. In paraphrasing St. Paul, Perkins became one of the first major English theorists—or assimilationist theologians, to be more precise—to mask the exploitative master/servant or master/slave relationship as a loving family relationship. He thus added to Zurara's justifying theory of Portuguese enslavers nurturing African beasts. For generations to come, assimilationist slaveholders, from Richard Mather's New England to Hispaniola, would shrewdly use this loving-family mask to cover up the exploitation and brutality of slavery. It was Perkins's family ordering that Puritan leaders like John Cotton and Richard Mather used to sanction slavery in Massachusetts a generation later. And it was Perkins's claim of equal souls and unequal bodies that led Puritan preachers like Cotton and Mather to minister to African souls and not challenge the enslavement of their bodies.<sup>4</sup>

Richard Mather was born in 1596 in northeastern England at the height of William Perkins's influence. After Perkins died in 1602, Puritan Paul Baynes succeeded him at Cambridge. Richard Mather closely studied Baynes's writings, and he probably could quote his most famous treatise, *Commentary on Ephesians*. In the commentary, Baynes said slavery was partly a curse for sins and partly a result of "civil condition," or barbarism. "Blackmores" were "slavish," he said, and he urged slaves to be cheerfully obedient. Masters were to show their superiority through kindness and through a display of "a white sincere heart."<sup>5</sup>

AS RICHARD MATHER came of age, Richard Hakluyt was establishing himself as England's greatest promoter of overseas colonization. Hakluyt surrounded himself with a legion of travel writers, translators, explorers, traders, investors, colonizers—everyone who might play a role in colonizing the world—and began mentoring them. In 1597, he urged mentee John Pory, a recent Cambridge graduate, to complete a translation that may have been on Hakluyt's list for quite some time. Pory translated Leo Africanus's *Geographical Histories of Africa* into English in 1600. English readers consumed it as quickly as other Europeans had for decades, and they were just as impressed. In a long introduction, Pory argued that climate theory could not explain the geographical distinctions in color. They must be "hereditary," Pory suggested. Africans were "descended from Ham the cursed son of Noah."<sup>6</sup>

Whether they chose to illuminate the stamp of Blackness through curse theory or climate theory, the travel writers and translators of the time had a larger common goal, and they accomplished it: they ushered in the British age of adventure. They were soon followed by another group: the playwrights. With the English literacy rate low, many more British imaginations were churned by playwrights than by travel writers. At the turn of the century, a respected London playwright from Stratford-upon-Avon was escorting English audiences back into the ancient world and around modern Europe, from Scotland (*Macbeth*), to Denmark (*Hamlet*), to inferior Blackness and superior Whiteness in Italy (*The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*). The racial politics of William Shakespeare's *Othello* did not surprise English audiences when it premiered in 1604. By the late 1500s, English dramatists were used to manufacturing Satan's Black agents on earth. Shakespeare's first Black character, the evil, oversexed Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*, first came to the stage in 1594. Down in Spain, dramatists frequently staged Black people as cruel idiots in the genre called *comedias de negros*.<sup>7</sup>

Shakespeare's *Othello* is a Moorish Christian general in the Venetian military, a character inspired by the 1565 Italian tale *Gli Hecatomithi*, and possibly by Leo Africanus, the Christian Moor in Italy who despised his Blackness. *Othello*'s trusted ensign, Iago, resents *Othello* for marrying the Venetian Desdemona. "For that I do suspect the

Richard Hakluyt was establishing himself as a leader of overseas colonization. Hakluyt was one of many travel writers, translators, explorers, and everyone who might play a role in mentoring them. In 1597, he urged his Oxbridge graduate, to complete a translation of Hakluyt's list for quite some time. Pory translated *Histories of Africa* into English in 1598 as quickly as other Europeans had impressed. In a long introduction, Pory could not explain the geographical origin of "hereditary," Pory suggested. Africa was the cursed son of Noah.<sup>6</sup>

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A Christian general in the Venetian army by the 1565 Italian tale *Gli Hecatomnidi*, the Christian Moor in Italy who trusted Othello, Iago, resents Othello's wife Desdemona. "For that I do suspect the

"lusty Moor / Hath leaped into my seat," Iago explains. To Desdemona's father, Iago labels Othello "an old black ram / . . . tupping your white ewe." Iago manipulates Othello to make him believe his wife betrayed him. "Her name that was as fresh / as Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black / As mine own face," Othello says before strangling Desdemona. At the play's climax, Othello realizes his dead wife's innocence and confesses to Emilia, Desdemona's maid servant. "O! the more angel she," Emilia responds. "And you the blacker devil." Othello commits suicide.<sup>8</sup>

The theater-loving Queen Elizabeth did not see *Othello*, as she did some of Shakespeare's earlier plays. She died in 1603. When the deadly plague of 1604 subsided, her successor, King James I, arrived in London, and started making plans for his grand coronation. King James I and his wife, Queen Anne of Denmark, saw *Othello*. But King James I commissioned Shakespeare's rival playwright, Ben Jonson, to produce an alluring international masque for his coronation, and to mark the end of Elizabethan self-isolation. Queen Anne proposed an African theme to reflect the new king's international focus. Leo Africanus, travel stories, and *Othello* had sparked the queen's interest in Africa. Satisfying his queen, Jonson wrote *The Masque of Blackness*.

Premiering on January 7, 1605, in the great hall of London's sparkling Whitehall Palace, which overlooks the snowy banks of the Thames River, *The Masque of Blackness* was the most expensive production ever presented in London. Its elaborate costumes, exciting dancing, sensational choirs, booming orchestras, exotic scenery, and a luxurious banquet caused all in attendance to marvel at the spectacle. Inspired by climate theory, it was the story of twelve ugly African princesses of the river god Niger who learn they can be "made beautiful" if they travel to "Britannia," where the sun "beams shine day and night, and are of force / To blanch an Æthiop, and revive a corpse." Queen Anne herself and eleven court ladies played the African princesses in blackface, inaugurating the use of black paint on the royal stage.<sup>9</sup>

*The Masque of Blackness* presented the imperial vision of King James I, Prince Charles, Richard Hakluyt, and a powerful lineup of English investors, merchants, missionaries, and explorers. And it helped renew British determination to expand Britannia to America. King James

chartered the London Company in 1606 with his eyes on North America—one eye on Virginia, another on New England. Although misfortune plagued the New England undertakings, Virginia fared better. Captain John Smith, a mentee of Richard Hakluyt, helped command the expedition of roughly 150 volunteers on the three boats that entered the Chesapeake Bay on April 26, 1607. Against all odds—and thanks to the assistance of the indigenous Powhatan Americans—North America's first permanent English settlement survived. His mission accomplished, John Smith returned as a hero to England in October 1609.<sup>10</sup>

In colonizing Virginia (and later New England), the British had already begun to conceive of distinct races. The word *race* first appeared in Frenchman Jacques de Brézé's 1481 poem "The Hunt," where it referred to hunting dogs. As the term expanded to include humans over the next century, it was used primarily to identify and differentiate and *animalize African people*. The term did not appear in a dictionary until 1606, when French diplomat Jean Nicot included an entry for it. "Race . . . means descent," he explained, and "it is said that a man, a horse, a dog or another animal is from good or bad race." Thanks to this malleable concept in Western Europe, the British were free to lump the multiethnic Native Americans and the multiethnic Africans into the same racial groups. In time, Nicot's construction became as addictive as the tobacco plant, which he introduced in France.<sup>11</sup>

Captain John Smith never returned to Jamestown. He spent the rest of his life as the greatest literary mentee of Richard Hakluyt, promoting British migration to America. Thousands crossed the Atlantic moved by Smith's exhilarating travel books, which by 1624 included his tale of Pocahontas saving his life. Pocahontas, the "civilized savage," had by then converted to Christianity, married an Englishman, and visited London. The English approved. Black people did not fare so well, in Smith's estimation. Settlers read his worldly—or rather, racist—opinions, though, and adopted them as their own. In his final book, published the year of his death in 1631, Smith told "unexperienced" New England planters that the enslaved Africans were "as idle and as devilish as any in the world." Apparently, Smith thought

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this knowledge would be useful to planters, probably knowing it was  
only a matter of time before enslaved Africans were brought to New  
England.<sup>12</sup>

But Smith was only recasting ideas he had heard in England  
between *The Masque of Blackness*, the founding of Virginia, and the  
founding of New England, ideas English intellectuals had probably  
learned from Spanish enslavers and Portuguese slave-traders. "Men  
that have low and flat nostrils are as Libidinous as Apes," cleric Edward  
Topsell explained in 1607 in *Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes*. King James  
made the common association of apes and devils in his 1597 book  
*Daemonologie*. In one of his last plays, *The Tempest* (1611), Shakespeare  
played on these associations of the ape and devil and African in crafting  
Caliban, the hypersexual bastard child of a demon and an African  
witch from a "vile race." In 1614, England's first famous working-class  
poet, John Taylor, said that "black nations" adored the "Black" Devil.  
In a 1615 address for the planters in Ireland and Virginia, the Rever-  
end Thomas Cooper said that White Shem, one of Noah's three sons,  
"shall be Lord over" the "cursed race of Cham"—meaning Noah's son  
Ham—in Africa. Future Virginia politician George Sandys also con-  
jured curse theory to degrade Blackness. In a 1620 paraphrase of Gen-  
esis, future politician Thomas Peyton wrote of Cain, or "the Southern  
man," as a "black deformed elf," and "the Northern white, like unto  
God himself." Five years later, Clergyman Samuel Purchas released the  
gargantuan four-volume *Hakluytus Posthumus* of travel manuscripts left  
to him by his mentor, Richard Hakluyt. Purchas blasted the "filthy  
sodomits, sleepers, ignorant, beast, disciples of Cham . . . to whom the  
blacke darknesse is reserved for ever." These were the ideas about Afri-  
can people circulating throughout England and the English colonies as  
African people were being hauled into Britannia on slave ships.<sup>13</sup>

IN 1619, RICHARD MATHER began ministering not far from the future cen-  
ter of the British slave trade, the port of Liverpool. In those days, the  
British slave trade was minuscule, and Africans hardly existed in Bri-  
tannia. But that would soon change. The vessels of slave traders were

cruising deeper and deeper into the heart of West Africa, especially after the Moroccans, armed with English guns, crushed the Songhay Empire in 1591. The vessels of English commerce were cruising deeper and deeper into Virginia, too, as English merchants competed with the Spanish, Portuguese, and rising Dutch and French empires.<sup>14</sup>

The first recorded slave ship to arrive in colonial America laden with African people was not originally intended for the English colonies. The Spanish ship *San Juan Bautista* departed Angola in July 1619 hauling 350 captives, probably headed for Vera Cruz, Mexico. Latin American slaveholders had used racist ideas to craft a permanent slavery for the quarter of a million Africans they held at that time. Two pirate ships probably attacked the Spanish ship in the Gulf of Mexico, snatching some 60 captives, and then headed east. Weeks later, in August 1619, the pirates sold 20 of their Angolan captives in Jamestown to Virginia governor George Yeardley, the owner of 1,000 acres.<sup>15</sup>

John Pory, the translator of Leo the African's book into English, was Yeardley's cousin, and he ventured to Jamestown in 1619 to serve as Yeardley's secretary. On July 30, 1619, Yeardley convened the inaugural meeting of elected politicians in colonial America, a group that included Thomas Jefferson's great-grandfather. These lawmakers named John Pory their speaker. The English translator of Leo the African's book, who had defended curse theory, thus became colonial America's first legislative leader.<sup>16</sup>

John Pory set the price of America's first cash crop, tobacco, and recognized the need for labor to grow it. So when the Angolans bound for slavery arrived in August, they were right on time. There is no reason to believe that George Yeardley and the other original enslavers did not rationalize their enslavement of African people in the same way that other British intellectuals did—and in the same way that Latin American slaveholders did—by considering these African people to be stamped from the beginning as a racially distinct people, as lower than themselves, and as lower in the scale of being than the more populous White indentured servants. The 1625 Virginia census did not list the ages or dates of arrival for most Africans. Nor did the census list any of them—despite in some cases the fact that they had

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resided in Virginia for six years—as free. Africans were recorded as distinct from White servants. When Yeardley died in 1627, he willed to his heirs his "goods debts chattles servants negars cattle or any other thyng." "Negars" were dropped below "servants" in the social hierarchy to reflect the economic hierarchy. And this stratification became clear in Virginia's first judicial decision explicitly referring to race. The court ordered a White man in 1630 "to be soundly whipt before an assembly of negroes & others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and the shame of Christianity by defiling his body in lying with a negro." The court contrasted the polluted Black woman and the pure White woman, with whom he could lie without defiling his body. It was the first recorded instance of gender racism in America, of considering the body of the Black woman to be a tainted object that could defile a White man upon contact.<sup>17</sup>

Richard Mather never saw a slave ship leave the Liverpool docks during his ministerial tenure in Toxteth in the 1620s. Liverpool did not become England's main slave-ship station until the 1740s, succeeding London and Bristol. British slave-traders were slowly expanding their activities in the 1620s, unlike all those Anglican persecutors of Puritans. The death of King James and the coronation of his son, Charles I, in 1625 set off a persecuting stampede. William Ames, a disciple of William Perkins, who was exiled in Holland, steeled Richard Mather, John Cotton, and countless other Puritans with *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*. Translated from Latin into English in 1627, the treatise described the sacred divinity of spiritual equality "between a free man and a servant"; the sacred divinity of "inferiors" owing "subjection and obedience" to their "superiors"; and the sacred divinity of "our blood kin" being "given more love than strangers." *The Marrow's* explanation became a guiding principle for Mather's generation of Puritans settling the Massachusetts Bay area in the late 1620s and 1630s. Puritans used this doctrine when assessing Native American and African strangers, ensuring intolerance from the start in their land of tolerance.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in 1642, Anglican monarchists and nonconforming parliamentarians locked arms in the English Civil War. As New England Puritans welcomed the nonconforming parliamentarians, Virginia's

royalists prayed for their retreating King Charles I. But in 1649, he was executed. Three years later, Virginia was forced to surrender to the new ruling parliament.

The economic hierarchy that had emerged in Virginia resembled the pecking order that William Ames had proposed and that Puritans established in New England—although their political and religious allegiances differed. Large planters and ministers and merchants stood at the top—men like John Mottrom of Virginia's Northern Neck, who used his power to acquire fertile land, solicit trade, procure labor, and keep legally free people—like Elizabeth Key—enslaved.<sup>19</sup>

*Elizabeth Key*  
Elizabeth Key was the daughter of an unnamed African woman and Newport News legislator Thomas Key. Before his death, Thomas had arranged for his biracial daughter to be freed at age fifteen. Her subsequent masters, however, kept her enslaved. At some point, she adopted Christianity. She birthed a baby, whose father was William Greenstead, an English indentured servant and amateur lawyer on Mottrom's plantation. Upon Mottrom's death in 1655, Key and Greenstead successfully sued the estate for her and her child's freedom.

Virginia planters followed the Key case almost as closely as they followed the English Civil War. They realized that the English common laws regarding not enslaving Christians—and stipulating that the father's status determined the child's status—both superseded curse theory, climate theory, beast theory, evangelical theory, and every other racist theory substantiating Black and biracial enslavement. Elizabeth Key had ravaged the ties that planters had unofficially used to bind African slavery.<sup>20</sup>

For Virginia planters, the timing of the Key case could not have been worse. By the 1660s, labor demands had grown. Virginians had uprooted more indigenous communities to expand their farmlands. Landowners were looking increasingly to African laborers to do the work, since their lower death rates made them more valuable and more permanent than temporary indentures. At the same time, the bloody English Civil War that had driven so many from England to America had come to a close, and new socioeconomic opportunities in England slowed the flow of voluntary indentured migrants. The White servants

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still arriving partnered with the enslaved Africans in escapes and rebellions, possibly bonding on similar stories of apprehension—being lured onto ships on the western coasts of Africa or Europe.<sup>21</sup>

Planters responded to labor demands and laborers' unity by purchasing more African people and luring Whiteness away from Blackness. In the first official recognition of slavery in Virginia, legislators stipulated, in 1660 (and in stricter terms in 1661), that any White servant running away "in company with any negroes" shall serve for the time of the "said negroes absence"—even if it meant life. In 1662, Virginia lawmen plugged one of Key's freedom loopholes to resolve "doubts [that] have arisen whether children got by an Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free." They proclaimed that "all children borne in this country" derived their status from "the condition of the mother." Trashing English law, they dusted off the Roman principle of *partus sequitur ventrem*, which held that "among tame and domestic animals, the brood belongs to the owner of the dam or mother."<sup>22</sup>

With this law in place, White enslavers could now reap financial reward from relations "upon a negro woman." But they wanted to prevent the limited number of White women from engaging in similar interracial relations (as their biracial babies would become free). In 1664, Maryland legislators declared it a "disgrace to our Nation" when "English women . . . intermarry with Negro slaves." By the end of the century, Maryland and Virginia legislators had enacted severe penalties for White women in relationships with non-White men.<sup>23</sup>

In this way, heterosexual White men freed themselves, through racist laws, to engage in sexual relations with all women. And then their racist literature codified their sexual privileges. *The Isle of Pines*, a bizarre short story published in 1668 by former English parliamentarian Henry Neville, gave readers one such ominous account. The tale purposefully begins in 1589, the year the first edition of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* appeared. Surviving a shipwreck in the Indian Ocean, George Pines finds himself alone on an uninhabited island with an English fourteen-year-old; a Welsh maid-servant; another maid-servant, whose Whiteness is clear and ethnicity is not; and "one Negro female slave." For Pines, "idleness and Fulness of every thing

begot in me a desire of enjoying the women." He persuades the two maids to lie with him, and then reports that the English fourteen-year-old was "content also to do as we did." The Negro woman, "seeing what we did, longed also for her share." One night, the uniquely sexually aggressive Black woman makes her move in the darkness while Pines sleeps.<sup>24</sup>

*The Isle of Pines* was one of the first portrayals in British letters of aggressive hypersexual African femininity. Such portrayals served both to exonerate White men of their inhuman rapes and to mask their human attractions to the supposed beast-like women. And the portrayals just kept coming, like the slave ships. Meanwhile, American enslavers publicly prostituted African women well into the eighteenth century (privately thereafter). In a 1736 exchange of letters on the inextricable sexuality and service of "African Ladies," single White men were counseled in the *South-Carolina Gazette* to "wait for the next shipping from the Coast of Guinny": "Those African Ladies are of a strong, robust Constitution: not easily jaded out, able to serve them by Night as well as Day." On their isles of pines in colonial America, White men continued to depict African women as sexually aggressive, shifting the responsibility of their own sexual desires to the women.

Of the nearly one hundred reports of rape or attempted rape in twenty-one newspapers in nine American colonies between 1728 and 1776, none reported the rape of a Black woman. Rapes of Black women, by men of all races, were not considered newsworthy. Like raped prostitutes, Black women's credibility had been stolen by racist beliefs in their hypersexuality. For Black men, the story was similar. There was not a single article in the colonial era announcing the acquittal of a suspected Black male rapist. One-third of White men mentioned in rape articles were acknowledged as being acquitted of at least one charge. Moreover, "newspaper reports of rape constructed white defendants as individual offenders and black defendants as representative of the failings of their racial group," according to journalism historian Sharon Block.<sup>25</sup>

Already, the American mind was accomplishing that indispensable intellectual activity of someone consumed with racist ideas:

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was accomplishing that indispens- one consumed with racist ideas:

*individualizing* White negativity and *generalizing* Black negativity. Negative behavior by any Black person became proof of what was wrong with Black people, while negative behavior by any White person only proved what was wrong with that person.

Black women were thought to aggressively pursue White men sexually, and Black men were thought to aggressively pursue White women sexually. Neither could help it, the racist myth posited. They naturally craved superior Whiteness. Black women possessed a "temper hot and lascivious, making no scruple to prostitute themselves to the Europeans for a very slender profit, so great is their inclination to white men," dreamt William Smith, the author of *New Voyage to Guinea* in 1744. And all of this lasciviousness on the part of Black men and women stemmed from their relatively large genitalia, the theory went. As early as 1482, Italian cartographer Jayme Bertrand depicted Mali emperor Mansa Musa almost naked on his throne with oversized genitals.<sup>26</sup>

SOME WHITE MEN were honest enough to broadcast their attractions, usually justifying them with assimilationist ideas. Royalist Richard Ligon, exiled from parliamentary England in Barbados, sat at a dinner adoring the "black Mistress" of the colony's governor. Barbados had become richer than all the other British colonies combined by the mid-1600s. Sugar was planted right up to the steps of homes, and the residents ate New England food instead of growing their own. To Ligon, the Black mistress had "the greatest beauty and majesty together: that ever I saw in one woman," exceeding Queen Anne of Denmark. Ligon presented her with a gift after the dinner. She responded with "the loveliest smile that I have ever seen." It was impossible for Ligon to tell what was whiter, her teeth "or the whites of her eyes."

This was one of the many small stories that made up Ligon's *A True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbadoes* in 1657, the year Elizabeth Key's case was finally settled. In one story, a submissive slave named "Sambo" tells on his fellows who are planning a slave revolt and refuses his reward. In another, Ligon informs a "cruel" master of Sambo's

desire to be "made a Christian." By English law, we cannot "make a Christian a Slave," the master responds. "My request was far different from that," Ligon replies, "for I desired him to make a Slave a Christian." If Sambo becomes a Christian, he can no longer be enslaved, the master says, and it will open "such a gap" that "all of the planters in the island" will be upset. Ligon lamented that Sambo was to be kept out of the church. But at the same time, he gave enslavers a new theory to defend their enterprise: Blacks were naturally docile, and slaves could and should become Christians. Planters had feared the conversion of slaves because they believed that if their slaves were Christian, they would have to be freed—and Elizabeth Key's successful suit showed that the laws supported this belief. Ligon's distinction between making "a Christian a slave" and "a slave a Christian" turned this idea on its head. Though it took time, eventually it became the basis for closing the religious loophole Key had exposed. Ligon lifted the biblical law of converting the unconverted over British law barring the enslavement of Christians. He promoted the idea of baptizing enslaved Africans through the docile figure of Sambo, and planters and intellectuals almost certainly got the point: submissive, confessing Sambo desired Christianity, and he should be permitted to have it. Indeed, Christianity would only make slaves more docile. Ligon's recommendation of Christianizing the slave for docility appeared during a crucial time of intellectual innovation. And as intellectual ideas abounded, justifications for slavery abounded, too.

ON NOVEMBER 28, 1660, a dozen men gathered in London and founded what became known as the Royal Society. Europe's scientific revolution had reached England. Italians initiated the Accademia dei Lincei in 1603, the French L'Academie française was founded in 1635, and the Germans established their national academy, Leopoldina, in 1652. King Charles II chartered the Royal Society as one of the first acts of his restored anti-Puritan monarchy in 1660. One of the early leaders of the Royal Society was one of England's most celebrated young scholars, the author of *The Sceptical Chymist* (1661) and the father of English

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chemistry—Robert Boyle. In 1665, Boyle urged his European peers to compile more "natural" histories of foreign lands and peoples, with Richard Ligon's *Historie of Barbados* serving as the racist prototype.<sup>27</sup>

The year before, Boyle had jumped into the ring of the racial debate with *Of the Nature of Whiteness and Blackness*. He rejected both curse and climate theorists and knocked up a foundational antiracist idea: "The Seat" of human pigmentation "seems to be but the thin *Epi-dermes*, or outward Skin," he wrote. And yet, this antiracist idea of skin color being only skin deep did not stop Boyle from judging different colors. Black skin, he maintained, was an "ugly" deformity of normal Whiteness. The physics of light, Boyle argued, showed that Whiteness was "the chiefest color." He claimed to have ignored his personal "opinions" and "clearly and faithfully" presented the truth, as his Royal Society deeded. As Boyle and the Royal Society promoted the innovation and circulation of racist ideas, they promoted objectivity in all their writings.<sup>28</sup>

Intellectuals from Geneva to Boston, including Richard Mather's youngest son, Increase Mather, carefully read and loudly hailed Boyle's work in 1664. A twenty-two-year-old unremarkable Cambridge student from a farming family copied full quotations. As he rose in stature over the next forty years to become one of the most influential scientists of all time, Isaac Newton took it upon himself to substantiate Boyle's color law: light is white is standard. In 1704, a year after he assumed the presidency of the Royal Society, Newton released one of the most eminent books of the modern era, *Opticks*. "Whiteness is produced by the Convention of all Colors," he wrote. Newton created a color wheel to illustrate his thesis. "The center" was "white of the first order," and all the other colors were positioned in relation to their "distance from Whiteness." In one of the foundational books of the upcoming European intellectual renaissance, Newton imaged "perfect whiteness."<sup>29</sup>

Robert Boyle would not live to read *Opticks*. He died, after a long and influential life, in 1691. During his lifetime, he did not merely found chemistry, whiten light, power the Royal Society, and inspire Isaac Newton, the Mather clan, and throngs of intellectuals on both sides of

the Atlantic. Boyle sat on the original Council for Foreign Plantations in 1660, which was commissioned concurrently with the Royal Society to centralize and advise the vast empire that Charles II inherited.

In 1661, Boyle's council made its first formal plea to planters in Barbados, Maryland, and Virginia to convert enslaved Africans. "This Act . . . shall [not] . . . impead, restrain, or impair" the power of masters, the council made sure to note. The council's pleas resounded louder and louder each year as the plantation economy surged across the Western Hemisphere, as a growing flock of powerful British ministers vied for submission of African souls, and as planters vied for submission of their bodies. Missionaries endeavored to grow God's kingdom as planters endeavored to grow profits. The marriage of Christian slavery seemed destined. But enslaved Africans balked. The vast majority of Africans in early America firmly resisted the religion of their masters. And their masters balked, too. Enslavers would not, or could not, listen to sermons to convert their slaves. Saving their crops each year was more important to them than saving souls. But of course they could not say that, and risk angering their ministers. Enslavers routinely defended their inaction by claiming that enslaved Africans were too barbaric to be converted.

The racist debate over the cause of Blackness—climate or curse—had been joined by this new racist debate over Blacks' capability for Christianity. The segregationist belief that enslaved Africans should not or could not be baptized was so widespread, and so taboo to discuss—as Richard Ligon found in Barbados—that virtually no enslaver took to writing to defend it in a major piece in the 1600s. That did not stop the assimilationists, who believed that lowly enslaved Africans, practicing their supposed animalistic religions, were capable of being raised to Christianity. In the 1660s, there emerged a missionary movement to publicize this divine duty to resistant slaveholders and slaves. Richard Mather's grandson spent his adult life carrying this movement to the churches of New England. But Mather did not live to see it.

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#### CHAPTER 4

## Saving Souls, Not Bodies

WHEN CHARLES II restored the English throne in 1660, he restored the religious persecution of Puritans. Roughly 2,000 Puritan ministers were forced out of the Church of England during the Great Ejection. In New England, Richard Mather had lost some hearing and sight in one eye. But he was still as defiant to the crown as he had been as a younger man, and he steered New England nonconformists as adroitly as he had done for three decades. His fellow theological captain, John Cotton, had died in 1652. Mather's first wife had also died, and he had married Cotton's widow, Sarah Hankredge Story Cotton. His youngest son, Increase Mather, married Sarah's daughter—now his stepsister—Maria Cotton, further interlacing the ties between the famous Cottons and Mathers. As if to triple-knot the family tie, Increase and Maria named their first son, upon his birth on February 12, 1663, Cotton Mather.

Richard Mather lived six years after the birth of his grandson. When he died, Increase Mather honored his father by writing his biography, putting in print Richard Mather's providential deliverance from the Great Hurricane of 1635, a story as meaningful to the Mather lineage as any passage in the Bible. Increase Mather, who took the helm of John Cotton's famed North Church of Boston in 1664, taught all ten of his eventual children that they were regular receivers of divine providence like their grandfather. Increase especially expressed this exceptionality to Cotton Mather. In time, Cotton would make his father a prophet. He combined the best of the Cottons and Mathers,

eclipsing them all in America's historical memory. By the century's end, African slavery sounded as natural to the colonists as the name "Cotton Mather," and hardly any intellectual was more responsible for this binding than Cotton Mather himself. Cotton Mather was not the sole progenitor of such ideas, however. He was influenced by the books he read by his contemporaries. And few, if any, books influenced Cotton Mather's racist ideas more than Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*.

From his British ministerial post in Kidderminster, Richard Baxter urged slaveholders across the ocean to follow God's law in making slaves into Christians in his well-traveled treatise *A Christian Directory* (1664–1665). He told them to "make it your chief end in buying and using slaves, to win them to Christ, and save their Souls." Be sure to "let their Salvation be far more valued by you than their Service." Although he was at the head of the missionary movement, Baxter was not alone in proselytizing to African people. As early as 1657, English Dissenter George Fox prevailed on his newly founded Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, to convert the enslaved. Eschewing church hierarchies, and preaching that everyone had access to the "inward light of God," the Quakers seemed primed to one day produce abolitionists and antiracists!<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to square his Christian faith—or his nation's Christian faith—with slavery, Baxter tried to argue that some kind of benevolent slavery was possible and would be helpful for African people. These assimilationist ideas of Christianizing and civilizing enslaved Africans were particularly dangerous because they gave convincing power to the idea that slavery was just and should not be resisted. And so Baxter, a nonconforming Puritan, conformed—and conformed his Puritan readers—to most, though certainly not all, of the racist policies of Charles II's expanding slaveholding empire. People who have "forfeited life or liberty" can be enslaved, Baxter wrote. However, "to go as pirates and catch up poor negroes . . . is one of the worst kind of thievery in the world." Enslavers "that buy them and use them as beasts and . . . neglect their souls, are fitter to be called incarnate devils than Christians." Baxter naïvely believed there existed in bulk in the slave trade what he called a "voluntary-slave." He tried to will into existence

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a world where loving masters bought voluntary slaves to save their souls. Baxter's world remained a heavenly dream crafted long ago by Gomes Eanes de Zurara. But even that dream world was seen as a threat by enslavers. American enslavers were still afraid to baptize Africans, because Christian slaves, like Elizabeth Key, could sue for their freedom.<sup>2</sup>

The colonies moved quickly to legalize the proselytizing demands of missionaries like Richard Baxter, and to hush the freedom cries from Christian slaves. In 1667, Virginia decreed that "the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage." New York did the same in 1664, as did Maryland in 1671. "May more" masters, the Virginia legislators inscribed, "carefully endeavor the propagation of Christianity" to slaves. Masters were supposed to care for the resisting souls of their captives. But what about their resisting bodies? In 1667, the English Parliament empowered masters to control the "wild, barbarous and savage nature" of enslaved Africans "only with strict severity." And in 1669, the personal physician of Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, one of the Lords Proprietor of the Province of Carolina, in his draft of the original *Fundamental Constitution of the Carolinas*, awarded the founding planters of the province "absolute power and authority" over their captives.<sup>3</sup>

WHEN JOHN LOCKE moved to London in 1667 to become the personal physician of Lord Cooper, he had much more to offer the colonizing British politician than his medical expertise. He had studied at the feet of Robert Boyle after his educational tenure at Oxford, and he had ended up collecting more travel books than philosophy texts for his immense personal library. Lord Cooper asked Locke to draw up the Carolinas constitution and serve as the secretary of the Proprietors (and soon the Council of Trade and Plantations and the Board of Trade and Plantations). Not many Englishmen were more knowledgeable—or less compassionate—than Locke about British colonialism and slavery. "You should feel nothing at all of others' misfortune," Locke advised a friend in 1670.<sup>4</sup>

Between all his colonial and medical duties, by July 1671 Locke had written the first draft of his lasting philosophical monument, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*. Over the next two decades, he revised and expanded the essay before its grand appearance in four books in 1689. That year, Locke also released his *Two Treatises of Government*, attacking monarchy, requesting a "government with the consent of the governed," and distinguishing between temporary "servants" and "slaves, who being captives taken in a just war, are by the right of nature subjected to the absolute dominion and arbitrary power of their masters." Just as Richard Baxter had pushed his "voluntary slave" theory to defend slavery in his free Christian society, John Locke pushed his "just war" theory to defend slavery in his free civil society.

In any society, the mind "at first . . . is rasa tabula," Locke famously wrote in *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*. If people are born without innate intelligence, then there cannot be a natural intellectual hierarchy. But Locke's egalitarian idea had a caveat. As Boyle and Newton painted unblemished light white, Locke more or less painted the unblemished mind white. Locke used the term "white paper" much more often than "blank slate" or "tabula rasa" to describe the child's "as yet unprejudiced Understanding."<sup>5</sup>

Locke also touched on the origin of species in *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*. Apes, whether "these be all Men, or no, all of human Species," depended on one's "definition of the Word Man," because, he said, "if History lie not," then West African women had conceived babies with apes. Locke thus reinforced African female hypersexuality in a passage sent round the English-speaking world, "And what real Species, by that measure, such a Production will be in Nature, will be a new Question." Locke's new "Question" reflected another new racist debate that most debaters feared to engage in publicly. Assimilationists argued monogenesis: that all humans were one species descended from a single human creation in Europe's Garden of Eden. Segregationists argued polygenesis: that there were multiple origins of multiple human species.

Ever since Europeans had laid eyes on Native Americans in 1492, a people unmentioned in the Bible, they had started questioning the

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The origin of species in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*—whether "these be all Men, or no, all one's 'definition of the Word Man,' or not," then West African women had been created in God's image. Locke thus reinforced African female equality round the English-speaking world. In this measure, such a Production will be in question." Locke's new "Question" reflected what most debaters feared to engage in public discourse: that all humans were one species; human creation in Europe's Garden of Eden; polygenesis: that there were multiple species.

Spain had eyes on Native Americans in 1492, and by 1519, they had started questioning the

biblical creation story. Some speculated that Native Americans had to have descended from "a different Adam." By the end of the sixteenth century, European thinkers had added African people to the list of species descended from a different Adam. In 1616, Italian freethinker Lucilio Vanini said—as Locke suggested later—that Ethiopians and apes must have the same ancestry, distinct from Europeans. But no one made the case for polygenesis as stoutly as French theologian Isaac La Peyrère in *Prae-Adamitae* in 1655. Translated into English in 1656, *Men Before Adam* was publicly burned in Paris and banned from Europe (after Locke secured a copy). Christians tossed La Peyrère in prison and burned Vanini at the stake for defying the Christian monogenesis story of Adam and Eve. But they could not stop the drift of polygenesis.

To justify Black enslavement, Barbados planters actually "preferred" the polygenesis theory over the curse theory of Ham, according to eyewitness Morgan Godwyn. Godwyn made this revelation in a 1680 pamphlet that criticized racist planters for making "those two words, *Negro* and *Slave*," synonymous, while "White" was "the general name for Europeans." This Anglican brought his missionary zeal from Virginia to Barbados in the 1670s. He stood at the forefront of his denomination's efforts to baptize enslaved Africans, aping a Quaker named William Edmundson.<sup>6</sup>

IN 1675, A WAR more destructive than the Great Hurricane of 1635 ravaged New England. Three thousand Native Americans and six hundred settlers were killed, and numerous towns and burgeoning economies were destroyed during King Philip's War. In the midst of the carnage, William Edmundson, who had founded Quakerism in Ireland, arrived in Rhode Island, reeling from his failure to convert enslaved Africans in Barbados. When his failures continued in Rhode Island, he began to understand that slavery was holding back his missions, and he told slave-owning Quakers as much in a letter in 1676. Edmundson had an assimilationist vision, a vision to "restrain and reclaim" African people from "their accustomed filthy, unclean practices" in defiling each other. Quakers' "self-denial" of human property could "be known to all."

*abolitionist*

Abolitionist ideas blossomed again a dozen years later among the Mennonite and Quaker founders of Germantown in Philadelphia, this time, without Edmundson's assimilationist ideas. Mennonites were an Anabaptist denomination born out of the Protestant Reformation in the German- and Dutch-speaking areas of Central Europe. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, orthodox authorities lethally persecuted the Mennonites. The Mennonites did not intend to leave behind one site of oppression to build another in America.

Mennonites therefore circulated an antislavery petition on April 18, 1688. "There is a saying, that we shall do to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are," they wrote, "In Europe there are many oppressed" for their religion, and "here those are oppressed" for their "black colour." Both oppressions were wrong. Actually, as an oppressor, America "surpass[ed] Holland and Germany." Africans had the "right to fight for their freedom."

The 1688 Germantown Petition Against Slavery was the inaugural antiracist tract among European settlers in colonial America. Beginning with this piece, the Golden Rule would forever inspire the cause of White antiracists. Antiracists of all races—whether out of altruism or intelligent self-interest—would always recognize that preserving racial hierarchy simultaneously preserves ethnic, gender, class, sexual, age, and religious hierarchies. Human hierarchies of any kind, they understood, would do little more than oppress all of humanity.

But powerful slaveholding Philadelphia Quakers killed the Germantown petition out of economic self-interest. William Edmundson had likewise suffered for promoting antislavery arguments a dozen years earlier. Slaveholding Quakers across New England had banished Edmundson from their meetings. The elderly founder of the American Baptist Church, Rhode Island's Roger Williams, called Edmundson "nothing but a bundle of ignorance." Not many New Englanders read Edmundson's letter to slaveholding Quakers, and not many noticed its significance. Everyone was focused on King Philip's War.<sup>7</sup>

In early August 1676, Increase Mather—the theological scion of New England with his father dead—impled God from sunup to

ed again a dozen years later among the members of Germantown in Philadelphia, this assimilationist ideas. Mennonites were an out of the Protestant Reformation in striking areas of Central Europe. During nineteenth centuries, orthodox authorities banished. The Mennonites did not intend to return to build another in America.

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Philadelphia Quakers killed the Germanic self-interest. William Edmundson noted antislavery arguments a dozen times across New England had banished. The elderly founder of the American Colonies Roger Williams, called Edmundson "a scoundrel." Not many New Englanders reading Quakers, and not many noticed its based on King Philip's War.<sup>7</sup>

Cotton Mather—the theological scion of the dead—impleored God from sunup to

sundown to cut down King Philip, or Metacomet, the Native American war leader. The conflict had been worsening for a little over a year, and the Puritans had lost homes and dozens of soldiers. Less than a week after Mather's prayer campaign, Metacomet was killed, more or less ending the war. Puritans cut up his body as if it were a hog's. A nearly fourteen-year-old Cotton Mather detached Metacomet's jaw from his skull. Puritans then paraded Metacomet's remains around Plymouth.<sup>8</sup>

Down in Virginia, Governor George Berkeley was trying to avoid a totally different war with neighboring Native Americans, in part to avoid disrupting his profitable fur trade. Twenty-nine-year-old frontier planter Nathaniel Bacon had other plans. The racial laws passed in the 1660s had done little to diminish class conflict. Around April 1676, Bacon mobilized a force of frontier White laborers to redirect their anger from elite Whites to Susquehannocks. Bacon's mind game worked. "Since my being with the volunteers, the discourse and earnestness of the people is against the Indians," Bacon wrote to Berkeley in triumph. Berkeley charged Bacon with treason, more worried about armed landless Whites—the "Rabble Crew"—than the Susquehannocks and nearby Occaneechees. But Bacon was not so easily stopped. By summer, the frontier war had quickly become a civil war—or to some, a class war—with Bacon and his supporters rebelling against Berkeley, and Berkeley hiring a militia of mercenaries.

By September 1676, a defiant Bacon had "proclaimed liberty to all Servants and Negroes." For Governor Berkeley's wealthy White inner circle, poor Whites and enslaved Blacks joining hands presaged the apocalypse. At the head of five hundred men, Bacon burned down Jamestown, forcing Berkeley to flee. When Bacon died of dysentery in October, the rebellion was doomed. Luring Whites with pardons and Blacks with liberty, Berkeley's forces persuaded most of Bacon's army to lay down their weapons. They spent the next few years crushing the rest of the rebels.

Rich planters learned from Bacon's Rebellion that poor Whites had to be forever separated from enslaved Blacks. They divided and conquered by creating more White privileges. In 1680, legislators

pardoned only the White rebels; they prescribed thirty lashes for any slave who lifted a hand "against any Christian" (Christian now meant White). All Whites now wielded absolute power to abuse any African person. By the early eighteenth century, every Virginia county had a militia of landless Whites "ready in case of any sudden eruption of Indians or insurrection of Negroes." Poor Whites had risen into their lowly place in slave society—the armed defenders of planters—a place that would sow bitter animosity between them and enslaved Africans.<sup>9</sup>

COTTON MATHER WAS in college when he detached Metacomet's jaw from his skull and heard about Bacon's Rebellion. Back in the summer of 1674, Increase Mather crossed the Charles River to present an eleven-year-old Cotton Mather for admission as the youngest student in Harvard's history. He was already well known in New England as an intellectual prodigy—or, from the Puritans' standpoint, the chosen one. Cotton Mather was fluent in Latin, running through fifteen chapters of the Bible a day, and as pious as boys came.<sup>10</sup>

Smaller than a sixth-grade pupil, when Cotton Mather walked onto the tiny campus he was like a self-righteous politician entering a corrupted Congress. The dozen or so fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds schemed to break the eleven-year-old's moral backbone until Increase Mather complained about the hazing. The teenagers stopped prodding him to sin, but sin still bedeviled him. Sin was like the shadow he could never shake. The most trivial incident could explode into anxiety. One day, his tooth ached. "Have I not sinned with my Teeth?" his mind raced. "How? By sinful, graceless excessive Eating. And by evil Speeches." Cotton Mather had started stuttering, and the incessant self-searching and the burden of trying to live up to his two famous names may have worsened his condition. For the young minister-in-training, the soul-searching setback caused him to turn to his ink and quill.<sup>11</sup>

Insecure in speech, Cotton Mather seemed to be a different person as a writer—confident, brilliant, and artistic. His father allowed him to write up many important church and government documents. Cotton ended up writing 7,000 pages of sermons in his notebooks

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between the ages of thirteen and thirty-two, far and away more ser-  
monic pages than any other American Puritan. And his diary from  
1681 to 1725 is the lengthiest available of any American Puritan.<sup>12</sup>

Cotton Mather had been encouraged by his anxious but reassuring  
father. Sooner or later, Cotton steeled his determination to find a way  
around the mighty rock. The youngster incessantly practiced away his  
stammer by singing psalms and speaking slowly, and by the end of his  
Harvard days he had learned to control it. He was delivered.

Cotton Mather cruised to the annual Boston Commencement  
Day in 1678. Harvard president Uriah Oakes called him to receive his  
degree. "What a name!" Oakes smiled. "I made a mistake, I confess; I  
should have said, what names!"<sup>13</sup>

THE FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD COTTON MATHER graduated into a British world  
that was developing more and more sophisticated racist ideas to ratio-  
nalize African slavery. English scientists and colonizers seemed to  
be trading theories. Around 1677, Royal Society economist William  
Petty drafted a hierarchical "Scale" of humanity, locating the "Guinea  
Negroes" at the bottom. Middle Europeans, he wrote, differed from  
Africans "in their natural manners, and in the internal qualities of their  
minds." In 1679, the British Board of Trade approved Barbados's bru-  
tally racist slave codes, which were securing the investments of traders  
and planters, and then produced a racist idea to justify the approval:  
Africans were "a brutish sort of People."<sup>14</sup>

In 1683, Increase and Cotton Mather founded colonial America's  
first formal intellectual group, the Boston Philosophical Society. Mod-  
eled after London's Royal Society, the Boston Society lasted only four  
years. The Mathers never published a journal, but if they had, they  
might have modeled it after the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transac-  
tions*, or the *Journal des Scavans* in Paris. These were the organs of West-  
ern Europe's scientific revolution, and new ideas on race were a part  
of that revolution. French physician and travel writer François Bernier,  
a friend of John Locke's, anonymously crafted a "new division of the  
earth" in the French journal in 1684.<sup>15</sup>

Through this essay, Bernier became the first popular classifier of all humans into races, which he differentiated fundamentally by their phenotypic characteristics. To Bernier, there existed "four or five Species or Races of men so notably differing from each other that this may serve as the just foundation of a new division of the world." As a monogenesist, he held that "all men are descended from one individual." He distinguished four races: the "first" race, which included Europeans, were the original humans; then there were the Africans, the East Asians, and the "quite frightful" people of northern Finland, "the Lapps." Bernier gave future taxonomists some revisionist work to do when he lumped with Europeans in the "first" race the people of North Africa, the Middle East, India, the Americas, and Southeast Asia.

The notion of Europeans—save the Lapps—as being in the "first" race was part of Western thought almost from the beginning of racist ideas. It sat in the conceptual core of climate theory: Africans darkened by the sun could return to their original White complexion by living in cooler Europe. In advancing White originality and normality, Bernier positioned the "first" race as the "yardstick against which the others are measured," as historian Siep Stuurman later explained. Bernier simultaneously veiled and normalized, screened and standardized White people—and he eroticized African women. "Those cherry-red lips, those ivory teeth, those large lively eyes . . . that bosom and the rest," Bernier marveled. "I dare say there is no more delightful spectacle in the world."

It was a subtle contradiction—the diminution of Black people's total (as racial) humanity in the midst of the elevation of their sexual humanity, a contradiction inherent in much of anti-Black racism. Bernier valued rationality, using it as a yardstick of superiority, irrespective of physicality. Superior physicality related Africans to those creatures containing the utmost physical prowess—animals. François Bernier posed the notion of two human souls: one hereditary, sensitive, nonrational, and animal-like; the other God-given, spiritual, and rational. "Those who excel in the powers of the mind . . . [should] command those who only excel in brute force," Bernier concluded, "just as the soul governs the body, and man rules animals."<sup>16</sup>

ier became the first popular classifier of the differentiated fundamentally by their race. Bernier, there existed "four or five Species" differing from each other that this was "the division of a new division of the world." As a matter of fact, all men are descended from one individual species: the "first" race, which included Europeans; then there were the Africans, the "lightful" people of northern Finland, "the Swedes," and so on. Taxonomists some revisionist work to do in this "first" race the people of North America, the Americas, and Southeast Asia.

—save the Lapps—as being in the "first" race almost from the beginning of racist theory: Africans darkened to their original White complexion by "accident"; White originality and normality, race as the "yardstick against which the black man Siep Stuurman later explained. Bernier normalized, screened and standardized African women. "Those cherry-red large lively eyes . . . that bosom and the like, say there is no more delightful specta-

on—the diminution of Black people's beauty amidst the elevation of their sex, inherent in much of anti-Black racism. Using it as a yardstick of superiority, irreducible physicality related Africans to those irreducible physical prowess—animals. François Bernier human souls: one hereditary, sensible; the other God-given, spiritual, and irreducible powers of the mind . . . [should] rule in brute force," Bernier concluded, "and man rules animals."<sup>16</sup>

IT IS UNCLEAR whether Cotton Mather read Bernier's "new division of the earth." Next to his father, he was more likely than any other English-speaking New Englander to know a little French and read the *Journal des Scavans*. In the years after his graduation, he amassed one of the largest libraries in New England. But the late 1670s and 1680s were a tense time for New England elites. It was difficult to maintain the peace of mind for leisurely reading.

In 1676, English colonial administrator Edward Randolph had journeyed to New England, and he had seen the devastation wrought by King Philip's War. Randolph, an advocate of stern royal control, informed King Charles II of New England's vulnerability and suggested that the time had come to snatch the royally appointed chair of autonomy for Massachusetts—the precious charter of 1629—out of colonial hands. In the coming years, while Cotton Mather finished college and prepared for the pulpit, Randolph journeyed back and forth over the Atlantic Ocean. Every trip stirred new rumors of the charter being pulled and a new round of debates on whether to submit, compromise, or defy the king. Some New Englanders were furious at the prospect of losing local rule. "God forbid, that I should give away the Inheritance of my Fathers," stormed Increase Mather at a town meeting in January 1684.

A year after Cotton Mather became co-pastor with his father of Boston's North Church, Randolph returned holding the royal revocation of the charter and the installation of a royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. Much of New England despondently submitted on May 14, 1686. Not Increase Mather, the newly installed head of Harvard. By May 1688, he was in England lobbying the successor to Charles II, James II, who offered religious liberty to Catholics and nonconformists. But during the "Glorious Revolution" later in the year, James II was overthrown by William, the Dutch prince, and James's daughter, Mary. New Englanders did not sit by idly. In 1689, they raised the baton of revolt.

CHAPTER 5

## Black Hunts

ON THE EVENING of April 17, 1689, the twenty-six-year-old Cotton Mather probably held a meeting at his house. These elite merchants and ministers plotted to seize the captain of the royal warship guarding Boston Harbor, arrest royalists, and compel the surrender of the royalist contingent on Fort Hill. They hoped to control and contain the revolt, avoid the bloodshed, and await instructions from England, where Increase Mather held his lobbying post before William and Mary. They did not want a revolution. They merely wanted their royally backed local power reestablished. But "if the Country people, by any unrestrainable Violences," pushed toward revolution, Cotton Mather explained, then to pacify the "ungoverned Mobile" they would present a *Declaration of Gentleman and Merchants*.

The next morning, conspirators seized the warship captain as planned. News of the seizure initiated rebellious seizures all over Boston, as the elite plotters feared would occur. A convulsed working-class crowd gathered at the Town House in the center of town, "driving and furious," avid for royal blood and independence. Mather rushed to the Town House. At noon, he probably read from the gallery a *Declaration of Gentleman and Merchants* to the revolutionaries. Mather's calm, assuring, ministerial voice "reasoned down the Passions of the Populace," according to family lore. By nightfall, Sir Edmund Andros, Edward Randolph, and other known royalists had been arrested, and Puritan merchants and preachers once again ruled New England.<sup>1</sup>

The populace remained unruly, however, over the next few weeks. Cotton Mather was tapped to preach at a May convention called to settle the various demands for independence, military rule, or the old charter. He did not see democracy in the different demands; he saw pandemonium. "I am old enough to cry *Peace!* And in the Name of God I do it," he preached at the convention. The next day, town representatives voted to return to the old charter and reappoint the old governor, Simon Bradstreet. Peace, or the old social order of the populace submitting to the ministers and merchants, did not reappear, as Mather had wished. Nearly everyone knew the Bradstreet government was unofficial, as it had not received royal backing. When the king recalled Andros, Randolph, and other royalists in July 1689, it did not calm the masses. "All confusion is here," one New Englander reported. "Every man is a Governor," another testified.<sup>2</sup>

THE DECLARATION OF GENTLEMAN AND MERCHANTS—most likely written by Mather—resembled another declaration by another prominent intellectual down in Virginia a century later. In the sixth article (of twelve), the writer declared, "The people of *New England* were all slaves and the only difference between them and slaves is their not being bought and sold." In unifying New Englanders, Mather tried to redirect the resistance of commoners from local elites to British masters. And in actuality, Mather saw more differences between Puritans and slaves, if his other published words in 1689 were any indication, than between local New Englanders and their British masters. In the collection of sermons *Small Offers Toward the Service of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness*, Mather first shared his racial views, calling the Puritan colonists "the English Israel"—a chosen people. Puritans must religiously instruct all slaves and children, the "inferiors," Mather pleaded. But masters were not doing their job of looking after African souls, "which are as white and good as those of other Nations, but are Destroyed for lack of Knowledge." Cotton Mather had built on Richard Baxter's theological race concept. The souls of African people were equal to those of the Puritans: they were *White* and good.<sup>3</sup>

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Mather wrote of all humans having an unblemished White soul the same year John Locke declared all unblemished minds to be White. Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton had already popularized light as White. Michelangelo had already painted the original Adam and God as both being White in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. And for all these White men, Whiteness symbolized beauty, a trope taken up by one of the first popular novels by an English woman.

Published in 1688, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave*, was the first English novel to repeatedly use terms like "White Men," "White People," and "Negro." Set in the Dutch South American colony of Surinam, *Oroonoko* is the story of the enslavement and resistance of a young English woman and her husband, Oroonoko, an African prince. Oroonoko's "beautiful, agreeable and handsome" physical features looked more European than African ("His nose was rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat"), and his behavior was "more civilized, according to the European Mode, than any other had been." Behn framed Oroonoko as a heroic "noble savage," superior to Europeans in his ignorance, in his innocence, in his harmlessness, and in his capacity for learning from Europeans. And in true assimilationist fashion, one of the characters insists, "A Negro can change colour; for I have seen 'em as frequently blush and look pale, and that as visibly as I ever saw in the most beautiful White."<sup>4</sup>

RICHARD BAXTER ENDORSED the London edition of Cotton Mather's other 1689 publication, his first book-length work, which became a best seller: *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions*. Baxter rejoiced, having influenced the young Mather, as someone "likely to prove so great a Master Building in the Lords Work." Mather's treatise, outlining the symptoms of witchcraft, reflected his crusade against the enemies of White souls. He could not stop preaching about the existence of the Devil and witches. Or perhaps the restlessness of the commoners in the aftermath of the 1689 revolt triggered the real obsession in Cotton Mather. The revolt, indeed, had fueled public strife against not only the faraway British king

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but also Puritan rulers of Mather's stature. Maybe Mather was con-  
sciously attempting to redirect the public's anger away from elites  
and toward invisible demons. He did regularly preach that anyone  
and anything that criticized his English Israel must be led by the  
Devil. Long before egalitarian rebels in America started to be cast off  
as extremists, criminals, radicals, outsiders, communists, or terrorists,  
Mather's community of ministers ostracized egalitarian rebels as dev-  
ils and witches.<sup>5</sup>

"How many doleful Wretches, have been decoy'd into Witch-  
craft," Cotton Mather asked in 1691. His father, Increase, preached a  
lengthy series on devils in 1693 after returning from England with the  
new Massachusetts charter. Samuel Parris, a Salem minister, preached  
endlessly about the devils in their midst. And on one dismal day in  
February 1692, Parris anxiously watched his nine-year-old daughter  
and eleven-year-old niece suffer chokes, convulsions, and pinches. As  
their condition worsened each day, the minister's worsened, too. It  
dawned on Parris: the girls had been bewitched.<sup>6</sup>

While prayers rose up like kites in Salem and nearby towns, the  
Salem witch hunt began. The number of afflicted and accused spread  
over the next few months, swelling the public uproar and turning  
public attention from political to religious strife. And in nearly every  
instance, the Devil who was preying upon innocent White Puritans  
was described as Black. One Puritan accuser described the Devil as "a  
little black bearded man"; another saw "a black thing of a considerable  
bigness." A Black thing jumped in one man's window. "The body was  
like that of a Monkey," the observer added. "The Feet like a Cocks, but  
the Face much like a man's." Since the Devil represented criminality,  
and since criminals in New England were said to be the Devil's oper-  
atives, the Salem witch hunt ascribed a Black face to criminality—an  
ascription that remains to this day.<sup>7</sup>

Cotton Mather's friends were appointed judges, including mer-  
chant John Richards, who had just officiated at Mather's wedding. In a  
letter to Richards on May 31, 1692, Mather expressed his support for  
capital punishment. The Richards court executed Bridget Bishop on  
June 10, the first of more than twenty accused witches to die.<sup>8</sup>

The accused up north in Andover, Massachusetts, confessed that the Black Devil man compelled them to renounce their baptism and sign his book. They rode poles to meetings where as many as five hundred witches plotted to destroy New England, the accused confessed. Hearing about this, Cotton Mather sniffed out a "Hellish Design of Bewitching and Ruining our Land." Mather ventured to Salem for the first time to witness the executions on August 19, 1692. He came to see the killing of George Burroughs, the supposed general of the Black Devil's New England army of witches. Burroughs preached Anabaptist ideas of religious equality on the northern frontier, the kind of ideas that had bred antiracism in Germantown. Mather watched Burroughs plead his innocence at the execution site, and stir the "very great number" of spectators when he recited the Lord's Prayer, something the judges said witches could not do.<sup>9</sup>

"The black Man stood and dictated to him!" Burroughs's accuser shouted, trying and failing to calm the crowd. Mather heard the ticking time bomb of the spectators, sounding like the unruly masses during the 1689 revolt. As soon as Burroughs was hanged, Mather sought to quell the passions of the crowd by re-inscribing the executive policies of his ruling class into God's law. Remember, he preached, the Devil often transformed himself into an Angel of Light. Mather clearly believed in the power of religious (and racial) transformation, from Black devils to White angels, with good or bad intentions.

The fervor over witches soon died down. But even after Massachusetts authorities apologized, reversed the convictions, and provided reparations in the early 1700s, Mather never stopped defending the Salem witch trials, because he never stopped defending the religious, class, slaveholding, gender, and racial hierarchies reinforced by the trials. These hierarchies benefited elites like him, or, as he continued to preach, they were in accord with the law of God. And Cotton Mather viewed himself—or presented himself—as the defender of God's law, the crucifier of any non-Puritan, African, Native American, poor person, or woman who defied God's law by not following the rules of submission.<sup>10</sup>

Sometime after the witch trials, maybe to save their Black faces from accusations of devilishness and criminality, a group of enslaved

Andover, Massachusetts, confessed that they had renounced their baptism and attended meetings where as many as five hundred New England, the accused confessed. Mather sniffed out a "Hellish Design of Land." Mather ventured to Salem for the executions on August 19, 1692. He came to Burroughs, the supposed general of the Black witches. Burroughs preached Anabaptist ideas in the northern frontier, the kind of ideas that Mather abhorred. Mather watched Burroughs' execution site, and stir the "very great number" recited the Lord's Prayer, something the crowd did.<sup>9</sup>

"I am dictated to him!" Burroughs's accuser tried to calm the crowd. Mather heard the tick-tockers, sounding like the unruly masses soon as Burroughs was hanged, Mather calmed the crowd by re-inscribing the execution into God's law. Remember, he preached, he cast himself into an Angel of Light. Mather was part of religious (and racial) transformation, angels, with good or bad intentions.

The crowd died down. But even after Massachusetts reversed the convictions, and provided reprieves, Mather never stopped defending the Salem trials. He stopped defending the religious, class, and social hierarchies reinforced by the trials. He was like him, or, as he continued to preach, the law of God. And Cotton Mather viewed himself—as the defender of God's law, the crusader, Native American, poor person, or by not following the rules of submission.<sup>10</sup> In the trials, maybe to save their Black faces from death and criminality, a group of enslaved

Africans formed a "Religious Society of Negroes" in Boston. It was one of the first known organizations of African people in colonial America. In 1693, Cotton Mather drew up the society's list of rules, prefaced by a covenant: "Wee, the miserable children of Adam and Noah . . . freely resolve . . . to become the *Servants* of that Glorious Lord." Two of Mather's rules were instructive: members were to be counseled by someone "wise and of English" descent, and they were not to "afford" any "Shelter" to anyone who had "Run away from their Masters." Meeting weekly, some members of the society probably delighted in hearing Mather cast their souls as White. Some probably rejected these racist ideas and used the society to mobilize against enslavement. The Religious Society of Negroes did not last. Few Africans wanted to be Christians at that time (though that would change in a few decades). And not many masters were willing to let their captives become Christians because, unlike in other colonies, there was no Massachusetts law stipulating that baptized slaves did not have to be freed.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the social tumult of the 1690s, Mather obsessed over maintaining the social hierarchies by convincing the lowly that God and nature had put them there, whether it applied to women, children, enslaved Africans, or poor people. In *A Good Master Well Served* (1696), he presumed that nature had created "a conjugal society" between husband and wife; a "Parental Society" between parent and child; and, "lowest of all," a "herile society" between master and servant. Society, he said, became destabilized when children, women, and servants refused to accept their station. Mather compared egalitarian resisters to that old ambitious Devil, who wanted to become the all-powerful God. This line of thinking became Mather's everlasting justification of social hierarchy: the ambitious lowly resembled Satan; his kind of elites resembled God.

"You are better fed & better clothed, & better managed by far, than you would be, if you were your own men," Mather informed enslaved Africans in *A Good Master Well Served*. His insistence that urbane American slavery was better than barbaric African freedom was not unlike Gomes Eanes de Zurara's estimation that Africans were better off as slaves in Portugal than they had been in Africa. Do not partake in evil and "make

yourself infinitely Blacker than you are all ready," Mather warned. By obeying, your "souls will be washed 'White in the blood of the lamb.'" If you fail to be "orderly servants," then you shall forever welter "under intolerable blows and wounds" from the Devil, "your overseer." In sum, Mather offered enslaved Africans two options: righteous assimilated Whiteness and slavery to God and God's minions, or segregated criminal Blackness and slavery to the Devil and the Devil's minions.<sup>12</sup>

Mather's writings on slavery spread throughout the colonies, influencing enslavers from Boston to Virginia. By the eighteenth century, he had published more books than any other American, and his native Boston had become colonial America's booming intellectual center. Boston was now on the periphery of a booming slave society centered in the tidewater region of Maryland, Virginia, and northeastern Carolina. The Mid-Atlantic's moderate climate, fertile land, and waterways for transportation were ideal for the raising of tobacco, and lots of it. Fulfilling the voracious European demand, tobacco exports from this region skyrocketed from 20,000 pounds in 1619 to 38 million in 1700. The imports of captives (and racist ideas) soared with tobacco exports. In the 1680s, enslaved Africans eclipsed White servants as the principal labor force. In 1698, the crown ended the Royal African Company's monopoly and opened the slave trade. Purchasing enslaved Africans became the investment craze.<sup>13</sup>

The economic craze did not yield a religious craze, though. Planters still shied away from converting enslaved Africans, ignoring Mather's arguments. One lady inquired, "Is it possible that any of my slaves should go to heaven, and must I see them there?" Christian knowledge, one planter complained, "would be a means to make the slave more . . . [apt] to wickedness." Cotton Mather's counterpart in Virginia, Scottish minister James Blair, tried to induce planters to realize the submission wrought by Christianity. The 1689 appointment of the thirty-three-year-old Blair as commissary of Virginia—the highest-ranking religious leader—reflected King William and Queen Mary's new interest in the empire's most populous colony. Blair used profits from slave labor to found the College of William & Mary in 1693, the colonies' second college.<sup>14</sup>

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In 1699, Blair presented to the Virginia House of Burgesses "a Proposition for encouraging the Christian Education of Indians, Negroes, and Mulatto Children." Lawmakers responded, rather inaccurately, that the "negroes born in this country are generally baptised and brought up in the Christian religion." As for imported Africans, lawmakers announced, "the gross bestiality and rudeness of their manners, the variety and strangeness of their languages, and the weakness and shallowness of their minds, render it in a manner impossible to make any progress in their conversion." For the much more difficult commercial tasks, planters overcame the "strange" languages and had no problem teaching these "shallow-minded rude beasts" in other matters. Planters of impossibilities suddenly became planters of possibilities when instructing imported Africans on the complexities of proslavery theory, racist ideas, tobacco production, skilled trades, domestic work, and plantation management.<sup>15</sup>

As Maryland's commissary, the Oxford-educated Thomas Bray did not fare much better than Blair in converting Blacks during his tour of Maryland in 1700. Returning to London distressed in 1701, he organized the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). King William approved, and an all-star cast of ministers signed up to become founding members of the Church of England's first systematic effort to spread its views in the colonies. Cotton Mather did not sign up for SPG, distrustful of Anglicans on every level. Even though Mather started mocking "the Society for the Molestation of the Gospel in foreign parts," he remained in solidarity with Anglican SPG missionaries—and Quaker missionaries—in trying to persuade resistant enslavers to Christianize resistant Africans. Persuading planters was extremely difficult. Then again, persuading them to Christianize their captives was much easier than what Mather's friend tried to persuade them to do in 1700.<sup>16</sup>

CHAPTER 6

## Great Awakening

THE NEW CENTURY brought on the first major public debate over slavery in colonial America. New England businessman John Saffin refused to free his Black indentured servant named Adam after Adam served his contracted term of seven years. When Boston judge Samuel Sewall learned of Saffin's decision essentially to enslave Adam for the foreseeable future, Sewall was livid. Well known as one of the first Salem witch trial judges to publicly apologize, Sewall courageously took another public stand when he released *The Selling of Joseph* on June 24, 1700. "Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery," Sewall wrote. He shot down popular proslavery justifications, such as curse theory, the notion that the "good" end of Christianity justified the "evil" means of slavery, and John Locke's just war theory. Sewall rejected these proslavery theories from the quicksand of another kind of racism. New Englanders should rid themselves of slavery *and* African people, Sewall maintained. African people "seldom use their freedom well," he said. They can never live "with us, and grow up into orderly Families."<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Sewall could not be easily cast aside like those powerless Germantown petitioners. A close friend of Cotton Mather, Sewall had received an audience with the king in England, and he had served as judge on the highest court in Boston. He was on track to becoming the Puritans' chief justice in 1717. When Sewall judged slavery to be bad, he should have opened the minds of many. But proslavery racism had almost always been a close-minded affair. In place of open minds,

closed-minded "Frowns and hard Words" bombarded the forty-six-year-old jurist.

John Saffin, in particular, was maddened by Sewall's attack on his business dealings. A judge himself, Saffin refused to disqualify himself from adjuring a freedom case for Adam. At seventy-five years old in 1701, his lifetime in the trenches of early American capitalism had nurtured his outlook on powerful people. "Friendship & Munificence are Strangers in this world," Saffin once opined. "Interest and profit are the Principles by [which] all are Sway'd." No one attacked Saffin, called him "manstealer," and got away with it.<sup>2</sup>

Before the end of 1701, John Saffin had printed *A Brief and Candid Answer, to a Late Printed Sheet, Entitled, The Selling of Joseph*. "God hath set different Orders and Degrees of Men in the World," Saffin declared. No matter what Sewall said, it was not an "Evil thing to bring [Africans] out of their own Heathenish Country" and convert them. Saffin, well known among literary historians as a leading seventeenth-century poet, ended his pamphlet in verse with "The Negroes Character": "Cowardly and cruel are those Blacks Innate, Prone to Revenge, Imp of inveterate hate."<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Sewall won the battle—Adam was freed in 1703 after a long and bitter trial—but he lost the war. America did not rid itself of slavery or of Black people. In the newspaper debate that trailed the Sewall-Saffin dispute, Bostonians seemingly found Saffin's segregationist ideas more persuasive than Sewall's. Sewall did get in the last volley in his lost war, prompted by the London Athenian Society questioning whether the slave trade was "contrary to the great law of Christianity." Sewall answered affirmatively in a fourteen-page pamphlet in 1705. He pointed out that the so-called just wars between Africans were actually instigated by European slave-traders drumming up demand for captives.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the enslaved population continued to rise noticeably, which led to fears of revolts and then, in 1705, new racist codes to prevent revolts and secure human property up and down the Atlantic Coast. Massachusetts authorities forbade interracial relationships, began taxing imported captives, and, over Samuel Sewall's objections, rated Indians and Negroes with horses and hogs during a revision

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of the tax code. Virginia lawmakers made slave patrols compulsory for non-slaveholding Whites; these groups of White citizens were charged with policing slaves, enforcing discipline, and guarding routes of escape. The Virginia legislature also denied Blacks the ability to hold office. Evoking repeatedly the term "christian white servant" and defining their rights, Virginia lawmakers fully married Whiteness and Christianity, uniting rich White enslavers and the non-slaveholding White poor. To seal the unity (and racial loyalty), Virginia's White lawmakers seized and sold all property owned by "any slave," the "profit thereof applied to the use of the poor of the said parish." The story would be told many times in American history: Black property legally or illegally seized; the resulting Black destitution blamed on Black inferiority; the past discrimination ignored when the blame was assigned. Virginia's 1705 code mandated that planters provide freed White servants with fifty acres of land. The resulting White prosperity was then attributed to White superiority.<sup>5</sup>

ON MARCH 1, 1706, Cotton Mather asked God whether, if he "[wrote] an Essay, about the Christianity of our *Negro* and other *Slaves*," God would bless him with "Good Servants." Mather hoped a pamphlet focusing exclusively on this topic would help to shift the minds of enslavers who refused to baptize their captives. By now, he was unquestionably America's foremost minister and intellectual, having just published his New England history, a toast of American exceptionalism, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, regarded as the greatest literary achievement of New England's first century.<sup>6</sup>

Mather released *The Negro Christianized* in June 1706. The "Providence of God" sent Africans into slavery and over to Christian America to have the capacity to learn from their masters the "Glorious Gospel." They "are Men, and not Beasts," Mather stressed, opposing segregationists. "Indeed their Stupidity is a Discouragement. It may seem, unto as little purpose, to Teach, as to wash" Africans. "But the greater their Stupidity, the greater must be our Application," he proclaimed. Don't worry about baptism leading to freedom. The "Law of

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Christianity . . . allows Slavery" he resolved. He cited the writings of other Puritan theologians as well as St. Paul.<sup>7</sup>

On December 13, 1706, Mather believed wholeheartedly that God had rewarded him for writing *The Negro Christianized*. Members of Mather's church—"without any Application of mine to them for such a Thing"—spent forty or fifty pounds on "a very likely Slave," he happily noted in his diary. New England churches routinely gifted captives to ministers. Mather named "it" Onesimus, after St. Paul's adopted son, a converted runaway. Mather kept a close racist eye on Onesimus, constantly suspecting him of thievery.<sup>8</sup>

Mather's Christian slavery views were more representative in New England than Samuel Sewall's or John Saffin's ideas. But Samuel Sewall's views continued to echo in the writings of others. In 1706, John Campbell's first full-fledged essay in his *Boston News-Letter*, the second newspaper in colonial America, urged the importation of more White servants to reduce the colony's dependence on enslaved Africans, who were "much addicted to Stealing, Lying and Purloning." Americans reading early colonial newspapers learned two recurring lessons about Black people: they could be bought like cattle, and they were dangerous criminals like those witches.

From their arrival around 1619, African people had illegally resisted legal slavery. They had thus been stamped from the beginning as criminals. In all of the fifty suspected or actual slave revolts reported in newspapers during the American colonial era, resisting Africans were nearly always cast as violent criminals, not people reacting to enslavers' regular brutality, or pressing for the most basic human desire: freedom.<sup>9</sup>

As the sun fired up the sky on April 7, 1712, about thirty enslaved Africans and two Native Americans set fire to a New York building, ambushing the "Christians" who came to put it out, as the story was told. Nine "Christians" were slain, five or six seriously wounded. The freedom fighters ran off into the nearby woods. Fear and revenge smoldered through the city. Within twenty-four hours, six of the rebels had committed suicide (believing they would return to Africa in death); the rest were "hunted out" by soldiers and publicly executed, mostly

burned alive. New York colonial governor Robert Hunter, who supervised the hunt, the trials, and the executions, was a member of Thomas Bray's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Royal Society. He framed the slave revolt a "barbarous attempt of some of their slaves." No matter what African people did, they were barbaric beasts or brutalized like beasts. If they did not clamor for freedom, then their obedience showed they were naturally beasts of burden. If they nonviolently resisted enslavement, they were brutalized. If they killed for their freedom, they were barbaric murderers.

Their "barbarism" occasioned a "severe" slave code, resembling the laws passed by the Virginians and Puritans in 1705. New York lawmakers stripped free Blacks of the right to own property, and then they denigrated "the free negroes of the colony" as an "idle, slothful people" who weighed on the "public charge."<sup>10</sup>

IN THE MIDST of relentless African resistance and increasingly vocal antislavery Quakers, British slave-traders were still doing quite well, and they were primed for growth. In 1713, England won the *Assiento*, the privilege of supplying captives to all those Spanish American colonies, allowing it to soon become the eighteenth century's greatest slave-trader, following in the footsteps of France, Holland, and the pioneers in Portugal. New England had become the main entryway into the colonies for European and Caribbean goods. Ships setting out from the colonies, mostly from Boston and Newport, Rhode Island, carried the food that fed the British Caribbean's planters, overseers, and laborers. Ships returned hauling sugar, rum, captives, and molasses, all supplying New England's largest manufacturing industry before the American Revolution—liquor.<sup>11</sup>

Boston's status as one of the key ports in the colonies left the city vulnerable to disease. On April 21, 1721, the HMS *Seahorse* sailed into Boston Harbor from Barbados. A month later, Cotton Mather logged in his journal, "The grievous calamity of the smallpox has now entered the town." One thousand Bostonians, nearly 10 percent of the town, fled to the countryside to escape the judgment of the Almighty.<sup>12</sup>

al governor Robert Hunter, who supervised executions, was a member of Thomas Mather's congregation at the First Church of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and condemned the slave revolt a "barbarous attempt of savages." After what African people did, they were savages. If they did not clamor for freedom, they were naturally beasts of burden. If they fled enslavement, they were brutalized. If they were barbaric murderers.

Mather had passed a "severe" slave code, resembling the one passed by New England Puritans in 1705. New York lawmakers had given slaves the right to own property, and then they had condemned them as "the colony" as an "idle, slothful people" who deserved punishment.<sup>10</sup>

American resistance and increasingly vocal abolitionists were still doing quite well, though. In 1713, England won the *Assiento*, giving slaves to all those Spanish American colonies. Some of the eighteenth century's greatest economic footprints of France, Holland, and the British Isles had become the main entryway for British and Caribbean goods. Ships setting out from Boston and Newport, Rhode Island, carried British Caribbean's planters, overseers, and sailors, hauling sugar, rum, captives, and molasses—the largest manufacturing industry before the Industrial Revolution.<sup>11</sup>

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Fifteen years prior, Mather had asked Onesimus one of the standard questions that Boston slaveholders asked new house slaves—Have you had smallpox? "Yes and no," Onesimus answered. He explained how in Africa before his enslavement, a tiny amount of pus from a smallpox victim had been scraped into his skin with a thorn, following a practice hundreds of years old that resulted in building up healthy recipients' immunities to the disease. This form of inoculation—a precursor to modern vaccination—was an innovative practice that prevented untold numbers of deaths in West Africa and on disease-ridden slave ships to ports throughout the Atlantic. Racist European scientists at first refused to recognize that African physicians could have made such advances. Indeed, it would take several decades and many more deaths before British physician Edward Jenner, the so-called father of immunology, validated inoculation.

Cotton Mather, however, became an early believer when he read an essay on inoculation in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* in 1714. He then interviewed Africans around Boston to be sure. Sharing their inoculation stories, they gave him a window into the intellectual culture of West Africa. He had trouble grasping it, instead complaining about how "brokenly and blunderingly and like Idiots they tell the Story."<sup>13</sup>

On June 6, 1721, Mather calmly composed an "Address to the Physicians of Boston," respectfully requesting that they consider inoculation. If anyone had the credibility to suggest something so new in a time of peril it was Cotton Mather, the first American-born fellow in London's Royal Society, which was still headed by Isaac Newton. Mather had released fifteen to twenty books and pamphlets a year since the 1690s, and he was nearing his mammoth career total of 388—probably more than the rest of his entire generation of New England ministers combined.<sup>14</sup>

The only doctor who responded to Mather was Zabadiel Boylston, President John Adams's great-uncle. When Boylston announced his successful inoculation of his six-year-old son and two enslaved Africans on July 15, 1721, area doctors and councilmen were horrified. It made no sense that people should inject themselves with a disease

to save themselves from the disease, Boston's only holder of a medical degree, a physician pressing to maintain his professional legitimacy, fanned the city's flames of fear. Dr. William Douglass concocted a conspiracy theory, saying there was a grand plot afoot among African people, who had agreed to kill their masters by convincing them to be inoculated. "There is not a Race of Men on Earth more False Liars" than Africans, Douglass barked.<sup>15</sup>

Anti-inoculators like Dr. Douglass found a friendly medium in one of the colonies' first independent newspapers, the *New England Courant*, launched by twenty-four-year-old James Franklin in 1721. James Franklin's fifteen-year-old indentured servant and younger brother, Ben, worked as the typesetter for the newspaper. Feeling disrespected by the *Courant*, Cotton Mather demanded intellectual obedience like a tired college professor. The general public ignored him and withdrew. Bostonians' distaste for Mather and Boylston improved only when the epidemic that killed 842 people finally ended in early 1722.<sup>16</sup>

As April 1722 approached, Ben Franklin decided he wanted to do more than setting type for his brother's newspaper. He started anonymously penning letters with fascinating social advice, slipping them under the print shop door for his brother to print in the *Courant*. Signing the letters Silence Dogood, Ben was inspired by Mather's 1710 *Bonifacius, or Essays to Do Good*, on maintaining social order through benevolence. The book "gave me such a turn of thinking, as to have an influence on my conduct through life," Benjamin Franklin later explained to Mather's son. After publishing sixteen popular letters, Ben revealed the true identity of Silence Dogood to his jealous and overbearing brother. James promptly censured Ben. By 1723, all the ambitious Ben could think about was running away.<sup>17</sup>

Before fleeing to Philadelphia, Ben was summoned to a home on Ship Street. He nervously knocked. A servant appeared and led him to the study. Ben entered and beheld probably the largest library in North America. Cotton Mather forgave Ben for the war of words, as a father would a misbehaving child. No one knows what else the sixty-year-old and seventeen-year-old discussed.

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Ben Franklin may have noticed Cotton Mather's melancholy. Mather's beloved father, then eighty-four, was ill. When Increase Mather died in his oldest son's arms on August 23, 1723, the tragedy topped off some weary years for Cotton Mather, who had weathered marital disputes, financial problems, disagreements with Anglican ministers, being passed over twice for the Harvard presidency, and the news that Isaac Newton's Royal Society would no longer publish his work. Despite all his successes, Mather had begun to worry about his intellectual legacy.

If Mather stayed abreast of current events in the colonies in the 1720s, then he had no reason to worry about his missionary legacy. More fervently than any American voice since the 1680s, Mather had urged slaveholders to baptize enslaved Africans, and enslaved Africans to leave the religions of their ancestors. Moving slowly and carefully uphill, he had made strides over the years. Like-minded Anglican missionaries, such as James Blair, Thomas Bray, and the agents of his Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, had taken this idea further. Whether he realized it or not, and whether he despised the Anglican missionaries or not, Mather's prayers finally began to be answered during his final years.

Edmund Gibson, the distinguished Anglican bishop of London, decided to eliminate any lingering doubt in planters as to whether they could hold Christian captives. In two letters to Virginians in 1727, he praised and authenticated the innovative statute of 1667 that denied freedom to baptized captives. Gibson talked about how conversion obligated captives to "the greatest Diligences and Fidelity," an idea that Mather had been stressing for years. The British crown and the aides of Sir Robert Walpole, the first prime minister of Great Britain, echoed the bishop. All of Britain's religious, political, and economic power now united to free missionaries and planters from having to free the converted, thus reinvigorating proselytizing movements and dooming calls for manumission.<sup>18</sup>

More and more enslavers began to listen to the arguments of missionaries that Christian submission could supplement their violence in

subduing African people. Actually, the ministers focused on the submission and were mum on the violence. Minister Hugh Jones, a William & Mary professor, published his highly influential *Present State of Virginia* in 1724. "Christianity," Jones wrote, "encourages and orders" African people "to become more humble and better servants." They should not learn to read and write, though. They were "by Nature cut out for hard Labour and Fatigue." In his stunningly popular 1722 collection of sermons, James Blair proclaimed that the Golden Rule did not suggest equality between "superiors and inferiors." Order required hierarchy. Hierarchy required responsibility. Masters, Blair preached, were to baptize and treat their slaves kindly.<sup>19</sup>

Enslavers continued to become more open to these ideas right up until the First Great Awakening, which swept through the colonies in the 1730s, spearheaded by Connecticut native Jonathan Edwards. His father, Timothy Edwards, had studied under Increase Mather at Harvard, and he knew and venerated Cotton Mather. During Edwards's junior year at Yale in 1718, Cotton Mather had secured the donation from Welsh merchant Elihu Yale that had resulted in the name of America's third college (the Collegiate School) being changed.

Revivals at Edwards's Massachusetts church in Northampton jump-started the First Great Awakening around 1733. In awakening souls, passionate evangelicals like Edwards spoke about human equality (in soul) and the capability of everyone for conversion. "I am God's servant as they are mine, and much more inferior to God than my servant is to me," the slaveholding Edwards explained in 1741. But the proslavery Great Awakening did not extend to the South Carolina plantation of Hugh Bryan, who was awakened into antislavery thought. Bryan proclaimed "sundry enthusiastic Prophecies of the Destruction of Charles Town and Deliverance of the Negroes from servitude" in 1740. His praying captives stopped laboring. One woman was overheard "singing a spiritual at the water's edge," like so many other unidentified antiracist, antislavery Christian women and men who started singing in those years. South Carolina authorities reprimanded Bryan. They wanted evangelists preaching a racist Christianity for submission, not an antiracist Christianity for liberation.<sup>20</sup>

ually, the ministers focused on the sub-violence. Minister Hugh Jones, a Wilmited his highly influential *Present State of* Jones wrote, "encourages and orders" ore humble and better servants." They write, though. They were "by Nature atigue." In his stunningly popular 1722 air proclaimed that the Golden Rule did superiors and inferiors." Order required responsibility. Masters, Blair preached, slaves kindly.<sup>19</sup>

ome more open to these ideas right up g, which swept through the colonies in nnecticut native Jonathan Edwards. His studied under Increase Mather at Hart- ted Cotton Mather. During Edwards's otton Mather had secured the donation Yale that had resulted in the name of illegiate School) being changed.

assachusetts church in Northampton Awakening around 1733. In awakening like Edwards spoke about human equal- of everyone for conversion. "I am God's much more inferior to God than my lding Edwards explained in 1741. But ng did not extend to the South Carolin, who was awakened into antislavery undry enthusiastic Prophecies of the and Deliverance of the Negroes from captives stopped laboring. One woman tual at the water's edge," like so many antislavery Christian women and men years. South Carolina authorities reprim- vangelists preaching a racist Christian- acist Christianity for liberation.<sup>20</sup>

Hugh Bryan was an exception in the missionary days of the First Great Awakening, days Cotton Mather would not live to see. Though bedridden, he was happy he lived to see his sixty-fifth birthday on February 13, 1728. The next morning, Mather called his church's new pastor, Joshua Gee, into the room for prayer. Mather felt a release. "Now I have nothing more to do here," Mather told Gee. Hours later, Cotton Mather was dead.<sup>21</sup>

"He was perhaps the *principal Ornament* of this Country, and the greatest Scholar that was ever bred in it," praised the *New-England Weekly Journal* on February 19, 1728, the day of Mather's burial. It was an accurate eulogy for the grandson of John Cotton and Richard Mather. Cotton Mather had indeed overtaken the names of his grandfathers, two ministerial giants bred in an intellectual world debating whether Africa's heat or Ham's curse had produced the ugly apelike African beasts who were benefiting from enslavement. If his grandfathers consumed in England the racist idea of the African who can and should be enslaved, then Cotton Mather led the way in producing the racist idea of Christianity simultaneously subduing and uplifting the enslaved African. He joined with the producers of racist ideas in other colonial empires, from the mother countries in Europe, and normalized and rationalized the expansion of colonialism and slavery. Europeans were taking over and subduing the Western world, establishing their rightful ruling place as the very standard of human greatness, these racist producers proclaimed in a nutshell. By the time of Mather's death in 1728, Royal Society fellows had fully constructed this White ruling standard for humanity. Christianity, rationality, civilization, wealth, goodness, souls, beauty, light, Adam, Jesus, God, and freedom had all been framed as the dominion of White people from Europe. The only question was whether lowly African people had the capacity of rising up and reaching the standard. As America's first great assimilationist, Cotton Mather preached that African people could become White in their souls.

In 1729, Samuel Mather completed his esteeming biography of his deceased father, as Cotton Mather had done for his father, and as Increase Mather had done for Richard Mather. "When he walked the

streets," Samuel wrote of Cotton Mather, "he still blessed many persons who never knew it, with Secret Wishes." He blessed the Black man, dearly praying "Lord, Wash that poor Soul, make him white by the Washing of thy SPIRIT."<sup>23</sup>