

Discourse of Western Planting

by Richard Hakluyt

A particular discourse concerning the great necessity and manifold commodities that are like to grow to this Realm of England by the Western discoveries lately attempted, Written In the year 1584 by Richard Hakluyt of Oxford at the request and direction of the right worshipful Mr. Walter Raieigh now Knight, before the coming home of his Two Barks: and is divided into xxi chapters, the titles whereof follow in the next leaf.

That this western discovery will be greatly for the enlargement of the gospel of Christ whereunto the Princes of the reformed religion are chiefly bound, amongst whom her Majesty is principal.

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

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

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

That this voyage will be a great bridle to the Indies of the King of Spain and a means that we may arrest at our pleasure for the space of time weeks or three months every year, one or two hundred sail of his subjects ships at the fishing in Newfoundland.

That the riches that the Indian Treasure, wrought in time of Charles the late Emperor father to the Spanish king is to be had in consideration of the Queen most excellent Majesty, lest the continual coming of the like treasure from thence to his son, work the unrecoverable annoyance of this realm, whereof already we have had very dangerous experience.

What special means may bring King Phillip from his high throne, and make him equal to the princes his neighbors, wherewithal is showed his weakness in the west Indies.

That the limits of the King of Spain's dominions in the west Indies be nothing so large as is generally imagined and surmised, neither those parts which he hold be of any such forces as is falsely given out by the popish Clergy and others his suitors, to terrify the princes of the religion and to abuse and blind them.

The names of the rich towns lying along the sea coast on the north side from the equinoctial of the main land of America under the King of Spain.

A brief declaration of the chief lands in the Bay of Mexico being under the King of Spain, with their havens and fortes, and what commodities they yield.

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

That the passage in this voyage is easy and short, that it cuts not near the trade of any other mighty princes, nor near their countries, that it is to be performed at all times of the year, and needs but one kind of wind, that Ireland being full of good havens on the south and west sides, is the nearest part of Europe to it, which by this trade shall be in more security, and the sooner drawn to more civility.

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

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

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

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

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

That the Queen of England title to all the west Indies, or at the least to as much as is from Florida to the Circle Arctic, is more lawful and right than the Spaniards or any other Christian Princes.

An answer to the Bull of the Donacion of all the west Indies granted to the Kings of Spain by Pope Alexander the VI who was himself a Spaniard born.

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

A note of some things to be prepared for the voyage which is set down rather to draw the takers of the voyage in hand to the present consideration than for any other reason for that divers things require preparation long before the voyage, without which the voyage is maimed.