Other Spaniards explored the west coast, yet despite many rumors and hopeful promises, the interior of the northern continent was seemingly barren of all but a scattered native population still living in the Stone Age.

Nevertheless, some interest remained, not least among the French, who in 1562 sent an expedition to northern Florida under Jean Ribaut. Sponsored by Gaspard Coligny, the Protestant Admiral of France, its aim was to establish a retreat for his coreligionists in the event of their persecution at home. The initial attempt by Ribaut to establish a post at Charlesfort in modern South Carolina failed, so two years later he led a second expedition, this time to build a fort and settlement on the St. Johns River in Florida. Unfortunately for the French, this second, more substantial expedition merely induced the Spanish to make a new effort to establish themselves in that area. In the summer of 1565, a force of fifteen hundred men under Pedro Menéndez de Avilés first founded the town of St. Augustine and then tracked down and destroyed Ribaut's settlement. The Spanish then placed various missions along the coast to convert the local inhabitants and to prevent any further intrusion by the subjects of a foreign power.

At this point, interest in the northern continent subsided. The Spanish were too busy elsewhere to bother with their less promising northern territories, while the Portuguese had more than enough to do exploiting Brazil, their preserve east of the Tordesillas line. Other European nations, meanwhile, seemed unable to make any impression. England and France were politically weak; Holland was a province of Spain; Germany was divided into small states; and Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries were remote and impoverished. In addition the trauma of the Reformation now swept most of northern Europe, channeling the region's energies away from exploring the New World.

2 ENGLAND: THE ELIZABETHAN PRELUDE

The Reformation in Europe began in 1517 when Martin Luther protested against what he considered to be the corrupt practices of the Roman Catholic church under the pope. Luther and others believed that faith alone, not good works, could secure salvation. They also felt that the church contained too much ceremony, pomp, and superstition to be compatible with the Christian message contained in the Bible. Ultimately most of northern Europe, including England, denounced the pope and separated from Catholicism.

The process of reforming the English church proved tortuous, however, and it was not until 1559 that Elizabeth I effected even a partial settlement. Interest in the New World resumed only in 1576 when Martin Frobisher set off on a series of journeys to seek a northwest passage. Two years later Sir Humphrey Gilbert obtained a patent from Queen Elizabeth for the discovery and colonization of the northern continent. Unfortunately, Frobisher was frustrated by the arctic ice, while Gilbert drowned off the Newfoundland coast in September 1583 before he could accomplish anything. Gilbert's patent was then taken up by his half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, who managed to interest a number of influential courtiers and seafaring men like Sir Francis Drake and Richard Grenville. As a result an expedition comprising two small vessels was dispatched in April 1584 under Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe to explore the coast of North America. They duly made their way via the West Indies and early in July reach the outer banks of North Carolina, where they made contact with the inhabitants of Roanoke Island and the surrounding area. Before leaving they persuaded (or forced) two inhabitants, Manteo and Wanchese, to accompany them back to England, to provide more information, not least knowledge of their language.

Amadas and Barlowe were sufficiently encouraging about trading prospects and the defensive advantages of Roanoke to persuade Raleigh and his friends to dispatch a major expedition the following year, this time to establish a permanent base. The flotilla comprised five large and two small vessels under the command of Grenville. Raleigh put much thought into the expedition. Not only were Manteo and Wanchese to return as interpreters but Thomas Harriot, a young Oxford graduate and scientist, and John White, an artist, were hired to assess the resources and draw the flora and fauna of the region, now called Virginia, in honor of the celibate queen.

Grenville's force left England in early April 1585 and arrived off the outer banks early in July. Here the expedition suffered its first setback when Grenville discovered that only the smallest vessels could get over the sandbar to the sound beyond, making Roanoke unsuitable as a permanent military base. Next, as the force explored the interior, a silver cup went missing. Grenville's decision to avenge this incident by burning an Indian village was hardly calculated to maintain good relations, though the act was to prove typical of the English in their dealings with the native population.

Grenville then departed for the Caribbean toward the end of August, leaving Captain Ralph Lane with approximately one hundred men to complete a fort and other dwellings. This number was smaller than originally contemplated, which posed a problem because more men were now needed to find another, more suitable site. Fortunately relations with the Roanoke Indians and their chief, Wingina, remained friendly. Lane was accordingly able to reconnoitre the surrounding area, even dispatching a party under White to winter among the Chesapeake Indians. However, when supplies began to run low toward the spring, Lane responded by demanding corn from Wingina, who offered Lane and his men some empty fields and seed corn. Despite this generosity Lane believed that the Indians were plotting an attack and carried out a preemptive strike, murdering Wingina and a number of his people. The triumph proved short-lived, since it soon made the other Indian communities fearful of further dealings with the white men, thus intensifying the food shortage. The Europeans now realized how tenuous their hold was. Not surprisingly, when Drake called unexpectedly in June 1586 after a buccaneering expedition in the West Indies, Lane and his men insisted on returning home.

The timing was unfortunate, for Grenville arrived a few weeks later with fresh supplies and men. After some deliberation he decided to leave fifteen men to hold the fort until a further group of colonists could arrive the following year.

Meanwhile, in England Raleigh's enthusiasm for colonization was beginning to wane. White and a number of others, however, remained optimistic and suggested a new plan to settle the Chesapeake area, which he believed would provide better harbor facilities and a more friendly population. Under White's prompting the scheme this time was less martial and more agricultural, being primarily aimed at establishing a colony of predominantly families and freeholders as opposed to soldiers and servants. It was to be called the City of Raleigh.

Accordingly in April 1587 some eighty-five men, seventeen women, and eleven children set sail, this time for the Chesapeake. Unfortunately the two vessels were late in departing, and the captain insisted on leaving the settlers at the old site on Roanoke. White may have agreed to this, since Manteo was still with him and could be expected to enlist some local support. There was also a chance that the men Grenville had left behind would be present to welcome them. Unfortunately, they turned out to be no longer there, having presumably been driven off by a now enraged native population. This meant that no crops

Plate 1 Roanoke and its vicinity 1585, by John White. The Mansell Collection, London.

had been sown, nor habitable accommodation maintained. In this critical situation it was decided that White should return to England for additional help.

Before he could return with fresh supplies, however, war broke out between England and Spain. Philip II had been increasingly angered by Elizabeth I and her policies. Having previously been married to Elizabeth's half-sister and predecessor, Queen Mary, he still had pretensions to the English throne. A devout Catholic, having received from the pope the title of "most Catholic monarch," his religious belief also caused him to oppose Protestant England. In addition, Philip II resented England's support for the Dutch revolt against his rule; and he was also displeased at the activities of Drake and Grenville. By 1588 the solution was clear. With the support of Pope Sixtus V, he resolved to invade England, claim its throne for himself, and rid the world of a dangerous heretic.

The effect of the war was to sever all communication with Roanoke until after the Spanish Armada had been defeated. Not until August 1590 did a relief vessel get through, by which time all trace of the settlers had vanished. White had left instructions that the colonists were to move to a neighboring location in the event of trouble, leaving a message as to their whereabouts. The only message was the word "Croatan" carved on a doorpost, an apparent reference to a neighboring island on which Manteo's people lived. But no clue to the settlers' fate could be found, though diminishing supplies and poor weather prevented a visit to Croatan itself.

The Roanoke episode subsequently gave rise to legends that the settlers had intermarried with the local people and migrated into the interior of the continent. Another

thesis is that they went north to join the Chesapeake Indians. More prosaically, their fate can be reduced to one of three possibilities: either they died of starvation; or they were killed by hostile American Indians; or they drowned at sea while trying to make their escape. The last fate now seems the most likely, given the lack of any archeological remains.[1]

There are several reasons for the English failure to sustain a permanent presence on the continent at this time. The first was poor timing. Had the Armada not sailed, the Roanoke settlers would probably have been rescued by White's relief expedition. The second factor against them was the poor nature of the site, which was swampy, not readily accessible, and disease-ridden. But even more important was the project's poor organization, which stemmed mainly from Raleigh's limited funds. Mounting an expedition so far from home in such hostile conditions required huge resources, not to mention luck. It was an enterprise equivalent to exploring the moon today, in which no single individual, however rich, could hope to succeed.

Other factors, too, worked against the would-be colonists. One was the type of settler. Most were soldiers of fortune, not colonizers. They lacked the motivation and practical skills to get a settlement started. They and their patrons were interested mainly in seizing existing wealth, either from newly discovered empires or from Spanish treasure fleets, and the lure of such conquests remained strong until the next century, despite the diminishing returns that even successful buccaneers like Drake and Grenville experienced. As late as 1617, Raleigh was still proposing another expedition to discover a new El Dorado, reputed to be a fabulously rich Indian empire in the interior of Guiana.

Although the last decade of the sixteenth century witnessed no fresh attempt at settlement by the English, a number of changes occurred which ultimately enabled them to colonize North America. The first was the growing realization that precious metals and jewelry were not the only commodities to bring wealth. Increasingly sugar, cotton, cacao, coffee, tobacco, and even fish were seen as having equal value. Indeed, as the Dutch were beginning to demonstrate, shipping these goods alone could be a highly profitable undertaking.

This realization in turn led to the appreciation that a different kind of operation was required to profit fully from the New World. Buccaneering might result in the interception of a treasure fleet; it could hardly enable a crop to be harvested. Clearly a more sober type of colonist was needed. Richard Hakluyt, Jr., advocated this and other ideas in his book *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation,* which appeared in 1589. In various chapters Hakluyt listed the advantages which would result from plantations, as he called them. The new settlements could provide naval stores like pitch, tar, and hemp. Ships would be required to supply them, thus increasing the pool of seamen and naval resources of the nation. Other valuable commodities, like olives, vines, and citrus fruit, could be grown, thus ending both dependence on foreign producers and the drain on bullion. In short, the American settlements could "yield unto us all the commodities of Europe, Africa and Asia . . . and supply the wants of all our decayed trades."[2] The poor need no longer burden the rest of the community, while the power of the state would greatly increase, as would the profit of the individual.

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[1] For the argument that the colonists joined the Chesapeake Indians see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Roanoke: The Abandoned Colony* (Totowa, 1984); and David B. Quinn, *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584–1606* (Chapel Hill, 1985).

[2] Extracts of Hakluyt's writings are to be found in David B. Quinn, *The New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, 5 vols (London, 1979), III, 71–123.

English colonization of the New World was given another important boost at this time by the rise of the joint stock company, a new institution which promised to overcome the limitations of exploration by individuals such as Raleigh. By selling shares in an enterprise, such companies could harness the resources of many individuals, making possible a larger and more sustained effort. The first such ventures were the Russia and Eastland companies, formed in 1553 and 1572 respectively to trade with Muscovy, followed in 1592 by the Levant Company, set up to trade in the eastern Mediterranean. The most famous was the East India Company, established in 1600 to trade with India and the Far East. The development of these companies reflected not only the growing concentration of monied wealth, especially in London, but also the increasing opportunities for commerce. Indeed, historians have regarded European expansion in the sixteenth century as proof that the continent was emerging from its feudal, theocratic, and communal past into a more aggressive, individualistic, and capitalistic era.

These opportunities for English colonization and trade were greatly increased in 1604 by the formal signing of peace with Spain. Although Spain did not recognize the right of the English to contravene the Treaty of Tordesillas, the agreement did promise a new era in which their colonial ventures stood a better chance of success. The Spanish implicitly accepted that they had enough difficulty controlling their existing possessions without attempting to police the activities of other nations farther to the north.

Another stimulus to English overseas settlement at this time was the growth in population and rise in unemployment. The latter problem was greatly exacerbated by the enclosure of fields to consolidate holdings; as a result of this policy many tenant farmers lost their lands. Some of these were prepared to try their fortunes elsewhere. So, too, were skilled workers in the woolen industry who were experiencing hard times. As Sir George Popham, one of the first architects of English settlement in Virginia argued, a colony in America could employ not only the ex-soldiers and "poor artisans" but also "the idle vagrants" and many others who could not find work at home.

A further inducement for people to leave England was religious conflict. Although Elizabeth I had tried to devise a religious settlement which permitted theological diversity, many groups were still dissatisfied. The Puritans in particular yearned for greater cleansing of the national church. They believed that there were still too many corrupt Roman Catholic elements in the Episcopalian settlement, and their discontent increasingly brought them into conflict with the authorities. As a result, some Puritan dissenters began to think of leaving England to establish a commonwealth elsewhere which was free from such corruption.

Yet another reason for emigration may have been the Crown's attempts to modernize the English state. Since the middle of the sixteenth century successive monarchs had interfered with local institutions like the borough corporations, the militia, and the governing of the poor. Now new laws like the Statute of Artificers regulating the employment of labor were suddenly imposed on communities which had barely changed in centuries, while additional agencies of government, like justices of the peace, were also created. All of these changes helped produce an atmosphere of uncertainty, encouraging some people to look overseas for a more stable environment.

A final contributing factor may have been the English colonization of Ireland. Since the beginning of her reign Elizabeth I had made determined efforts to anglicize Ireland by imposing English law, customs, and officials to bind the country more securely to the Crown. In the process a number of settlers had also been sent. Of course colonizing Ireland was very different from settling North America. Ireland had a large population with a highly developed

agriculture. It was also a Christian country with a long cultural tradition, many of whose people spoke English. Moreover, Ireland was nearby, and the English and the Irish had been visiting each other since the time of the Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century.[3]

North America, on the other hand, was three thousand miles distant. The main challenge there was to tame a totally different environment, and to civilize inhabitants who in English eyes were nothing more than heathen savages. The English colonization of Ireland was nevertheless an important precedent, if only for the experience it provided. Many of those involved in Ireland were also active across the Atlantic, notably Raleigh, Grenville, Gilbert, and Lane. Significantly, their attitude to the Irish was similar to that shown subsequently to the indigenous peoples in North America.

By the turn of the seventeenth century, then, the pace of English interest in the New World was beginning to quicken. Peace with Spain was in the offing, and new possibilities for trade were in prospect. Even the most northern parts of America now appeared attractive, since it was now appreciated that the seas there abounded with fish, while the land contained many fur-bearing animals. These prospects led to renewed voyages of exploration, notably by Sir George Weymouth, who visited the coast of Nantucket and Maine in 1605. He returned with five Abenaki Indians and a highly optimistic account of the possibilities for trade and settlement. One final spur, if any were needed, was the knowledge that from 1603 the French were sending out various expeditions under Samuel Champlain to explore the area of the St. Lawrence.

Toward the end of 1605, therefore, a group of merchants and their friends, including the younger Hakluyt, petitioned the Crown for a charter incorporating two companies, one from the City of London, called the London Company, the other from the ports of Bristol, Exeter, and Plymouth, called the Plymouth Company, to establish two colonies in that part of America "commonly called Virginia." This area was defined as lying between latitudes 34 and 45 degrees north, which James I, Elizabeth's successor, affirmed was outside the dominion of either Spain or France, since neither nation had established any effective settlement there.

The plea was accordingly successful and a charter duly issued on April 10, 1606. The London Company, or South Virginia group, was granted the area between 34 and 41 degrees north: the Plymouth Company, or North Virginia group, could settle anywhere between 38 and 43 degrees north, though neither company was to come within one hundred miles of the other. No difficulties were anticipated in this respect, since the South Virginia group intended to concentrate on the Chesapeake area, which White and others had explored in the winter of 1585. The North Virginia group, in contrast, intended to devote itself to the area to the north reconnoitred by Weymouth.

In America, each venture was to set up a council of thirteen, which was to elect a president and control all local matters. However, the overall direction of the two enterprises was to be in the hands of a royal council of fourteen chosen by the king. The normal joint stock model was not adhered to in this case because the two companies were not simple trading organizations. The fact that they were rather aiming to develop commerce by peopling new lands with subjects of the Crown led James I to believe that his Privy Council should oversee all important aspects of the new venture. Both groups were in any

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[3] The argument that Ireland provided a model for the English colonization of America is put forward by Nicholas P. Canny. See especially his article, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXX, 1973, 575–98.

case represented on the new royal council, the northern company by Sir Fernando Gorges and the southern company by Sir Thomas Smith.[4]

Initially few objections were voiced, for the prospects still looked promising. The charter granted the companies "all the Lands, Woods, Soil, Grounds, Havens, Ports, Rivers, Mines, Minerals, Marshes, Waters, Fishings, Commodities, and Hereditaments" within their jurisdiction. In addition they could mine for gold and other precious metals, though one-fifth of any such discoveries would belong to the Crown. They could also mint money, a rare privilege, but could not trade with foreign nations, meaning Europeans. Finally, the companies had the right to expel any interlopers, which effectively gave each an absolute monopoly in its respective area.

The charter also had to address the status of those now going across the sea. It was clearly not intended that they should cease to be subjects of the king. On the other hand, neither should their position be disadvantaged as a result of leaving their homeland. Consequently it was agreed that the colonists and their children should be guaranteed all the "liberties, franchises, and immunities" which Englishmen then enjoyed. These were not defined, although recognized as among the most important was the right to own and inherit property. Nevertheless, all lands in America were to be held as part of the king's demesne in free and common socage, not fee simple.[5] Except in New England, seventeenth-century property rights were never to be as absolute as they later became in the United States.[6]

The charter said little about the treatment of the native inhabitants except that the settlements might "tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty" by spreading "the christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance." The hope was that such missionary work would "in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government." No liberties or immunities were mentioned for them. Indeed, the Spanish precedent suggested that Christianity could succeed only when civility had been accomplished and that this could be achieved only by compulsion. Even then, the indigenous peoples could expect no more than a subordinate role as hewers of wood and drawers of water, if the examples set by Raleigh, Gilbert, and others in Ireland were any guide.

In the initial stages of colonization, the Plymouth Company proved the more speedy. By August 1606 it had a ship ready to reconnoitre its designated area. Unfortunately, the vessel was blown off course and then seized by the Spanish. A second attempt at reconnoitring the New England coast was more successful, but by the time the crew returned, the London Company had already dispatched three ships – the *Sarah Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery* – with the first colonists on board.

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[4] A complete copy of the charter can be found in W. Keith Kavenagh, *Foundations of Colonial America: A Documentary History* (New York, 1974), III, 1698–1704.

[5] The term *socage* meant that the possessor had to pay a small annual fee, known as quitrent, to the king, as opposed to enjoying an absolute *fee simple*, which would have been equivalent to owning the land outright. Modern English property law uses the term *leasehold* for socage and *freehold* for fee simple. It is these latter terms which are generally used hereafter to describe such property arrangements.

[6] This was true of all "rights" at this time, which basically fell into three categories: privileges granted by the Crown, privileges established by custom, and rights laid down by statute. Crown privileges varied according to the residence and circumstance of the individual. The same was true of custom. Only rights established by statute, notably trial by jury, were common to all. Even these were not absolute in the sense of the later state and federal constitutions of America, since what one parliament had granted another could take away.