

- 14 Today, 65 percent of American nuns have master's degrees and 25 percent have doctoral degrees. Only 24 percent of American bishops have master's degrees, and only 10 per cent have doctorates.' B. Ferraro and P. Hussey *No Turning Back* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990) p 62.
- 15 Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). p xv.
- 16 Yvone Gebara, Option of the Poor as option for the Poor Women in *Concilium* 194:110 'Poor, even though it refers primarily to a social group deprived of material goods, can be expanded to include an impoverished culture, voiceless minorities without rights, groups seeking elementary recognition in society. Women are included in this expansion of the term poor.'
- 17 *Economic Justice for All* (Wash, D.C.: USCC) No. 24.

Columbus was not Eichmann

John Navone SJ

Christopher Columbus has been a target of revisionist debunking as the New World prepares for the 500th anniversary of the European discovery. Once praised as a superb seaman by Samuel Eliot Morison, Columbus has shrunk to an incompetent bumbler in Kirkpatrick Sale's book, *The Discovery of Paradise*—a paradise, the author argues, that Europeans despoiled. Going further, other protesters hand up the equivalent of a Nuremberg indictment. What happened after 1492, thunders the National Council of Churches, was 'an invasion and colonisation with legalised occupation, genocide, economic exploitation and a deep level of institutional racism and moral decadence.' This is partly true, but by the same selective reckoning Jefferson was a Virginia elitist and a slave-owning plutocrat. In his *New York Times* editorial (June 26, 1991), 'Columbus Was Not Eichmann,' Karl E. Meyer affirms that, despite their cruelties, Spanish colonisers were not simply war criminals; and, whatever his faults, Columbus was not Eichmann. That anyone would suggest otherwise tells more about our own self-righteous age than that of Columbus.

Nobody can deny that the conquistadores thirsted for gold and glory, slaughtered Indians and imported African slaves. What needs to be added is that their excesses were searingly indicted by Spanish churchmen, notably by the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas. His *Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, published in Seville in 1552, remains the prime source for the worst horror stories of the Spanish conquest. His searing narrative, Meyer affirms, was seized upon by English Protestants to justify their own conquests. This grew

into what scholars call the 'Black Legend,' a caricature of Spanish cruelty drawn by the busy pens of Protestant propagandists. Here, for example, is Sir Walter Raleigh's depiction of life in the rival evil empire:

The sighs, grones, lamentacions, teares and blood of so many millions of innocent men, women and children afflicted, robbed, reviled, branded with hot irons, roasted, scalded with hot oil, suet and hog grease, put to the strapado, ripped open alive, beheaded in sport, drowned, dashed against the rocks, famished, devoured by mastifs, burned and by infinite cruelty consumed.

It should be observed that cruelty was the common currency of power among Europeans, and indeed among less-than-noble high Indian civilisations. The same applies to religious fanaticism. English Protestants relished denouncing the Inquisition and its burning of heretics. But Meyer notes that a witch-hunting frenzy in Protestant Europe claimed as many or more victims. What is left out is that Spain, almost from the beginning, acknowledged that Indians were also God's children, a ruling that gave moral leverage to clerical defenders of indigenous peoples. Spanish culture, which included Cervantes no less than Torquemada, gave Latin America a common tongue and a common framework of law.

All this is set forth in a hundred scholarly works of which detractors of the Hispanic legacy in the Americas appear to know little. Those who sentimentalise native American cultures overlook a grievous failing: all power was vested in the community, to which obedience was obligatory. Meyer affirms that the idea of individual rights—human, civil and political—was a redeeming gift of haughty Iberians and, yes, of Anglo-Saxons. Meyer admits that the colonisers had much to answer for; to ignore their achievements distorts history. Europeans passed judgment on themselves, thus nurturing the very universal norms that enable people today to throw mud at their ancestors.

Teresa De Balmaseda Milam, Vice Chairman of Florida's Columbus Hemispheric Commission, also defends Columbus and the Spanish cultural and religious contribution (*New York Times*, July 4, 1991) in her response to an attack on the same which had appeared the previous month. She observes that Americans do not object to celebrating Thanksgiving Day annually as a national holiday. She raises the question: 'Did America start the arrival of the Mayflower?' There were two other thanksgivings much before this. One in 1565, when Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and his men arrived in St. Augustine, and the first mass was celebrated on the American continent. The other

Thanksgiving, she continues, was celebrated later in Texas. What happened to the natives in 17th century North America? She remarks that are not many Mestizos there. Spanish Franciscans and Jesuits taught the Indians not only religion but also skills, crafts, reading. Spaniards also learned the native languages.

A Spaniard by birth and an American by citizenship, she recounts that in Spain children are taught in school of Spain's early civilisations and its invaders: the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Visigoths, the Moors. Throughout the history of any nation there have been many contributions to its development—some good and some bad—but we are part of those civilisations. The Spanish flag was in the U.S. much before the Jamestown colony and stayed there for nearly 300 years. This influence is obvious throughout the U.S. There were 200 missions in Georgia and 180 in Florida, which were destroyed by later Protestant invaders. Balmaseda Milam laments that American history books tell nothing of how Spain helped the 13 states to gain their independence by giving money and ammunition to General Washington. She also decries the 'Black Legend' which has vilified and defamed all Latin Catholic cultures, Italian and French, no less than Iberian.

John Leo, in his essay 'The North American Conquest' (*U.S. News and World Report*, May 13, 1991, p. 25), writes that for the revisionists Columbus' arrival was not a 'discovery,' but an 'invasion' that led to 'genocide' and 'ecocide.' One academic sourcebook is titled the 'American Holocaust and Survival.' The revisionist work, for Leo, is not emerging in a vacuum but in the context of great unhappiness about industrial pollution, American power in the world and rising complaints from domestic minority groups. When the *City Paper* of Washington, D.C. reviewed the Smithsonian Institute's revisionist and highly ideological art exhibit about the Old West, it did not merely point out the sins of European settlers. It ranted about 'business-suited white males.' Similarly, the positionings of the Indian as an environmental hero, living in perfect harmony with nature, is something of an exaggeration. America was a hard place, and Indians mowed down small forest and sometimes drove lots of buffalo over cliffs. Many tribes just messed up the place and moved on. There is no reason, Leo affirms, to believe that with better technology they would not have made just as big a mess as more advanced cultures have. After all, Europeans and Asians at the same stage of development were not major environmental villains either.

In much of the popularised literature, the deadly diseases brought by Europeans are either counted as 'genocide' or implicitly used as an anti-white political paradigm (white equals disease and death). But the tragic

deaths of so many Indians occurred because the natives had been isolated for thousands of years from the rest of the world's cycle of diseases and immunities. The incredible die-off would have occurred if the Europeans had come in peace and remained on the coast, or if Asians or Africans had been the new settlers. Besides, historians rarely assign blame and guilt for diseases as they are transported around and around. Nobody says that the Mongols were genocidal killers for passing on the Black Plague to Europe.

William Pfaff, columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, writes about the same multiculturalist ideology in his article, 'Immigration: A Clashing of Theory and Hard Fact,' (*International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1991). Multiculturalists hold that the rich countries are illicitly rich, and stole their wealth from the rest of the world through imperialism and colonialism. They exploited migrant labourers so long as they needed them. Now they must give back to the poor, through policies of unrestricted and non-discriminatory immigration. Multiculturalists may add that policies of cultural assimilation in the host country are a form of imperialism. They argue that schools and other cultural institutions should not privilege the historical values, norms of behaviour, language or literature of the host-country majority, as this would suggest that the values of the immigrant groups are less meritorious.

Pfaff asserts that the argument against indiscriminating immigration states that while the industrial nations benefit from migration there is a social as well as practical limit to the numbers they can accept in a given period. It rejects multiculturalism, and defends the proposition that a hierarchy of values exists. It says that these democratic and liberal values, which worldwide are defended by a heavily outnumbered minority, are properly taught in a democracy. It insists that cultural assimilation is a justified objective of host-country social and educational policy. Beyond these arguments, Pfaff believes, lies a reality that has nothing to do with theory. The political forces of exclusion stirring in Europe demonstrate that a social and political limit does indeed exist to European peoples' willingness to accept further mass immigration. These phenomena also demonstrate for Pfaff the European populations' unwillingness to accept indefinitely the existence of large culturally unassimilated minorities in their countries. It is plain that a common European policy controlling immigration is essential, as are measures of cultural as well as economic assimilation of the young migrants already installed in Western Europe. Good or bad, this is fact. One who remembers the origins of the Second World War will not underestimate the danger of substituting theory for fact in such a matter

as this. The religio-cultural war between the Croats and Serbs, no less than current tensions between Greeks and Turks, Jews and Palestinians, Azerbaijanis and Armenians, Slovaks and Czechs—all manifest the danger. All suggest, for Pfaff, the irresponsibility of immigration policies that promise new confrontations between peoples of deep cultural differences and expectations.

The Monastic Ethic and the Spirit of Greenery

Hugh Walters O.P.

Lucio: Why, how now Claudio! whence comes this restraint?

Claudio: From too much liberty my Lucio; liberty,
As surfeit, is the father of much fast;
So every scope by the immoderate use
Turns to restraint...

(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* Act 1 Scene 2)

What we can call 'greenery' is all about ordering one's life. It is about how to live in our common home; to be green it is not necessary to be a Christian. An eclectic mix of cosmology and apocalyptic speculation, politics and sheer commonsense, make up what Germaine Greer has called the 'Tyranny of the Green Religion'. This embodies both criticism and hope and, more immediately, a call to change the minutiae of one's life in the face of a perceived threat to that life. In the face of massive pollution outside the private sphere of influence we are trying, rather desperately perhaps, to rediscover personal ways of becoming clean. Ironically, this might be achieved by romantically rediscovering the organic, the soil, dirt, clay itself, the natural, the given in the face of the man made; an attempt to place the moral and political orders once more in the context of the natural order.

Two recently published books attempt to green the Churches and stimulate dialogue between those ecologically minded people who are not Christian and those Christian people who are not particularly ecologically minded. Some education is necessary for both groups, and