

Document 1

Francesco Guicciardini, Italian historian, from his famous history book, 1537

“These voyages have not only confuted many things which had been affirmed by writers about terrestrial matters, but . . . they have also given some cause for alarm to interpreters of Holy Scriptures, who . . . declared that . . . faith in Christ had spread over the entire earth through . . . the Apostles: an interpretation contrary to the truth.”

Document 2

A chronicle kept by the Cakchiquel Mayas for their descendants, recording the impact of a European disease on their people, early 16th century

“Great was the stench of the dead. After our fathers and grandfathers had succumbed, half of the people fled to the fields. The dogs and vultures devoured the bodies. The mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died, and with them died the son of the king and his brothers and kinsmen. So it was that we become orphans, oh, my sons! So we became when we were young. All of us were thus. We were born to die!”

Document 3

Adam Smith, British economist, from his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776

“Since the discovery of America, this market for the produce of its silver mines has been growing gradually more and more extensive . . . [and] the greater part of Europe has been much improved. . . . The East Indies is another market for the silver mines of America, and a market which has been continually taking off a greater and greater quantity of silver. Particularly in China and [India], the value of the precious metals was much higher than in Europe; and it continues to be so. . . . The silver of the new continent seems in this manner to be one of the principal commodities by which the commerce between the two extremities of the old [world, namely Europe and India/China] is carried on, and by means of it, in great measure, that those distant parts of the world are connected with one another [in trade].”

Document 4

John Evelyn, English pamphleteer, his concerns addressed to Parliament, 1674

“[You should worry about] the ruinous number of our men daily flocking to American plantations [from] whence so few return . . . which in time will drain us of people, as now Spain is, and will endanger our ruin, as the Indies do Spain.”

Document 5

Tomas de Mercado, Dominican priest and theologian, his book of advice to merchants, 1520

“Previously, Andalucia (Southern Spain) and Lusitania (Portugal) used to be the very end of the world, but now, with the discovery of the [West] Indies, they have become its center. . . . they (the merchants of Seville) deal in all parts of Christendom and even in Barbary (Muslim lands). To Flanders they ship wool, oil, and wine, and bring therefrom every kind . . . To Florence they send cochineal (dye) and hides, and bring back brocades, silk, and cloth. At Cape Verde they trade in Negroes . . . to the (West) Indies they ship cargoes of every merchandise, and return with gold, silver, pearls, and cochineal . . . the opportunities for great wealth . . . attract some of the principal citizens into becoming merchants, when they see the vast profits to be gained . . . the gentry through greed or necessity, have lowered themselves, if not to trade, at least to intermarry with trading families; and the merchants, with their desire for nobility, have striven to rise, and establish rich entitled estates.”

Document 6

Letter from King Affonso of Angola (Africa) to the King of Portugal, 1526

“We cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and vassals and our relatives, because the thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this kingdom which they are ambitious of; they grab them and get them to be sold; and so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness that our country is being completely depopulated. . . . We beg of Your Highness to help and to assist us in this matter, commanding your factors [slavers] that they should not send either the merchants or wares, because it is our will that in these kingdoms there should not be any trade of slaves nor outlet for them.”

Document 7

Robert Bellarmine, French Cardinal and Jesuit, his book, *Controversiae*, 1593

“Heretics (Protestants) are never said to have converted either pagans or Jews to the faith, . . . But in this century the Catholics have converted many hundreds [of thousands] of heathens in the world; yet . . . they [Protestants] have hardly converted even so much as a handful.”