

JOHN CAMPBELL (1708–1775)

THE SPANISH EMPIRE IN AMERICA (1747)

Comprehending a Description of the Spanish Settlements

If the Spanish Councils were turned for the Encouragement of Trade, there are in these Countries such a vast Variety of valuable Commodities as might, one would think, furnish the People possessed of them with inexhaustible Treasures . . . it seems to be a thing out of Dispute, that it is not so much the Weakness of the Spaniards, as the Weakness of their Councils, which have occasioned their Losses in these parts . . .

Priests, generally speaking, proceed upon narrow and selfish Views, and so do all Religious Orders, particularly the Jesuits, who therefore are the least qualified for Missionaries, though deficient in no other Respect, which appears from their Conduct in Paraguay, where the Fathers have established a much more regular Government than subsists anywhere else in America, and are able to raise a greater Number of regular Troops in a Week, than could be assembled by the Viceroy of Peru in a Year.

Treating of the Commerce of America

It has been always the ruling Maxim in the Spanish Councils to preserve by all means possible the Commerce with the West Indies, not only to the Spanish Nation, but to the Crown of Spain. On this principle they restrained, with great Punctuality, all Strangers from passing through their American Dominions . . . Thus we see that the lawful Commerce between Europe and Spanish America is entirely in the Hands of the Spaniards, and absolutely subject to the Direction of the Crown.

There is nothing more common than to hear Spain compared to a Sieve, which, whatever it receives, is never the fuller. . . . All who are in any degree acquainted with the History of Europe know, that for a long Course of Years Spain maintained Wars in Flanders, Germany, Italy, and sometimes in Ireland, which created a prodigious Expense of Treasure and Troops . . . By so long a Series of Mismanagement the Spaniards have brought their Affairs into so wretched a Situation, that they neither have, nor can have any very great Benefit from their vast Dominions in America. They are said to be Stewards for the rest of Europe; their Galleons bring the Silver into Spain, but neither Wisdom nor Power can keep it there.

The Methods taken by his most Catholic Majesty for effectually securing the Commerce of his American Dominions to the Inhabitants of Old Spain, is the grand Source of the little Respect paid to him in the Indies, and of the great Weakness of his Government at home. Men, whatever Climates they dwell in, of whatsoever Complexions they be, have the same Inclinations, and the same Resentments, if once you trespass on their natural Rights . . . When Folks are in such a Situation, there needs be no Wonder at their endeavouring to carry on a clandestine Trade, as, on the other hand, one cannot think it strange that their Neighbours, who live under better Governments, who have at cheap Rates all that these Spaniards want, and yet stand in need of the Silver and Gold with which they abound, should be very willing to commence such an Intercourse as might take away their Wants.

Taken from John Campbell, *The Spanish Empire in America* (London: M. Cooper, 1747): 74, 77, 79–81, 279–280, 291, 296, 306–308.