CHAPTER 3

The Cultural on the Other Side of the Imperial Mirror

Every idea thrown into the mind of the Negro is caught up and realized with the whole energy of his will; but this realization involves a wholesale destruction ... it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of the Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or Culture, and as we see them at this day, such they have always been. The only essential connection between the Negroes and the Europeans is slavery ... we may conclude slavery to have been the occasion of the increase in human feeling among the Negroes.1

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL

La grandeza de España es inmensa cuando esta es comparada con la bajeza y degradación de los pueblos nativos: Compara [las dotes españolas de] prudencia, ingenio, magnanimidad, templanza, humanidad y religión, con las de esos hombrecillos en los que apenas se pueden encontrar restos de humanidad, que no sólo carecen de cultura, sino que ni siquiera usan o conocen las letras ni conservan monumentos de su historia, sino cierta oscura y vaga memoria de algunos hechos consignada en ciertas pinturas, carecen de leyes escritas y tienen instituciones y costumbres bárbaras.2

JUAN GINÉS DE SEPÚLVEDA

Le mécanisme de cette mort de la culture et des civilisations sous le régime colonial commence à être bien connu. Toute culture pour

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s'épanouir a besoin d'un cadre, d'une structure. Or il est certain que
les éléments qui structurent la vie culturelle du peuple colonisé,
disparaissent ou 'abâtardissent du' fait du régime colonial.\(^3\)

**Aimé Césaire**

... \(\ldots\)

History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is quite easy
for a stranger to impose his rule on a people. But history equally
.teaches us that, whatever the material aspects of that rule, it cannot
be sustained except by the permanent and organized repression of
the cultural life of the people in question.\(^4\)

**Amilcar Cabral**

**Introduction**

As I showed in chapter 2, Constantinianism marked both the unique blending of
Christianity with an imperial cultural ethos and the historical moment at which
Christians ceased to be considered a minority. According to John Howard Yoder,
prior to Constantinianism the church was conceived in terms of a theology of
the invisible church-*ecclesia invisibilis*; before Constantine, “one knew as a fact
of everyday experience that there was a believing Christian community but
one had to ‘take it on faith’ that God was governing history.”\(^5\) But with the age of
Constantinianism, this perception of the church changed; people knew that (the
Christian) God was in control of history. The church and the empire were inseparable,
and the emperor was perceived as God’s regent on earth.

I allude here (too) briefly to these complex debates in order to highlight the radical shift Constantinianism signified for the theological articulation of the church. For our purposes, it is important to note these shifts contributed overtime to Western European imperial projects in all of their multiple and at times contradictory expressions. The self-perception of Europeans as Christians was interwoven with cultural concerns hidden behind notions of civilization. From the late Middle Ages onward, as Europeans went out of their political boundaries to “explore” the

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