Introduction

"At the beginning of the world," said the Portuguese Jesuit Manuel de Nóbrega in 1559, "all was homicide."[1] This was a suspect but significant statement. From the sixteenth century, many Europeans began looking to ancient precedents, even for genocide, a phenomenon that had become more frequent after European expansion accelerated in 1492. A cult of antiquity inspired those on the brink of modernity even as they took up technological innovations, including some that facilitated mass murder.

Nóbrega's claim contained more than a grain of truth. Mass killing was no New World novelty. Some prehistorians suspect that ancestors of modern humans exterminated Europe's archaic Neanderthal population. Later archaeological evidence suggests that during the Stone Age, "competing local communities may have resorted even to annihilation of one another." Over 5,000 years ago, for example, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers in a region of what is now Germany carefully positioned the skulls of 34 men, women, and children in a cave. Archaeologists found these "trophy" skulls arranged in groups "like eggs in a basket." Most bore evidence of multiple blows with stone axes.[2]

The rise of agriculture in the Neolithic era supplied a surplus that could sustain systematic warfare. If Europe's first farmers were more civilized than prehistoric hunters, ironically, well-provisioned agricultural societies may also have been more prone to mass killing. Evidence exists of the destruction of entire communities. Excavation at the early Neolithic site of Talheim in Germany revealed that 7,000 years ago, a group of killers armed with six axes massacred 18 adults and 16 children, then threw their bodies into a large pit. A

late Neolithic site in France, dating from 2,000 B.C.E., yielded evidence of the hasty burial of 100 people of all ages and both sexes, many with arrowheads embedded in their skeletons. While some archaeologists date the origins of war earlier, in the Mesolithic era, others argue that armed conflicts began only when prehistoric hunters became farmers, settled down, and fought over land. Palisades and ditches defended many Neolithic villages.[3]

The prominence in genocidal ideology of cults of antiquity and a fetish for agriculture are two of the four major themes of *Blood and Soil.* Some ancient precedents reveal early preoccupations with land use. According to the Bible, for example, extreme violence often accompanied conflicts over land and sometimes pitted prospective farmers against ethnically alien town dwellers. While God promised the Israelites "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), the book of Deuteronomy added: "Of the cities . . . which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (20:16). The book of Joshua (6–10) describes Israelite massacres of the entire populations of seven cities, including Jericho and three Amorite kingdoms. "Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs," and "utterly destroyed all that breathed" (10:40; see fig. 1).

Animosity toward nonagriculturalists—nomadic, pastoral, or urbanized—may have fueled some of the conflicts described in the Old Testament. One target of Deuteronomy were the Amorites, whom the Sumerians termed a pastoral people who "do not grow grain." In more urbanized Canaan, the Israelite arrival apparently brought agricultural terracing and sedentarization to previously sparsely settled areas. The new devotion of the Israelites—heretofore pastoralists themselves—to agriculture may have intensified their ideological hostility to other pastoral peoples even as they clung to their own pastoral traditions.[4]

Yet the biblical association of agriculture with righteousness was never pervasive; the pastoral image of the shepherd and flock remained more common until the fifteenth century. In the book of Genesis, Cain offered "fruits of the soil," but God "did not look with favor" on them, accepting only Abel's new lamb (4:3–4). Expelled from Eden for killing Abel, Cain became "the first peasant" of ancient and medieval Christianity. Far from being favored, as historian Paul Freedman has shown, Cain signified the "ur-peasant"—deformed, rustic, and wicked.[5] Biblical pastoralism and the medieval model of a pristine, idyllic garden both rejected the cultivator. Farming found relative ideological favor only in the modern era.

Some ancient sources also suggest a third recurring theme of genocide and thus of this book: ethnic enmity. The Old Testament is replete with examples. Deuteronomy trumpets hatred and violence: "But thou shalt utterly destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you" (20:17). Listing these same ethnic groups, the book of Exodus adds: "I will wipe them out" (23:23). Again in Deuteronomy we read: "[T]hou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them. . . . Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them" (7:2, 16). Whatever this might reveal of actual biblical events, such extremism is neither limited to nor representative of Jewish texts, any more than the Koran's injunction to "slay the idolaters wherever you find them" (9:5) is representative of Islamic texts. Jews in particular have long been major victims of ethnic persecution and slaughter; during the second millennium, it was often professed Christians who appealed to violent biblical injunctions as precedents for the mass murder of other groups.

Imperial and territorial conquests compose the fourth major theme of this book. Ancient empires set their own genocidal precedents. The dispersal of the Jews began with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the deportation of its inhabitants to Babylon. After Rome's destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C.E., its annexation of Egypt in 6 C.E. excluded Alexandria's large Jewish community from the privileges accorded to citizens, and Jews suffered two expulsions from Rome itself. Indeed, "the first pogrom in Jewish history" shook Alexandria in 38 C.E. when Romans herded Jews into a ghetto as rioters burned synagogues and looted shops. [6] Like other diaspora populations, Jews became increasingly vulnerable.

Blood and Soil focuses on the six centuries since 1400, the period historians term "the modern era." The main features of modern genocidal ideology emerged then, from combinations of religious or racial hatred with territorial expansionism and cults of antiquity and agriculture. This book charts the slow development of modern genocidal racism against a background of sectarian warfare, ancient models, and worldwide conquest of new territory with accompanying visions of its idealized cultivation. When agrarian idealism shaded into antiurban or monopolist thinking, genocide was occasionally associated with rising hostility to cities or commercial centers.

The modern era gave prominence to these notions. At first, drawing upon the Bible, European medieval culture had considered agricultural serfs to be

Map 1. The ancient eastern Mediterranean

descendants of Ham, cursed by Noah and doomed to their subordinate status. Their mundane assignment precluded them from any ideological role in the domination of others. But then, during the Middle Ages in the Islamic world, and later in early modern Europe and America, Cain's image as the archetypal peasant merged with the racialist symbol of a black African Ham as the archetypal slave. The two concepts fused in Europe in the sixteenth century and influenced America until the nineteenth. As the curse of Ham became slowly racialized, it migrated from European serfs to haunt Africans and Native Americans.[7] From the sixteenth century, liberated from Ham's curse and enlisted in the settlement of the New World, European peasants and farmers became a symbol of superiority to Indians rather than of subordination to other Europeans.

Modern expansion thus saw the emergence of a complementary ideology of cultivation. Farming as an occupation came to be considered superior to hunter-gathering, to pastoral herding, even to the newly burgeoning city life that depended upon agricultural supply. Promoting the culture and utility of a yeomanry more than farmers' material needs, a novel emphasis on the importance of cultivation lent legitimacy to the brutal seizure of lands occupied until then by progeny of both Cain and Ham. This new agrarian vision, together with emerging racism, helped fuel early modern Europe's enclosures, land clearances, and colonial expansion. Most colonial encounters in particular were at least initially violent. Catastrophes multiplied with conquests from the West Indies to the East Indies.

The technological imbalance of forces that made modern genocide feasible was rarer in the ancient and medieval worlds. Only from the fifteenth century, the dawn of the modern era, did advances in transportation and firepower frequently bring into collision societies separated by the requisite technology chasm. Genocide sometimes resulted—from the expansionism of Asian powers as well as in the New World. In both Europe and Asia, the early modern era also saw the rise of cults of antiquity and of agriculture, which strengthened emerging notions of racial superiority.

Genocides were nevertheless exceptional, emerging from specific social conditions and individual human decisions. However, if each was unique, and some were extreme, historical connections and consistent themes appeared. The long history of genocidal violence multiplying across the globe therefore has but one redeeming feature—but it is of inestimable importance. With hindsight, it is now possible to discern patterns in the development of geno-

cidal movements and regimes. Because they emerged in different centuries in a range of societies with varying cultures, they might seem to have been provoked by different historical crises in no apparent sequence, perpetrated by diverse political groups with a multiplicity of ideological labels, targeting a vast spectrum of victims. Yet these genocides do have much in common. Six hundred years of evidence helps us detect their essential elements not only in retrospect but, by analysis of common causes, potentially in advance, which increases the possibility of preventing future genocides with timely action.

Perpetrators and Dissenters

Much of this book documents genocides by European perpetrators, but it also shows that they hold no monopoly on the crime. Rebelling Indians in Peru and African slaves in Haiti, for instance, committed genocidal massacres of European settlers and planters. Elsewhere, mass killing occurred in the absence of colonialism. Consider the Fifth Dalai Lama's instructions to repress Tibetan rebels, issued in 1660:

> Make the male lines like trees that have had their roots cut;
> Make the female lines like brooks that have dried up in winter;
> Make the children and grandchildren like eggs smashed against rocks;
> Make the servants and followers like heaps of grass consumed by fire; . . .
> In short, annihilate any traces of them, even their name.[8]

Although more extensive written sources survive for Western history, adequate evidence from other regions shows that European conquest of most of the globe sprang from no inherently greater cultural propensity for violence. The roots of genocide lie elsewhere, if not everywhere.

Moreover, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, violent domination also provoked internal dissent. In the first book of Samuel (15:1–16:1), God recalled that Amalekites had "lain in wait" for the Israelites on their journey from Egypt, and he told Saul: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep." The Israelites then "utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword," but Saul spared Agag, king of Amalek, and his kingdom's best stock. When God found that Saul "hath not followed my commandments," Samuel "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord." God punished Saul for refusing to "utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites" by denying Saul's descendants the throne of Israel. Along with its genocidal injunction, this episode

provided a biblical precedent for Jewish and Christian (and Islamic) dissent: the recalcitrant who would not complete a genocide paid a heavy price, yet not a mortal one. Demands for obedience and genocide recur in Judeo-Christian scripture, but so do models of dissent and nonviolence.

Many Christians took such lessons to heart. "We dispute in schools," Englishman John Bulwer wrote in *Anthropometamorphosis* in 1653, "whether, if it were possible for man to do so, it were lawful for him to destroy any one species of God's creatures, though it were but the species of toads and spiders, because this were taking away one link of God's chain, one note of his harmony." Bulwer was contesting calls for extermination of vermin in the English countryside, authorized by a 1566 act of Parliament allowing bounties for killing foxes, polecats, weasels, otters, and hedgehogs. Bulwer was defending animal species, yet his text certainly also implied a religious injunction against what we today would call genocide.[9]

Some English settlers committed that crime in parts of North America and later in Australia, but they were not the only ones. Virginia Indians perpetrated genocidal massacres of white settlers in 1622 and again in 1644. In the founding years of the colony of New South Wales, local Aboriginal leader Bennelong repeatedly requested British support to "exterminate" rival groups. Governor Arthur Phillip did not oblige. An elderly Aboriginal warrior from Victoria's Westernport tribe told an Englishman in 1844 of the near annihilation of his people several years earlier. "Wild blacks" had surrounded the tribe at night, "killed nearly all the men, stole the females and destroyed the children, so that few escaped." The man asked: "Where are all my brothers? do you see any old men? I am the only one." His people were lying "about the country like dead kangaroos." That same year an Aborigine showed Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson the site where a "Whole Tribe" had recently been "destroyed by the Yattewittongs and their Allies," and "blanched human bones strewed the surface and marked the spot where the slaughter happened."[10]

Some English colonists in both Australia and America tried to stop genocidal massacres of indigenous people. Besides Phillip in Sydney, Roger Williams in Rhode Island and Governor Edmund Andros in New York, as well as Americans Benjamin Franklin in Pennsylvania and Sam Houston in Texas, not to mention the sixteenth-century Spanish missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas, all made genuine and effective efforts to conciliate or assist indigenous people. At regional and local levels, at least, the most shocking European violence was deplored, restrained, or resisted by such people, or was even rivaled by that of

perpetrators from opposing cultures, which in turn possessed their own conciliators and dissenters.

The same is true of the even darker twentieth century, when all continents produced perpetrators of genocide as well as dissenters. The technology, scale, and intensity of this violence were all new. At least 30 million people perished in genocides across the globe. Some were sudden or concentrated outbursts of mass murder, like those committed by the Young Turks in 1915, the Nazis in World War II, the Khmer Rouge in 1975–79, or Rwanda's Hutu Power regime in just three months in 1994 (chapters 10, 11, and 15).

Other genocides were gradual and prolonged. In the USSR, Stalin's regime of terror rose and fell incrementally, over nearly three decades, before and after his homicidal frenzy of the 1930s (chapter 13). Maoism, along with its Chinese and Japanese enemies, subjected China to intermittent cycles of deadly violence from the 1920s to the 1970s, peaking in a regime-made famine that killed tens of millions in the 1950s (chapters 12 and 14). Third world populations suffered long and hard under smaller, but equally relentless, killer regimes like that of Kim Il-sung in North Korea, where repression and starvation escalated under his son, Kim Jong-il. After a U.S.-sponsored coup ended a democratic era in Guatemala in 1954, murderous political repression plagued that country until 1996, persisting even after its intense genocidal phase of 1981–83.[11] Extermination in East Timor began with the Indonesian invasion of 1975, reached its zenith in 1978–80, and continued sporadically until Jakarta's violent withdrawal in 1999. Mass killing in Sudan has gathered pace since 1982, with its Islamist regime taking 2 million victims by 2006, first Christians and animists, then black Muslims in Darfur.

The twenty-first century could be just as bleak. After the cold war ended in 1989, new flashpoints emerged. Multinational Communist regimes like the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia collapsed in ethnic division, as did their allies Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Armed territorial secession threatened other large multiethnic states like Indonesia and Congo. Following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, ethnic violence spread to Burundi and to Congo, where a new genocide erupted. Ethnic cleansing campaigns in the Caucasus and Chechnya cleared ground for new conflicts that seem to resist solution. Vicious Al-Qaeda terrorism targets civilians from Manhattan to Madrid, from Morocco to the Moro region of the Philippines. Muslim-Christian violence has erupted in Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Iraq. Threats loom in rising anti-immigrant, nativist, and religious fundamentalist movements from western Europe to East

Asia. A deepening divide in China, Islamic rebellions in southern Thailand and the Philippines, murderous insurgency and repression in Iraq, international and domestic crisis in North Korea, continuing ethnopolitical dissension in Afghanistan and suppression in Burma, and brutal national-religious conflicts in Kashmir and Sri Lanka all bode ill for twenty-first-century ethnic conciliation.

Countervailing trends offer grounds for hope but not complacency. The end of the colonial era and of the cold war, the spread of democracy and international law, and the rise of U.N. peacekeeping all reduced the number of interstate wars, internal coups, and crises. (Less reassuringly, mass flight reduced the death rate, too: the number of refugees and displaced people quadrupled from 10 to 40 million between 1970 and 1992.) According to the 2005 *Human Security Report,* even the number of genocides, after "nearly five decades of inexorable increase," became fewer in the late 1990s, when "more people were being killed in sub-Saharan Africa's wars than the rest of the world put together." Yet new conflicts have broken out since: "That the world is getting more peaceful is no consolation to people suffering in Darfur, Iraq, Colombia, Congo or Nepal."[12] As genocide prevention has become more feasible, it remains urgent. It requires prediction of likely outbreaks, which in turn demands a prescient understanding of common features of genocide that often emerge early in the process.

Historical and Legal Definitions

The first step in identifying the essential and thus the predictable elements of genocides is to adopt a consistently defined term for use in comparison. One such term has been *holocaust,* originally a biblical Greek word for a religious offering sacrificed completely by fire. From the late fifteenth century, it began to acquire overtones of mass murder. Bishop John Alcock's description in *Mons Perfeccionis* in 1497 of "an holocauste of martyrdom made to Cryste" includes the original meaning but may also have coined the word's modern English usage as a metaphor for religious violence. The Spanish missionary Las Casas employed the term in his sixteenth-century exposé of conquistador brutality, *The Devastation of the Indies.* In their "butchery" in Guatemala in 1524–30, Las Casas wrote, "[w]henever the Spaniards captured an important noble or chieftain, they did him the honor of burning him at the stake. . . . You can judge what would be the number of victims that were swallowed up in