

WORLDEATER SERIES

lawful and righteous Christian terrorism

The sustainability industry is built to sustain a colonial world order. What have been, and continue to be, the narratives, mechanisms and systems that establish and advance colonial sustainability?

Doctrine of Discovery

Three central papal bulls issued by Pope Eugene IV and Pope Nicholas V in 15th century Europe legalised European colonialism and the enslavement of non-Europeans or non-Christians. These form the institutional foundations that permit and incentivise ongoing colonisation. The contemporary sustainability industry plays central roles in upholding these narratives, mechanisms and systems.

Sicut Dudum (1435)

Issued by Eugene following pressure from Portugal's King Edward; allowed the Portuguese to enslave un-baptised and non-Christian inhabitants of the Canary Islands

Illius qui se pro divini (1441)

Issued by Eugene following requests Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator; legalised Portugal's expanding raids enslaving captives on the West African coast; pardoned crimes against "Saracens" and "enemies of Christianity"

Romanus pontifex (1455)

Issued by Nicholas as an endorsement of Portugal's King Afonso V to permit Christians to "invade", "vanquish", "subdue" and "capture" non-Christians everywhere and claim their lands, possessions and resources for "their use and profit"

Other European kingdoms followed Portugal's lead, inflicting colonial terror across the vast majority of the planet to profit their own populations, particularly European upper and ruling classes. This system of colonisation is defended and justified through beliefs, rationales and narratives that are upheld and regulated by our ruling classes through formal institutions throughout the centuries.

Great Chain of Being

From Aristotle's History of Animals, to the Scholastic period's Scala Naturae, to Linnaeus' Systema Naturae - European philosophers have long curated a hierarchical structure of all matter and life, as a way to classify and rank everything.

Great Chain of Being

The philosophy of the Great Chain of Being places God at the top, followed by angelic beings, and then humans, other animals, plants and minerals. Entities or species within each category in the hierarchy are also ranked as higher- or lower-order entities. Certain humans are ranked higher than others (i.e. "closer to God"). Whiteness is seen as the pinnacle of all creation, justifying the subordination of all others to itself.

The Great Chain of Being maintained monarchic class structure in European human societies for centuries, while justifying colonial anthropocentrism in Europe's ecocidal domination over the natural world. It had a pervasive influence on Western thought, forming the foundations of the modern European worldview. By the 17th century, it even came to be considered as a scientific fact, reinforcing Christian supremacy's justifications for colonisation and slavery. Its rationalisation of racial hierarchies simultaneously advanced the concept of "development" or "progress" through ideas, beliefs, practices and technologies manufactured and promoted by European Enlightenment.

This racist and speciesist narrative has persisted through the ages to justify the 21st century's lucrative, unjust, unequal, white supremacist world order. Today, it finds a home even in environmentalism and sustainability: white sustainability is seen as the only perspective that can be seriously considered in "saving the planet".

Institutional justifications

In the above, we see how Christian supremacy justifies violence, plunder and oppression for the profit of the Christians righteously waging holy war. Within this narrative, we can observe the establishing of systems that persist today, such as institutional rationales and justifications for

- Genocide and ethnocide, extractive capitalism, modern slavery, systemic human rights abuses,
- Ecocide, monoculture and factory farming, systemic environmental rights abuses,
- Corporate and shareholder profit, collusion between business, law and state, and
- Externalising or shunning responsibilities for justice and reparations.

These rationales may have since dropped explicit mention of Christianity, but continue to buttress the contemporary development narrative with the same righteous fervour.

Colonial narratives remain powerful: between 1960 and 2018, the colonial powers of the Global North drained USD 152 trillion from the colonised Global South. Rich countries continue to rely on imperialism to sustain their high incomes and over-consumption.

Today, as it has been ever since the founding of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the private multinational corporation serves as the dominant mechanism by which colonisation is advanced. It is within this structure that the sustainability industry thrives, promoting colonial narratives of development and progress, peddling a single "shared sustainable future" dominated by Western ideology and technology for the "betterment" of humankind.

