

## Struggle in Europe

**I**t is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the great religious zeal behind European colonization of America — without first briefly surveying various events in Europe — events which preceded and led up to the American colonization.

The Roman Empire had ruled over much of Europe — including France, Spain, England and part of Germany — for many centuries when the Western branch of the Roman Empire was brought tumbling down before the onslaught of the barbarians.

Once the political power of the Western branch of the Roman Empire had been crushed, there was no power in the West to equal or challenge the power of the Pope at Rome. Though the Eastern branch of the Roman Empire at Constantinople continued to function, in the West there was a nearly total power vacuum left after the mighty fall of Rome.

Justinian revived the Roman Empire in the West in 554. From this time forward, all the kings and emperors in the West were in one way or another dependent on or subject to the power and authority of the Pope at Rome.

During the Middle Ages few kings or emperors were powerful enough to challenge or in any way defy the authority of the popes — without feeling the serious consequences of such “obstinate” and “heretical” defiance.

Kings and emperors who dared to challenge the authority of the church actually found themselves humiliated, excommunicated or even deposed!

In 1075 Pope Gregory VII decreed that any priest receiving “lay investiture,” or any layman giving investiture to a priest would be excommunicated! (The term “lay investiture” refers to the appointment of bishops, abbots and other holders of church offices by laymen — and kings and emperors were also considered laymen).

But the Pope’s denying civil rulers the authority to make appointments to church offices did not set well with Henry IV, King of Germany and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Henry struck back by convening an assembly at Worms, composed in the main of bishops that he had nominated. This august assemblage then proceeded to depose Pope Gregory.

The Pope retaliated by excommunicating Henry. Then, to make matters worse, Henry's bishops concluded they could no longer give allegiance to him — an excommunicated king!

Realizing the Pope had, at least temporarily, tied his hands, Henry felt compelled to seek the Pope's pardon. In order to ask the Pope's forgiveness, penitent Henry made a long journey in the cold winter to Canossa, a fortress where the Pope was residing. The humbled German king is said to have stood barefoot in the snow for three days before he was granted permission to kneel at the Pope's feet and receive pardon.

But Henry later exacted his vengeance on Pope Gregory for this humiliating experience. In 1084, Henry marched against Rome and captured the city, forcing Gregory to flee. King Henry IV then replaced Pope Gregory with a new pope of his choice. Gregory died in exile.

But the battle was not over. A later pope proceeded to expel Henry from the Church. And in 1105, Henry IV was forced to abdicate after one of his own sons was influenced to rebel against him.

This conflict between king and pope will serve to illustrate just how powerful the popes became. Remember, at this time their sway extended over nearly all of Western Europe.

Another notable example of temporal rulers submitting to the authority of the pope is that of Henry II, King of England (1154-1189).

After the conquest of England by William the Conqueror in 1066 A.D., the Church continued advancing in Europe its already immense claims to authority. The Pope, as Vicar of Christ, responsible for men's salvation, insisted on supremacy over the secular rulers of Christendom. Earthly kings and princes were merely his vassals. They owed complete homage to him, and had to obey his "bulls" and decrees.

Henry II, King of England, was one prince who differed with the Pope on the matter of "lay investiture." However, England's Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, agreed with the Pope, and bitterly opposed Henry on this important issue.

King Henry became furious at his opposition: "Are there none that will rid me of this turbulent priest?" asked Henry.

Shortly afterwards some of Henry's knights murdered Archbishop Becket. A stunned Europe shuddered at the news of his murder. Eventually, an overwhelmed Henry confessed his fault, and begged the Pope's forgiveness. So deep was his sense of guilt and remorse that he afterwards did penance at the tomb of the martyred archbishop, walking near the tomb barefoot, while monks scourged his naked back.

During the Dark Ages many other kings and emperors humbled themselves before the popes. Several, on the other hand, fought against the popes; and on a few occasions, even took them captive or deposed them.

Besides the "lay investiture" conflict, there were other clashes be-

tween kings, emperors and popes during the Middle Ages. Many rulers objected to the riches, corruption, and authoritative demands of the Church. They did not like the popes or any of the clerics meddling in their secular affairs. Many petty princes endured it. Other more powerful secular rulers rebelled.

During the fourteenth century fierce doctrinal differences sprang up within the Church. These religious conflicts climaxed in the second Great Schism in the Christian Church. The popes had moved to Avignon for purely political reasons, and when those reasons seemed no longer valid, Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome; and died shortly afterward. Subsequently, two popes were elected — one ruled at *Avignon*, the other, at *Rome*. For the next thirty-nine years, there were two *rival popes* — each claiming to be the true head of the Church.

This great schism helped to discredit the Church and caused it to lose much of its authority. This period of two-pope strife fostered a climate of further schism, outright heresy, and serious *protest* — which eventually led to Martin Luther's break with Rome in 1517, and the resultant third Great Schism in the Christian Church, the Protestant Reformation.

Papal claims, plus their "meddling" (as some called it) in secular matters, and the great schism which resulted in two popes claiming to be Christ's Vicar, weakened the Church in many ways. This was especially true in England.

Had it not been for this general *confusion* (plus the undeniable *corruption*, and great affluence in the Church, while the masses lived in poverty) Henry VIII might never have been emboldened to break with Rome and, in 1534, declare himself Head of the Church in England.

### *The Renaissance*

During the long night of the Dark Ages Europe stagnated, forgetting much of the art, skills, science and learning of the ancients. It was as if a heavy, smothering blanket of ignorance and superstition settled down over Western Europe. During much of this period, the Church held universal sway over virtually every facet of men's lives.

But at last a breath of fresh air, the *Renaissance*, or rebirth of learning, began to waft across Europe. During the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, bold thinkers began to rediscover the ancient Greek and Latin writings. Arts, crafts and many branches of learning blossomed.

As men began to shake off the shackles of ignorance and superstition which had suppressed them during the Dark Ages, they began to think for themselves, to question, to demand proof. Some even dared to question many of the Church's cherished beliefs.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) was one of the great thinkers who began

to question, among other things, whether the earth really was the center of the universe. Following the Copernican theory he held that the earth revolved around the sun. But since this belief was anathema to the teaching of the Church, Galileo was put under a Church ban.

On June 22, 1633, this old man (who had distinguished himself as an astronomer and a teacher), pale and trembling, stood in sackcloth before the assembled cardinals, who were dutifully prepared to carry out their sacred trust as part of the dreaded Inquisition.

One of Galileo's inquisitors informed him in a monotonous voice that he was to be "held absolved (from his heresy), provided that, with a sincere heart and a faith unfeigned, he abjures and curses the heresies he has cherished, as well as every other heresy against the Church . . . and that he shall be condemned to the prison of the Inquisition during its pleasure . . . ."

The aged Galileo fell on his knees before the assembly, invoking divine assistance as he vowed never again to teach his heretical doctrines. Then, with trembling hand, he signed a paper setting forth his wrongdoing. As the assemblage of cardinals arose, he was taken from the room, reportedly muttering defiantly, "*Eppur si muove*" ("But it moves, just the same!").

Not only kings and emperors, but also scholars and scientists had to be careful not to oppose or in any way even contradict the Church. Otherwise they could be excommunicated — cut off from the Church, from family and society. They might even receive the death penalty, if they obstinately refused to recant. Such "heretics" were expected to repudiate their "false" ideas — even if they honestly believed they were right.

These facts of medieval life played a big part in impelling many Europeans to seek real *religious freedom* in the New World across the Atlantic.

### *Discovery of America*

What is it that impelled seamen, voyaging in rather primitive, unsafe ships, to be willing to brave the fury of oceanic tempest in order to discover the New World?

Why were men willing to leave their families and fortunes behind, and sail far westward into the unknown "dark, deep ocean" — risking their very lives?

One contributing factor was that Europe longed to discover a new route to the spice lands of the East. Europeans wanted to find a shorter, less time-consuming and less costly route to the Orient — to India, Japan and China, as well as the rich spice islands, the Moluccas.

In 1453 the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople and renamed it Istanbul. By 1571 the Ottoman Empire dominated the Mediterranean,

and sealed off to European seamen all the old sea-routes between Europe and the rich spice lands of the East.

Remember, during those times when canning and refrigeration were unknown, spices were considered *necessary* in order to make unpalatable foods more savory. Meats could be made much more enjoyable if they were seasoned with exotic spices from the Orient.

European merchants, deprived after 1571 of their source of rich spices, began to think of ways to overcome their difficulty. How could they find a direct route to Japan (Cypangu), China (Cathay), the Moluccas and other spice lands — without having to traverse *Moslem* lands — and thereby avoid paying excessive prices for these precious spices?

About this time, certain important inventions (the magnetic compass and the astrolabe) and the art of map-making began to make sea voyaging much more enticing.

The Portuguese early became great navigators. Under the impetus of Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) and others, they explored the waters around Africa, and sailed all the way east to India and China. Not long afterward, the Spaniards, English, French and Dutch also began to navigate the world's unknown waters — especially the Atlantic.

In the late 1400s a remarkable man, Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), appeared on the world scene — with a consuming *vision* that God had chosen him for some great purpose!

He tried to get the King of Portugal and then the King of France to underwrite his exploratory expedition in search of Cathay (China). He ran into a brick wall. The kings of both Portugal and France turned him down flatly. He sent his brother, Bartholemew, to see if the King of England, Henry VII, would back his explorations. Again his request was turned down.

Many thought he was *mad!* How could anyone believe you could reach the *East* by sailing *West*? This just did not make sense to them. Even though enlightened people of the day believed the earth was a sphere, nobody had yet proven this to be so. Understandably, then, kings and private financiers were reluctant to risk fortune and lives on this harebrained adventure.

Finally, however, Columbus began to receive some encouragement. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain became mildly interested in the plans of this tall, red-haired, freckled-faced, blue-eyed visionary — with his wild dreams of discovering Japan, China and India by sailing west. They put Columbus on a small retainer salary for several years. He grew somewhat discouraged — thinking he was getting nowhere. Finally he decided to pack his bags, mount his donkey and head for another kingly court. But just at this instant, Queen Isabella sent a messenger after him — telling him that he was being commissioned to discover a new route to the Orient.

In that very year, 1492, the Moors had finally been driven out of southern Spain (Granada), and this victory made it possible for the Spanish throne to divert finances into Columbus's scheme. It was estimated that the entire expense of his exploratory voyage would only equal the cost of one royal dinner.

King Phillip II and Queen Isabella of Spain promised him that he would be made Admiral of the fleet, would be given ten percent of all the gold or treasures which he found, and would also be made viceroy of all the lands which he discovered.

In 1492 Columbus and a crew of ninety men sailed from Spain in three small ships (*Santa Maria*, *Pinto*, and *Nina*) looking for a shortcut to the East. After sailing for many weeks, the crew was on the verge of mutiny when they finally sighted land — San Salvador.

On his first voyage Columbus discovered San Salvador (Watling Island), Santa Maria de la Conception (Rum Key), Isabella (Crooked Island), Long Island, Haiti and Cuba.

Columbus and his crew became the first Europeans to set foot on the New World in modern times, other than the Vikings. They were so joyful when they sighted land, that they knelt down, kissed the ground, and recited a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having brought them safely through the terrors of the vast ocean, and for enabling them to discover this new land which Columbus promptly claimed for Spain on behalf of his Catholic sovereigns.

On Columbus's return voyage to his country, he stopped off at the Azores, and sent a message back to Spain, explaining his discovery.

When he and his men arrived back in Spain they were given a huge reception. Columbus was treated royally, as a true hero!

They had brought some gold, exotic fruits, other objects, including some natives from their discovered islands as *proof* of their discoveries. (Columbus thought he had reached India, and he held firmly to this belief till his death.)

### *Pope Divides the World*

In the following year, 1493, Pope Alexander VI divided the New World between Spain and Portugal — setting the line of demarcation (which ran north and south one hundred leagues (about 300 miles) west of the Azores. All land west of this line would go to Spain. All land to the east would belong to Portugal.

Did the Pope have divine authority for dividing the New World between Spain and Portugal? He certainly believed he did. When a new Pope is crowned, the officiating cardinal puts the triple tiara on his head, and says: "Receive the three-fold crown of the tiara and know that Thou art the Father of princes and kings, the Ruler of the round earth,

and here below the Viceroy of Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory forever." Popes claimed they had authority to give lands to kings and emperors.

The Pope and others feared that if a line of demarcation were not drawn, squabbling might break out between Spain and Portugal, if either party encroached on the other's claims.

Spain and Portugal agreed (at the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494) to move this demarcation line further west — to a point about 1200 miles west of the Azores.

Apparently this line of demarcation was moved further west at Portugal's request. Some think her explorers had already sighted Brazil, and this new line of demarcation would enable her to claim that vast territory.

The King and Queen of Spain were so impressed with Columbus' discoveries that they gave him additional authority and added money to outfit other ships, hire more men and make three more exploratory expeditions to the New World.

On Columbus's second voyage (1493-6) he discovered Dominica, Porto Rico, Guadaloupe, Antigua, Santa Cruz and the Virgin Islands.

It was while on his third voyage (1498-1500) that he first set foot upon continental South America near the mouth of the Orinoco River. On that voyage, he also discovered Trinidad.

His fourth, and final voyage, proved to be a big disappointment. He discovered no new islands, but he did explore the coast of Honduras and Nicaragua. He finally returned to Spain broken in health, a dejected man. He was now discredited, almost forgotten!

Even though Columbus was greatly interested in finding a new route to the Orient by sailing west, he and his crew were also greatly interested in finding gold, silver and other treasures.

Eventually, Cuba became the Spanish base of operations — from which Spain sent explorers, conquistadores and colonizers into Central, South and North America.

### *Mexico's Fabulous Wealth*

In 1504, only twelve years after Columbus had discovered the New World, Hernando Cortes (1485-1547) set out at the age of nineteen to seek adventure in the West Indies.

Cortes settled in the West Indies. He was 33 before he got his golden opportunity. The greedy and rapacious Spanish Governor of the island of Cuba (Don Diego Velasquez) appointed Cortes leader of an expedition into Mexico — where it was known that gold and a highly developed civilization existed.

The Governor then changed his mind, and decided to remove Cortes

# Pope Alexander Divides the World

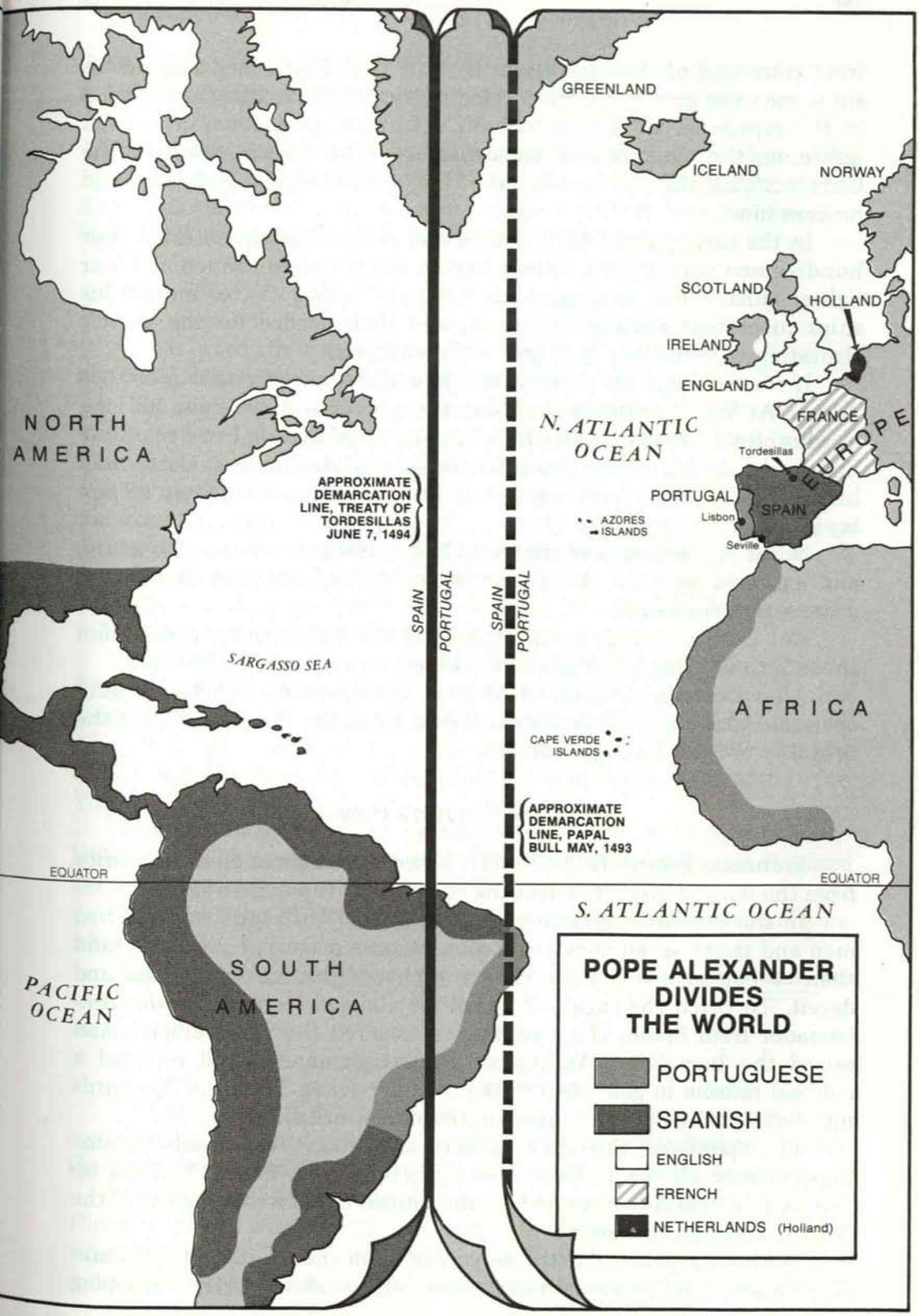
Columbus discovered the New World in 1492. The following year, 1493, Pope Alexander VI drew an imaginary line from north to south 100 leagues (c. 340 miles) west of the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. That Line of Demarcation, drawn between the north and south poles, barely touched the easternmost point of Brazil in South America — which hadn't yet been discovered. Pope Alexander gave Spain all unexplored, non-Christian lands to the west of this line — while all to the east went to Portugal. The Pope hoped his Line of Demarcation would prevent disputes between Spain and Portugal over the right to claim, explore and colonize lands in the Americas and Asia.

However, neither Spain nor Portugal were completely satisfied with the Pope's imaginary Line of Demarcation. Therefore, in 1494, at Tordesillas, Spain, they signed the Treaty of Tordesillas whereby they reaffirmed the papal division; they also agreed to move the Line of Demarcation to a point 370 leagues (c. 1,250 miles) west of the Cape Verde Islands. Papal sanction of their Line-of-Demarcation change was not given until January, 1506. Scholars now think this Line lay near the 48° west longitude line.

By extending this Line around the globe and into the Eastern Hemisphere, Portugal was given the right to claim the Philippine Islands. In later treaties with Spain, Portugal gave up its claim to the Philippines and won the rest of Brazil. By the Treaty of Saragossa in 1529, the Line of Demarcation in the Eastern Hemisphere was set 17° east of the Moluccas (Spice Islands).

Other up-and-coming maritime powers — England, France and the Netherlands — totally ignored the Pope's imaginary Line of Demarcation and went merrily on their way exploring and colonizing wheresoever they chose!





NORTH AMERICA

APPROXIMATE DEMARCATION LINE, TREATY OF TORDESILLAS JUNE 7, 1494

SARGASSO SEA

EQUATOR

PACIFIC OCEAN

SOUTH AMERICA

GREENLAND

ICELAND

NORWAY

SCOTLAND

HOLLAND

IRELAND

ENGLAND

FRANCE

Tordesillas

PORTUGAL

Lisbon

Seville

AZORES ISLANDS

AFRICA

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

APPROXIMATE DEMARCATION LINE, PAPAL BULL MAY, 1493

EQUATOR

S. ATLANTIC OCEAN

### POPE ALEXANDER DIVIDES THE WORLD

-  PORTUGUESE
-  SPANISH
-  ENGLISH
-  FRENCH
-  NETHERLANDS (Holland)

from command of the expedition. By this time Cortes had readied his ships, men and provisions. He decided to leave Cuba secretly at the head of the expedition to Mexico without asking the permission of or even informing the Governor of his departure. This he did, exciting the Governor's ire. But Cortes was out of the harbor before Velasquez could prevent him.

In the early part of 1519, Cortes had readied his eleven ships, four hundred and twenty men, sixteen horses, ten fair-sized cannon and four lighter guns. When he landed his force in Mexico, Cortes burned his ships to prevent mutiny or retreat, and then headed for the world's richest, most fabulous city of gold — Tenochtitlan.

If the accounts are correct, the population of the city was 500,000 Aztecs. At first the priest-king Montezuma received Cortes and his men in a hospitable manner. Later they became suspicious and turned on the Spaniards. By 1521, after much bloodshed and destruction, Cortes and his men made themselves masters of Mexico. The entire Aztec empire lay in ruins.

Never in the history of the world had so few men mastered so many, and gathered such an abundance in gold, silver, precious stones and other articles of wealth.

But Cortes's savage brutality against the Indian tribes earned him the infamy of being listed among the cruelest conquerors of history.

After Cortes's conquest of Mexico, the Spaniards ruled ruthlessly over the Aztecs and other Indian tribes. Even the Popes protested the brutality of Spain's conquistadores.

### *Pizarro Conquers Peru*

Francisco Pizarro (c. 1478-1541) asked for and was given authority from the King of Spain to effect the conquest of the Incas of Peru.

In the year 1532 Pizarro took a small army of about two hundred men and thirty-seven horses and soon became master of the Incas (and their vast treasures) in Peru. He accomplished this feat by intrigue and deceit. To catch the Incas off guard, he claimed to be a friendly Ambassador from Spain. His men then massacred the court officials and seized the Inca King, Atahualpa. Pizzaro demanded and received a colossal ransom in gold (£3,500,000) for his release. Then the Spaniards murdered Atahualpa and seized control of his Inca Empire.

The Spaniards, through treachery and cruelty, eventually became masters over all the Indian tribes stretching from South America up through Central America and into the southern and western parts of the North American continent.

During the year 1517 (the very year when the Protestant Reformation began) the Spaniards began the infamous slave trade — shipping

slaves against their will from West Africa to Central and South America to help the Spaniards build up their Empire.

It is estimated that at least 11,000,000 slaves were transported from Africa to the Americas from 1517 until the slave trade ended in the 1800s. Most of them were taken to Central and South America by the Spaniards and the Portuguese. But perhaps a million or so were brought to North America by English-speaking slave masters.

### *Spain Wallows in Wealth*

What were the consequences of Spain's and Portugal's discovery and colonization of Central, South, and parts of North America?

The fabulous wealth (mainly gold and silver) which the Spanish conquistadores plundered from the Aztecs in Mexico, and the Incas in Peru, made Spain the wealthiest country in the world!

So much gold and other treasure began flowing back to Spain that the King of Spain was able to build many new ships and hire large mercenary armies. By reason of their wealth and power, the Spaniards were in a position to dictate much of the course of Europe's history. This immense wealth of the New World, flooding into the Old World, proved to be upsetting to Europe's balance of power.

This vast treasure trove was also a prime factor in inciting Britain, France and Holland to begin making piratical raids on the endless stream of Spanish treasure galleons returning to Spain laden with gold. This immense wealth also provoked privateers and freebooters, like Drake and Hawkins, to raid Spanish ports in Spain and in the New World.

England's sea dogs reasoned that it was indecent of Spain to selfishly wallow in her plundered gold. Why shouldn't poor little England get her hands on some of this Aztec-Inca treasure?

But how? Did English freebooters dare rob the treasure-laden Spanish galleons?

This tempting prize proved too much for England's bold buccaneers to resist.

### *Seeds of Protestantism*

Meanwhile throughout Europe serious theological contention and controversy continued erupting. Protest and outright rebellion against the authority of the Church seethed even before Galileo's time.

In short, by the fifteenth century, after ages of oppression by the Church, Europe trembled on the brink of the Protestant Reformation — which was not only destined to divide historic Christianity, but was also soon to become responsible for bathing much of Europe in some of its

most sanguinary struggles. This religious bloodbath between long entrenched Catholics and newly emerging Protestants was destined to take the lives of millions before it was over.

The Church had stood virtually unchallenged for over a thousand years, and it was not about to passively stand by while "heretical" Protestants challenged its authority and divided the nations' allegiance.

Only twenty-six years after Columbus discovered America, the Protestant Reformation was ignited in Europe; and it was sparked by one who had himself been an ordained priest of the Roman Catholic Church.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), the father of the Protestant Reformation, was an intelligent pupil, though stubborn. He first studied law, then spent three years as a monk in the Augustinian convent at Erfurt, where he was ordained a priest in 1507.

Later he visited Rome and was appalled by the manifest corruption and the low moral standards of Christianity's Holy City.

Shortly after this he was shocked to see a Dominican Monk, Johann Tetzel, selling indulgences as a means of raising funds for the rebuilding of St. Peter's at Rome.

Incensed by this blasphemous example of a holy man blatantly selling indulgences, Luther wrote out *ninety-five theses* in which he strongly attacked the selling of indulgences. He then tacked his ninety-five theses on the front door of the castle church of Wittenberg.

Luther's bold action immediately caught the attention of people all over Germany and Europe. Rome also took notice, and Luther was asked to retract his teachings. This Luther steadfastly refused to do.

At this point in German history, so many German princes were "fed up" with excesses of the Church and its popes, that the German nation was ready to back any strong man who would vigorously protest such abuses.

Luther's religious ideas soon spread throughout Germany and Scandinavia, and into other parts of Europe. John Calvin in France, John Knox in Scotland, Zwingli in Switzerland, and others took up the Protestant banner.

Most of Europe was in religious foment. Many felt it was time to throw off the shackles of the Church, and return to the pure, pristine teachings of the Scriptures as practiced by the early Christians.

The Protestant ideas of Martin Luther began to shake the Catholic Church's foundations in Germany, Scandinavia, Holland, France, Switzerland, Bohemia (Czechoslovakia) and other nations of Europe.

### *England's Protestant Beginning*

But in England the Catholic Church seemed unshakable. In 1521 King Henry VIII even wrote a book in defense of the Church, attacking

Luther and his Lutheranism. For Henry's defense of the Church, the Pope conferred on him the title of "Defender of the Faith." But the Pope was later to regret this favor.

For Henry VIII was a strong-willed king, and he had ideas of his own — especially when it came to matrimony.

Henry met and fell in love with a pretty, buxom maid of honor, Anne Boleyn, whom he immediately wanted to marry. But to do so he would first have to get the Pope to nullify his marriage to Catharine of Aragon, his first wife.

But the Pope was afraid to grant Henry his request, since to do so would alienate the King of Spain; for Henry's first wife, Catharine, was the fourth daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Self-willed Henry decided to take matters into his own hands. He deposed and executed Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who would not nullify his first marriage. Henry then had his chief adviser, Thomas Cromwell, declare his first marriage null and void. This made it possible to legitimize his marriage to Anne Boleyn.

This action did not set well with the Pope. While the Pope hesitated, Henry again went boldly into action. He decided to make the break final with Rome. With this in mind, by his Act of Supremacy, he declared himself head of the Church in England in 1534, and began overhauling the Church as he saw fit. He and his ministers began to appropriate whatever Church property they wanted.

From this time forward, the King of England in actuality became one of the leading figures of Protestantism, though Henry remained a Catholic at heart.

Luther himself had begun to withdraw from his leadership of the Protestants after he saw some of the excesses of his followers, and the cruel bloodshed which resulted from this great cleavage of Christianity.

It needs to be clearly understood that Henry VIII did not repudiate Catholic teachings. In fact, he remained a Catholic at heart until the day of his death. He merely rejected the Pope as the *head* of the Church in England. And by substituting himself in place of the Pope, he could dissolve the monasteries, sell off the Church's property and thereby get sufficient money to carry out various projects, including his wars, and the building up of England's royal navy.

In 1547, just one year after Luther's death, Henry VIII was also dead. His son, Edward VI, a frail, weakly youth, inherited the throne. During his reign, Protestantism continued in England. Catholic churches were stripped of many of their sacred images and pictures, and their colorful stained glass — with the idea of removing all "popish superstitions" and reminders from Edward's Sceptered Isle.

*“Bloody Mary”*

But Protestants in England began to worry about what would happen when Catholic Mary ascended the throne. They feared the worst, and their fears were justified.

Frail Edward VI was soon dead (1553), and Mary I ascended the throne. This Catholic queen soon became known as “Bloody Mary,” for she immediately turned on the Protestants, and tried to rid England of all Protestant influence. She sincerely, passionately believed that England’s true salvation lay in its return to the historic faith — Catholicism!

Within two years of her becoming Queen, she replaced the Anglican ministers with Catholic priests. Old Catholic rites and ceremonies were reinstated. The laws of the reformed Church were swept away, and Protestants, in terror of losing their lives, made a panicky dash for the Continent.

The religious gale blowing through Europe had driven the English ship of state back onto the Catholic shore. It looked as though Protestantism had been dealt a death blow in that island kingdom.

Beginning in 1555, Bloody Mary embarked on a campaign of systematic persecution. Within a three-year period, nearly three hundred Protestant martyrs fell victims of this Queen and her policy of total destruction of Protestantism.

Queen Mary thought she could stamp out Protestantism before her death. She was wrong! Her persecution and martyrdom of those who opposed her only strengthened Protestant resolve in England. Her pitiless, inhuman slaughter of Protestants turned many Englishmen against the Catholic Church for all time.

When Bloody Mary died in 1558, not many tears were shed. There was, however, much rejoicing! Many Englishmen had suffered under her bloody purges, and they now looked forward to having a Protestant sovereign. Having once tasted from the cup of religious freedom, they craved to drink it to the full. There could be no turning back to religious tyranny again.

So on Mary’s death many in England heaved a big sigh of relief. For they rejoiced to see Mary’s half-sister, Queen Elizabeth I, who had been brought up as a Protestant, reverse Mary’s Catholic policies, and head the English ship of state back toward the Protestant shore.

Meanwhile Elizabeth and the English continued to give aid and comfort to the Dutch Protestants, who at that very moment were not only trying to throw the Spanish out of the Netherlands, but were also seeking to establish Protestantism in their country.

*Catholics Become Alarmed*

Popes, clergymen and all Catholic leaders were alarmed by the continuing spread of Protestantism in Europe — and feared that if its progress were not stopped, their thrones, and everything that the Catholic Church had painstakingly built up for over a thousand years might come crashing down.

What could be done to staunch this deadly heresy?

Alarmed Catholics devised a means of countering the deadly menace — the “Counter-Reformation” was launched. The dreaded Inquisition (founded in 1446 by a zealous Spanish Priest, Ignatius Loyola) was continued as part of that answer.

For many years after Protestantism had emerged, the popes and Catholic kings and emperors believed they could destroy Protestantism by using the armies of loyal Catholic countries to conquer rebellious, heretical Protestant strongholds.

But when England’s leaders joined Protestant ranks, the task loomed larger than ever before.

The titanic struggle between England and Spain in the latter part of the late sixteenth century was part of Rome’s attempt to crush the rising tide of Protestantism!

Catholic Philip II of Spain had as his main goal the overthrow of Protestant England, and then the complete destruction of Protestantism in the Netherlands. After dealing a deathblow to Protestantism in England and Holland, the Catholic Church would then be able to handle the rebellious Protestants in Germany, France, Switzerland and any other country where they dared to raise a protesting head.

