

FOUNDED UPON ROCK: PART VIII:
THE AGE OF EXPLORATION AND THE GATHERING OF NATIONS

I. The Age of Exploration was opening up new lands for missionary activities, although the missionaries often had to fight colonial lords to promote the faith.

A. The Age of Exploration began in full with Portugal as Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) launched expeditions to find a way around Africa to the Far East.

1. The Europeans knew about India the Far East and had some trade with them starting in the early 13th century, when the Mongol tribes became more united and provided safer passage.

a. Several explorers wrote about journeys to the Far East, with the most famous of them being Marco Polo, who journeyed in China from 1271 to 1295. The overland trade had gone through the Byzantine Empire and the Mongol tribes of central Asia. However, with the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, the overland trade had to go through the Ottoman Empire, which both made it more expensive and resulting in more wealth pouring into an Empire that was threatening Europe. The trade routes also became more dangerous with the feuds between the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Empire and the increasingly fractured tribes.

b. There were also trade routes through Egypt, around Arabia and through the Indian Sea.

2. In 1487-88, the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeo Diaz sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern edge of Africa and thus paved the way for a route by sea to India and the Far East. Within a few years, trade with India and then China began by these sea routes.

3. It took awhile for missionaries to make the journey. However, the Jesuit St. Francis Xavier travelled to India by 1542 and Japan by 1549, establishing Christian missions in southern India and Japan. He attempted to plant the faith in China, but the government there was more hostile to foreign influences. By the late 1500s, the Japanese government had also turned against Christianity and all influences it considered to be foreign. Unlike most persecutions, that effort at suppression mostly succeeded; and Christianity declined dramatically in that land.

4. In Vietnam, the Jesuit priest Alexandre De Rhodes (1591 – 1660) had some success in bringing the faith to the people. And even in China, despite the government's opposition the Jesuit Matteo Ricci helped promote the faith, especially by arguing that their beliefs in ancestor worship could be amended to become the Catholic belief in the Communion of the Saints. However, the attempt to adapt local customs did come under suspicion by many authorities in Rome. One central conflict came over the question of whether rice bread could be used for Communion; the holding was that it could not.

5. In 1512, Portuguese traders made contact with what is now called Indonesia. They established extensive trading centers, which would later be taken over by the Netherlands and come under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company. The wars over trade, both with the local peoples (largely Muslim) and with the Dutch prevented a

large amount of missionary work, especially after the Portuguese influence declined in the seventeenth century.

B. When the Spanish King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had succeeded in gaining full control over Spain in 1492, they then funded Christopher Columbus' voyage west to discover a trading route in that direction.

1. All educated people of the day knew the earth was round. The problem was that, with the earth being an estimated 26,000 miles, it was thought (accurately) that no ship of the day could make the voyage from Europe west to Japan and China. Christopher Columbus (1450-1504) used different measurements and thought he could make the journey.

2. His first voyage came across San Salvador in what is now the Bahamas. To his death, he firmly believed that he had discovered an island off of Asia. However, it soon became apparent to most people that he had discovered an entirely new land.

3. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI partitioned off what lands would be available to the Spanish, and what lands to the Portuguese. That agreement, with some modifications, held. And so most of what is now called Latin America and the Philippines was available to the Spanish and Brazil, Africa, India and most of Asia to the Portuguese, at least to the degree that they could control it.

4. In 1519 – 1521, the Spanish under Cortez had conquered Mexico (with a great deal of help from local tribes opposed to the then ruling Aztecs.) In 1531-36, Pizarro conquered the lands of the Incas in South America. The result of these and similar conquests was that all of what is now Latin America, except Brazil, was open to the Spanish.

C. The exploration opened up vast new lands for the Christian faith, leading to the Church making up in the new world the losses she had suffered in the old

1. Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego at Guadalupe in 1531 and instructed him to call for the local bishop of Mexico to build a Marian shrine there. To overcome the bishop's skepticism, she created for St. Juan Diego on his tilma (cloak) a spectacular image of her that is preserved to this day. From that time, conversions to Christianity began rapidly expanding.

2. Many of the colonial lords wished to run the colonies for profit, and largely suppressed the local natives. The missionaries wanted to bring the Gospel to the local areas, with more respect for the local customs that were not contrary to the faith.

- Thus, for example, the Dominican Bartolomeo Las Casas (1474-1566) argued that the local natives were as rational as the Europeans, and that the Spanish should see the new lands as an opportunity to bring the Gospel there as the missionaries had done for Europe 1000 years earlier. The king of Spain Charles V (ruled 1519 – 1558) did enact some reforms such as getting rid of the *encomienda*, which authorized colonial lords to demand tribute of wealth or labor; but he did not abolish slavery.

3. Franciscan missionaries began to enter what is now the United States about 1600, establishing the central mission of the Holy Faith (Santa Fe) in 1609. By 1700, missions were growing rapidly in what is now New Mexico and Texas. For example, they established the missions of St. Anthony (San Antonio), including the Alamo, in what is now Texas, in the early eighteenth century. Saint Junipero Serraa (1713-1784) spearheaded the establishment of Franciscan missions in California. These missions would later close, but the areas that they developed would become such places as Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Bernadino, San Diego, and Santa Rosa.

4. Ferdinand Magellan began his famous journey that would go around the world in 1519. He died in route. But in 1521, his crew reached the Philippines, where they established Christian missions. Later Miguel Lopez de Legazpi came from New Spain (Mexico) and established a more permanent settlement in 1565. From there, the faith would spread rapidly through those islands, although there was also a great deal of Muslim and nativist influence.

5. The Spanish were very willing to intermarry with the local natives in their colonies. That willingness allowed a new group of people to arise, which would be heavily Catholic.

D. The French also sent missionaries to the New World, although their influence was less due to the fact that fewer French colonists came to the New World.

1. The French Empire gained control of what is now Canada and much of what is now the eastern Midwest of the United States. Their interest was more in trade with the natives than in large scale settlements. However, French missionaries, and particularly the Jesuits, brought the faith to the Indian population.

2. Under Jacques Cartier, the French colonization began in the New World in 1541. However, the wars with Spain prevented many settlements from being established until about 1600.

3. About the year 1600, French Jesuits established missions in Nova Scotia, but the British destroyed the effort. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain established the first permanent French colony in Quebec.

4. By 1615, Franciscan friars were establishing missions among the Indian people in Quebec. But it was the Jesuits, with their more flexible style, who would spearhead the missionary work.

5. A Jesuit priest Jacques Marquette (1636-75) began establishing missions around the Great Lakes in 1668. He travelled with the great French explorer Louis Jolliet down the Mississippi River in 1673; and upon his return, Fr. Marquette continued bringing missions into what is now called Illinois.

6. Jesuits also brought missions to what is now called Ontario and upstate New York. Led by St. John de Brebeuf, Jesuits came to the area in 1625 and were initially rather successful. There was a setback in 1629 as the English gained control of the region. But, the Jesuits came back in 1632 with more assistants, including the priest St. Isaac

Jogues. However, in 1639, diseases and warfare again began devastating the local Huron tribes, and they started turning against the Jesuits. Between 1642 and 1648, most of the Jesuits were martyred for the faith. However, their great courage impressed many natives and set the stage for future conversions. Saint Kateri Tekakwitha (1656 – 1680), who was a Mohawk Indian and a convert to the faith, became a particularly strong inspiration.

E. In the British colonies, there were few Catholics, except in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

1. In 1624, a prominent Englishman named George Calvert became Catholic and resigned his post in government, as well as his seat in Parliament. However, King James I favored him and granted him a new colony named Maryland after the future Charles I's wife Maria Henrietta.

2. His son Cecil, now called Lord Baltimore, brought Catholic colonists to Maryland with the two ships named the Ark and the Dove. He established a colony that would respect religious liberty.

3. When Oliver Cromwell took power in England in 1642, the Catholics were briefly forced into Virginia. But Lord Baltimore fought his way back into Maryland and a fight for control began. The struggle ended when Oliver Cromwell died in 1658 and Catholics again achieved freedom in Maryland.

4. Unfortunately, in the wake of the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, the situation changed in Maryland, and Catholics were again under legal disabilities.

5. In 1681, King Charles II granted William Penn, a charter for the land that would become known as Pennsylvania in part to pay off a debt. William Penn was a Quaker, which was a tradition that descended from the Baptists. Being under civil disabilities in England, the Quakers believed very strongly in religious liberties. And so William Penn established religious liberty in Pennsylvania. As a result, it became the best homeland in the British colonies for Catholics.

II. Even as the more powerful nations of Western Europe were fighting over the faith, the Catholic nations of Europe had to fight off continual attacks from the Ottoman Empire.

A. When Constantinople fell in 1453, the way was open to further conquests into Europe.

1. The Muslims had already sent forces east to India and what is now called Indonesia, establishing local Muslim kingdoms in those lands.

2. A series of powerful Sultans made the Ottoman Empire more powerful in the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1517, the Ottoman Emperor Selim the Grim (1512 – 1520) conquered Syria and Egypt, and then had himself declared caliph as well, thus joining the two realms of the Ottomans and Egyptians, as well as spiritual and temporal authority under himself and his dynasty. His son Suleiman, called the Magnificent (1520 – 1556) centralized and augmented Ottoman power and launched more invasions of Europe by land and sea.

- B. The Ottoman Empire gradually conquered Serbia between 1371 and 1521.
- The city of Belgrade did survive an attack in 1456, due largely to the leadership of St. John of Capistrano and the general John Hunyadi. That victory helped stave off a further invasion of Europe for the time. But Serbia could not hold out and Belgrade fell in 1521. The Austrian Empire would reconquer it again in 1717.
- C. In 1463, the Ottoman Empire conquered most of Bosnia, a conquest that was finalized in 1482. It then invaded Croatia, beginning a war that lasted over 100 years before the Croats expelled them in 1592.
- D. The Ottoman Empire had first attacked the Hungarian Kingdom in the mid-fourteenth century. In 1526, with French help, the Ottoman Empire won a striking victory against the Hungarian Kingdom at the Battle of Mohacs. After that battle, the Kingdom split into three parts: royal Hungary in the north and west, Ottoman Hungary, and Transylvania. Royal Hungary accepted rule by the Holy Roman Emperor, with the latter two kingdoms under Ottoman domination, and often favoring them against the Holy Roman Empire.
- E. The Ottoman Empire then struck into the heart of the Holy Roman Empire, besieging Vienna itself in 1529. With the Emperor Charles V finally sending sufficient reinforcements, that siege failed and the Empire was safe for the time being.
- F. There were a series of wars between the Ottoman Empire and the powerful Republic of Venice over the course of 1463 and 1538, after which the Ottoman Empire established dominance over the eastern Mediterranean Sea.
- G. In the Mediterranean Sea, the Ottoman Empire seized the central island of Rhodes in 1522, forcing the Knights of Rhodes to Malta. With a desperate battle, and at last the help of reinforcements from Spain under Don Garcia, the Knights repulsed a siege of Malta in 1565.
- H. In 1570, the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Cyprus just off the Italian Coast. The defending forces finally capitulated with promises of leniency. However, the prisoners were brutalized, with their captain Bragadino scourged to death.
- I. The threat to Cyprus and from there to Italy and Western Europe led Pope St. Pius V to forge an alliance called The Holy League, which joined the forces of Spain, Venice, Genoa, Austria, and the Papal States.
1. The joint navy was placed under the command of Don Juan of Austria, the half-brother of Philip II of Spain.
 2. Seeing the great navies of the Christian Mediterranean countries joined together, the Muslim navy also joined together to meet them for an epic battle.
 3. They met on October 7, 1571 at a port called Lepanto in the Aegean Peninsula. The Muslim navy was slightly larger (251 ships and about 31,000 armed forces versus 212 ships and about 28,500 armed forces.) But the Christian navy had mastered much better the use of gunpowder at sea.

4. With the use of gunpowder, the dramatic escape of many Christian slaves in the Muslim fleet, and weather suddenly changing in their favor, the Christian navy won a decisive victory, destroying about three quarters of the Muslim ships and officers in the battle.

5. By the time the Ottoman Empire's navy recovered, the Christian nations of Europe had built up their navy's to counter the threat.

J. The attempted invasions by land would continue, however, until the mid-seventeenth century.

1. The Ottoman Empire launched an attack that brought it to the walls of Vienna in 1529, but it was repulsed.

2. Tensions continued throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire fought for lands in southeastern Europe.

3. During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) the Holy Roman Empire was weakened, as even Catholic France turned against it. The Treaty of Westphalia broke off numerous lands from the Empire.

4. However, the Kingdom of Poland was growing stronger, and was able to help the Holy Roman Empire secure its borders. Poland, Lithuania and the Republic of Venice formed the Holy League to fight Ottoman incursions.

5. In 1680 the Ottoman Empire sensed weakness in the Holy Roman Empire and prepared for another attack. The Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I formed an alliance with Pope Innocent XI, the kingdom of Poland, the allies of Lithuania and what was left of the Hapsburg kingdom in Hungary. The combined army was led King John III Sobieski of Poland.

6. On September 12, 1683 the armies met outside of Vienna. With all of the reinforcements arriving in time, and the Ottoman Empire staging several very unsuccessful attempts at attacking the city, the Christian forces won a dramatic victory.

7. After that battle, the Ottoman Empire could no longer muster the strength to invade more of Europe. And in fact, the Holy Roman Empire began a re-conquest of Hungary, leading to the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which gave to the Austrian Empire most of what is now Hungary and Slovenia and overlordship in Transylvania.

8. The European nations were now becoming the dominant powers. Nevertheless, there were still raids from the Ottoman Empire into Eastern Europe that captured Christians who were sold into slavery until Russia asserted its power over the Black Sea and ended the raids in 1790.