



As Protestantism and Catholicism battled for control of Western Europe during the Reformation, anti-Christ found opportunity to spread his religion of conquest in the East through the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Beginning its conquests in the late thirteenth century, the Ottoman Empire reached its height during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (reigned 1520-1566). The boundaries of the empire stretched from the southern borders of the Holy Roman Empire in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east, encompassing western Persia (modern Iran). From north to south it stretched from the southern borders of Poland to Egypt, and much of North Africa. Although kept from conquest of the West through the might of the Holy Roman Empire and the rise of Protestant Western Europe, from the time of the Ottomans' greatest reach to the present, the anti-Christ's religion of Islam has continued to dominate the religious and social culture of most of those lands in Asia Minor and northern Africa.

Ottoman expansion into Western Europe ended with the empire's defeat at the Battle of Vienna in September, 1683. Besieged by the Ottoman army for two months, Vienna was defended by the Holy League—the Holy Roman Empire in union with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Venetian Republic.

Historians are divided on the cause for the Ottoman defeat, some suggesting that the Battle of Vienna marked the turning point of the 300-year conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire. Others attribute the defeat to the already-decaying strength of the Ottomans. The truth most likely lies in a combination of both factors. The Holy Roman Empire was still a formidable force even after the Protestant Reformation, and the Ottomans' strength had been sapped as the result of constant military campaigns from its inception. In any case, the Lord did not allow the dominance of Islam to spread into the West. And as much as we may condemn the Roman Catholic Church for its aberrant doctrines and practic-

es, had it not been for the Holy Roman Empire, Islam would have certainly overrun most of Western Europe. We can only speculate on what that may have meant to the birth of the United States of America had God not used the Roman Catholic Church to that end. The United States of America never would have existed.

As it is, the seventeenth century saw North America and Canada colonized by Western Europe as explorers and traders settled in the New World. Here, a new battleground for the struggle between anti-Christ and God's people would develop. Western Europe had become entrenched in religious rivalry and confusion. Much of Protestant Europe, having been given the opportunity to free itself from the religious oppression of the papacy, developed its own form of oppression. They made outcasts of believers in Jesus who did not fit within either Roman Catholic or specific Protestant theological parameters according to their centers of power.

The discovery of the New World was largely the result of Western European nations attempting to find alternate routes to the East because of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. Unable to easily travel the trade routes previously open to them, and with their merchant ships plundered in the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean by the Barbary pirates serving the Ottoman Empire, the Western European nations were forced to seek other routes to maintain their trade and ensure their wealth. Thus the Age of Discovery, which began in the Middle Ages, was spurred on to greater heights as ships began to head west in search of an alternate route to India and Asia.

The voyages began in earnest after 1492 when Christopher Columbus discovered the Bahamas, which gave no indication of the great continent in the western hemisphere that lay beyond. It did not enter anyone's mind that God was directing their paths for the founding of what would become the greatest nation ever to flourish from the time of Adam to the present.

Although the Viking Leif Ericson is credited as the first European to discover the Americas in the eleventh century, it was not in God's plan that the Vikings would colonize the New World. Largely a pagan people, although Ericson converted to Christianity, the Vikings would have no doubt established something quite different than what came about through the settlement of Pilgrims much later. As it turned out, anti-Christ was largely responsible for that fortuitous outcome. For were it not for anti-Christ's dominance in the East, it is doubtful that any nation in the West would have ventured into the unknown and hazardous expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. And were it not for anti-Christ's influence in Western European Protestantism—particularly in the Church of England's persecution of dissenters, there would have been no impetus for the spread of the faith from Europe to the New World.

The beginning of the persecution that led to the Pilgrims leaving England for the New World is found in the Gunpowder Plot (November 1605) which was instigated by Catholic Guy Fawkes who intended to blow up the English Parliament when



KING JAMES I OF ENGLAND

(WIKICOMMONS)

King James I would be present. Fawkes was found out and subsequently executed, but his actions resulted in the English Parliament enacting the Popish Recusants Act 1605, which forbade Roman Catholics from engaging in law and medicine and from acting in fiduciary manners as guardians or trustees. The act also required an oath of allegiance, and required recusants to be fined £60 or forfeit two-thirds of their land if they did

not receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at least once a year in the Church of England. It was also made high treason to obey the pope rather than the king.

King James I's oversight of the Church of England would result in persecution of certain non-Catholic dissidents as well. Those dissidents, pejoratively known as Pilgrims, had their foundations in the Marian exiles of the sixteenth century, having fled persecution under the Catholic Queen Mary I (aka "Bloody Mary" for her persecution of Protestants).

After Mary's imprisonment and the accession to the throne by Elizabeth I, Puritanism became an activist movement within the Church of England.

Upon Elizabeth's death with no heirs, Mary's son, King James VI of Scotland, took the throne, adding the title of King James I of England. Under James, Puritanism co-existed with the Church of England for a time. But anti-Christ, ever desirous of causing schisms within Christianity, found fertile ground for

persecution among the diverse doctrines of Puritanism and the Church of England. Yet the schism that resulted from Puritan dissension was a necessary element to the continuation of the Reformation process, even though the Reformation was for all intents and purposes ended, having caused sufficient departure of many from Roman Catholicism.

The Puritans believed that the Protestant Reformation had not gone far enough, and that the Church of England was still largely Roman Catholic in many beliefs and practices, particularly sacramentalism. The Puritans' dissatisfaction with the Church of England's ecclesiology led to the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, which brought King James I together with representatives of the Church of England and leading English Puritans. At the conference the Puritans set forth their complaints which were considered by James and his bishops. James managed to broker some agreeable outcomes between the two conflicting elements, primarily in the area of tolerance. The Puritans won a great victory in their insistence that individual believers should be able to learn God's Word without the influence of ecclesiastical intermediaries. This led to James commissioning the Bible in the English language, which would become known as the *Authorised Version*. That is, it was the only version authorized to be read in churches, superseding the Great Bible and the Bishops' Bible. First published in 1611, over time it came to be called *The King James Bible*.

Thus, anti-Christ's attempt to cause a deep schism in the Church of England resulted in one of the greatest benefits God has bestowed upon His people, not only in England but throughout the world. For over 300 years the King James Bible had been the staple for biblical studies until the turn of the 20th century which saw modern translations come into existence.

In spite of that great victory, not long after the conference the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, died, to be succeeded by the anti-Puritan Richard Bancroft who demanded that Puritan ministers adhere to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. This brought even greater dissension between the Puritans and the established church.

The Puritans found themselves in constant conflict with the Church of England on many issues, including personal living. This led to James I, ever seeking compromise, issuing a number of declarations including his "Declaration of Sports" (aka *The Book of Sports*) in which the king sought to resolve a dispute between the Puritans and the gentry in Lancashire. Many of the gentry were Roman Catholics. The Puritans insisted that Sunday, being the alleged "Christian Sabbath" was to be kept as a time to worship God. Frivolous activities, particularly sports, were forbidden among the Puritans and they wanted the king to impose those sanctions on all others under his domain. Seeking a compromise, James determined some sports to be acceptable, while others were forbidden. Allowed were archery, dancing, "leaping, vaulting, or other such harmless recreation," as well as "May-games, Whitsun-ales and Morris-dances, and the setting up of Maypoles." Among prohibited activities were bear- and bull-baiting, and bowling.

James made his declaration universal throughout his kingdom, effectively rebuking the Puritans and others he deemed

“precise persons.” On the other hand, he condemned those who did not first attend church services in their parish, and specified that only those who had first done so were allowed to participate in recreation afterward.

This did not appease the Puritans, and the conflict drew more attention to their differences.

The Puritans taught purity of doctrine and worship, as well as personal purity and piety. By the early part of the seventeenth century the Puritans were considered dissenters from Church of England polity and thus met with persecution. That persecution spurred some Pilgrims to embark on the fateful journey to the New World in order to establish lives free from domination by traditional Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Although the Pilgrims erred in their adoption of Reformed theology, God used them to establish faith in Christ further westward.

The Puritans’ migration to New England began in support of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, an English settlement situated in the area that would become present-day Salem and Boston. The first attempt to settle New England at Cape Ann was less than successful, but the company’s second attempt resulted in some 20,000 people migrating during the 1630s, many of them Puritans whose spiritual leaders strongly influenced the governance of the colony.

Elected offices were limited to freemen—men who were landholding male Puritan church members. Yet again, anti-Christ found fertile soil to cause schism between Christians, as members of other churches, including Anglicans and Baptists, were not allowed to hold office.

Although Roman Catholics were the first major religious group to colonize the Americas, having come from Spain and Portugal and, later, France, it was the Pilgrims who brought to North America the foundations for personal freedom and self-governance which greatly aided the prosperity of what would become the United States of America. For reasons known only to God, He provided for a nation that would be the most unique and godly (although not perfect, by any means) expression of human government in the history of mankind. As such, however, the nation would become a target of anti-Christ from its inception.

The early immigration did not go well. Death and sickness accompanied the brave settlers, and for a while it looked as if the efforts on the part of those holding to the Protestant biblical ethic to colonize the New World would be thwarted. Had that happened, virtually all of North America would have ended up like Central and South America—Third World, oppressed Roman Catholic countries. There are many reasons we may surmise why the Lord allowed the United States to be birthed,

from establishing it as the means for evangelization throughout the world, to the present-day holding off of the Muslim nations that threaten modern Israel as the precursor to the last-days fulfillment of biblical prophecy. While the rest of the world wallowed in pagan dissipation and misery, bound by the anti-Christ spirit of witchcraft, shamanism and voodoo, Europe muddled through conflicting anti-Christ religious philosophies centered in Christianity. But among those Christian religious philosophies there emanated from the hearts of individual believers the light of the Gospel, which would enlighten the New World with a fresh start at developing a godly society.

It began with the voyage of the Mayflower, and the Plymouth Colony settlement at New Plimoth, a site previously surveyed by Captain John Smith. There the Pilgrims established the first large permanent settlement in New England, basing much of their law

on Old Testament penal sanctions. Although rarely imposed, the sentence of death was placed upon certain egregious crimes such as murder, adultery, sodomy, witchcraft, youthful rebellion against parents, and treason, among others.

In their fledgling state, the original colonies that followed after Plymouth were imperfect but necessary to establish the biblical ethic that would guide the great nation to follow. If there were any nation on

earth that could be classified as a “Christian nation,” it would be the United States of America. Not because all its citizens are or have been Christians, or that God rules over it as a theocracy, but because Christianity in varied forms was the religion of the overwhelming majority of its founders and early settlers.

America’s founders were not all true believers in Jesus, but at worst some were Deists; all believed in Divine Providence based on the God of the Bible, if not *exactly* the God of the Bible. That belief generated within the hearts of the founders a care for personal freedom which, if submitted to the will of God, would result in blessings beyond measure. History, of course, demonstrates that the life of the nation has not always been so devoted to the will of the true God. But there is little difference between a nominally Christian nation and a theocracy. The only true theocracies in history were ancient Israel and Judah, and even they failed to live up to the standards set by God.

Still, the foundation upon which this nation rested for much of its history, at least in its early stages, has been the Bible. That is reflected in the various official documents of the early settlers and later colonialists.

The Mayflower Compact, the first written law for the initial settlers, the Pilgrims, stated:

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sover-



Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor by William Halsall (1882)

eign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620.

The Plymouth Charter, granted by King James I in 1620, stated that the colony was established “In the hope thereby to advance the enlargement of the Christian religion, to the glory of God Almighty.”

Eleven of the thirteen colonies were established between 1607 (Virginia) and 1681 (Pennsylvania). Delaware and Georgia would follow in 1702 and 1732 respectively. The first colony, Virginia, stated in its charter, “To the glory of His divine Majesty, in propagating of the Christian religion to such people as yet live in ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God.”

The Massachusetts Charter of March 4, 1629, stated in part:

For the directing, ruling, and disposing of all other Matters and Things, whereby our said People may be soe religiously, peaceable, and civilly governed, as their good life and orderlie Conversacon maie wynn and incite the Natives of the Country to the Knowledg and Obedience of the onlie true God and Savior of Mankinde, and the Christian Fayth, which in our royall Intencon, the Adventurers free profession, is the principall Ende of the Plantacion.

The Delaware Charter established the purpose of the colony “To further propagate the Holy Bible.”

The Rhode Island Compact states: “We submit our persons, lives, and estates unto our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

The original governing body of New Hampshire declared in 1639:

Considering with ourselves the holy will of God and our own necessity, that we should not live without wholesome laws and civil government among us, of which we are altogether destitute, do, in the name of Christ and in the sight of God, combine ourselves together to erect and set up among us such government as shall be, to our best discerning, agreeable to the will of God.

When the thirteen colonies decided to unite as a single nation they drafted the Declaration of Independence which, although not naming Jesus Christ, declared certain truths to be self-evident: “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

No one can say honestly that the “Creator” to whom the Declaration referred is not the God of the Bible; the men who signed it may not all have been true believers in Jesus, but when they spoke of God they had no pagan god, Muslim god, Mormon god or any other false god in mind. Most of them were at least nominal Christians who recognized the superior moral and spir-

itual qualities of religion based on God’s Word. Even the Deists among them knew of no other God than the God of the Bible, as much as they misunderstood His nature.

The biblical ethic of those men formed the basis for a new “nation, under God,” that would become the envy of the world—and the target of anti-Christ.

Anti-Christ has been allowed to control only so much of the world’s population directly through his religion. Yet indirectly he controls the entire world. His spirit permeates the cultures of the pagan-dominated East, and is fast gaining more and more influence over the Christendom of the West.

From the time of the first settlers in the seventeenth century, anti-Christ sought to destroy this bastion of biblical truth. Wars, disease, famine, schism among various Christian denominations were all part of his plan to undo the unique thing that God had wrought among the nations. The next three centuries would see unleashed upon the world the greatest suffering of mankind in general as anti-Christ would use traitors from within and enemies from without to accomplish his ends. The blessings of God would be turned into occasions to remove many hearts from the nation’s First Love.



The Pilgrims Landing by Edward Moran