



THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY began with much turmoil in Christendom. Beginning in 1600, the Ottoman Turks attacked Central Europe and occupied large areas there, in the Middle East and in North Africa. Persecution of Christians and Jews throughout the Ottoman Empire (although not in all areas) served anti-Christ's objective to hinder the Gospel and destroy as many of God's people as possible.

It is estimated that the Russian famine of 1601–1603 killed about one-third of the Russian population.

In 1603 the Shogun Era (military dictatorship) began in Japan when Tokugawa Iyeyasu seized power. He began a pogrom against Christian missionaries and drove out European traders, ending the great period of Portuguese trading there. The shogunate lasted until 1868.

In India, upon the death of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev, in 1606, Sikhism, which was founded in the early 16th century, began to gain political strength. Sikhism holds a seemingly contradictory concept of a god that is both transcendent apart from, and yet immanent to creation. It also believes in a form of reincarnation similar to karma. Contrary to the belief of some, Sikhism is not the same as Hinduism, although it draws from some aspects of Hinduism and, to a lesser degree, other religions.

The 17th century saw a great surge in witchcraft in Europe, which displaced many Christian influences. This occurred while conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Europe continued to make the Gospel of little effect. As well, there were protracted wars between Christian nation states. The Anglo-Dutch Wars lasted 22 years as the Dutch and English fought for supremacy over trade routes. The Dutch also fought against the French through many land wars from 1672 to 1713. Louis XIV, known as "the Sun King," sought to make France the most powerful country in Europe through numerous military campaigns. The Thirty Years War was a terrible series of wars that started with a religious dispute in Bohemia.

Just as in ancient Israel, when God's chosen were unfaithful, witchcraft proliferated, so, too, in Christian Europe, the more Christian factions warred against one another the easier it was for anti-Christ to goad people into alternate forms of worship. If the Christian God was represented by bloodshed, greed and warfare, why should the formerly pagan people not return to their roots?

The Great Elizabethan Age came to an end in 1603 with the death of Elizabeth I. We have previously discussed the ascension of King James I of England and his commissioning the Church of England to produce his Authorized Version of the Bible, which has been a formidable weapon by true believers against the spiritual forces of darkness. For this, and many other reasons, anti-Christ deigned to keep Christendom on the edge of extinction through continual conflict between warring Christian denominations.

Thus, James's reign would be threatened by Roman Catholics who were unhappy with his treatment of Catholics, even though Catholics retained high offices during his reign. This led to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, also known as the Jesuit Treason.

The object of the plot was to blow up the House of Lords with the hope of assassinating James I, and installing his nine-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, as the Catholic head of state. Led by Robert Catesby, a recusant Catholic (one who refused to swear the Oath of Supremacy or attend Anglican services in England), the Gunpowder Plot was discovered through an anonymous letter sent to William Parker, 4th Baron Monteagle. During a search of the House of Lords, one of the conspirators, Guy Fawkes, was found guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder—enough to totally annihilate the English Parliament. Eight of the conspirators, including Fawkes, were convicted and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.

Although Fawkes is most often identified with the Gunpowder Plot, it was Catesby who was the architect of the rebellion.

It appears as if the Jesuits were associated with the plot because a particular Jesuit priest, Henry Garnet, allegedly knew of the plot, possibly through hearing the confession of one of the conspirators. Because he was bound by oath to the confidentiality of the confessional he could not divulge the plot to the authorities. He was convicted of treason and executed.

As a side note, confidentiality of the confessional would not have prevented Garnet from divulging the plot, as long as he did not name the person from whom he learned of it. And he certainly could have informed the authorities anonymously. By remaining silent he was complicit in the conspiracy.

Roman Catholicism gained much prestige with the completion of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1612. It remains the cathedral of the Roman bishop—the pope—and is the largest Christian church in the world. Anti-Christ's use of Roman Catholicism to destroy the ability of individuals to possess the Bible would continue as the political and religious power of the papacy fought against the Protestant Reformation through every means and opportunity available.

The 17th century saw many innovations in science, technology, literature, art and other human endeavors. In 1605 Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, the first proper novel; in 1607 forks were introduced as eating utensils in Italy; 1608 saw the invention of the first telescope by Dutchman Hans Lippershey; in 1623 William Shakespeare's plays were published in book form for the first time under the title, *First Folios*. The brilliant Italian astronomer and physicist, Galileo Galilei gains prominence for many inventions and discoveries, including the fact that Copernicus was correct that the earth revolves around the sun, thus igniting the pope's animosity for challenging the ancient superstition that the earth is the center of the universe.

Until the 17th century, much of the most important world history, and certainly the warfare between Christ and the anti-Christ, was confined to the Middle East as the center of God's plan for earth, and the Christianized Western Europe. As exploration of the New World began to increase, spreading Christianity to theretofore unknown parts of the world, the battleground increased substantially. Now the forces of darkness would be spread far and wide with more intensity than ever.

THE NEW WORLD

With the discovery of the New World, there came an increase in mankind's travels to find riches and new opportunities for a better life, particularly by Europeans. At first, the nations were content to send out explorers to garner the natural resources and riches of the relatively untouched land. But the New World would prove to be too small for the nations that sought to expand their boundaries through colonization. The prospect of wealth and freedom created ideal conditions for the anti-Christ to use the inherent pride and greediness of men to goad the Christian nations of Europe into warfare over the territories.

In 1607, the first permanent English colony in North America, Virginia, was established by the Virginia Company of London as "James Fort." Under the leadership of Captain John Smith, Jamestown survived harsh conditions and attacks by the Powhatan nation.

Smith was the first to call the region New England, and trained the settlers how to farm and work to sustain the colony, thus enabling it to survive. Paraphrasing the biblical admonition of Paul to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:10), he proclaimed, "He who does not work, shall not eat."



Captain John Smith

Jamestown served as the capital from 1616 to 1699. Eleven more of the final thirteen colonies would be founded during the 17th century: Massachusetts (1620); New Hampshire (1623); Maryland (1632); Connecticut (1635); Rhode Island (1636); Delaware (1638); North Carolina (1653); South Carolina (1663); New Jersey (1664); New York (1664); Pennsylvania (1682). The thirteenth colony, Georgia, would not be founded until 1732.

Pertinent to this study, the First Charter of Virginia (granted by James I of England) stated:

We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their Desires for the Furtherance of so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government: DO, by these our Letters Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended Desires...

The second charter (May 23, 1609) iterated in different words these same sentiments, but added that no Roman Catholic should enter the colony unless they express allegiance to the Oath of Supremacy.

The third charter (March 12, 1611) affirmed the same but in less stringent words, omitting mention of Roman Catholicism.

The colony of Massachusetts received a similar charter from King James I, expressing the desire that the colony, in addition

to its purposes of commerce, would be a source of conversion to “the Indians Natives of the Country to the knowledge and obedience of the onely true God and Saviour of Mankinde and the Christian Faith which his royall Majestie our Royall Grandfather king Charles the first in his said Letters Patents declared was his Royall Intentions...”

Charles also granted a charter for the entire Province of Carolina, but in 1691, dissent over the governance of the province led to a split between the northern and southern districts. South Carolina was never chartered independently, although North Carolina was later granted a charter by Charles II.

James I's successor, Charles I, further administered his father's intentions that the colonies act as missionary outposts for the spread of the Christian faith by stating so in the charters he granted to Maryland.

Charles found himself embroiled in warfare against the armies of the English and Scottish parliaments during the English Civil War. Defeated in 1645, he was handed over to the English Parliament by his Scottish captors. Refusing to accept Parliament's demand for a constitutional monarchy, Charles was imprisoned. After escaping and being recaptured he was sent in exile to the Isle of Wight. He was eventually tried, convicted and executed for high treason under the army's general Oliver Cromwell in January, 1649.

The Interregnum in England ended when Charles's son, Charles II, took the throne of England upon the start of the Restoration of the Monarchy. Charles II continued in his father's and grandfather's footsteps regarding the colonies, granting new charters that contained much the same provisions as before.

Although a number of the colonies had been founded years earlier, their charters came much later under Charles II. These were Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, Pennsylvania and North Carolina.

Only the colonies of New York, New Hampshire and New Jersey were never directly chartered by the English monarchy, and so no such references to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the Christian faith, or the desire for the conversion of the natives to Christianity is mentioned in any of their constitutions or other legal papers.

Territories in other parts of the Americas granted to loyal subjects by the kings of Spain, France and Portugal often carried references to these same desires, but directed toward the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy.

Even so, anti-Christ has worked over the centuries to divest the United States of America of any knowledge or understand-

ing of the faith (although often misplaced) that was intended to guide the governance of the New World nations. So, too, anti-Christ has managed to substitute other religions for the allegiance of Americans. It is no little thing to realize that, whereas the intent of the early colonists was to convert the American Indians to the Christian faith, today American Indian religion is gaining popularity among former Christians.

The native populations living in the Americas during the time of colonization were still very primitive in their technologies, although they did manage in some areas to build large civilizations by ancient standards.

Central and South America

The major civilizations of the New World were principally the Maya, the Aztecs and the Incas of Central and South America.

The Maya civilization began around 2000 BC and reached its peak during the Classic period (c. AD 250 to 900) when it occupied most of Mesoamerica, from today's central Mexico to northern Costa Rica. It continued until the arrival of the Spanish.

Around AD 1100 the Incas recognized their first king, Sinchi Roca. The Inca kingdom continued until it was transformed into an empire sometime in the early 13th century. At its peak, the Incan Empire stretched along the western coast of South America, encompassing present-day Peru, Bolivia, most of Ecuador, and northern Chili. With the arrival of the Spanish the destruction of the Incan Empire began, culminating in a final victory over the last ruler, Túpac Amaru, in 1572.

The Aztec Empire was a newer civilization that ruled the area in and around the Valley of Mexico, a highlands plateau in central Mexico. The empire grew out of a triple alliance that developed after protracted 15th-century warfare over the territory among competing kings. Although the Aztecs did not expand their territory beyond the valley, the population grew to over 1 million people by 1520. The empire met its demise when the Spanish conquered all of Mexico during the 16th century.

Although with the Spanish Conquistadores came missionaries determined to convert the native peoples of the Americas to Christ, many of the conversions were accomplished through force and persecution. And the conversions were not to Christ as much as to Roman Catholicism. At the time the Pilgrims from England were establishing the Reformed faith among the natives in the New England colonies, the Papacy's emissaries were establishing Roman Catholicism among the natives of western North America all the way to the southernmost tip of



Charles I of England



Charles II of England

South America. If any gospel was going to sway the natives from their animist religions, anti-Christ was going to make sure that as many as possible would be shuttled into one form of false Christianity or another.

By the 17th century the southern areas of the Americas became a mishmash of Roman Catholic/pagan culture and religion. In truth, the Roman Catholic missionaries allowed the natives to engage in their satanic rituals as long as they were practiced under the watchful eye of a Catholic priest. Even today, there can be found in Mexico and many Central and South American churches, pagan rituals alongside the Catholic Mass.

Also, in the process of “converting” the natives, unspeakable atrocities were committed against the native populations. However, it must be pointed out that the overall material welfare of those native populations was greatly enhanced due to the superior industrial and technological achievements that grew in Western Europe. That does not justify the often-imposed slavery and servitude that the natives suffered, but the truth is that they suffered those same things under their rulers and other conquering native tribes. What the Spanish accomplished, at least, was the elimination of human sacrifices and unsanitary religious practices. But beyond that, anti-Christ religions in one form or another have dominated.

North America

As the Spanish were enslaving the native populations of Central and South America, there began a period in North America that would leave a black mark on the history of an otherwise admirable civilization, superior to any that had ever existed anywhere in the world prior, or that would most likely ever exist again.

Slavery in North America began in 1619 when the first boatload of African slaves arrived in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, to bolster the labor force for various crops, most notably tobacco. Prior to the introduction of African slaves, wealthy European settlers relied on indentured servants, mostly poorer Europeans. There were many problems with indentured servants, including a high mortality rate. Also, many left for better positions after they had become skilled workers. Add to this the fact that the English economy had improved over time, resulting in fewer willing to suffer the perils of travel to the New World.

The conditions were ripe for anti-Christ to institute an evil that would, to this day, threaten the stability of the one nation throughout history that would become the wealthiest and yet godliest, apart from Israel under David and Solomon. With the arrival of a Dutch ship carrying the first African slaves, human greed overrode the faith to which the Christian settlers claimed allegiance. There grew a lucrative business of importing and selling slaves throughout the American colonies.

Although history teachers and the media focus their attention on slavery in the south of what would become the United States of America, less than 7% of the twelve million slaves imported from Africa were sent to work in British North America. The vast majority of slaves were imported to sugar colonies in the Caribbean. Originally colonized by Spain, the Spaniards enslaved the native populations to work the sugar cane fields, and supplemented that labor with slaves imported from Africa. Later, after the decline of the Spanish Empire, the British would take over the lucrative sugar trade and import even more slaves from Africa. Over one-third of all African slaves were sent to Brazil, which had been colonized by the Portuguese, and by 1800 the slave trade yielded 88 percent of Brazil’s revenue.¹

Most of the slave owners in North America would have identified with one or another Christian denomination, both Catholic and Protestant, but one little-mentioned fact about the slave trade is that the majority of slave traders in Africa were Muslims who contracted with African tribal kings to buy their strongest subjects and sell them in the Americas.

Even so, that Christians would join with them in the evils of slavery demonstrates how far from the faith anti-Christ was able to move them through greed. It may have been argued that it wasn’t greed as much as necessity to maintain one’s business that required the importation of slaves. That may fly in the presence of unregenerate men, but God will ultimately judge slavery for the evil it is.



A slave market in sub-Saharan Africa

Some point to God’s provision for slavery in the Bible to justify the kind of slavery that was engaged in throughout the New World. And it is true that slavery as an institution is not prohibited in Scripture. An Israelite could purchase slaves with certain provisions; he could also acquire slaves through the conquest of Israel’s enemies, and for repaying of debt. But in all instances slaves were to be treated with kindness and even had the opportunity to become members of their master’s family under certain conditions.

Slavery in the Americas was often brutal, certainly lacking any aspect of love toward one’s fellow man. Some slaves were treated with kindness, particularly those indentured to small landowners. The large plantations were the most harsh and destructive toward not only the bodies, but the minds and morale of their slaves.

In any case, this great evil of slavery gave justification for anti-Christ to attack the new nation that would come into existence in the next century. Today the United States of America is paying for having engaged in such brutal slavery, and for myriad other sins that may have been stifled early on due to the moral climate that existed then, but has always been in the sinful hearts of men.

¹ *The Encyclopedia of World History: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Chronologically Arranged*, Peter N. Stearns, Gen. Editor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), p. 394.