

# INTRODUCTION

We live in what has been, since 1945 at least, the most important and most powerful nation in the World. Trends, whether political or social, which start in the United States soon spread throughout the globe. But if this is a source of pride to Americans, it is also a great responsibility. For Catholic Americans, the responsibility becomes even greater. In the first case, there is the necessity of ensuring that this great power be a force for good; in the second, there is the added need to spread the Catholic faith in our native land—thus assisting it throughout the world.

History is the key to understanding men—whether as nations, families, or individuals. Without an employment record, we cannot evaluate a prospective worker; without genealogy, we cannot say much about a given family as it is today. Similarly, without a firm grasp of a nation's history, we cannot understand its present. In the case of America, so many of its present-day policies are based upon factors so deeply buried in our history, that without a good understanding of those factors the present is simply incomprehensible. Yet history (due in part to some of these factors) is probably our most poorly taught subject. Due to other of these factors, what little of it that is imparted to students is more in the way of a national mythology (with such episodes as Washington and the cherry tree and the Boston Tea Party given more attention than the underlying causes and forces) than serious history—useless for understanding, or for any other purpose than self-praise.

For Catholics, history has an even higher purpose beside. For them, history is the unfolding of God's Will in time, and the attempts of men either to conform themselves to or to resist that Will. As the great Dom Gueranger, author of the monumental *Liturgical Year* points out, "for the Christian there is no purely human History" since "man has been divinely called to the supernatural state. This state is his goal and the chronicles of human kind should therefore exhibit the traces of that supernatural life." Thus the Catholic historian may rely upon the guidance provided by the Church which always goes before him as a column of light and divinely illuminates all his thoughts. The Christian knows that a close bond unites the Church and the Son of God made man; the Christian knows that the Church has the guarantee of Christ's promise against all errors in her teaching and in the general conduct of Christian society, and that the Holy Spirit animates and leads the Church. It is in her, therefore, that he finds the rule for judging. The true Christian is not surprised by the weakness of churchmen or by

their temporal abuses, because he knows that God has decided to tolerate the weeds in His field until the harvest... But he knows where the direction, the spirit, and the divine instinct of the Church are manifested. He receives them, he accepts them, he professes them bravely and applies them in his narration of history. Therefore, he never betrays them, he never sacrifices them, he considers good what the Church judges as good and bad what the Church judges as bad. He does not care about the sarcasm or clamor of short-sighted cowards. Other historians will stubbornly observe only the political side of events, and so will descend to the pagan point of view. But the Christian historian will remain firm, because he has the initial certainty that he is not mistaken. [He knows that] Christ is at home in history; [that is why] he must not fear condemning the thousands of calumnies which have made history a huge conspiracy against truth... It is necessary to be prepared to fight; if one is not brave enough to do that, then that person should refrain from writing history. (Gueranger, *The Christian Sense of History*, pp. 17-18, 53-54)

The good Benedictine gives us a second important premise. “The supreme disgrace of the Christian historian would be to take the ideas of his time as criteria for evaluation and to apply them to judging the past. [In this way non-Christians] succeed in dragging Catholics into their systems, and are jubilant because of the progress they have made in imposing their language and their ideas (*ibid*, 36 and 59).

Adherence to these principles has produced such great historians as Hilaire Belloc, Bernard Fay, William Thomas Walsh, and Christopher Hollis, to say nothing of the great Dom Gueranger himself. But American Catholic historians have generally refrained from exploring their own national history with these principles, preferring instead to adopt the analysis of their non-Catholic colleagues, save when looking at purely Catholic topics (and sometimes not then). It is easy to see why.

Solange Hertz, perhaps the first Catholic writer to rigorously apply Catholic principles to American history, reached an uncomfortable conclusion: “U.S. History shows how all Catholic government, whether English, French, or Spanish, was gradually crowded out..., on a continent liberally watered by the blood of martyrs from all parts of Europe who first planted the Cross of Christ there and who sought no other end than consolidating His peaceful possession” (*The Star-Spangled Heresy*, p. 171).

This is not a pleasing summary. But it is this author’s belief that a candid examination of the facts of U.S. history will bear Mrs. Hertz’s contention out. For America is not as yet really a nation. It is in fact a religion—Americanism, described thusly by Dr. John Rao:

“Americanism” is a religion in which both major elements of the American “soul”—secularized Puritanism and Anglo-Saxon conservatism—have helped to develop. “Americanism” is a religion that adores the United States as the incarnation of the secularized Puritan vision of paradise. It is a religion that simultaneously adores the bland, materialistic, catch-all unity that stems from the Anglo-Saxon drive for stability and integration. “Americanism” is an evangelical religion that wishes the rest of the world to be converted to its doctrines (Americanism, p. 3).

As a revealed religion Catholicism must claim a monopoly of truth; she cannot be tolerant of error, of false religions. Americanism, being a rival faith, must inevitably be an opponent of Catholicism. As Dr. Rao further opines, it “is, and always has been, a danger to the Church of Rome. Indeed, the threat that it poses to Catholicism may be the most pressing experienced in the past few centuries of revolution” (*loc. cit.*).

Having said all of this, it must be pointed out that opposition to the religion of Americanism is not the same thing as disloyalty to the country. If anything, pursuit of the Americanist religious ideals has involved this country in innumerable foreign and domestic disputes, any one of which could easily have destroyed us. Moreover, for a Catholic resident in a non-Catholic country, a desire to convert his nation from its error constitutes real patriotism, just as a convert’s desire to see his parents accept the truth of the Faith is the cornerstone of his love for them.

It is vital then, for Catholics, especially young Catholics, to have a good and proper understanding of their country’s history. To exercise their patriotism, they must work for the conversion of the U.S.; to do this effectively, they must understand the forces and events which brought forth not only the religion of Americanism and the country itself, but also the sort of Catholicism which, in 300 years, failed so dismally to bring this conversion about.

One of the most exciting and positive notes of our history, however, is that the American continents have provided a place wherein native and European, African, and Asian cultures have mingled, and from which a vital spirit emerged. In those areas evangelized properly, the results have been extraordinary. Two models have been offered for this mingling: the Catholic, wherein the constituent elements retain their integrity while enriching one another, and the Americanist, wherein the ultimate result is intended to create a conformity based upon the lowest common denominator: money.

In this book, it is hoped that a beginning will be made toward a Catholic view of American history. Obviously, such a vast topic cannot be adequately explored in the little space available to us. But

what can be done (and what this author hopes to have accomplished) is to reinterpret the better known episodes of our history in accordance with the Faith, and to point up lesser-known details which will give factual proof of the truth of this reinterpretation.

Unfortunately, so poor has so much of the standard historical education been in recent decades, that many names, places and dates which were common knowledge not long ago will have been forgotten. Hence, for best results, this book should be used alongside a standard encyclopedia. The names and places in italics can then be looked up for further knowledge.

The author does not pretend to have written the final word in this matter; it is no small task to reverse five centuries of misinterpretation and outright lies. But if this present work will inspire other, abler hands to lend their pens to this work, he will have succeeded.

At any rate, it will be helpful, before we begin our survey, to look at the continents of Europe, America, and Africa on the eve of the great discovery which would bring them all together.

## **EUROPE**

The Europe of 1492 was a continent in the midst of change. In the West, Catholicism reigned supreme from Iceland to Russia. In many ways, the ideals of Medieval Christendom, although shaken by the Great Schism (with its scandal of three Popes at once) and the Renaissance (with its rediscovery of pagan literature and morality), remained. The Middle Ages were suffused with Catholicism in a way which the world has never seen—before or since. This does not mean that they were perfect, or that men were any less sinners than they are now. What it does mean is that they were clearer as to their goals than were either their ancestors or their descendants. As Kenelm Digby observes in *Mores Catholici*, "...the avowed object of all government in ages of faith was to secure glory to God, and peace on earth to men of good-will. The Catholic religion admitted of no other.

The Kings themselves, hereditary for the most part, were not merely the equivalents of our heads of state. For just as Papal and Imperial authority were considered to be divine in origin, so too was Royal. Yet the Kings often had little power: no power of income tax, nor of regulation, nor of the secret police, nor of so many of the myriad interferences we have come to accept as the rightful appurtenances of governmental power. Instead, as Kenelm Digby (*op. cit.* p. 99) says:

...the whole state was founded on the pacific type of the best kingdom. The pacific character of royal majesty was a religious idea, emanating from what was believed of the celestial dominations and powers; for it was a devotional exercise in reparation of the sins of anger, passion, and revenge, to offer to God the peace, mildness and tranquillity of the thrones. The Christian religion had put everything in its place, so that the hierarchy of men was as complete as that of angels in the order shown by Dionysius. As in the latter, thrones are after Seraphim and Cherubim, so in the state, physical force was regarded after love and science. In the ancient Christian sculpture, dominations, which command angels, and principalities, which rule over men, are represented with crowns and sceptres; but powers which command the Satanic race are shown with spear and shield, since the devil only yields to force. Therefore, the crown and sceptre were the symbols of royal power, and the maxim was “‘Tis more kingly to obtain peace than to enforce conditions by constraint.”

For this reason, the King had three roles: in a sense, he had a demi-priestly character, conferred by his coronation. He was firstly the defender of the Church within his realm. A sort of sub-diaconal character was his, and various kings were often traditionally canons of one or several of their cathedral cities. Kings also often had liturgical roles, such as foot-washing on Maundy Thursday, an honored place in Corpus Christi and other processions, and special Mass prayers said for them. In a few cases, he was believed to have miraculous powers. So the Kings of England and France cured scrofula (called “The King’s Evil), the King of Denmark cured epilepsy, the King of Hungary jaundice, and the Holy Roman Emperor, successor of Charlemagne, was said to have some control over the weather (so in Germany fine warm weather is called *Kaiserswetter*). Isabel of Spain’s ancestors, the Kings of Castile, were resorted to by the possessed for exorcism, as we see in Alvarez Pelayo’s 1340 work, *Speculum regum*, written to King Alphonso XI:

It is said that the kings of France and of England possess a [healing] power; likewise the most pious kings of Spain, from whom you are descended, possess a power which acts on the demoniacs and certain sick persons suffering from divers ills. When a small child, I myself saw your grandfather king Sancho [Sancho II, 1284-1295], who brought me up, place his foot upon the throat of a demoniac who proceeded to heap insults upon him; and then, by reading words taken from a little book, drive out the demon from this woman, and leave her perfectly healed. (quoted in Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, p. 88).

His Majesty’s second role was as supreme judge. The Court of Queen’s Bench is a relic of this in Commonwealth countries—indeed,

our very word “Court” hearkens back to the King sitting in judgment over cases, with all his chief men around him. Yet he could not be arbitrary: each of his provinces must be ruled in accordance with their own laws—or Roman Law if that was accepted there. Law was considered to be something immutable which could be discovered, but never created. So true was this that the Assizes of Jerusalem, the legal code of the Latin Kingdom of that city, were declared to be a recovery of previous law, rather than a new creation for a new kingdom. Nor was the King above the Law: such things as Magna Carta and various Golden Bulls were not considered as new limitations of the King’s power, but rather a return to previously existing balance. Since the King had little power at his command, he must either hear cases in his own residence, send out judges to the different provinces of his realm, or else invest various local notables with judicial power. Lack of a real standing army generally reduced his ability to discipline offending nobles to merely declaring such “outlaws” who might be preyed upon by any other noble strong enough to do so.

This last brings us to the King’s third role: warlord. He was chief of whatever soldiery he happened to have on hand: if he wished to go to war with a neighboring nation or to go on Crusade, he must summon his chief nobles with their retainers, or else hire mercenaries. Both of these were often dangerous propositions. Thus it is that until the Hundred years War, we see little in the way of major wars between Christian Kings, although there was plenty of local warfare between barons.

The King’s role, then, was that of orchestra conductor. A good King, like St. Louis, was able to benefit his subjects greatly through force of personality; a bad one was unable generally, to do more than make the lives of his courtiers unpleasant. Would the same might be said of chief executives today! The Kings gathered around themselves courts. These consisted of the ruler’s friends, servants, and the great men of his realm. One thinks immediately of King Arthur’s Round Table, the Paladins of Charlemagne, and the warriors clustered around Hrothgar in *Beowulf*; but the much attenuated descendants of such groups may be found today in institutions like the British Privy Council and the Danish Council of State. Within these amorphous bands, the King carried out his main functions: observing the rites of the Church, ruling on judicial cases brought to him, and occasionally deciding on military action.

As time progressed, these particular functions became more specialized, and eventually developed into quasi-departments or ministries of state. From this simple beginning have derived the great central administrations with which we are familiar; in time, these would do away with the Kings. Today, only the largely ceremonial

British royal household, and the pragmatic Roman Curia survive in anything like their original form.

It is important to remember that just as Christendom was one body in religious matters, so it was in temporal matters also. This is admirably summed up by James, Viscount Bryce, in his *The Holy Roman Empire* (pp. 102-105):

The realistic philosophy, and the needs of a time when the only notion of civil or religious order was submission to authority, required the World State to be a monarchy: tradition, as well as the continued existence of a part of the ancient institutions, gave the monarch the name of Roman Emperor. A king could not be universal sovereign, for there were many kings: the Emperor must be universal, for there had never been but one Emperor; he had in older and brighter days been the actual lord of the civilized world; the seat of his power was placed beside that of the spiritual autocrat of Christendom. His functions will be seen most clearly if we deduce them from the leading principle of medieval mythology [as the ignorant call it], the exact correspondence of earth and heaven. As God, in the midst of the celestial hierarchy, rules blessed spirits in Paradise, so the Pope, His vicar, raised above priests, bishops, metropolitans, reigns over the souls of mortal men below. But as God is Lord of earth as well as of heaven, so must he (the Emperor *coelestis*) be represented by a second earthly viceroy, the Emperor (*Imperator terrenus*), whose authority shall be of and for this present life. And as in this present world the soul cannot act save through the body, while yet the body is no more than an instrument and means for the soul's manifestation, so there must be a rule and care of men's bodies as well as of their souls, yet subordinated always to the well-being of that element which is the purer and more enduring. It is under the emblem of soul and body that the relation of the papal and imperial power is presented to us throughout the Middle Ages. The Pope, as God's vicar in matters spiritual, is to lead men to eternal life; the Emperor, as vicar in matters temporal, must so control them in their dealings with one another that they are able to pursue undisturbed the spiritual life, and thereby attain the same supreme and common end of everlasting happiness. In view of this object his chief duty is to maintain peace in the world, while towards the Church his position is that of Advocate or Patron, a title borrowed from the practice adopted by churches and monasteries of choosing some powerful baron to protect their lands and lead their tenants in war. The functions of Advocacy are twofold: at home to make the Christian people obedient to the priesthood, and to execute priestly decrees upon heretics and sinners; abroad to propagate the faith among the heathen, not sparing to use carnal weapons. Thus does the Emperor answer in every point to his antitype the Pope, his power being yet of a lower rank, created on the analogy of the papal...Thus

the Holy Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire are one and the same thing, seen from different sides; and Catholicism, the principle of the universal Christian society, is also Romanism...

This has specific reference to our own continent. Gary Potter defines it admirably in modern terms (*In Reaction*, p. 55):

Words express ideas, and some of them now being quoted signify notions likely to be totally foreign to anyone unfamiliar with history prior to a few decades ago: “world emperor,” “imperial office,”...This is not the place to lay out all the history needed to be known for thoroughly grasping the notions. However, the principal one was adumbrated by Our Lord Himself in the last command His followers received from Him: to make disciples of *all* the nations. In a word, the idea of a universal Christian commonwealth is what we are talking about.

To date it has never existed. Today there is not even a Christian government anywhere. However, from the conversion of Constantine until August, 1806—with an interruption (in the West) from Romulus Augustulus in 475 to Charlemagne in 800—there was *the* Empire. It was the heart of what was once known as Christendom. Under its aegis serious European settlement of the Western Hemisphere began, and the Americas’ native inhabitants first baptized, which is why the feathered cloak of Montezuma is in a museum in Vienna.

The first time Christendom had set out to colonize a territory outside of Western Europe was during the course of the First Crusade in 1099. At that time, while the modern nationalities of Europe were in existence, they were seen by their members as being at least theoretically subordinate to their common obedience to the Holy Empire, the *Res Publica Christiana*. Although various of the armies of the First Crusade were lead by Lorrainers, French, English Normans, and Italian Normans, and in later days German, French, and English rulers would lead swarms of multi-national crusaders to the Holy Land, there was never any questioning of annexing the new lands to one of the constituent kingdoms of the Empire. Instead, the lands freed from the Turk were organized into independent Crusader states: the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and its vassal counties of Edessa, Tripoli, and Antioch.

Being the common property of Christendom, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was organized as the prototypical feudal state. For all that the King was crowned in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, his powers were limited. His three chief officers, the Seneschal, Marshal, and Constable, each wielded considerable power. The Lords of the constituent fiefs, gathered together in the High Court, were a strong check on the King’s will, as was the Court of the Burgesses, to which



belonged citizens of the different towns. The Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Grand Masters of the three Military Orders (Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller, and Teutonic Knights) were similarly placed. All in all, the historian must agree with Donald Attwater's description of the Kingdom's administration as "a good example...wise, just, and moderate."

But this first attempt at colonization would fail. Internal disunion could perhaps have been remedied. But the growing national disunity of the states of Christendom, whose joint effort was essential to the Kingdom's survival, doomed it. By 1291, the last cities held by the Crusaders had fallen. With the exception of the 1918-1948 British Mandate, the Holy Land has been out of Christian hands ever since.

This disunity continued; it led to the fratricidal Hundred Years' War between England and France, the War of the Roses in the former country, ongoing strife between Guelphs (Papal supporters) and Ghibellines (Imperial supporters) in Germany and Italy, and at last the Great Schism in the very Papacy itself. The same friction between emerging, centralizing nations led directly to the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, and permitted them to occupy all Europe south of the Danube River.

But by 1492, a great deal of this had been papered over; Alexander VI, the much maligned Borgia Pope, was on the throne of Peter; Frederick III, last of the Emperors to be crowned at Rome, was reigning in Vienna. Charles VIII of France had married Anne of Brittany, uniting her land—the last major independent fief—to the French throne. In England, Henry VII, first of the Tudors, was imposing unity on the country after defeating and killing the rightful King, Richard III, in 1485. While all these men were attempting to consolidate their respective realms by centralizing power under the royal administrations we have just discussed, Ferdinand and Isabel of Spain, having united Aragon and Castile by their marriage, were ending the age-old struggle against the Moors. The year of 1492 saw the fall of the last Moorish stronghold, Granada, to the Spanish. The Canary, Azores, and Madeira Islands had already been discovered and partially colonized by this year. An Italian mariner, Christopher Columbus, wished to go further in that direction, and blaze new trade routes to the Far East; these would replace the ones occupied by the Turks, and allow the Faith to expand in heretofore unknown areas. Freed of the Moorish problem, Ferdinand and Isabel were disposed to back him.

The Portuguese, during the course of the 1400s, had been busy exploring themselves. Under the patronage of the King's brother, *Prince Henry the Navigator* (1394-1460), the Azores, Madeiras, and Cape Verdes were discovered as mentioned. Portuguese sailors continued to journey south along the African coast, until in 1486,

*Bartholomew Diaz* discovered the Cape of Good Hope. The East lay waiting. But it should be noted that Prince Henry was not interested only in trade with the Far East. As Grand Master of the Order of Christ (the Portuguese branch of the Templars which survived when that order was suppressed), he committed his ships and sailors to finding out the strength of Islam in the regions they explored, to attempt to contact Christian allies (if any were present) and to spread the Faith among the heathen. So it was that his caravels bore the red Crusader's cross, as their voyages of discovery were considered continuations of that conflict.

## THE AMERICAS

Due to the lack of written records, a veil is drawn across the face of pre-Columbian America. Although the commonly held belief among academics is that there was little or no contact between the Americas and the rest of the world, some scholars do maintain otherwise. The history of the Americas is quite as and even more interesting from this point of view. In the article "Mexico", in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (X, p. 252), there is a fascinating account of pre-Columbian Mexican religion. Some of their traditions closely parallel various stories from Genesis, and represent their particular remnants of the original revelation given the first men. But other elements have a later origin:

In the history of the nations of ancient Mexico the coming of Quetzalcoatl marks a distinct era. He was said to have come from the province of Panuco, a white man, of great stature, broad brow, large eyes, long black hair, rounded beard, and dressed in a tunic covered with black and red crosses. Chaste, intelligent, a lover of peace, versed in the arts and sciences, he preached by his example and doctrine a new religion which inculcated fasting and penance, love and reverence for the Divinity, practice of virtue, and hatred of vice.

He went on to predict the coming of white men at a particular time and place (which "just happened" to be those where came Cortez) who would overthrow their old gods. He was driven out, and went to Yucatan with the same message; among the Mayans he was called Kukulcan. From his time in both areas dates the native veneration of the Cross, and in various places there were practiced rites he had introduced, suggestive of our baptism, confession, and communion. The Mayans who practiced the latter called the bread *Toyolliatlacual* : "food of our souls." The author of the article supposes that Quetzalcoatl was a 10th or 11th Century Norse priest, driven off course

perhaps from the Northern voyages. Others suggest that he was some disciple of the Irish St. Brendan the Navigator, or even the Saint himself. Whatever the case, the implications of the song written by Cauch, High Priest of Tixcayon long before the Spanish came are clear:

There shall come the sign of a god who dwells on high,  
And the cross which illumined the world shall be made manifest;  
The worship of false gods shall cease.  
Your father comes, O Itzalanos!  
Your brother comes, O Itzalanos!  
Receive your bearded guests from the East,  
Who come to bring the sign of God.  
God it is who comes to us, meek and holy.

It is interesting to note that Our Lady appeared at Guadalupe in the traditional garb of an Aztec princess. This 1531 apparition was the signal for mass conversion. Ancient Peru also had a Quetzalcoatl-like figure, Viracocha, who was said to have been an old bearded white man wearing a robe and carrying a staff.

The Vikings, while still pagan, had chased Irish monks from Iceland. Upon their settlement of Greenland, they found evidence that the same group had preceded them, and then fled westward. According to the *Vinland Saga*, the Indians the Norse later encountered on the coast of North America informed them of white bearded men in the interior, who wearing robes carried crosses in procession. The Vikings assumed that these were still more of the same. They themselves maintained a diocese in Greenland from the tenth Century until the 1400s, when the Greenland colony died out. We have, of course, no way of knowing what, if any missionary activity they undertook, whether collectively or via lone individuals.

Then there is the famous tale of Madoc ap Owain Gwynedd, the legendary Welsh Prince who many claim led a party of colonists to North America in 1170. The legends of "white Indians" bearing tattered Missals, crucifixes, rosaries, etc. appears to have some basis in fact: Roman coins (then in circulation in Wales) have been discovered in Kentucky, where such a group was rumored to exist around Louisville in the 18th Century. Lewis and Clark were very surprised by the Caucasian appearance of many of the Mandan Indians; artist George Catlin, who lived among them before their near destruction by smallpox and knew them better than any other white man, claimed their language contained a great many Welsh words. Whatever the case, the Daughters of the American Revolution felt the story had enough proof to erect a monument to Madoc at the supposed site of his landing in Mobile Bay.

There are further supposed traces of Japanese, Chinese, African, and even Phoenician visits to the American coasts before Columbus. But regardless of whether or not such voyagers arrived, it was Columbus who started the movement which would make America an integral part of the civilization of Europe.

There were, however, civilizations in the Americas already: the bloody theocracy of the Aztecs, and the ant-hill like despotism of the Incas. Whatever they may have owed to Old World contacts, they were certainly distinctive enough. Many other civilizations—the Olmecs, of Mexico, the Chimu of Peru, and of course, the Mayans of Yucatan, had risen and fallen. In North America, a similar culture, called either “Mound-builders” (so called from the enormous mounds they built) or “Mississippian” had reached practically the same technological level as the Incas or Aztecs about the year 850 A.D. But a few hundred years later it began to break up, under pressure from Plains and Woodland tribes. By the time the Europeans arrived, the Natchez Indians survived as a lone remnant, rather as the Byzantines were of Rome. Interestingly, as the Inca was called the “Son of the Sun,” so the chief of the Natchez was titled “The Great Sun.”

The North American Indians at the time of the discovery were much more primitive than either their Aztec and Inca contemporaries or their Mississippian predecessors. More settled tribes, such as those in the South and North East, grew pumpkins, beans, corn and squash. Plains Indians, having no horses (none would arrive until the Spanish came) lived sedentary lives in earth lodges nestled along river banks. In the far West, the California Indians lived wretched lives, subsisting primarily off acorns and rabbits (the fires local tribesmen lit to frighten rabbits out of hiding in the L.A. area provided that future city’s first smog). North Western Indians lived relatively comfortably. These latter were famous for *potlaches*, parties at which the host would give away most of his goods to his guests.

It was a continent teeming with game. Buffalo, deer, elk, rabbit, passenger pigeon, turkey, and many other animals and birds went into the tribesmen’s larder, as well as various wild plants, and the four staple crops mentioned above. Further to the South, peanuts, chocolate, and potatoes all were raised. Their subsequent introduction to the rest of the world (from which they were absent) would cause as great a revolution in various old world countries’ diet as importation of European foods and plants would in the Americas.

At any rate, it so happened that, at the time of the discovery, there were no Indian nations capable of real resistance to the Europeans, save the Aztecs and the Incas. The bloodthirstiness of the former and the rigid interior conformity of the latter seriously depleted their ability to

defend themselves against any technologically superior culture with which they might come in contact.

## **AFRICA**

The portion of Africa closest to America, West Africa, is naturally the part which would have, via the slave-trade, the closest connection to the New World. Divided among such incessantly warring peoples as the Ashanti, Fante, Dahomey, and Benin, the West African coast was nevertheless a rich source of gold. In 1471, the Portuguese arrived at what they soon called the Gold Coast (present day Ghana) and in 1482, they built Elmina Castle there, the first of four local forts designed to ensure that other Europeans did not trade in the region. From this depot they hoped to send the gold to Europe, rather than Muslim North Africa. On that particular occasion, an Italian seaman named Christopher Columbus was present.

The small local states had another interesting custom. Fighting continually as they did, they captured many prisoners. These they would sell as slaves, generally to the larger Muslim states to the North, particularly those in the Sudan. But of course, the change in direction of the gold flow away from these countries reduced their ability to buy slaves. Luckily for the petty coastal chieftains, the discovery of the New World would soon provide a whole new outlet for their wares.

## **ASIA**

But what of Asia, of the glittering Far East which the Portuguese hoped to reach by sea going East, and Columbus by going West? In the 13th Century, *Marco Polo* had reached the court of *Khublai Khan*, Mongol ruler of China. From then on, overland trade and communication between Europe and China grew for about a century, during which time Catholic dioceses were established. Foreigners themselves, the Mongol Emperors of China were friendly to Europeans.

But in 1368, they were driven out of the country, and the native Ming dynasty assumed the throne. Expansionistic, China under the Ming resolved to become a naval power. From 1407 to 1431, Admiral *Cheng Ho* cruised the waters of the Indian Ocean. He visited East African and Arabian ports, and reduced many countries in Southeast Asia to vassals of his Emperor. This was the beginning of the massive

emigration of Chinese to those areas, of which their later migration to our West Coast was an eventual product.

But later Emperors did not consolidate the conquests of Cheng Ho. Moreover, the naval interests of China lay to her South and West, not East—where were the fierce Japanese pirates. Although, as earlier suggested, some Chinese may have reached the new world at one time or another, the China of 1492 was not interested in what lay beyond Japan.

Japan herself, in a state of civil war, produced as seamen pirates who were interested only in capturing Chinese ships—thus discouraging Chinese interest in their direction further, and causing them to look Westward. The rest of Eastern Asia was too divided to worry about what might lay beyond the Eastern horizon. If the Westerners were interested in Asia, and unable to dislodge the Turks from their control of the traditional overland routes, then they must find a way by sea themselves.

## CONCLUSION

This, then, was the situation of the world on August 3, 1492, when Christopher Columbus and his tiny fleet of three ships set sail from Palos Harbor. They did not realize it, nor did any other human on the planet, but the world was set for a major revolution. Those three small ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria* carried as cargo the future of the world, the civilization of Christendom, and the Catholic Faith. Not only the Americas were to receive these benefits as a result of the voyage, but Asia and Africa too, as Portuguese efforts to keep up with Spain drove them to pursue their Eastern direction more avidly. Further, the cornerstone of our own country was set down that Summer day in Spain.