

American Minute with Bill Federer

Sinking of Invincible Spanish Armada & its impact on English colonizing of America

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After **Charles V** abdicated the Spanish throne in 1556, he lived in the Monastery of Yuste till his death.

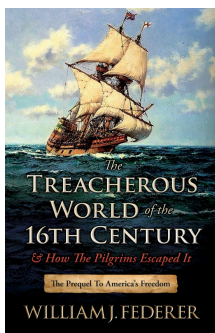
He had fought **France**, the **Ottoman Empire**, and ruled the **New World**. He

had presided over the **trial of Martin Luther**, and wrestled with the **beginning of the Reformation**. **Spanish gold** became the standard for **world monetary exchange**.

Charles' son was **King Philip II**, who ruled the **Spanish Empire** -- the **most powerful empire in the world**.

The **Philippines** were named after him ... [continue reading American Minute here ...](#)

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In 1554, **King Philip II of Spain** married **England's Queen Mary I**, the daughter of Henry VIII by his first wife -- the Spanish Catherine of Aragon.

By virtue of the marriage, **Philip considered himself co-monarch of England.**

When **Queen Mary died** in 1558, **Philip** still wanted to **claim the title of King of England.**

England instead chose **Queen Elizabeth I**, the daughter of Henry VIII by Anne Boleyn.

Philip sent a marriage proposal to **Elizabeth**, but with **Spain** being **Catholic** and **England** being **Anglican**, she declined.

Philip, nevertheless, continued a **peaceful relationship with England.**

King Phillip led in organizing the **Holy League** to stop the **Ottoman Turkish Fleet.**

Spain funded its military with **gold from the New World.**

Commanded by Philip's half-brother, **Don John of Austria**, the **Holy League defeated the Ottoman navy** in 1571, at the **Battle of Lepanto** near Corinth, Greece.

Involving over 400 ships, it was the **largest naval battle on the Mediterranean Sea** since classical antiquity.

Hilaire Belloc described the significance of the battle in ***The Great Heresies*** (1938):

"This violent Mohammedan pressure on Christendom from the East made a bid for success by sea as well as by land ...

The last great **Turkish** organization working now from the conquered capital of Constantinople, **proposed to cross**

the Adriatic, to attack Italy by sea and ultimately to recover all that had been lost in the Western Mediterranean ..."

Belloc continued:

"There was one critical moment when it looked as though the scheme would succeed.

A huge Mohammedan armada fought at the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth against the **Christian fleet** at **Lepanto**.

... **The Christians won that naval action** and the **Western Mediterranean was saved**.

But it was a very close thing, and the name of **Lepanto** should remain in the minds of all men with a sense of history as **one of the half dozen great names in the history of the Christian world**."

The **Spanish navy** was instrumental in **saving Western Civilization** from being overrun by the Islamic Ottoman Empire.

Instead of following up on the **victory at Lepanto** and **freeing all the Mediterranean coasts and islands** from **Ottoman control**, **Spain** decided to crush the **Netherlands' independence movement** fueled by the **Protestant Reformation in Holland**.

In 1572, **Spain** sent the **Iron Duke of Alba** to subdue **Antwerp** and surrounding **Dutch cities**, killing thousands, in what is called "**The Spanish Fury**," 1572-1576.

1572 was the same years that the **St. Bartholomew's Day massacre** took place in **Paris**, where **thousands** of Protestants were killed and their **bodies were thrown into the Seine River**.

The Netherlands' resistant continued to grow, and in 1581, it declared its **independence from Spain**.

With the **Dutch** pleading with England for help, **Elizabeth I** signed the **Treaty of Nonsuch** in 1585, **promising to help the Netherlands**.

Philip considered it an act of war.

A rumor spread of an **assassination plot on Elizabeth's life**, and then replacing her with **Mary Queen of Scots**, who was of royal lineage.

Though **Mary** was not responsible for the **plot**, to remove the threat, **Elizabeth reluctantly signed Mary's death warrant** and she was **executed** on February 8, 1587.

Of note, is that **Mary Queen of Scots'** only son, **James**, later became King of England.

After the death of Mary Queen of Scots, **Philip** sent his **invincible Spanish Armada** to invade **England** on May 19, 1588.

Consisting of **130 ships** with **1,500 brass guns** and **1,000 iron guns**, carrying **8,000 sailors** and **18,000 soldiers**, they were planning on picking up another **30,000 more soldiers** from the Spanish Netherlands.

Spain's Dunkirk Privateers raided **English** and **Dutch ships**.

Queen Elizabeth put on her armor and rallied England with **her most famous speech**, August 9, 1588:

"Let tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself, that **under God** I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects ...

...

... I am come amongst you ... resolved, in the midst and

heat of battle, to live or die amongst you all -- to lay down for my **God**, and for my kingdoms, and for my people, my honour and my blood even in the dust.

... I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king -- and of a King of England too,

and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm ...

By ... your valour in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my **God**, of my kingdom, and of my people."

Queen Elizabeth relied on **privateers**, a type of subcontracted pirate who was loyal to the throne:

- **Sir Francis Drake**, a privateer who was captain of the second expedition to circumnavigate the globe 1577-1680;
- **Sir John Hawkins**, second cousin of Francis Drake, a privateer and Treasurer of the English navy, responsible for building the fast ships which were able to successfully repel the Spanish;
- **Sir Martin Frobisher**, privateer and English explorer of Canada; and
- **Lord Howard of Effingham**, Admiral and commander-in-chief of the English fleet against the Spanish Armada.

England's smaller, faster vessels were able to elude the **enormous Spanish galleons** which attacked at port of Plymouth, England.

After **Spain's** initial attacks, the **English counter-attacked**.

The **Spanish Armada regrouped** on the other side of the English Channel near the **French port of Calais**.

The fast **flyboats** of **Dutch Admiral Justinus van Nassau** captured two **Spanish galleons**, whose deep-drafts put them at a disadvantage in shallow waters.

With weather getting tempestuous and with no deep water port, the **Spanish Armada anchored** off the coast in a tightly-packed defensive crescent formation.

At midnight, July 28, 1588, **Sir Francis Drake** stealthily drifted **8 ships** downwind **toward the Spanish Armada**, then **suddenly set them on fire**.

With no time to respond, and fearing their sails would go up in flames, **Spanish ships** immediately **cut their anchor ropes and drifted apart**.

The next day, **English** attacked in the **Battle of Gravelines**, July 29, 1588.

Hurricane force winds and currents drove the fight north toward **Scotland**.

As the **Armada** tried sailing on the **west side of Scotland and Ireland**, intense winds **dashed their ships against the rocks**.

In all, the **Spanish Armada** suffered:

- **56 ships wrecked, sunk or captured,**
- **10 ships scuttled,** and
- **over 20,000 dead** from battle, storms and disease.

When **King Philip II of Spain** learned of the loss, he exclaimed:

"I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves."

A **coin** minted in **Holland in 1588** had engraved on one side **Spanish ships sinking** and on the other side men kneeling under the inscription

"Man Proposeth, God Disposeth."

Prior to the first Spanish Armada attack, **Sir Walter Raleigh** had sent settlers in 1584 to settle **Roanoke Island, Virginia.**

When the attack came, **the colony was neglected** for several years, with **no supplies.**

Following the battle, supply ships returned to the **Roanoke Colony** in 1590, but found it completely **abandoned.** It was thereafter referred to as **"The Lost Colony."**

In 1596, **Philip** sent a **second Spanish Armada** to **attack England,** consisting of 140 ships and 20,000 men.

Providentially for England, this **Second Spanish Armada** was shattered in a **storm off Cape Finisterre.**

Thirty-eight ships sank, nearly **5,000 men died,** and the financial loss contributed to the **bankruptcy of the Spanish Empire later that year.**

In 1601, **Spain** tried **one last time to conquer the British Isles,** this time by **King Philip III, the son of Philip II.**

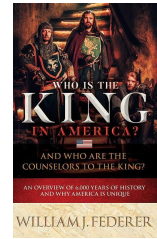
Philip III sent **Spain's navy** to the southern shores of **Ireland** and landed thousands of **Spanish troops.**

Their intention was to persuade the **Irish** to join them in attacking **England.**

The Spanish and Irish were defeated at the **Battle of Kinsale** in October of 1601.

The victorious **Protestant English** tragically responded by **selling into slavery thousands of Irish Catholics** who had **sided with Spain**.

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Of the 1588 defeat of the Invincible Spanish Armada, **Woodrow Wilson** wrote in *History of the American People* (1902, Vol. 1, Ch 1):

"For **England** the **end of Spain's power** was marked by **the destruction of the Armada**, and the consequent dashing of all the ambitious schemes that had been put aboard the imposing fleet at Lisbon ...

The great **Armada** came ...

Spain recognized in the smartly handled craft which beat her clumsy galleons up the **Channel** the power that would some day drive her from the seas.

Her hopes went to pieces with that proud fleet, before **English** skill and prowess and pitiless sea-weather."

Describing the English ships, **Theodore Roosevelt** and **Henry Cabot Lodge** wrote in *Hero Tales From American History* (1895):

"The ships ... which ... won glory in the War of 1812 were essentially like those with which **Drake and Hawkins and Frobisher** had harried the **Spanish armadas** two centuries and a half earlier.

They were wooden sailing-vessels, carrying many guns mounted in broadside."

Woodrow Wilson continued, giving background details:

"**Henry VIII** interested himself in improved methods of **ship-building**; and when he had time to think of it he encouraged instruction in seamanship and navigation; but he built no navy.

He even left the **English coasts** without adequate police, and suffered his subjects to defend themselves as best they might against the pirates who infested the seas not only, but came once and again to cut vessels out of port in **England's** own waters.

... Many public ships, it is true, had been built before the **Armada** came, and fine craft they were; but they were not enough.

There was no real navy in the modern sense. The fleet which chased the **Spaniards** up the **Channel** was a volunteer fleet.

Merchants had learned to defend their own cargoes.

They built fighting craft of their own to keep their coasts and harbors free of pirates, and to carry their goods over sea.

... They sought their fortunes as they pleased abroad, the crown annoying them with no inquiry to embarrass their search for **Spanish treasure ships**, or their trade in pirated linens and silks.

It was this **self-helping race of Englishmen ...**"

Woodrow Wilson added:

"Devonshire had the great harbor ... where a whole race of venturesome and hardy fishermen were nurtured.

All the great sea names of the **Elizabethan age** belong to it.

Drake, Hawkins, Raleigh, and the Gilberts were all

Devonshire men; and it was from Plymouth that the fleet went out which beat the great **Armada** on its way to shipwreck in the north."

English dramatist **Thomas Kyd** wrote the popular play ***The Spanish Tragedy***, sometime before 1592, which is considered by some as the **first mature Elizabethan drama**, and a **primary source for William Shakespeare** in his writing of the play ***Hamlet***.

The sinking of the **Spanish Armada** broke **Spain's monopoly of the New World**, held since the time of Columbus, and opened up a rush of European countries staking their claim in North America.

Adam Smith wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776:

"The Spaniards, by virtue of the first discovery, claimed all America as their own,

and ... such was ... the terror of their name, that the greater part of the other nations of Europe were afraid to establish themselves in any other part of that great continent ...

But ... **the defeat ... of their Invincible Armada** ... put it out of their power to obstruct any longer the settlements of the other European nations.

In the course of the 17th century ... **English, French, Dutch, Danes, and Swedes** ... attempted to make some **settlements in the new world.**"

Why was the **sinking of the Invincible Spanish Armada** significant to **America**?

Had **Spain** succeeded in their attempts to conquer **England**, there may have been:

- **no Anglican England;**

- no Puritans wanting to "purify" it;
- no Pilgrim separatists fleeing from it;
- no New England colonies being settled,
- and, quite possibly, no United States of America.

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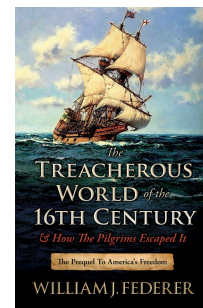


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