

## 2. The earliest known works...Roman Missions to America

The earliest expressions of Christian work in this continent (that may be clearly identified) came from Roman Catholic missionaries..in some cases priests, et al, travelling with colonizers, entrepreneurs, conquistadors, etc. There was less of this on the eastern seaboard, simply because colonization did not seem attractive there and little wealth was apparent among the natives. Motives among Catholic missionaries are about as diverse as they are among non-Catholic workers in the same end. But many of them were martyred and some are enormously heroic figures in the "propagation of the faith". The bulk of the colonial movement came after the reformation schism and the immediacy of gold in central America and south America drew the attention of the imperial lords of Europe...the sea-faring nations who needed such gold to pursue their own ends...and the national churches required it as well. So the great thrust of the Cathlic work of mission and establishment was in south and central America, the burden of their work in north America was in exploration although there were marked attempts to bring Indian tribes to the "fold". A strict chronology section by section of the Roman work is not possible in this course but the following notes will help us track it out a bit.

### a. Catholic Missions in the East:

(1) in 1523, deAyllon received papers from Charles V entitling him to exploration and conversion work in the east. He had previously discovered the St. John's river (Florida) and was interested in settling the land. Founding a work in Virginia, 1526, his hopes were overcome through death, mutiny, and Indian attack.

(2) Among other attempts of interest was the work of Cancer in attempting a Dominican mission at Tampa Bay. He and his party were martyred while the sailors on ship in the bay watched rather helplessly.

(3) Following a Huguenot settlement near the mouth of the St. John's in 1564, Menendez (as Florida belonged to Spain at this time, the Spanish took military action and drove out the French founding St. Augustine in 1565) brought Jesuit teachers and missionaries that soon filtered as far north as Chesapeake Bay. The hostility of the Indians was great and by 1571 the Jesuits had been recalled south to more productive territory. Some Franciscan fathers pursued the work and actually had about 44 mission stations by 1634. But the failure to find riches, the Spanish preoccupation with the central/southern American regions, and the lessening of Spanish authority in general combined with native hostility and a difficult climate thended to minimize this work and the result was that the Catholic work in the east could hardly be called a success.