ON JULY 10, 1584, CATHOLIC EXTREMIST FRANÇOIS GUION, WITH A brace of pistols hidden under his cloak, surprised William the Silent, the Prince of Orange, as he was leaving the dining hall of his palace and shot him at point-blank range. William led the Protestant nobility in the Netherlands, which was in revolt against the Catholic king of Spain. Guion masqueraded as a Protestant for seven years in order to ingratiate himself with William’s party, and before the assassination he consulted three Catholic priests who confirmed the religious merit of his plan. Spain’s representative in the Netherlands, the Duke of Parma, had offered a reward of 25,000 crowns to anyone who killed William; at the moment of the assassination four other potential assassins were in Delft trying to gain access to the Prince of Orange.

The murder of William the Silent exemplified an ominous figure in Western civilization—the religiously motivated assassin. There had been many assassinations before the late sixteenth century, but those assassins tended to be motivated by the desire to gain political power or to avenge a personal or family injury. Religion hardly ever supplied a motive. In the wake of the Reformation, killing a political leader of the opposing faith to serve God’s plan became all too common. The assassination of William illustrated patterns of violence that have since become the *modus operandi* of the political assassin—the use of deception to gain access to the victim, the vulnerability of leaders who wish to mingle with the public, the lethal potential of easily concealed pistols (a new weapon at that time), the corruption of politics through vast sums of money, and the obsessive hostility of zealots against their perceived enemies. The widespread acrimony among the varieties of Christian faith created a climate of religious extremism during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Religious extremism was just one manifestation of an anxiety that pervaded European society at the time—a fear of hidden forces controlling human events. In an attempt to curb that anxiety, the European monarchs formulated their politics based on the *confessions* of faith, or statements of religious doctrine, peculiar to Catholics or the various forms of Protestantism. During this age of confessional division, European countries polarized along confessional lines, and governments persecuted followers of minority religions, whom they saw as threats to public security. Anxious believers everywhere were consumed with pleasing an angry God, but when they tried to find God within themselves, many Christians seemed only to find the Devil in others.

The religious controversies of the age of confessional division redefined the West. During the Middle Ages, the West came to be identified with
the practice of Roman Catholic Christianity. The Renaissance added to that identity an appreciation of pre-Christian history going back to Greek and Roman Antiquity. The Reformation of the early sixteenth century eroded the unity of Christian Europe by dividing the West into Catholic and Protestant camps. This division was especially pronounced in western Europe, but less so in eastern Europe because it did not create confessional states. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, governments reinforced religious divisions and attempted to unify their peoples around a common set of beliefs. How did the encounter between the confessions and the state transform Europe into religiously driven camps?

PROCESSION OF THE CATHOLIC LEAGUE
During the last half of the sixteenth century, Catholics and Protestants in France formed armed militias or leagues. Bloody confrontations between these militias led to prolonged civil wars. In this 1590 procession of the French Catholic League, armed monks joined soldiers and common citizens in a demonstration of force.
CHAPTER 15
The Age of Confessional Division

THE PEOPLES OF EARLY MODERN EUROPE

How did the expanding population and price revolution exacerbate religious and political tensions?

During the tenth century if a Rus had wanted to see the sights of Paris—assuming he had even heard of Paris—he could have left Kiev and walked under the shade of trees all the way to France, so extensive were the forests and so sparse the human settlements of northern Europe. By the end of the thirteenth century, the wanderer from Kiev would have needed a hat to protect him on the shadeless journey. Instead of human settlements forming little islands in a sea of forests, the forests were by then islands in a sea of villages and farms, and from almost any church tower the sharp-eyed traveler could have seen other church towers, each marking a nearby village or town. At the end of the thirteenth century, the European continent had become completely settled by a dynamic, growing population, which had cleared the forests for farms.

During the fourteenth century all of that changed. A series of crises—periodic famines, the catastrophic Black Death, and a general economic collapse—left the villages and towns of Europe intact, but a third or more of the population was gone. In that period of desolation, many villages looked like abandoned movie sets, and the cities did not have enough people to fill in the empty spaces between the central market square and the city walls. Fields that had once been put to the plow to feed the hungry children of the thirteenth century were neglected and overrun with bristles and brambles. During the fifteenth century a general European depression and recurrent epidemics kept the population stagnant.

In the sixteenth century the population began to rebound as European agriculture shifted from subsistence to commercial farming. The sudden swell in human numbers brought dramatic and destabilizing consequences that contributed to pervasive anxiety.

The Population Recovery

During a period historical demographers call the “long sixteenth century” (ca. 1480–1640), the population of Europe began to grow consistently again for the first time since the late thirteenth century. As shown in Figure 15.1, European Population, in 1340 on the brink of the Black Death, Europe had about 74 million inhabitants, or 17 percent of the world’s total. By 1400 the population of all of Europe had dropped to 52 million or 14 percent of the world’s total. Over the course of the long sixteenth century, Europe’s population grew to 77.9 million, just barely surpassing the pre–Black Death level.

Figure 15.2, European Population, 1500–1600, depicts some representative population figures for the larger European countries during the sixteenth century. Two important facts emerge from these data. The first is the much greater rate of growth in northern Europe compared with southern Europe. England grew by 83 percent, Poland grew by 76 percent, and even the tiny, war-torn Netherlands gained 58 percent. During the same period Italy grew
These trends signal a massive, permanent shift of demographic and economic power from the Mediterranean countries of Italy and Spain to northern, especially northwestern, Europe. The second fact to note from these data is the overwhelming size of France, which was home to about a quarter of Europe’s population. Once France recovered from its long wars of religion, its demographic superiority overwhelmed competing countries and made it the dominant power in Europe, permanently eclipsing its chief rival, Spain.

What explains the growth in the population? To a large extent, the transformation from subsistence to commercial agriculture in certain regions of Europe made it possible. Peasants who practiced subsistence farming consumed about 80 percent of everything they raised, and what little was left over went almost entirely to the landlord as feudal dues and to the church as tithing—the obligation to give to God one-tenth of everything earned or produced. Peasant families lived on the edge of existence. During the sixteenth century, subsistence agriculture gave way to commercial crops, especially wheat, which was sold in town markets and the great cities such as London, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Paris, Milan, Venice, and Barcelona. As commercial agriculture spread, the population grew because the rural population was better fed and more prosperous.

The amount of land available, however, could not provide enough work for the growing farm population. As a result, the landless were forced to take to the road to find their fortunes. These vagabonds, as they were called, exemplified the social problems that emerged from the uneven distribution of
wealth created by the new commerce. Because large-scale migrations to the Americas had not yet begun, except from Spain, the landless had few options other than to seek opportunities in a city.

The Thriving Cities

By the 1480s cities began to grow, but the growth was uneven with the most dramatic growth occurring in the cities of the North, especially London, Antwerp, and Amsterdam. The surpluses of the countryside, both human and agricultural, flowed into the cities during the sixteenth century. Compared with even the prosperous rural villages, the cities seemed incomparably rich. Half-starved vagabonds marveled at shops piled high with food (white bread, fancy pies, fruit, casks of wine, roasting meats); they wistfully passed taverns full of drunken, laughing citizens; and they begged for alms in front of magnificent, marble-faced churches.

Every aspect of the cities exhibited dramatic contrasts between the rich and poor, who lived on the same streets and often in different parts of the same houses. Around 1580 Christian missionaries brought a Native American chief to the French city of Rouen. Through an interpreter he was asked what impressed him the most about European cities, so unlike the villages of North America. He replied that he was astonished that the rag-clad, emaciated men and women who crowded the streets did not grab the plump, well-dressed rich people by the throat.

City officials recognized the social problems caused by the disparities in wealth. Every city maintained storehouses of grain and regulated the price of bread and the size of a loaf so that the poor could be fed. The impulse to feed
the poor was less the result of humanitarian motives than fear of a hungry mob. Cities guarded carefully against revolts and crime. Even for petty crime, punishment was swift, sure, and gruesome. The beggar who stole a loaf of bread from a baker’s cart had his hand amputated on a chopping block in the market square. A shabbily dressed girl who grabbed a lady’s glittering trinket had her nose cut off so that she could never attract a man. A burglar was tortured, drawn, and quartered, with his severed head impaled on an iron spike at the town gate as a warning to others.

However talented or enterprising, new arrivals to the city had very limited opportunities. They could hardly start up their own business because all production was strictly controlled by the guilds, which were associations of merchants or artisans organized to protect their interests. Guilds rigidly regulated their membership and required an apprenticeship of many years. Guilds also prohibited technological innovations, guaranteed certain standards of workmanship, and did not allow branching out into new lines. Given the limited opportunities for new arrivals, immigrant men and women begged on the streets or took charity from the public dole. The men picked up any heavy-labor jobs they could find. Both men and women became servants, a job that paid poorly but at least guaranteed regular meals.

Among the important social achievements of both Protestant and Catholic Reformations were efforts to address the problems of the destitute urban poor, who constituted at least a quarter of the population, even in the best of times. In Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, southern Germany, and France, there was an enormous expansion of credit banks, which were financed by charitable contributions in order to provide small loans to the poor. Catholic cities established convents for poor young women who were at risk of falling into prostitution and for women who had retired from the sex trade. Catholic and Protestant cities established orphanages, hospitals for the sick, hospices for the dying, and public housing. Both Catholic and Protestant cities attempted to distinguish between the “honest” poor—those who were disabled and truly deserving—and the “dishonest” poor who were thought to be malingerers. Protestant cities established poorhouses, which segregated the poor, subjected them to prisonlike discipline, and forced the able-bodied to work.

The more comfortable classes of the cities enjoyed large palaces and luxurious lifestyles. They hired extensive staffs of servants, feasted on meat and fine wines, and purchased exotic imports such as silk cloth, spices from the East, and, in the Mediterranean cities, slaves from eastern Europe, the Middle East, or Africa. Rich merchants maintained their status by marrying within their own class, monopolizing municipal offices, and educating their children in the newly fashionable humanist schools. The wealthy of the cities were the bastions of social stability. They possessed the financial resources and economic skills to protect themselves from the worst consequences of economic instability, especially the corrosive wave of price inflation that struck the West after about 1540.

The Price Revolution

Price inflation became so pervasive during the last half of the sixteenth century that it contributed to the widespread fear that hidden forces controlled events. After a long period of falling or stable prices that stretched back to the fourteenth century, Europe experienced sustained price increases, beginning around 1540, in what historians called the Price Revolution. The inflation lasted a century, forcing major economic and social changes that permanently altered the face of Western society. During this period overall prices across Europe multiplied five- or sixfold.

What caused the inflation? The basic principle is simple. The price paid for goods and services is fundamentally the result of the relationship between supply and demand. If the number of children who need to be fed grows
faster than the supply of grain, the price of bread goes up. This happens simply because mothers who can afford it will be willing to pay a higher price to save their children from hunger. If good harvests allow the supply of grain to increase at a greater rate than the demand for bread, then prices go down. Two other factors influence price. One is the \textit{amount of money in circulation}. If the amount of gold or silver available to make coins increases, there is more money in circulation. When more money is circulating, people can buy more things, which creates the same effect as an increase in demand—prices go up. The other factor is called the \textit{velocity of money in circulation}, which refers to the number of times money changes hands to buy things. When people buy commodities with greater frequency, it has the same effect as increasing the amount of money in circulation or of increasing demand—again, prices go up.

The precise combination of these factors in causing the great Price Revolution of the sixteenth century has long been a matter of considerable debate. Most historians would now agree that the primary cause of inflation was population growth, which increased demand for all kinds of basic commodities, such as bread and woolen cloth for clothing. As Europe’s population finally began to recover, it meant that more people needed and desired to buy more things. This explanation is most obvious for commodities that people need to survive, such as grain to make bread. These commodities have what economists call \textit{inelastic demand}, that is, consumers do not have a great deal of discretion in purchasing them. Everybody has to eat. The commodities that people could survive without if the price is too high are said to have \textit{elastic demand}, such as dancing shoes and lace collars. In England between 1540 and 1640 overall prices rose by 490 percent. More telling, however, is that the price of grain (inelastic demand) rose by a stunning 670 percent, whereas the price of luxury goods (elastic demand) rose much less, by 204 percent. Thus, inflation hurt the poor, who needed to feed their children, more than the rich, whose desires were more elastic.

Monetary factors also contributed to inflation. The Portuguese brought in significant amounts of gold from Africa, and newly opened mines in central Europe increased the amount of silver by fivefold as early as the 1520s. The discovery in 1545 of the fabulous silver mine of Potosí (in present-day Bolivia) brought to Europe a flood of silver, which Spain used to finance its costly wars. As inflation began to eat away at royal incomes, financially strapped monarchs all across western Europe debased their currency because they believed, mistakenly, that producing more coins containing less silver would buy more. In fact, the minting of more coins meant each coin was worth less and would buy less. In England, for example, debasement was a major source of inflation during the 1540s and 1550s.

The Price Revolution severely weakened governments. Most monarchs derived their incomes from their own private lands and taxes on property. As inflation took hold, property taxes proved dangerously inadequate to cover royal expenses. Even frugal monarchs such as England’s Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) were forced to take extraordinary measures, in her case to sell off royal lands. Spendthrift monarchs faced disaster. Spain was involved in the costly enterprise of nearly continuous war during the sixteenth century. To pay for the wars, Charles V resorted to a form of deficit financing in which he borrowed money by issuing \textit{juros}, which provided lenders an annuity yielding between three and seven percent on the amount of the principal. By the 1550s, however, the annuity payments of the \textit{juros} consumed half of the royal revenues. Charles’s son, Philip II, inherited such an alarming situation that in 1557, the year after he assumed the throne, he was forced to declare bankruptcy. Philip continued to fight expensive wars and borrow wildly, and thus failed to get his financial house in order. He declared bankruptcy again in 1575 and 1596. Philip squandered
Spain’s wealth, impoverishing his own subjects through burdensome taxes and contributing to inflation by borrowing at high rates of interest and debasing the coinage. Although the greatest military power of the sixteenth century, Spain sowed the seeds of its own decline by fighting on borrowed money.

Probably the most serious consequence of the Price Revolution was that the hidden force of inflation caused widespread human suffering. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, people felt their lives threatened, but they did not know the source and so they imagined all kinds of secret powers at work, especially supernatural ones. The suspicion of religious differences created by the Reformation provided handy, if utterly false, explanations for what had gone wrong. Catholics suspected Protestants, Protestants suspected Catholics, both suspected Jews, and they all worried about witches. Authorities sought to relieve this widespread anxiety by looking in all the wrong places—disciplining the populace, hunting for witches, and battling against enemies from the opposite side of the confessional divide.

**DISCIPLINING THE PEOPLE**

- How did religious and political authorities attempt to discipline the people?

The first generation of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations had been devoted to doctrinal disputes and to either rejecting or defending papal authority. Subsequent generations of reformers faced the formidable task of building the institutions that would firmly establish a Protestant or Catholic religious culture. Leaders of all religious confessions, whether Lutheran, Calvinist, Catholic, or Anglican, attempted to reactivate the Christian community by disciplining nonconformists, enforcing moral rigor, and attacking popular culture. Discipline required cooperation between church and secular authorities, but it was not entirely imposed from above. Many people wholeheartedly cooperated with moral correction and even encouraged reformers to go further. Others actively or resentfully resisted it.

**Establishing Confessional Identities**

Between 1560 and 1650 religious confessions reshaped European culture. A confession consisted of the adherents to a particular statement of religious doctrine—the Confession of Augsburg for Lutherans, the Helvetic Confessions for Calvinists, the Thirty-Nine Articles for Anglicans, and the decrees of the Council of Trent for Catholics.

The process of establishing confessional identities did not happen overnight. During the second half of the sixteenth century, Lutherans turned from the struggle to survive within the hostile Holy Roman Empire to building Lutheranism wherever it was the chosen religion of the local prince. They had to recruit clergy and provide each clergyman with a university education, which was made possible by scholarship endowments from the Lutheran princes of the empire. Once established, the Lutheran clergy became a branch of the civil bureaucracy, received a government stipend, and enforced the will of the prince. Calvinist states followed a similar process, but where they were in a minority, as in France, Calvinists had to go it alone, and the state often discriminated against them. In those places confessional identities were established in opposition to the state and the dominant confession. Catholics responded with their own aggressive plan of training new clergy, educating the laity, and reinforcing the bond between church and state. Just as with the Lutheran princes, Catholic princes in the Holy Roman Empire associated conformity to Catholicism with loyalty to themselves, making religion a pillar of the state.

Everywhere in western Europe (except for Ireland, the Netherlands, a few places in the Holy Roman Empire, and for a time France) the
only openly practiced religion was the religion of the state. The eastern European states of Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, and Transylvania offered greater religious freedom.

Regulating the Family

One matter on which Calvinists, Lutherans, and Catholics agreed was that the foundation of society should be the authority fathers had over their families. This principle of patriarchy, as discussed in Chapter 12, was a traditional ideal. The reality of high mortality from disease, however, destabilized family life during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Unstable families often lacked fathers and senior males, making it difficult if not impossible to sustain patriarchy in daily life. The confessions that emerged from the Reformation attempted to combat this trend by reinforcing patriarchy. According to an anonymous treatise published in 1586 in Calvinist Nassau, the three pillars of Christian society were the church, the state, and the household. This proposition made the father’s authority parallel to the authority of the clergy and king. To enforce patriarchy, ecclesiastical and secular authorities regulated sexuality and the behavior of children. The authorities’ goal seems to have been to encourage self-discipline as well as respect for elders. Self-discipline reached into all aspects of life from sexual behavior to table manners. (See Encounters and Transformations in this chapter.)

Despite the near universal acceptance of the theory of patriarchy, the reality of the father’s and husband’s authority varied a great deal. Since the early Middle Ages in northwestern Europe—in Britain, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, northern France, and western Germany—couples tended to wait to marry until their mid- or late twenties, well beyond the age of sexual maturity. The couple had to be economically independent before they married, which meant both had to accumulate savings or the husband needed to inherit from his deceased father before he could marry. When they did finally marry, they established their own household separate from either of their parents. Husbands were usually only two or three years older than their wives, and that proximity of age tended to make those relationships more cooperative and less authoritarian than the theory of patriarchy might suggest. By contrast, in southern Europe, men in their late twenties or thirties married teenaged women over whom they exercised authority by virtue of the age difference. In eastern Europe, both spouses married in their teens and resided in one of the parental households for many years, which placed both spouses for extended periods under the authority of one of their fathers.

The marriage pattern in northwestern Europe required prolonged sexual restraint by young men and women until they were economically self-sufficient. In addition to individual self-control, sexual restraint required social control by church and secular authorities. Their efforts seem to have been generally successful. For example, in sixteenth-century Geneva, where the elders were especially wary about sexual sins, the rates of illegitimate births were extremely low. The elders were particularly concerned to discipline women and keep them subservient. In 1584 in another Swiss town, Calvinist elders excommunicated Charlotte Arbaleste and her entire household because she wore her hair in curls, which the elders thought were too alluring.

Northwestern European families also tended to be smaller, as married couples began to space their children through birth control and family planning. These self-restrained couples practiced withdrawal, the rhythm method, or abstinence. When mothers no longer relied on wet nurses and nursed their own infants, often for long periods, they also reduced their chances of becoming pregnant. Thus, limiting family size became the social norm in northwestern Europe, especially among the educated and urban middle classes. Protestant families tended to have fewer children than Catholic families, but Catholics in this region also
practiced some form of birth control, even though Church law prohibited all forms except abstinence.

The moral status of marriage also demonstrated regional variations during the early modern period. Protestants no longer considered husbands and wives morally inferior to celibate monks and nuns, and the wives of preachers in Protestant communities certainly had a respected social role never granted to the concubines of priests. But the favorable Protestant attitude toward marriage did not necessarily translate into a positive attitude toward women. In Germany the numerous books of advice, called the Father of the House literature, encouraged families to subordinate the individual interests of servants, children, and the mother to the dictates of the father, who was advised to be fair but who always had to be obeyed. Even if a wife was brutally treated by her husband, she could neither find help from authorities nor expect a divorce.

Discipline also played a large role in raising children. The *Disquisition on the Spiritual Condition of Infants* (1618) pointed out that because of original sin, babies were naturally evil. The godly responsibility of the father was to break the will of his evil offspring, taming them so that they could be turned away from sin toward virtue. The very title of a 1591 Calvinist treatise revealed the strength of the evil-child argument: *On Disciplining Children: How the Disobedient, Evil, and Corrupted Youth of These Anxious Last Days Can Be Bettered*. The treatise advised that the mother’s role should be limited to her biological function of giving birth. In order to break the will of their infants, mothers were encouraged to wean them early and turn them over for a strict upbringing by their fathers. It directed fathers to be vigilant so that their wives did not corrupt the children, because women “love to accept strange, false beliefs, and go about with benedictions and witches’ handiwork.”

THE DOMESTIC IDEAL

During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, idealized depictions of harmonious family life became very popular, especially in the Netherlands. This painting by Pieter De Hooch is a prime example of the simple pleasures of domesticity. A young child opens the door to a bedroom while her mother is making a bed.
The Auto-da-Fé: The Power of Penance

Performed in Spain and Portugal from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the *auto-da-fé* merged the judicial processes of the state with the sacramental rituals of the Catholic Church. An *auto* took place at the end of a judicial investigation conducted by the inquisitors of the Church after the defendants had been found guilty of a sin or crime. The term *auto-da-fé* means “act of faith,” and the goal was to persuade or force a person who had been judged guilty to repent and confess. Organized through the cooperation of ecclesiastical and secular authorities, *autos-da-fé* brought together an assortment of sinners, criminals, and heretics for a vast public rite that dramatized the essential elements of the sacrament of penance: *contrition*, by which the sinner recognized and felt sorry for the sin; *confession*, which required the sinner to admit the sin to a priest; and *satisfaction* or *punishment*, by which the priest absolved the sinner and enacted some kind of penalty. The auto-da-fé transformed penance, especially confession and satisfaction, into a spectacular affirmation of the faith and a manifestation of divine justice.

The *auto* symbolically anticipated the Last Judgment. By suffering bodily pain in this life the soul might be relieved from worse punishments in the next. Officers of the Inquisition forced the sinners, convicts, and heretics, now considered penitents, to march in a procession that went through the streets of the city from the cathedral to the town hall or place of punishment. These processions would typically include some 30 or 40 penitents, but in moments of crisis they could be far larger. In Toledo in 1486 there were three *autos*—one parading 750 penitents and two displaying some 900 each.

A 1655 *auto* in Córdoba illustrates the symbolic character of the rites. Soldiers carried torches to light the pyre for those to be burnt. Following them in a procession came three bigamists who wore on their heads conical miters or hats painted with representations of their sin, four witches whose miters depicted devils, and three criminals with harnesses around their necks to demonstrate their status as captives. The sinners carried unlit candles to represent their lack of faith. Criminals who had escaped arrest were represented in the procession by effigies made in their likeness; for those who had died before punishment, effigies were carried in their coffins. The marching sinners appeared before their neighbors and fellow citizens stripped of the normal indicators of status, dressed only in the emblems of their sins.

Among them walked a few who wore the infamous *sanbenitos*, a kind of tunic or vest with a yellow strip down the back, and a conical hat painted with flames. These were the *relajados*, the unrepentant or relapsed sinners.

The procession ended in the town square at a platform on which the sinners performed their public penances as on the stage of a theater. Forced to their knees, priests asked the penitents to confess and to plead for readmission into the bosom of the church. For those who did confess, a herald announced the sentence that would rescue them from the pains of Purgatory and the flames of the *auto*. The sentence required them to join a penitential procession for a certain number of Fridays, perform self-flagellation in public, or wear a badge of shame for a prescribed period of time. Those who failed to confess faced a more immediate sentence.

The most horrendous scenes of suffering awaited the *relajados*. If holdouts confessed prior to the reading of the sentence, then the *auto* was a success, a triumph of the Christian faith over its enemies. Therefore, priests attempted everything that they could to elicit confessions, including haranguing, humiliating, and torturing the accused until their stubborn will broke. If the accused finally confessed after the herald read the sentence, then the executioner would strangle them before burning, but if they held out to the very end, the executioner lit the flames while...
they were still living. From the ecclesiastics’ point of view, the refusal to confess was a disaster for the entire Church because the flames of the pyre opened a window into Hell. They would certainly prefer to see the Church’s authority acknowledged through confession than to see the power of Satan manifest in such a public fashion.

Eyewitnesses reported that crowds watched the violence of the autos-da-fé with silent attention in a mood of deep dread, not so much of the inquisitors, it seems, as for the inevitability of the final day of divine judgment that would arrive for them all. The core assumption of the auto-da-fé was that bodily pain could save a soul from damnation. As one contemporary witness put it, the inquisitors removed “through external ritual [the sinners’] internal crimes.” Church authorities assumed that the public ritual framework for the sacrament of penance would have a salutary effect on those who witnessed the auto by encouraging them to repent before they too faced divine judgment.

**For Discussion**

1. How did the auto-da-fé contribute to the formation of an individual and collective sense of being a Catholic?

2. In the auto-da-fé, inflicting physical pain was more than punishment. How was pain understood to have been socially and religiously useful?

**Taking It Further**


Flynn, Maureen. “The Spectacle of Suffering in Spanish Streets,” In Barbara A. Hanawalt and Kathryn L. Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (1994). In this fascinating article Flynn analyzes the spiritual value of physical pain.
The Introduction of the Table Fork: The New Sign of Western Civilization

Sometime in the sixteenth century, western Europeans encountered a new tool that initiated a profound and lasting transformation in Western society: the table fork. Before the table fork, people dined in a way that, to our modern sensibilities, seems disgusting. Members of the upper classes indulged themselves by devouring meat in enormous quantities. Whole rabbits, lambs, and pigs roasted on a spit were placed before diners. A quarter of veal or venison or even an entire roast beef, complete with its head, might be heaved onto the table. Diners used knives to cut off a piece of meat that they then ate with their hands, allowing the juices to drip down their arms. They used the long sleeves of their shirts to wipe meat juices, sweat, and spittle from their mouths and faces. These banquets celebrated the direct physical contact between the body of the dead animal and the bodies of the diners themselves who touched, handled, chewed, and swallowed it.

During the sixteenth century, puritanical reformers who were trying to abolish the cruder aspects of popular culture also promoted new table manners.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TABLE FORK

During the late sixteenth century the refinement of manners among the upper classes focused on dining. No innovation was more revolutionary than the spread of the use of the table fork. Pictured here is the travel cutlery, including two table forks, of Queen Elizabeth I.
New implements made certain that diners did not come into direct physical contact with their food before they placed it in their mouths. In addition to napkins—which came into widespread use to replace shirt sleeves for wiping the mouth—table forks appeared on upper-class tables. It became impolite to transfer food directly from the common serving plate to the mouth. Food first had to go onto each individual’s plate and then be cut into small portions and raised to the mouth. A French treatise of 1672 warned that “meat must never be touched...by hand, not even while eating.”

This prohibition had nothing to do with cleanliness because bacteria were not discovered until the end of the nineteenth century. The use of the table fork had more to do with civility than hygiene. Certain foods, such as bread or many fruits such as cherries, were and still are always eaten with the hands. In determining when to use a fork it was not cleanliness that mattered, but the kind of food consumed. Forks enabled sixteenth-century diners to avoid their growing sense of discomfort with the textures and juices of meats that reminded them of an animal’s flesh and blood.

Forks, then, enabled cultured people to distance themselves from the dead animal that they were eating. More generally, the spreading use of the fork was part of a set of changes linked to growing revulsion with the more physical aspects of human nature, such as reproduction—or the killing and consumption of animals. Just as sixteenth-century church authorities sought to regulate sexuality, so table manners regulated meat eating.

Paradoxically, the civility that resulted from the use of the table fork both created and eroded social divisions. Eating meat with a fork became one more way for those in the upper social ranks to distinguish themselves from the “uncivilized” masses below. Yet everyone—regardless of their social origins—could learn how to use a fork. A clerk or governess could disguise a humble background simply by learning how to eat properly. Gradually—very gradually—behavior replaced birth as a marker of “good breeding.” In the end, the transformations that occurred in Western society because of its encounter with the table fork—the blurring of class distinctions and creation of a universal code of manners—were so gradual and subtle that few of us who use a table fork daily are even aware of its profound significance.

For Discussion

How do manners, both good and bad, communicate messages to other people? Why is it important to have good manners?

HUNTING WITCHES

Why did people in the sixteenth century think witches were a threat?

The most catastrophic manifestation of the widespread anxiety of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the great witch-hunt. The judicial prosecution of alleged witches in either church or secular courts dramatically increased about the middle of the sixteenth century and lasted until the late seventeenth, when the number of witchcraft trials rapidly diminished and stopped entirely in most of Europe.

Throughout this period, people accepted the reality of two kinds of magic. The first kind was natural magic, such as the practice of alchemy or astrology, which involved the manipulation of occult forces believed to exist in nature. The fundamental assumption of natural magic was that everything in nature is alive. The trained magician could coerce the occult forces in nature to do his bidding. During the Renaissance many humanists and scientific thinkers were drawn to natural magic because of its promise of power over nature. Natural magic, in fact, had some practical uses. Alchemists, for example, devoted themselves to discovering what they called the “philosopher’s
infant mortality rates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, performing magical rituals for a sick baby could be very risky. The logic of witchcraft beliefs implied that a bad ending must have been caused by bad intentions.

While some people certainly attempted to practice maleficia, the second and far more serious kind of ritual practice associated with demonic magic, diabolism, certainly never took place. The theory behind diabolism was that the alleged witch made a pact with the Devil, by which she received her magical power, and worshiped him as her god.

The most influential witchcraft treatise, The Hammer of Witches (1486), had an extensive discussion of the ceremony of the pact. After the prospective witch had declared her intention to enter his service, Satan appeared to her, often in the alluring form of a handsome young man who offered her rewards, including a demonic lover, called an incubus. To obtain these inducements, the witch was obligated to renounce her allegiance to Christ, usually signified by stomping on the cross. The Devil then rebaptized the witch, guaranteeing that her soul belonged to him. To signify that she was one of his own, the Devil marked her body in a hidden place, creating a sign, which could easily be confused with a birthmark or blemish. To an inquisitor or judge, a mark on the skin that did not bleed and was insensitive to pain when pierced with a long pin often confirmed the suspicion that she was a witch.

After making the pact witches allegedly gathered in large numbers to worship the devil at nocturnal assemblies known as sabbaths. The devil was believed to have given them the power to fly to these gatherings. At these assemblies, so it was claimed, witches killed and ate babies, danced naked, and had promiscuous sexual relations with other witches and demons. The belief that witches attended sabbaths, which judicial authorities confirmed by forcing them to confess under severe torture, explains why witch-hunting took a high toll in human life. Between 1450 and 1750, approximately 100,000 people in Europe...
trials rarely occurred in a steady flow, as one would find for other crimes. In many cases the torture of a single witch would lead to her naming many alleged accomplices, who would then also be tried. This would lead to a witch panic in which scores and sometimes hundreds of witches would be tried and executed. Eighty percent of accused witches were women, especially those who were unmarried or widowed, but men and even young children could be accused of witchcraft as well. The hunts came to an end when judicial authorities recognized that no one was safe, especially during witch panics, and when they realized that legal evidence against witches was insufficient for conviction. The Dutch Republic was the first to ban witch trials in 1608. (See Different Voices in this chapter.)

were tried for witchcraft, and about 50,000 were executed. Approximately half of the trials took place in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire, where the central judicial authorities exercised little control over the determination of local judges to secure convictions. Prosecutions were also extensive in Switzerland, France, Scotland, Poland, Hungary, and Transylvania. Relatively few witches were executed in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, England, and Ireland.

The determination of both Catholics and Protestants to discipline deviants of all sorts and to wage war against the Devil intensified the hunt for witches. The great majority of trials occurred between 1560 and 1650, when religious tensions were strong and economic conditions severe. The trials rarely occurred in a steady flow, as one would find for other crimes. In many cases the torture of a single witch would lead to her naming many alleged accomplices, who would then also be tried. This would lead to a witch panic in which scores and sometimes hundreds of witches would be tried and executed. Eighty percent of accused witches were women, especially those who were unmarried or widowed, but men and even young children could be accused of witchcraft as well. The hunts came to an end when judicial authorities recognized that no one was safe, especially during witch panics, and when they realized that legal evidence against witches was insufficient for conviction. The Dutch Republic was the first to ban witch trials in 1608. (See Different Voices in this chapter.)
DIFFERENT VOICES  WERE THERE REALLY WITCHES?

Even during the height of the witch-hunt the existence of witches was controversial. Most authorities assumed that the devil worked evil on earth and that hunting witches, therefore, was an effective means of defending Christians. These authorities used the church and secular courts to interrogate alleged witches, sometimes supplemented by torture, to obtain confessions and the identities of other confederate witches. These authorities considered the hunting of witches part of their duty to protect the public from harm. Others accepted the reality of witchcraft but doubted the capacity of judges to determine who was a witch. A few doubted the reality of witchcraft altogether.

Johann Weyer (1515?–1588) was a physician who argued that most witches were deluded old women who suffered from depression and needed medical help rather than legal punishment. The devil deceived them into thinking they had magical powers, but because Weyer had a strong belief that only God had power over nature, he did not credit the devil or witches with any special powers. No one else during the sixteenth century disputed the reality of the powers of witches as systematically as he. Jean Bodin (1529?–1596) was one of the greatest legal philosophers of the sixteenth century. Although he was once skeptical of the reality of witchcraft, he changed his mind after witnessing several cases in which women voluntarily confessed to performing evil acts under the guidance of Satan. He considered witchcraft a threat to society and condemned Weyer’s soft-hearted view.

Johann Weyer’s letter to Johann Brenz (1565)

Witches have no power to make hail, storms, and other evil things, but they are deceived by the devil. For when the devil, with the permission and decree of God, can make hail and storms, he goes to his witches and urges them to use their magic and charms, so that when the trouble and punishment come, the witches are convinced that they and the devil have caused it. Thus, the witches cannot make hail and other things, but they are deluded and blinded by the devil himself to whom they have given themselves. In this way they think that they have made hail and storms. Not on that account but for their godless lives should they be punished severely. . . .

Our witches have been corrupted in their phantasy by the devil and imagine often that they have done evil things that didn’t even happen or caused natural occurrences that actually did not take place. In their confessions, especially under torture, they admit to doing and causing many things which are impossible for them and for anyone. One should not believe them when they confess that they have bound themselves to the devil, given themselves to his will, promised to follow his evil goals, just as we do not believe their confession that they make hail and storms, disturb and poison the air, and other impossible deeds. . . .

Even if an old woman, in deep depression, gives herself to the devil, one should not immediately condemn her to the fire but instead have regard for her confused, burdened, and depressed spirits and use all possible energy to convert her that she may avoid evil, and give herself to Christ. In this way we may bring her to her senses again, win her soul, and save her from death. . . .

THE CONFESSIONAL STATES

- How did religious differences provoke violence and start wars?

The Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555 provided the model for a solution to the religious divisions produced by the Reformation. According to the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (he who rules determines the religion of the land), each prince in the Holy Roman Empire determined the religion to be followed by his subjects; those who disagreed were obliged to convert or emigrate. Certainly, forced exile was economically
The Confessional States 473

and personally traumatic for those who emigrated, but it preserved what was almost universally believed to be the fundamental principle of successful rulership—one king, one faith, one law. In other words, each state should have only one church. Except in the states of eastern Europe and a few small troubled principalities in the Holy Roman Empire, few thought it desirable to allow more than one confession in the same state.

The problem with this political theory of religious unity was the reality of religious divisions created by the Reformation. In some places there were as many as three active confessions—Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist—in addition

Jean Bodin, On the Demonic Madness of Witches (1580)

The judgment which was passed against a witch in a case to which I was called on the last day of April, 1578, gave me occasion to take up my pen in order to clarify the subject of witches—persons who seem strange and wondrous to everyone and incredible to many. The witch whom I refer to was named Jeanne Harvil-lier, a native of Verbery near Compiègne. She was accused of having murdered many men and beasts, as she herself confessed without questioning or torture, although she at first stubbornly denied the charges and changed her story often. She also confessed that her mother presented her at the age of twelve years to the devil, disguised as a tall black man, larger than most men and clothed in black. The mother told him that as soon as her daughter was born she had promised her to him, whom she called the devil. He in turn promised to treat her well and to make her happy. And from then on she had renounced God and promised to serve the devil. And at that instant she had had carnal copulation with the devil, which she had continued to the age of 50, or thereabouts, when she was captured. She said also that [the] devil presented himself to her when she wished, always dressed as he had been the first time,-booted and spurred, with a sword at his side and his horse at the door. And no one saw him but her. He even fornicated with her often without her husband noticing although he lay at her side....

Now we have shown that ordinarily women are possessed by demons more often than men and that witches are often transported bodily but also often ravished in an ecstasy, the soul having separated itself from the body, by diabolical means, leaving the body insensible and stupid. Thus, it is completely ridiculous to say that the illness of the witches originates in melancholy, especially because the diseases coming from melancholy are always dangerous.... Thus, Weyer must admit that there is a remarkable incongruity for one who is a doctor, and a gross example of ignorance (but it is not ignorance) to attribute to women melancholy diseases which are as little appropriate for them as are the praiseworthy effects of a tempered melancholy humor. This humor makes a man wise, sober, and contemplative (as all of the ancient philosophers and physicians remark), which are qualities as incompatible with women as fire with water. And even Solomon, who as a man of the world knew well the humor of women, said that he had seen a wise man for every 1,000 men, but that he had never seen a wise woman. Let us therefore abandon the fanatic error of those who make women into melancholics.


For Discussion

1. How can the uncoerced confessions of women to witchcraft be explained?

2. Why would an otherwise intelligent observer such as Jean Bodin be so willing to believe in the reality of the power of witches?
to the minority sects, such as the Anabaptists and the Jewish communities. The alternative to religious unity would have been religious toleration, but hardly anyone in a position of authority was willing to advocate that. John Calvin expelled advocates of religious toleration, and Martin Luther was aggressively hostile to those who disagreed with him on seemingly minor theological points. After 1542 with the establishment of the Universal Inquisition, the Catholic Church was committed to exposing and punishing anyone who professed a different faith, with the exception of Jews in Italy, who were under papal protection. Geneva and Rome became competing missionary centers, each flooding the world with polemical tracts and specially trained missionaries willing to risk their lives by going behind the enemy lines to console their co-religionists and evangelize for converts.

Religious passions ran so high that during the late sixteenth century a new word appeared to describe a personality type that may not have been entirely new but was certainly much more common—the fanatic. Originally referring to someone possessed by a demon, fanatic came to mean a person who expressed immoderate enthusiasm in religious matters, a person who pursued a supposedly divine mission, often to violent ends. Fanatics from all sides of the religious divide initiated waves of political assassinations and massacred their opponents. François Guion, the assassin of William the Silent, whose story began this chapter, was in many ways typical of fanatics in his steadfast pursuit of his victim and his willingness to masquerade for years under a false identity. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no religious community had a monopoly on fanatics. They served the pope as well as the Protestant churches.

Wherever there were significant religious minorities within a state, the best that could be hoped for was a condition of anxious tension, omnipresent suspicion, and periodic hysteria (see Map 15.1). The worst possibility was civil war in which religious affiliations and political rivalries intertwined in such complicated ways that finding peaceful solutions was especially difficult. Between 1560 and 1648 several religious civil wars broke out, including the French Wars of Religion, the Dutch revolt against Spain, the Thirty Years’ War in Germany, and the English Civil War. (The latter two will be discussed in Chapter 16.)

The French Wars of Religion

When King Henry II (r. 1547–1559) of France died unexpectedly from a jousting accident, he left behind his widow, the formidable Catherine de’ Medici (1519–1589), and a brood of young children—including his heir, Francis II (r. 1559–1560), who was only 15. Henry II had been a peacemaker. In contrast, Catherine and her children, including three sons who successively ascended to the throne, utterly failed to keep the peace, and for some 40 years France was torn apart by a series of desperate civil wars.

The Huguenots: The French Calvinist Community

By 1560 Calvinism had made significant inroads into predominantly Catholic France. Pastors sent from Geneva had been especially successful in the larger provincial towns, where their evangelical message appealed to enterprising merchants, professionals, and skilled artisans. One in ten of the French had become Calvinists, or Huguenots as French Protestants were called. The political strength of the Huguenots was greater than their numbers might indicate, because between one-third and one-half of the lower nobility professed Calvinism. Calvinism was popular among the French nobility for two reasons. One involved the imitation of social superiors. The financial well-being of any noble depended on his patron, an aristocrat of higher rank who had access to the king and who could distribute jobs and lands to his clients. When a high aristocrat converted to Protestantism, he tended to bring into the new faith his noble clientele, who converted through loyalty to their patron or through the patron’s ability to persuade those who were financially dependent on him. As a result of a few aristocratic conversions in southwest France, Calvinism spread through “a veritable religious spider’s web,” as one contemporary put it.
A second reason for the spread of Calvinism was the influence of aristocratic women. The sister of King Francis I of France (r. 1515–1547), Marguerite of Angoulême (1492–1549), married the King of Navarre (an independent kingdom situated between France and Spain) and created a haven in Navarre for Huguenot preachers and theologians. Her example drew other aristocratic ladies to the Huguenot cause, and many of the Huguenot leaders during the French Wars of Religion were the sons and grandsons of these early female converts. Marguerite’s daughter, Jeanne d’Albret, sponsored Calvinist preachers for several years before she publicly announced her own conversion in 1560. Her son, Henry Bourbon (Henry of Navarre), became the principal leader of the Huguenot cause during the French Wars of Religion and the person responsible for eventually bringing the wars to an end.

**THE ORIGINS OF THE RELIGIOUS WARS** Like all civil wars, the French Wars of Religion exhibited a bewildering pattern of intrigue, betrayal, and treachery. Three distinct groups constituted the principal players. The first group was the royal family, consisting of Queen Catherine de’ Medici...
and her four sons by Henry II—King Francis II (r. 1559–1560), King Charles IX (r. 1560–1574), King Henry III (r. 1574–1589), and Duke Francis of Alençon (1554–1584)—and her daughter, Marguerite Valois (1553–1615). The royal family remained Catholic but on occasion reconciled themselves with the Huguenot opposition, and Marguerite married into it. The second group was the Huguenot faction of nobles led by the Bourbon family who ruled Navarre. The third group was the hard-line Catholic faction led by the Guise family. These three groups vied for supremacy during the successive reigns of Catherine de’ Medici’s three sons.

During the reign of the sickly and immature Francis II, the Catholic Guise family dominated the government and raised the persecution of the Huguenots to a new level. In response to that persecution, a group of Huguenot nobles plotted in 1560 to kill the Guises. The Guises got wind of the conspiracy and surprised the plotters as they arrived in small groups at the royal chateau of Amboise. Some were ambushed, some drowned in the Loire River, and some hanged from the balconies of the chateau’s courtyard. A tense two years later in 1562, the Duke of Guise was passing through the village of Vassy just as a large Huguenot congregation was holding services in a barn. The duke’s men attacked the worshippers, killing some 740 of them and wounding hundreds of others.

Following the massacre at Vassy, civil war broke out in earnest. For nearly 40 years religious wars sapped the strength of France. Most of the battles were indecisive, which meant neither side sustained military superiority for long. Both sides relied for support on their regional bases: The Huguenots’ strength was in the southwest; the Catholics’, in Paris and the north. Besides military engagements, the French Wars of Religion spawned political assassinations and massacres.

**Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day** After a decade of bloody yet inconclusive combat, the royal family tried to resolve the conflict by making peace with the Protestants, a shift of policy signified by the announcement of the engagement of Marguerite Valois, daughter of Henry II and Catherine de’ Medici, to Henry Bourbon, the son of the Huguenot King of Navarre. At age 19, Marguerite—or Queen Margot, as she was known—was already renowned for her brilliant intelligence—and for her wanton morals. To complicate the situation further, on the eve of the wedding Marguerite was having an affair with another Henry, the young Duke of Guise who was the leader of the intransigent Catholic faction. The marriage between Marguerite and Henry of Navarre was to take place in Paris in August 1572, an event that brought all the Huguenot leaders to the heavily armed Catholic capital for the first time in many years. The gathering of all their enemies in one place presented too great a temptation for the Guises, who hatched a plot to assassinate the Huguenot leaders. Perhaps because she had become jealous of the Huguenots’ growing influence on her son, King Charles IX, Catherine suddenly switched sides and became implicated in the plot.

Catherine somehow convinced the weakwilled king to order the massacre of the Huguenot nobles gathered in Paris. On August 14, 1572, St. Bartholomew’s Day, the people of Paris began a slaughter. Between 3,000 and 4,000 Huguenots were butchered in Paris and more than 20,000 were put to death throughout the rest of France. Henry of Navarre saved his life by pretending to convert to Catholicism, while most of his companions were murdered.

Catherine’s attempted solution for the Huguenot problem failed to solve anything. Henry of Navarre escaped his virtual imprisonment in the royal household, set Marguerite up in an isolated castle, returned to Navarre and his faith, and reinvigorated Huguenot resistance.

The wars of religion continued until the assassination of King Henry III, brother of the late Charles IX. Both Charles IX and Henry III had been childless, a situation that made Henry Bourbon of Navarre the rightful heir to the throne, even though he was a Huguenot. Henry Bourbon became King Henry IV (r. 1589–1610). He recognized that predominantly Catholic
ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S DAY MASSACRE
A Protestant painter, François Dubois, depicted the merciless slaughter of Protestant men, women, and children in the streets of Paris in 1572. The massacre was the most bloody and infamous in the French Wars of Religion and created a lasting memory of atrocity.

France would never accept a Huguenot king, and so in 1593 with his famous quip, “Paris is worth a mass,” Henry converted to Catholicism. Most Catholic opposition to him collapsed. Once Henry became a Catholic he managed to have the pope annul his childless marriage to Marguerite so that he could marry Marie de’ Medici and obtain her huge dowry. Affable, witty, generous, and exceedingly tolerant, “Henry the Great” became the most popular king in French history, reuniting the war-torn country by ruling with a very firm hand. With the Edict of Nantes of 1598, he allowed the Huguenots to build a quasi-state within the state, giving them the right to have their own troops, church organization, and political autonomy within their walled towns, but banning them from the royal court and the city of Paris.

Despite his enormous popularity, Henry too fell victim to fanaticism. After surviving 18 attempts on his life, in 1610 the king was fatally stabbed by a Catholic fanatic, who took advantage of the opportunity presented when the royal coach unexpectedly stopped behind a cart loading hay. Catholics and Protestants alike mourned Henry’s death and considered the assassin mad. Henry’s brilliant conciliatory nature and the horrors of the religious wars had tempered public opinion.

Philip II, His Most Catholic Majesty
France’s greatest rivals were the Habsburgs, who possessed vast territories in the Holy Roman Empire, controlled the elections for emperor, and had dynastic rights to the throne of Spain. During the late sixteenth century, Habsburg Spain took advantage of French weakness to establish itself as the dominant power in Europe. When Emperor Charles V (who had been both Holy Roman Emperor and king of Spain) abdicated his thrones in 1556, the Habsburg possessions in the Holy Roman Empire and the emperorship went to his brother, Ferdinand I, and the balance of his vast domain to his son, Philip II (r. 1556–1598). Philip’s inheritance included Spain,

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CHRONOLOGY: THE FRENCH WARS OF RELIGION, 1560–1598

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1560</td>
<td>Huguenot conspiracy of Amboise against Catholic Guise family</td>
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<tr>
<td>1572</td>
<td>Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day, Catholics murder Huguenots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1598</td>
<td>Edict of Nantes granting Huguenots religious toleration</td>
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Milan, Naples, Sicily, the Netherlands, scattered outposts on the north coast of Africa, colonies in the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines. In 1580 Philip also inherited Portugal and its far-flung overseas empire, which included a line of trading posts from West Africa to the Spice Islands and the vast colony of unexplored Brazil.

This grave, distrustful, rigid man saw himself as the great protector of the Catholic cause and committed Spain to perpetual hostility toward Muslims and Protestants. On the Muslim front he first bullied the Moriscos, the descendants of the Spanish Muslims. The Moriscos had received Christian baptism but were suspected of secretly practicing Islam. In 1568 Philip issued an edict that banned all manifestations of Muslim culture and ordered the Moriscos to turn over their children to Christian priests to educate. The remaining Moriscos were eventually expelled from the country in 1609.

Philip once said he would rather lose all his possessions and die a hundred times than be the king of heretics. (See Justice in History in this chapter.) His attitude toward Protestants showed that he meant what he said. Through his marriage to Queen Mary I of England (r. 1553–1558), Philip encouraged her persecutions of Protestants, but they got their revenge. After Mary’s death her half-sister, Queen Elizabeth I, refused Philip’s marriage proposal and in 1577 signed a treaty to assist the Protestant provinces of the Netherlands, which were in rebellion against Spain. To add insult to injury, the English privateer Sir Francis Drake (ca. 1540–1596) conducted a personal war against Catholic Spain by raiding the Spanish convoys bringing silver from the New World. In 1587 Drake’s embarrassing successes culminated with a daring raid on the great Spanish port city of Cadiz, where, “singeing the king of Spain’s beard,” he destroyed the anchored Spanish fleet and many thousands of tons of vital supplies.

Philip retaliated by building a huge fleet of 132 ships armed with 3,165 cannons, which in 1588 sailed from Portugal to rendezvous with the Spanish army stationed in the Netherlands and launch an invasion of England. As the Invincible Armada, as it was called, passed through the English Channel, it was met by a much smaller English fleet, assembled out of merchant ships refit for battle. Unable to maneuver as effectively as the English in the fluky winds of the channel and mauled by the rapid-firing English guns, the Spanish Armada suffered heavy losses and was forced to retreat to the north, where it sustained further losses in storms off the coast of Scotland and Ireland. Barely more than half of the fleet finally straggled home. The defeat severely shook Philip’s sense of invincibility.

The reign of Philip II illustrated better than any other the contradictions and tensions of the era. No monarch had at his grasp as many resources and territories as Philip, and yet defending them proved extremely costly. The creaky governmental machinery of Spain put a tremendous burden on a conscientious king such as Philip, but even his unflagging energy and dedication to his duties could not prevent military defeat and financial disaster. Historians remember Philip’s reign for its series of state bankruptcies and for the loss of the Dutch provinces in the Netherlands, the most precious jewel in the crown of Spain.

The Dutch Revolt

The Netherlands boasted some of Europe’s richest cities, situated amid a vast network of lakes, rivers, channels, estuaries, and tidal basins that periodically replenished the exceptionally productive soil through flooding. The Netherlands consisted of 17 provinces, each with its own distinctive identity, traditions, and even language. The southern provinces were primarily French-speaking; those in the north spoke a bewildering variety of Flemish and Dutch dialects. When Philip II became king of Spain he also inherited all of the Netherlands. With his characteristic bureaucratic mentality, Philip treated Dutch affairs as a management problem rather than a political sore spot, an attitude that subordinated the Netherlands to Spanish interests. Foreign rule irritated the Dutch, who had long enjoyed ancient privileges including the right to raise their own taxes and muster their own troops.
Philip’s harsh attitude toward Protestants upset the Netherlands’ delicate balance among Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anabaptist communities, as did the arrival of Huguenot refugees from the French Wars of Religion. In 1566 Calvinist fanatics occupied many Catholic churches and destroyed paintings and statues.

In response Philip issued edicts against the heretics and strengthened the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition in Spain had been an arm of the monarchy charged with ensuring religious conformity, but when introduced in the Netherlands, it became an investigating agency devoted to finding, interrogating, and, if necessary, punishing Protestants.

Philip also dispatched 20,000 Spanish troops under the command of the Duke of Alba (1508–1582), a veteran of the Turkish campaigns in North Africa and victories over the Lutheran princes in the Holy Roman Empire. Alba directly attacked the Protestants. He personally presided over the military court, the Council of Troubles, which became so notoriously tyrannical that the people called it the Council of Blood. As an example to others, he systematically razed several small villages where there had been incidents of desecrating Catholic images and slaughtered every inhabitant. Alba himself boasted that during the campaign against the rebels, he had 18,000 people executed, in addition to those who died in battle or were massacred by soldiers. Sixty thousand refugees, about two percent of the population, went into exile.

The Prince of Orange, William the Silent (1533–1584), organized the Dutch Revolt to resist to Alba. Within a few short years, William the Silent seized permanent control of the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, which were then flooded by Calvinist refugees from the southern provinces.

His policies a failure, Alba was recalled to Spain in 1573. After Alba’s departure, no one kept control of the unpaid Spanish soldiers, who in mutinous rage turned against cities loyal to Spain, including Brussels, Ghent, and most savagely Antwerp, the rich center of trade. Antwerp lost 7,000 citizens and one-third of its houses to the “Spanish fury,” which permanently destroyed its prosperity.

Alba’s replacement, the shrewd statesman and general the Duke of Parma (r. 1578–1592), ultimately subdued the southern provinces, which remained a Spanish colony. The seven northern provinces, however, united in 1579, declared independence from Spain in 1581, and formally organized as a republic in 1588 (see Map 15.2). William the Silent became the stadholder (governor) of the new United Provinces, and after his assassination in 1584 his 17-year-old son, Maurice of Nassau, inherited the same title.

The Netherlands’ struggle for independence transformed the population of the United

### MAP 15.2
The Netherlands During the Dutch Revolt, ca. 1580
During the late sixteenth century the northern United Provinces separated from the Spanish Netherlands. The independence of the United Provinces was not recognized by the other European powers until 1648.
Provinces from mixed religions to staunch Calvinism. The alliance with England, which provided much-needed financial and moral support, reinforced the Protestant identity of the Dutch, and the failure of the Spanish Armada to land Parma’s men in England guaranteed the survival of an independent Netherlands. The Dutch carried on a sporadic and inconclusive war against Spain until the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1648, when the international community recognized the independent United Provinces of the Netherlands, known as the Dutch Republic.

Literature in the Age of Confessional Division

Churches and monarchs everywhere demanded religious conformity in word and deed, a situation that would seem to stifle creativity, and yet the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were one of the most remarkable periods in the history of creative literature. Some literary figures did find their works banned and some had political or personal troubles with their monarch. But the controversies of the day seemed to have stimulated rather than inhibited great writers. Political and religious turmoil led them to rise above the petty religious squabbles that preoccupied so many of their contemporaries and to ask penetrating questions about the meaning of life. And importantly, they did so in their native languages. During this period the native or vernacular languages of western Europe became literary languages, replacing Latin as the dominant form of expression, even for the educated elite.

French Literature During the Religious Turmoil

In France royal decrees in 1520 and 1539 substituted French for Latin in official legal and government documents. A century later, with the founding of the Académie Française, it became government policy to promote, protect, and refine the French language. The greatest masters of French prose during this crucial period were François Rabelais (ca. 1483–1553) and Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592).

Trained as a lawyer, Rabelais became a friar and priest but left the Church under a cloud of heresy to become a physician. Rabelais’s satirical masterpiece, a series of novels recounting the fantastic and grotesque adventures of the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel, combined an encyclopedic command of humanist thought with stunning verbal invention that has had a lasting influence on humorous writers to this day. Rabelais’s optimistic vision of human nature represented a startling contrast to the growing anxiety provoked by the religious controversies of his time. Rabelais’s controversial work was banned, and he was briefly forced into exile.

It is ironic that Montaigne became a master of French prose. His mother was a Catholic of Spanish-Jewish origin, and the young Michel spoke only Latin for the first six years of his life because his German tutor knew no French. After a modestly successful legal
career, Montaigne retired to the family chateau to discover himself by writing essays, a literary form well suited to reflective introspection. In his essays, Montaigne struggled with his lasting grief over the premature death from dysentery of a close friend, reflected on his own experience of the intense physical pain of illness, and diagnosed the absurd causes of the French Wars of Religion. Montaigne’s essays were a profound series of meditations on the meaning of life and death, presented in a calm voice of reason to an age of violent fanaticism. In one essay, for example, he exposed the presumption of human beings: “The most vulnerable and frail of all creatures is man, and at the same time the most arrogant.” Montaigne thought it presumptuous that human beings picked themselves out as God’s favorite creatures. How did they know they were superior to other animals? “When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?” His own skepticism about religion insulated him from the sometimes violent passions of his era. His essay “On Cannibals” pointed to the hypocrisy of Christians who condemned the alleged cannibalism of the native Americans but justified the torture and murder of other Christians over some minor theological dispute. Montaigne argued that the capacity to understand and tolerate cultural and religious differences, not rigid adherence to biblical laws, defined a truly ethical, truly Christian person.

Stirrings of the Golden Age in Iberia. The literary tradition in the Iberian peninsula thrived in several languages: Basque, Galician, Portuguese, Castilian, and Catalan. The greatest lyric poet of the peninsula, Luís Vaz de Camões (1524–1580), lost an eye in battle and was sent to the Portuguese East Indies after he killed a royal official in a street brawl. When he returned years later, he completed his epic poem The Lusiads (1572), a celebration of Vasco da Gama’s discovery of the sea route to India, which became the national poem of Portugal. Camões modeled this work on the ancient epics, especially the Aeneid, the greatest Latin epic of ancient Rome, and even included the gods of Olympus as commentators on the human events of Camões’s time. By connecting Portugal directly to the glories of the ancient empires, Camões elevated the adventures of his fellow Portuguese in Asia to an important moment in the history of the world.

The period when Spain was the dominant power in Europe coincided with the Golden Age of Spanish literature. Because Spain was unified around the crown of Castile, the Castilian language became the language we now call Spanish. The greatest literary figure was Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), an impoverished son of an unsuccessful doctor with little formal education. Like Camões, Cervantes survived many adventures. He lost the use of his left hand at the naval Battle of Lepanto and spent five years languishing in a Turkish prison after his capture by Algerian pirates. The disabled veteran wrote plays for the Madrid theater and worked as a tax collector, but was still imprisoned several times for debts. Desperate to make money, Cervantes published a serial novel in installments between 1605 and 1615. It became the greatest masterpiece in Spanish literature, Don Quixote.

The prototype of the modern novel form, Don Quixote satirizes chivalric romances. Cervantes presented reality on two levels, the “poetic truth” of the master and dreamer Don Quixote and the “historic truth” of his squire and realist Sancho Panza. Don Quixote’s imagination persistently ran away with him as he tilted at windmills, believing they were fierce dragons. It remained to Sancho Panza to point out the unheroic truth. Cervantes pursued the interaction between these two incongruous views of truth as a philosophical commentary on existence. For Cervantes there was no single, objective truth, only psychological truths revealed through the interaction of the characters, an idea that contrasted with the notion of dogmatic religious truth that dominated the time.
The Elizabethan Renaissance  

During the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), the Renaissance arrived in England. The daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth faced terrible insecurity as a girl. Her father had her mother beheaded, she was declared illegitimate, and her half-sister Mary imprisoned her in the Tower of London for treason. After she ascended to the throne in 1558, however, she proved to be a brilliant leader. Elizabeth prevented the kind of religious civil wars that broke out in France by establishing a moderate form of Protestantism as the official religion. She presided over the beginnings of England’s rise as a major European power. Perhaps most remarkably, she became a patron and inspiration for England’s greatest age of literature.

The principal figure of the Elizabethan Renaissance was a professional dramatist, William Shakespeare (1564–1616). In a series of theaters, including the famous Globe on the south side of the Thames in London, Shakespeare wrote, produced, and acted in comedies, tragedies, and history plays. Shakespeare’s enormous output of plays, some of which made veiled allusions to the politics of Elizabeth’s court, established him not only as the most popular dramatist of his time, but the greatest literary figure in the English language. The power of his plays derives from the subtle understanding of human psychology found in his characters and the stunning force of his language. For Shakespeare, as for Montaigne, the source of true knowledge was self-knowledge, which most people lacked. Pride and human authority prevented people from knowing themselves:

But man, proud man,
Drest [dressed] in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,  
His glassy [dull] essence, like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As make the angels weep.  
(Measure for Measure II, ii, 117)

Unlike most contemporary authors, Shakespeare wrote for a broad audience of paying theater goers that included common workers as well as highly educated members of Elizabeth’s court. This need to appeal to a large audience who gave instant feedback helped him hone his skills as a dramatist.

STATES AND CONFESSIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

How did the countries of eastern Europe during the late sixteenth century become enmeshed in the religious controversies that began in western Europe during the early part of the century?

The religious diversity of eastern Europe contrasted with the religious conformity of western Europe’s confessional states. Whereas in western Europe the religious controversies stimulated writers to investigate deeply the human condition but made them cautious about expressing nonconforming religious opinions, writers and creative people in eastern Europe during this period were able to explore a wide range of ideas in a relatively tolerant atmosphere. Bohemia and Poland, in particular, allowed levels of religious diversity unheard of elsewhere. During the last decades of the sixteenth century and early decades of the seventeenth, however, dynastic troubles compromised the relative openness of the eastern states, enmeshing them in conflicts among themselves that had an increasingly strong religious dimension. In the Holy Roman Empire, the weakness of the mad Emperor Rudolf permitted religious conflicts to fester, setting the stage for the disastrous Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) that pitted Catholic and Protestant princes against one another.

Around the Baltic Sea, rivalries among Lutheran Sweden, Catholic Poland-Lithuania, and Orthodox Russia created a state of almost permanent war in a tense standoff among three very different political and religious states. The enormous confederation of Poland-Lithuania sustained the most decentralized, religiously diverse state anywhere in Europe. By the end of the century, it remained politically decentralized but had become an active theater of the Catholic Reformation where dynastic policy firmly supported the Roman Church. Russia began to strengthen itself under the authoritarian rule of the tsars, who began to transform it into a major European power.

The Dream World of Emperor Rudolf

In Goethe’s Faust, set in sixteenth-century Germany, drinkers in a tavern sing:

The dear old Holy Roman Empire,  
How does it hang together?

Good question. How did this peculiarly decentralized state—neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire, as Voltaire would later put it—hang together? In the late sixteenth century the empire consisted of one emperor; seven electors; 50 bishops and archbishops, 21 dukes, margraves, and landgraves; 88 independent abbots and assorted prelates of the Church; 178 counts and other sovereign lords; about 80 free imperial cities; and hundreds of free imperial knights. The emperor presided over all, and the Imperial Diet served as a parliament, but the Holy Roman Empire was, in fact, a very loose confederation of semi-independent, mostly German-speaking states, many of which ignored imperial decrees that did not suit them. During the first half of the sixteenth century the empire faced a number of challenges—the turmoil within the empire created by Lutheranism, endless French enmity on the western borders, and
Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Many of these figures became central figures in the Scientific Revolution, but Rudolf also fell prey to fast-talking charlatans. These included Cornelius Drebber who claimed to have invented a perpetual-motion machine. This weird court, however, was less the strange fruit of the emperor’s hopeless dementia than the manifestation of a striving for universal empire. Rudolf sought to preserve the cultural and political unity of the empire, to eradicate religious divisions, and to achieve peace at home. Rudolf’s court in Prague was perhaps the only place left during the late sixteenth century where Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and even radical heretics such as Giordano Bruno, the notorious occult philosopher, could gather around him to pursue their interests.

Incapable of governing, Rudolf transmuted the imperial ideal of universality into a strange dream world. In Prague he gathered around him a brilliant court of humanists, musicians, painters, physicians, astronomers, astrologers, alchemists, and magicians. These included an eclectic assortment of significant thinkers—the great astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler, the notorious occult philosopher Giordano Bruno, the theoretical mathematician and astrologer John Dee, and the remarkable inventor of surrealist painting Giuseppe Arcimboldo.
As Bruno could gather together in a common intellectual enterprise. The goal of such gatherings was to discover the universal principles that governed nature, principles that would provide the foundations for a single unifying religion and a cure for all human maladies. It was a noble, if utterly improbable, dream.

While Rudolf and his favorite courtiers isolated themselves in their dream world, the religious conflicts within the empire reached a boiling point. Without a strong emperor, confessional squabbles paralyzed the Imperial Diets. In 1607, the Catholic Duke of Bavaria annexed Donauworth—a city with a Lutheran majority—to his own territories. Despite the illegality of the duke’s action, Rudolf passively acquiesced, causing fear among German Protestants that the principles of the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555 might be ignored. The Religious Peace had allowed princes and imperial free cities, such as Donauworth, to determine their own religion. The Duke of Bavaria’s violation of Donauworth’s status as a free city jeopardized not only civic liberty but religious liberty. In the following decade, more than 200 religious revolts or riots took place. In 1609 the insane Duke John William of Jülich-Cleves died without a direct heir, and the most suitable claimants to the Catholic duchy were two Lutheran princes. The succession of a Lutheran prince to this Catholic dukedom would have seriously disrupted the balance between Catholics and Protestants in Germany. Religious tensions boiled over. As Chapter 16 will describe, in less than a decade the empire began to dissolve in what became the Thirty Years’ War.

The Renaissance of Poland-Lithuania

As the major power in eastern Europe, Poland-Lithuania engaged in a tug-of-war with Sweden over control of the eastern Baltic and almost constant warfare against the expansionist ambitions of Russia (see Map 15.3). Nevertheless, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Poland-Lithuania experienced a remarkable cultural and political renaissance inspired by influences from Renaissance Italy linked to strong commercial and diplomatic ties to the Republic of Venice and intellectual connections with the University of Padua. But perhaps the most remarkable achievement of Poland-Lithuania during this contentious time was its unparalleled level of religious toleration and parliamentary rule.

Very loosely joined since 1385, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania formally united as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. The republican thought from Renaissance Italy directly influenced the political structure and values of the Commonwealth. Polish jurists studied law at the universities of Padua and Bologna where they learned to apply the civic values of Italy to the Polish context. Under these influences, the Polish constitution guaranteed that there would be no changes of the law, no new taxes, and no limitations on freedoms without the consent of the parliament, known as the Sejm. The novel feature of the Commonwealth was how the nobles (szlachta) reserved power for themselves through their control of regional assemblies, which in turn dominated the Sejm. The szlachta consisted of between 6.6 and 8 percent of the population and nearly 25 percent of ethnic Poles. Elsewhere in Europe, except for Spain, the nobility accounted for no more than 1 to 3 percent of the population. Thus, a much higher percentage of the population of Poland-Lithuania enjoyed political rights than in any other country in Europe. In 1573 the Sejm introduced a highly limited monarchy for Poland. The Sejm elected the king and treated him, at best, as a hired manager. While the rest of Europe moved toward ever more authoritarian monarchies, Poland moved in the opposite direction toward broader political participation.

The Warsaw Confederation of 1573 prohibited religious persecution, making the Commonwealth the safest and most tolerant place in Europe. Poland-Lithuania contained an incomparable religious mixture of Roman
Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Russian Orthodox, Anabaptists, Unitarians, Armenians, and Jews. These communities, however, were strongly divided along geographic and social lines. Lutheranism was a phenomenon of the German-speaking towns, the peasants of Poland remained Catholic, those in Lithuania were Orthodox, and many of the nobles were attracted to Calvinism.

During the late sixteenth century, however, many Protestants in Poland returned or converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The key to the transformation was the changing attitude of the Polish szlachta, who had promoted religious diversity because they believed that religious liberty was the cornerstone of political liberty. The revival of Catholicism owed a great deal to Stanislas Hosius (1504–1579), who had studied in Italy before he returned to Poland to become successively a diplomat, bishop, and cardinal. Imbued with the zeal of the Italian Catholic Reformation, Hosius invited the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) into Poland.
and worked closely with the papal nuncios (the
diplomatic representatives of the pope), who
organized a campaign to combat all forms of
Protestantism. Between 1565 and 1586, 44 Polish
nobles studied at the Jesuit college in Rome.
When they returned, they took up the most influ-
ential church and government offices in Poland.
Jesuit colleges sprouted up in many Polish towns,
attributing the brightest sons of the nobility and
urban bourgeoisie. A close alliance between the
kings of Poland and the Jesuits enhanced the
social prestige of Catholicism.

The cultural appeal of all things Italian
also helped lure many members of the Polish
nobility back to Catholicism. Through the
spread of elite education, Catholicism returned
to Poland largely through persuasion rather
than coercion. But the transformation did not
occur without violent repercussions. Lutheran,
Calvinist, and Bohemian Brethren churches
were burned. In Cracow armed confrontations
between Protestant and Catholic militants led
to casualties. In 1596 the Polish king and
Catholic fanatics imposed Catholicism on the
Orthodox in the eastern parts of the Common-
wealth. Although allowed to retain their rites,
Orthodox believers had to accept the authority
of the pope. Despite the growing religious hos-
tility, Poland did not degenerate into civil war,
as did France or the Netherlands over much the
same issues.

Not all Poles and Lithuanians interpreted the
Italian influence as affirming the Catholic Reformation. In 1580 Count Jan Zamoyski
(1542–1605) founded the city of Zamość,
designed as an ideal Renaissance city on the Ital-
ian model. Zamoyski had studied at Padua and
returned to Poland determined to build his own
Padua. He invited Armenians and Jews to
inhabit the new town as citizens. A forceful
advocate of civic freedom against royal authority
and religious toleration, he built a Roman
Catholic Church, a Calvinist chapel, an Armen-
ian Orthodox church, and two synagogues. In
Zamoyski’s planned town the religions of the
West encountered one another on a daily basis
and exemplified one of the most attractive fea-
tures of the Polish Renaissance.

Perhaps most remarkable was the position
of Jews in Poland. During the early modern
period Poland-Lithuania became the center of
European Jewish culture. Jews described Vil-
nius as the “new Jerusalem.” Jews had their
own parliament and sent nonvoting representa-
tives to the Sejm, a form of unequal citizenship
but a guarantee of certain rights without parallel
elsewhere in Europe. Unlike other parts of
Europe, in Poland-Lithuania Jews were not
forced to assimilate or hide and were allowed
to develop their own distinctive communities.
The Troubled Legacy of Ivan the Terrible

While Poland experimented with a decentralized confederation dominated by nobles that severely restricted the king’s initiative, Russia did the opposite. During the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the grand dukes of Moscow who became the tsars of Russia gradually expanded their power over the boyars (the upper-level nobles who dominated Russian society) and challenged Moscow’s neighbors—Poland-Lithuania and the Republic of Novgorod.

Although well integrated into the European diplomatic community and engaged in trade with its western neighbors, Russia for more than 300 years had been under the “Tartar Yoke,” a term describing the Mongolian tribes that overran the country, pillaging and depopulating it. Ivan III, “The Great” (1462–1505), succeeded in gradually throwing off the Tartar Yoke by refusing to continue to pay tribute to the Mongols.

Ivan’s marriage to Zoë, the niece of the last Greek emperor of Constantinople, gave him the basis for claiming that the Russian rulers were the heirs of Byzantium and the exclusive protectors of Orthodox Christianity, the state religion of Russia. Following the Byzantine tradition of imperial pomp, Ivan practiced Byzantine court ceremonies, and his advisers developed the theory of the Three Romes. According to this theory, the authority of the

THE MOSCOW KREMLIN

The Kremlin in Moscow was the seat of government for the Russian tsars until 1712. Originally built in 1156, the present enclosure of the Kremlin dates from the sixteenth century and reflects the influence of Italian architects brought to Moscow as well as traditional Byzantine styles. This view shows the Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel and Bell Tower of Ivan the Great.
ancient Roman Empire had passed first to the Byzantine Empire, which God had punished with the Turkish conquest, and then to Moscow as the third and last “Rome.” Ivan celebrated this theory by assuming the title of tsar (or “Caesar”). With his wife’s assistance, he hired Italian architects to rebuild the grand ducal palace, the Kremlin.

With his capture of the vast northern territories of the Republic of Novgorod, Ivan expanded the Russian state north to the White Sea and east to the Urals. In 1478 Ivan sent his army to Novgorod, massacred the population, abolished the parliament, and burned the archive, ending the rich republican tradition of northern Russia. Ivan’s invasion of parts of Lithuania embroiled Russia in a protracted conflict with Poland that lasted more than a century. Like his fellow monarchs in western Europe, Ivan began to bring the aristocrats under control by incorporating them into the bureaucracy of the state.

Ivan III’s grandson, Ivan IV, “The Terrible” (1533–1584), succeeded his father at age three and became the object of innumerable plots, attempted coups, and power struggles among his mother, uncles, and the boyars. The trauma of his childhood years and a painful disease of the spine made him inordinately suspicious and prone to acts of impulsive violence. When at age 17 Ivan was crowned, he reduced the power of the dukes and the boyars. He obliged them to give up their hereditary estates. In return he redistributed lands to them with the legal obligation to serve the tsar in war. In weakening the boyars, Ivan gained considerable support among the common people and was even remembered in popular songs as the people’s tsar. At first, he was a great reformer who introduced a code of laws and a church council. By setting aside half of the realm as his personal domain, he created a strong financial base for the army, which led to military successes in the prolonged wars against Poland-Lithuania and Sweden.

Nevertheless, Ivan distrusted everyone, and his struggle with the boyars led him to subvert his own reforms. He often arrested people on charges of treason, just for taking trips abroad. In a cruel revenge to his enemies among the boyars, he began a reign of terror in which he personally committed horrendous atrocities. His massacre in 1570 of the surviving inhabitants of Novgorod, whom he suspected of harboring Polish sympathies, contributed to his reputation as a bloody tyrant. During his reign, the Polish threat and boyar opposition to his rule revealed signs of the fragility of Russian unity.

Then, during the “Time of Troubles” (1604–1613), Russia fell into chaos. Boyar families struggled among themselves for supremacy, the Cossacks from the south led a popular revolt, and Poles and Swedes openly interfered in Russian affairs. Finally, the Time of Troubles ended when in 1613 the national assembly elected Tsar Michael Romanov, whose descendants ruled Russia until 1917. During the seventeenth century the Romanovs gradually restored order to Russia, eroded the independence of local governments, and introduced serfdom to keep the peasants on the land. By the

CHRONOLOGY: STATES AND CONFESSIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1480</td>
<td>Grand Duke and later Tsar Ivan III, “The Great,” of Russia refuses to pay tribute to Tartars</td>
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<tr>
<td>1569</td>
<td>Constitutional Union established Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604–1613</td>
<td>Time of Troubles in Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Michael Romanov elected Tsar of Russia</td>
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end of the seventeenth century Russia was strong enough to reenter European affairs as a major power.

CONCLUSION

The Divisions of the West

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, hidden demographic and economic pressures eroded the confidence and security of many Europeans, creating a widespread sense of unease. Most people retreated like confused soldiers behind the barricades of a rigid confessional faith, which provided reassurance that was unavailable elsewhere. To compensate for the absence of predictability in daily life, societies everywhere imposed strict discipline—discipline of women, children, the poor, criminals, and alleged witches. The frenzy for social discipline displaced the fear of those things that could not be controlled (such as price inflation) onto the most easily controllable people, especially the weak, the subordinate, and those perceived to be different in some way.

The union between religion and political authority in the confessional states bolstered official religious faith with the threat of legal or military coercion. Where different religious confessions persisted within one state—most notably France and the Netherlands—the result was riots, assassinations, and civil war. The West had become divided along religious lines in two ways. The first kind of division was within countries with religiously mixed populations, where distinctive religious communities competed for political power and influence. In these countries religion became the cornerstone to justify patriotism or rebellion, loyalty or disloyalty to the monarch. The second kind of division was international. The confessional states formed alliances, crafted foreign policies, and went to war, with religion determining friend and foe. Over the subsequent centuries, religious differences mutated into ideological differences, but the sense that alliances among states should be linked together by a common set of beliefs has persisted to this day as a legacy from the sixteenth century.

During the period of the middle seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, confessional identity and the fear of religious turmoil led monarchs throughout Europe to build absolutist regimes, which attempted to enforce stability through a strengthened, centralized state. The principles of religious toleration and the separation of church and state were still far in the future. They were made possible only as a consequence of the hard lessons learned from the historical turmoil of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

KEY TERMS

confessions
Price Revolution
auto-da-fé
witch-hunt
magic
fanatic
Huguenots
French Wars of Religion
Edict of Nantes
Spanish Armada
Dutch Revolt
vernacular languages
boyars
Time of Troubles

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

1. How did the expanding population and price revolution exacerbate religious and political tensions? (page 458)
2. How did religious and political authorities attempt to discipline the people? (page 463)
3. Why did people in the sixteenth century think witches were a threat? (page 469)
4. How did religious differences provoke violence and start wars? (page 472)
5. How did the countries of eastern Europe during the late sixteenth century become enmeshed in the religious controversies that began in western Europe during the early part of the century? (page 483)

**TAKING IT FURTHER**

1. Why was it so difficult to establish religious toleration in the sixteenth century?
2. A common emotion during the age of confessional division was fear. How do you explain the spread of collective fears?
3. How did religious fanatics perceive the world during this period?

Practice on MyHistoryLab