

The West in an Age of Religious Conflict and Global Expansion, 1500–1650



- The Protestant Reformation
- The Catholic Counterreformation
- Religious and Political Strife in Europe
- The Globalization of Western Christianity and Commerce
- Western Society in an Age of Religious and Economic Change
- Chapter Review

Executing A Peasant Rebel

In the sixteenth century, while Western nations forged global connections, Western society was wracked by divisive religious and social rebellions. Here a leader of the German Peasants' Revolt is shown being burned at the stake.

On April 18, 1521, the Imperial Diet, an assembly of the Holy Roman Empire's leading princes and nobles, met at the bishop's palace in the German town of Worms (VOHRMSS). There, on the previous day, the Diet had ordered a monk named Martin Luther to retract his writings, which defied the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Now, in the emperor's presence, the Diet reassembled to hear Luther's response. His bold reply, delivered that day, echoed throughout Europe for decades: "Unless I shall be refuted by . . . the scriptures or by manifest reason (for I believe in neither the Pope nor in the Councils alone . . .) I am not able to retract . . ."

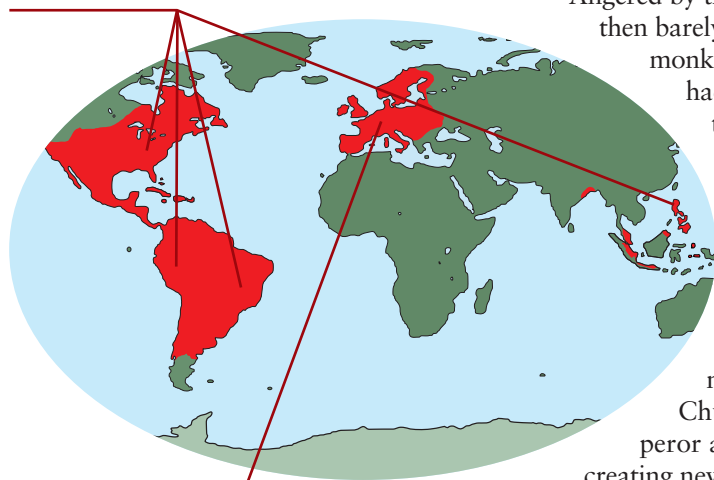
Angered by this defiance, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, then barely 21 years old, issued a stinging rebuke. A single monk must not be allowed to deny what Christianity had held for more than a thousand years. To defend the Catholic faith, Charles declared, he was prepared to use "all my possessions, my friends, my body, my blood, my life, and my soul." Thus were drawn the battle lines of a great religious conflict that divided the Western world for centuries.

At first this conflict was mainly a struggle among European Christians. Backed by Germans who feared imperial power and resented Church corruption, Luther boldly defied both emperor and pope. His success led others to do likewise, creating new religions and sparking revolts that fragmented Western Christendom.

Soon, however, the struggle was entwined with developments worldwide. In 1521, even as Charles vowed at Worms to defend the Catholic cause, his subjects were conquering distant lands such as Mexico and the Philippines, laying the foundations of a global Spanish empire. In ensuing decades, as officials and religious orders spread Catholicism throughout that empire, Charles and his heirs exploited its wealth to fight their European foes.

The result was a century of religious strife, accompanied by zealotry and witch hunts. But these conflicts were also accompanied by increased global trade, new kinds of commerce and production, expansion of learning and literacy, and changes in family life. By the seventeenth century, although Europe was still torn by religious and political strife, its monarchs, missionaries, and merchants had extended their reach around the world.

European Colonies and Claims



The Christian West

The Protestant Reformation

In the early 1500s almost all Western Christians still belonged to the Catholic Church. Headed by the pope in Rome and administered by a hierarchy of bishops and priests, the Church had long been a source of authority and unity in the West. Soon, however, this authority was challenged, and this unity shattered, by religious rebellions that divided Western Christendom into differing denominations. Collectively these rebellions are called the Protestant Reformation.

Roots of the Reformation

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was rooted in two key concerns. One was corruption in the Roman Catholic Church, the institution most Europeans looked to for salvation. The other was political unrest in the Holy Roman Empire, an assortment of central European states, loosely united by their rulers' recognition of its emperor as their overlord (Map 20.1).

Church corruption and political unrest help spark the Reformation

Renaissance Europe had sophisticated culture, but death and disease still surrounded its people, whose main concern was thus eternal salvation: When they died would their souls go to heaven or hell? Most believed that the Catholic Church held the keys to eternal salvation, providing the rules and rituals they needed to make it to heaven. Chief among the rituals were the **sacraments**, sacred rites believed to bestow the graces needed for salvation.

The most important sacraments were baptism, Eucharist, and penance. To make it to heaven, one first had to undergo baptism, the ritual use of water that brings membership in the Church. Then one had to lead a virtuous life, doing good works and avoiding serious sins. Those who committed such sins and died with them unforgiven were damned

FOUNDATION MAP 20.1 Europe in the Sixteenth Century

From 1519 to 1556, Europe's most powerful ruler was Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, heir to the Habsburg family's many possessions. Note that these possessions included Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, and much of Central Europe and Italy, as well as a growing Spanish American empire. Who were his major friends and enemies in the rest of Europe? Why did the Protestant Reformation pose a threat to his power?





Sketch of Friar John Tetzel selling indulgences.

Sale of indulgences and other abuses increase Church corruption

to eternity in hell. But through Eucharist (also called Communion), the consumption of consecrated bread and wine, believed by the faithful to be Christ's body and blood, Christians could gain grace to avoid sin. And through penance, the confession of one's sins with sincere repentance to a priest, Christians could have their sins forgiven.

After that, however, sinners still had to atone for the wrong they had done. If they died without doing so, the Church taught, they would have to endure **purgatory**, a place of suffering that purified the soul so it could enter heaven. But people could also atone for their sins while still alive. Through certain prayers and sacrifices, such as fasts, pilgrimages, and charitable works, a person could earn an **indulgence**, a remission of the punishment still due for sins that had been forgiven through penance, to reduce or eliminate suffering in purgatory. Eventually, when popes started granting indulgences for *financial* sacrifices, such as donations to the Church, it began to look as if people could buy their way into heaven.

This sale of indulgences was one of several abuses that contributed to Church wealth and corruption. Others included simony (*SIH-muh-nē*), the sale of Church offices and benefits, and pluralism, the practice by which some clerics held multiple church offices, typically to enhance their income. Furthermore, while high Church officials such as popes and bishops lived lavishly in sumptuous palaces, poorly educated parish priests were often neither sober nor chaste.

Over the years, various individuals had dared to condemn such abuses. One was John Wyclif (*WICK-liff*) (1330–1384), theology professor at England's Oxford University, who denounced the sale of indulgences and Church offices. Asserting that the Church must set an example of poverty and piety, he called on civil rulers to reform it and seize its possessions. He also declared that divine authority resided in the Bible, not the Church. His followers, called Lollards, were vigorously suppressed, and some were even burned to death as heretics. Another Church critic was John Hus (1369–1415), rector of Prague University, who promoted similar ideas in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic). In 1415 he was invited to a Church council with a promise of safe conduct, but then convicted of heresy and burned to death at the stake. For the time being, the Church thus silenced its dissidents.

In time, however, Renaissance popes supplied a new set of scandals. Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484), for example, sold Church offices to enrich his family and imposed heavy taxes on the Papal States. He also proclaimed that living people could gain indulgences for souls already in purgatory. Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503), having gotten his post through bribery, used Church wealth to indulge his illegitimate children, including a daughter with whom he was alleged to have had sexual relations and a son who used the papal armies in an effort to create his own kingdom. The next pope, Julius II (1503–1513), a vain and violent man, led wars to enlarge the papal domains and sold indulgences to finance extravagant projects—including the construction in Rome of a grandiose new church, Saint Peter's Basilica, replacing an ancient one built by Constantine that Julius had torn down.

Political unrest in Central Europe, the Reformation's other root cause, had meanwhile spread among the German people. Irked by Italians who saw themselves as culturally superior, many Germans also resented the use of money collected in Germany, through indulgence sales and other Church payments, to fund the costly wars and ventures of the Renaissance popes. Devout Germans, such as those belonging to the Brethren of the Common Life, a lay movement stressing piety and simplicity, were also dismayed by Church wealth and worldliness.

Scandalous Renaissance popes discredit papacy

Furthermore, the heads of Germany's numerous states were anxious to protect their local autonomy against the ambitions of their overlords, the Holy Roman Emperors. Austrian Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, elected emperor in 1493, seemed intent on ending this autonomy by transforming the empire into a centralized monarchy. By arranging favorable marriages for himself and his son, he also assured that his grandson, the future Emperor Charles V (1519–1556), would inherit not only Austria, the Netherlands, Sicily, Sardinia, and much of Central Europe and Italy (Map 20.1), but also Spain (where he was King Carlos I) and its American empire. Alarmed, many German princes and nobles resolved to resist any further Habsburg ambitions.

The Lutheran Revolt

Into these troubled waters waded Martin Luther (1483–1546), a devout German monk obsessed with fears of death and eternal damnation. As a young man he had prepared to study law but, when caught in a violent storm, vowed instead to enter a monastery if God let him survive. He lived to join the Augustinian order and became an exemplary monk, repeatedly fasting, praying, and confessing his sins. But he still felt unworthy of salvation and feared he was doomed to hell. A 1510 trip to Pope Julius II's Rome only intensified his fears: how could a Church so worldly and corrupt help him save his soul? In confronting this question, Luther plunged Western Christendom into turmoil.

At the University of Wittenberg (*VIT-in-bārg*), in the central German state of Saxony, Luther studied scripture and became a doctor of theology, finally developing a doctrine that eased his torment. No one, he concluded, is worthy of salvation. It is not something one can *earn* by doing good works. It is rather a *gift* from God, who freely bestows his saving grace on those who have faith in him. We do not gain grace by doing good, reasoned Luther; we do good because we have grace. We are “justified,” in Luther's words, not by our deeds but by God's grace, which we receive through faith.

The doctrine of “justification by faith alone,” which Luther grounded on the writings of Saint Paul, implicitly threatened the Catholic Church. For if faith alone brought salvation, who needed sacraments and indulgences? Indeed, who needed the Church?

Trouble arose in 1517 when a friar named John Tetzel traveled through Germany selling indulgences to help build the new Saint Peter's in Rome and pay the debts of a corrupt archbishop who had purchased his post. The crafty friar, assuring donors that coins put in his coffer would earn indulgences to ease the suffering of their departed loved ones, allegedly used slogans like “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!” Appalled, on October 31 Luther responded by issuing his **Ninety-five Theses**, a set of propositions challenging the Church's power to forgive sins and grant indulgences. Legend says he posted his theses on the Wittenberg castle church door.

The theses circulated widely, winning Luther fame and support among disgruntled Germans and religious reformers, while evoking Rome's anger. In a 1519 debate he defended the views of John Hus and denounced the Church for Hus's execution. In 1520 Luther published an *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, urging German nobles to cast off Rome's control and seize Church property, artfully appealing to their Germanic pride and zest for wealth and power. The pope responded with a papal *bull* (edict) condemning Luther's views as heresy.

Undeterred, Luther burned the papal bull and continued his assault. God's truth was found, he said, not in Church teachings but only in the Bible, which people must read and



Statue of Martin Luther in Wittenberg, Germany.

Luther asserts that faith alone, not the Church, brings salvation

Luther urges German nobles to reform the Church and seize its property

interpret themselves. He denied all sacraments except baptism and Communion, finding no biblical basis for the rest. He renounced not just indulgences but also belief in purgatory, pilgrimages, fasts, papal authority, and even monastic life. Proclaiming a “priesthood of all believers,” he rejected priestly celibacy and encouraged clergymen to marry.

In truth, then, Luther was not just a reformer who attacked *abuses* the Church could conceivably correct, but also a rebel who denounced *doctrines* the Church regarded as inspired by God. Luther essentially denied the authority and divine mission of the Church. And this no pope could accept.

The Rising Tide of Rebellion

Soon Charles V, the new Holy Roman Emperor, grew alarmed about the danger Luther posed to both Church and empire. In 1521 he summoned Luther to face the Imperial Diet. Ordered to repudiate his views, as noted at the start of this chapter, the religious rebel held firm. Then, denounced by the emperor as a heretic, he was secretly taken to the castle of Saxony’s ruler, Frederick the Wise, a German prince dismayed by Church corruption and determined to resist the emperor’s growing power. There Luther hid for a year and began translating the Bible into German.

Aided by the new printing press, developed by German inventor Johannes Gutenberg in the 1450s (Chapter 16), and by German nobles eager to expand their wealth and power at Church expense, Luther’s ideas spread quickly. Central Europe was soon divided between Lutherans, who adopted these new ideas, and Catholics, who remained loyal to the emperor and pope.

The situation quickly became more complex. By denying the Catholic Church’s authority and urging people to interpret the Bible on their own, Luther opened the way for others to dissent, further fragmenting Christendom into additional sects. In 1522, for example, a dissident priest named Huldrych Zwingli (*TSVING-lē*) began his own movement in Zurich, Switzerland. More extreme than Luther, he rejected anything not literally found in the Bible, including the belief that Christ is present in Communion bread and wine. Soon zealots called *Anabaptists* (or Re baptizers), since they baptized adults (rather than infants) as a sign of conscious faith commitment, split with Zwingli and started communities throughout central Europe.

Other religious rebels called for radical social reforms, helping to inspire a violent Peasants’ Revolt against German nobles in 1524–1525. Although Zwingli supported this uprising, Luther did not. Heavily reliant on noble support, and anxious to keep his religious movement from becoming a social rebellion, Luther urged the authorities to “smash, strangle, and stab” the rebels, who were thenceforth slaughtered by the thousands.

Meanwhile neither emperor nor pope could stem the Lutheran tide. Charles V was resisted by an alliance of German Lutheran princes, called “Protestants” after 1529, when they formally protested his efforts to curb their religion. He was also diverted by wars against the Ottoman Turks, who conquered much of Hungary in 1526 and besieged Vienna in 1529 (Chapter 17), and even the Catholic French, who so greatly feared his power that they sided against him with the Protestant German princes and Islamic Turks. Several successive popes, faced with calls for a Church council that could work at resolving the religious issues, resisted convening one for fear that it might also act to reduce papal powers. And a growing conflict with England’s king further hampered the papacy.

The printing press and German nobles help spread Luther’s ideas

Diverted by other conflicts, emperor and pope cannot stop “Protestants”

Henry VIII and the English Reformation

England's Reformation, unlike Luther's, was rooted in royal affairs, not doctrinal disputes. John Wyclif, it is true, had earlier sown seeds of religious unrest in England, and Luther's ideas attracted much interest there. But English humanist Thomas More, though critical of Church corruption, explicitly condemned the Lutheran creed. And King Henry VIII (1509–1547) was a staunch Catholic who in 1521 issued a *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, for which the pope proclaimed him "Defender of the Faith." England seemed safely within the Roman Catholic fold.

But things began to change in 1527, when Henry aspired to end his long marriage to Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish princess by birth. She had borne him six children, but only one, their daughter Mary, survived. As he and his wife got older, Henry feared he would have no male heir, leaving the realm in crisis after he died. Besides, he had fallen in love with youthful Anne Boleyn (*boo-LIHN*), one of his wife's attendants.

The Church did not permit divorce, but it could grant an annulment, a ruling that the marriage was never valid. Since Catherine had first wed Henry's older brother and then had married Henry after his brother died, and since the Bible stated that a man who took his brother's wife would die childless (Leviticus 20:21), Henry saw his lack of a son as a sign that God disapproved of his marriage to Catherine. He thus appealed to Rome to have the union annulled.

The request put Pope Clement VII (1523–1534) in a difficult bind. He did not want to anger Henry and risk losing England from the Church. But Catherine was the aunt of Emperor Charles V, whose soldiers occupied Rome, and whose help the Church sorely needed against Luther and the Turks. And Charles opposed the annulment: Catherine's marriage was his family's link to England, which he hoped to strengthen by wedding his son Philip to Henry's daughter Mary, who would one day be queen if there were no male heir. Besides, since a prior pope (Julius II) had permitted Henry to wed his brother's widow, an annulment would admit that popes erred, as Lutherans asserted. So Clement delayed his decision.

As Henry's case moved slowly through the papal courts he grew increasingly impatient. By 1533, his mistress Anne was pregnant, so Henry could wait no longer. In order to legitimize his expected heir, he promptly married Anne and got the Archbishop of Canterbury (England's highest cleric), a Lutheran sympathizer named Thomas Cranmer, to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine without waiting for Rome. Anne was then crowned queen, and a few months later gave birth: not to the desired son, but to a girl who was named Elizabeth.

Having acted on his own, in defiance of the pope, the king now completed the break. In 1534 he persuaded Parliament to pass an Act of Supremacy, naming the monarch "supreme head of the Church of England" and cutting all ties with Rome. Then, over the next five years, he closed the English monasteries and seized their property, selling much of it to local nobles. Henry thus solidified his support, since to keep their new lands the nobles would have to back him against the pope. But he also disbanded eminent institutions that had served as centers of learning and charity for centuries.

Henry's legacy was further tarnished by several other events. In 1535, his former friend Thomas More, the highly respected humanist, was beheaded for refusing to support the Act of Supremacy. In 1536 the unfortunate Anne, having twice failed to produce a son, was accused of adultery and likewise beheaded. A third wife finally bore Henry a boy but perished while giving birth. The king went on to wed three more times before dying in 1547.



Anne Boleyn.

The English ruler becomes head of the "Church of England"

Despite his break with the Roman Church and attacks on its English supporters, Henry VIII was not a religious rebel. He remained true to most Catholic teachings, and resisted adopting the new practices promoted by Luther and other Protestants. Not until after Henry's death did the Church of England undergo significant doctrinal change.

Calvin and the Elect

In Switzerland, a new religious rebel expanded the Reformation. John Calvin (1509–1564), raised in France and trained as both a lawyer and a theologian, was initially attracted by Lutheran ideas. But in 1533 he reportedly had a conversion that crystallized his views in a flash of light. He concluded that faith, for Luther the key to salvation, was a gift that God gave only to certain people. And he concluded that the Catholic Church was not just a corrupt institution that needed reform, but an evil institution that should be destroyed.

In 1536, having earlier fled to Switzerland to escape a crackdown on Protestants by French authorities, Calvin published the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, soon the central work of Protestant theology. That same year he agreed to settle in the Swiss town of Geneva, which under his influence soon became the center of the Protestant world.

Calvin's teachings focused on **predestination**, the notion that God long ago decided each person's eternal fate. Some are destined for heaven, others are doomed to hell, no matter what they do. Earlier Church thinkers such as St. Augustine had promoted predestination, but had not gone as far as Calvin in dismissing free will and personal choice. Like Luther, Calvin believed that no one could earn salvation, but unlike Luther he concluded that God saved only **the elect**—those God had chosen beforehand for salvation.

Although God alone knew who the elect were, Calvin's followers assumed that people like themselves, who led lives of faith and virtue, were among the elect. But for them faith and virtue were *results* of their salvation, not causes. Unlike Catholics, who led good lives in order to save their souls, Calvinists led good lives as a sign that they were already saved. For Catholics salvation came *after* one's life and was based on how one had lived; for Calvinists salvation came *before* one's life and determined how one would live.

Calvinists were also **puritanical**, promoting a strict moral code and "pure" religious practices. They held simple worship services, focused on sermons and Bible readings rather than elaborate rituals, in unadorned buildings rather than grandiose churches. Calvinists abhorred the ornate altars, vessels, statues, and stained-glass windows that adorned Catholic churches.

The Calvinist model of a Christian community was Geneva, widely seen as the Protestant answer to Rome. Reformers came from all over Europe to take part in Geneva's religious life and learn from Calvin himself. A religious commission, under Calvin's influence, supervised moral behavior, prohibiting offenses such as gambling, dancing, and drinking. Graver crimes, such as blasphemy, adultery, and witchcraft, were punished by secular leaders, who sometimes used torture and executions. Geneva thus became a very sober and austere community.

The Spread of Protestantism

Geneva also served as a Reformation headquarters, sending disciples hither and yon to spread the Calvinist creed, which took root in parts of Northern and Central Europe. Lutheranism, meanwhile, spread from Germany to Scandinavia, and the Church of England eventually embraced many Protestant beliefs (Map 20.2).

Calvin settles in Geneva, which becomes key Protestant center



John Calvin.

Calvin's Geneva becomes model of Protestant Christian community

One of Calvin's followers was John Knox, who spent several years in Geneva and then took the new faith home to Scotland, where it later became Presbyterianism. Communities of Calvinists likewise emerged in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland; in the Netherlands, where they constituted the Dutch Reformed Church; in France, where they were called Huguenots (*HYOO-guh-notz*); and in England, where they were known as Puritans. Calvinist churches were largely independent of each other: rejecting the authoritarianism of popes and bishops, they formed no centralized international institution like the Catholic Church.

Nor did the Lutherans develop a single centralized church; instead, they relied on secular rulers to adopt the new faith and impose it on their domains. Many rulers did so, not only because they liked Luther's ideas but also as a way to confiscate the property of the Catholic Church and gain control of religion in their realms. Supported by such rulers, Lutheranism spread quickly across northern Germany and Scandinavia, becoming the main faith throughout the Baltic region.

The Church of England, too, was controlled by the monarchs, who after the death of Henry VIII eventually made it more Protestant. Under Henry's sickly son, King Edward VI (1547–1553), Archbishop Cranmer brought in Protestant theologians,

Lutherans and Calvinists form smaller churches, not a large centralized church

Map 20.2 Sixteenth-Century Reformation Divides Europe Along Religious Lines

By the late 1500s, thanks to the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic response, European Christians had divided into rival denominations. Note that Protestantism had taken hold in northern and central Europe, while elsewhere Catholicism remained the dominant faith. What factors contributed to Protestantism's spread and Europe's religious fragmentation?



simplified liturgies, allowed priests to marry, and imposed his own *Book of Common Prayer* as the norm for church services. Queen Mary (1553–1558), the Catholic offspring of Henry's first marriage, tried to restore full Catholicism, executing Cranmer and several hundred Protestants. But her efforts were undone by Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603), the Protestant daughter of Henry's second marriage. Determined to secure her throne by avoiding religious strife, Elizabeth pursued a middle path that aimed at satisfying most of her subjects. The English (or Anglican) Church thus combined Catholic-style liturgies and rituals performed by bishops and priests with the Protestant theology introduced under Cranmer.

By the 1560s, then, Protestantism in various forms had spread throughout northern and central Europe and into parts of France and Eastern Europe (Map 20.2). But by then the Catholic Church, which still prevailed in the South, had launched an effective counterattack and extended its influence far beyond Europe.

The Catholic Counterreformation

In the 1540s, after several decades of inability to stem the Protestant tide, Rome finally mounted a vigorous response. Pope Paul III (1534–1549), the earnest successor to the hapless Clement VII, called a general council to initiate Church reforms, authorized tribunals to prosecute Protestants for heresy, and approved new religious orders that reinvigorated the ancient Church. He thus began an era of Church reform and revitalization, often called the Catholic Reformation, but also labeled by Church foes as the Counterreformation, since it involved a counterattack against Protestantism.

The Council of Trent

In 1545, after years of pressure from Emperor Charles V, Paul III convened a great council of Catholic bishops and other Church leaders. The Council of Trent, which met in 1545–1547, 1551–1552, and 1562–1563, shaped Catholic doctrine and worship for the next four hundred years. Although Charles V wanted it to compromise with Lutherans, and some bishops hoped it would limit papal power, the council instead went the other direction. It affirmed many things that Protestants denied, including indulgences, papal supremacy, priestly celibacy, the Latin Mass, and the Church's power to forgive sins. It insisted that salvation was based on *both* faith *and* good works, not on faith alone. It declared that divine revelation was found in *both* the Bible *and* Church tradition, not in scripture alone. It reasserted the Church's stance that there were seven sacraments, not just the two (baptism and Communion) that Luther recognized. And to reinforce Church unity, the council affirmed the pope's preeminence.

The Council of Trent also enacted some reforms. Although it affirmed indulgences for pious deeds and prayers, for example, the council forbade their *sale*, the practice that had triggered Luther's revolt. To eliminate pluralism, the council allowed each bishop only one diocese, or administrative district, in which he must reside. To improve the quality of clergy, it ruled that each diocese must have a *seminary*, a training school for priests. These reforms did not win back the Protestants, but that was not their intent. They were designed to purify and strengthen Catholicism for battle against Protestantism, a struggle that lasted far longer than anyone at Trent could foresee.

The Council of Trent reaffirms Catholic teachings and sacraments

The Roman and Spanish Inquisitions

The Counterreformation's tactics were sometimes extreme. In central Italy and Spain, where Catholics were in control, they employed Inquisitions, church tribunals mandated to investigate, arrest, and prosecute people suspected of heretical beliefs. In Rome the Inquisition operated under the Holy Office, a council of six cardinals formed in 1542 by Pope Paul III. It was authorized to fine, imprison, and sometimes even execute people it convicted of promoting false doctrines. Starting in 1559, it also published an *Index of Forbidden Books*, a list of works that Catholics were forbidden to read without special permission. Officially designed to protect the faithful from heresy, the *Index* in time banned many works, including even novels such as *Les Miserables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Chapter 27), perceived as offensive by the Church.

The Spanish Inquisition, which functioned largely under the rulers of Spain, had been set up in 1478 to investigate Jews and Muslims who had outwardly converted to Catholicism. Now it also targeted people suspected of Protestant views. To extract confessions, inquisitors sometimes used tortures such as the rack, which stretched the victim's body, and the thumbscrew, which crushed the victim's thumbs. Those found guilty of heresy were often burned to death.

Using closed trials, secret informers, tortures, and executions, the Inquisitions enforced Catholicism and virtually eradicated Protestantism in Italy and Spain. But elsewhere their main effect was to increase anti-Catholic hostility among Protestants, who sometimes employed similar methods against their religious foes.

Spanish Inquisition persecutes Muslims, Jews, and Protestants

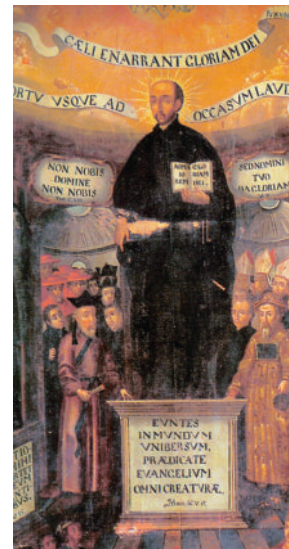
New Religious Orders

Amid this tumult, the Catholic Church enjoyed a spiritual revival, led by dynamic individuals and new religious orders. Even before the Reformation, the Brethren of the Common Life, an association of devout laypersons and clergy who led simple lives in imitation of Christ, had spread through northern Europe. In Italy, a similar group called the Oratory of Divine Love stressed works of charity and devotion as antidotes to worldly corruption. In the 1530s an Italian woman named Angela Merici (*muh-RĒ-chē*) created the Ursuline (*UR-suh-līn*) order, a community of nuns who educated Catholic girls throughout Italy, France, and the Americas. But the most influential new order was begun by a Spanish nobleman named Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556).

An heir to Spain's crusading tradition, Ignatius was a soldier until 1521, when he was crippled in battle by a cannonball. During a long, painful recovery he read books about Christ and Christian saints. Deeply inspired, he then embarked on a spiritual crusade. He withdrew to a cave, where for months he prayed and lived alone in great austerity, depriving himself of all physical comforts. There he developed the Spiritual Exercises, a four-week regimen of prayer and meditation designed to prepare one for selfless discipline in service to God and Church.

After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and brushes with the Spanish Inquisition, in 1528 Ignatius enrolled at the University of Paris, where he attracted a group of like-minded men. In 1537 they formed a "Company of Jesus," and in 1540 Pope Paul III formally approved them as the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuits, as they were soon known, became Catholicism's most zealous champions. Highly selective, they accepted only men of talent and discipline. Organized on military



Ignatius of Loyola.

Jesuits work to globalize and strengthen Catholicism

lines, they vowed strict obedience to their superiors and the pope. Refusing to withdraw and live as monks or beggars, they served in the world as educators, missionaries, preachers, and political advisors.

As educators, the Jesuits combined Renaissance humanism (Chapter 16) with Catholic ideals, promoting both secular learning and religious faith, while creating a network of schools and universities that eventually became a worldwide educational system. As missionaries, they worked tirelessly to convert the peoples of the Americas, Africa, and Asia to Catholicism, helping to transform their European faith into a global religion. As preachers to European Christians and political advisors to Catholic rulers, they led an intensive anti-Protestant campaign, helping to stem the Protestant tide and even restoring parts of Central Europe to the Catholic fold. They gained a reputation for both eloquence and political intrigue, making many enemies and adding to the climate of religious and political strife.

Religious and Political Strife in Europe

In the wake of the Reformation, Europe was ravaged by a century of religious and political conflicts. Bolstered by the riches of their Spanish overseas empire, the Catholic Habsburgs strove to impose their power and faith by force on Protestant regions. The Protestants, however, staunchly defended their new religions and political autonomy, perpetuating the fragmentation of Western Christianity.

The Spanish Catholic Crusade

In 1556 Emperor Charles V, longtime Catholic champion and ruler of the Habsburg realms, retired to a monastery. Deeming his domains too vast for one ruler, he split them between his brother and his son. His brother Ferdinand received the Habsburg lands in Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary, and succeeded Charles as Holy Roman Emperor. His son Philip got the rest, including Spain and its American empire, the Netherlands, Sardinia, Sicily, and parts of Italy. As King Philip II he ruled these lands from 1556 to 1598.

The wealth of its American empire makes Spain a global power

By this time Spain was Europe's mightiest country, owing largely to its American empire. The conquest of the Aztecs and Inca, with their enormous riches (Chapter 18), had been followed in 1545 by the discovery of vast silver deposits near Potosí (*pō-tō-SĒ*), in what is now Bolivia. These immense resources, exploited by Spaniards using Amerind (American Indian) and African slaves, soon supplied Spain's king with almost limitless wealth. And Philip was determined to use this fortune to further the Catholic cause.

A zealous Catholic, he launched a crusade to reinforce his religion throughout his realms and win back for his Church the lands it had lost. In Spain he used the Inquisition to suppress Protestantism. In America he used missionaries to foster his faith and officials to enforce it; so successful were they that Spanish America became a Catholic stronghold. In the Mediterranean he used his navy to challenge the Ottoman Turks, joining forces with Venice and the pope to defeat the Turkish fleet near the coast of Greece at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Elsewhere, however, Philip ran into problems.

Philip's first setback came in England, where he was wed to the Catholic Queen Mary. With her help he hoped to bring England back to Catholicism, and perhaps into his empire. But in 1558 she died in a cholera epidemic, and her Protestant successor Elizabeth, spurning his marriage proposals, soon became a formidable foe.

His next setback was the Dutch Revolt, a rebellion in the Netherlands against his heavy-handed rule. In 1566, alarmed that he might impose the Inquisition on them, Dutch Calvinists rebelled, attacking Catholic churches, smashing sacred vessels, statues, stained-glass windows, and artwork. Enraged by this “Calvinist fury,” Philip tried to reassert control by executing rebels and confiscating lands of Calvinist nobles. By 1579 he had subdued the Netherlands’ southern Catholic provinces, which henceforth became the Spanish Netherlands (and today constitute Belgium). But the northern Protestant provinces then declared independence as the United Provinces of the Netherlands. This new nation, often called Holland (after its main province), continued to fight Spain for a generation.

In 1585, fearing that Spain might prevail and then use the Netherlands as a base from which to attack her country, England’s Queen Elizabeth sent money and troops to aid the Dutch. Philip, in turn, prepared to invade England. Tension increased in 1587, when Elizabeth approved the execution of her cousin Mary Stuart (Mary Queen of Scots), the Catholic claimant to the English throne. The next year Philip dispatched the Invincible Catholic Armada, a fleet of 130 huge ships, with orders to land in the Netherlands and escort the Spanish army to England to begin the assault.

Its ships emblazoned with crosses and Catholic banners, the Armada set sail in May 1588. In July it met the English fleet in the English Channel. The result was a disaster for Spain. The English, whose ships were smaller and faster, harassed the Armada’s huge vessels and kept them from landing. A fierce gale, which the English dubbed the “Protestant Wind,” blew the Spanish ships off course, and further storms did even more damage as the Armada’s remnants, trying to return to Spain, sailed around Scotland and Ireland. Some survivors, shipwrecked in Ireland, were killed; others settled there and married Irish women.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 by no means ended the fighting, which continued until 1604. But it did help the English and Dutch to foil Philip’s Catholic crusade, to continue their Protestant course, to challenge Spain for control of the seas, and hence to found their own colonies in North America.

English and Dutch combat Spain’s anti-Protestant campaign



English ships confront the Spanish Armada.

The Wars of Religion in France

From 1562 to 1594, as Catholic Spain battled Dutch and English Protestants, France was torn by internal conflicts called the Wars of Religion. By then, although France remained mostly Catholic, about 7 percent of its people—including about 40 percent of its nobles—had become Calvinists. Known as Huguenots and led by the Bourbon family, they fought Catholic factions in a complex struggle for religious and political power. Catherine de Medicis (*MED-ih-chee*), the influential mother of three Catholic kings who reigned from 1559 to 1589, tried to preserve her family’s power by reconciling hostile factions. In 1572, however, fearful of growing Protestant strength, she helped plot the massacre of several thousand Huguenots gathered in Paris for a wedding. But even this atrocity could not save Catherine’s clan. In 1589, following her death and the murder of her last royal son, the head of the Huguenot Bourbons inherited the throne as King Henri IV.

The struggle nonetheless continued. French Catholics, refusing to accept a Protestant king, blocked Henri’s efforts to enter Paris and assume the throne. So Henri, pragmatically concluding that “Paris is worth a Mass,” formally became a Catholic in 1593, thereby gaining acceptance in Paris as king in 1594. Betrayed by their champion, the Huguenots resisted Henri’s rule until 1598, when he won them over with religious toleration, issuing the Edict of Nantes (*NAHNT*). This historic document gave French Protestants full civil

Calvinist King Henri IV becomes Catholic and enforces toleration

rights, the freedom to hold worship services in their own manors and towns, and the right to fortify these towns with their own troops. It also helped make Henri IV, already known for his charm and dashing demeanor, one of France's most popular kings. But Henri's tolerant edict did not please everyone: in 1610 he was murdered by a fanatical Catholic. Religious animosities did not die easily in France.

The Thirty Years War

Nor did they die easily in Germany, birthplace of the Reformation, where Lutherans and Catholics had for decades observed an uneasy truce. In 1608 the Calvinists, having made inroads in parts of the Holy Roman Empire, joined with Lutherans in an alliance called the Protestant Union. The next year the Austrian Habsburgs, backed by the wealth of their Spanish cousins, created a rival coalition called the Catholic League, setting the stage for a calamitous conflict known as the Thirty Years War (1618–1648).

This conflict began in 1618 with an incident called the “Defenestration of Prague” (*dē-FEN-ih-STRĀ-shun*: the act of throwing someone out a window). Protestant nobles in Bohemia, angered by Habsburg efforts to restrict their rights, threw two imperial agents out of a high palace window. Despite their survival—credited by Catholics to divine intervention and by Protestants to the fact that they landed in a dung heap—the fragile peace was shattered. Emperor Ferdinand II (1619–1637), aided by the Catholic League and his Spanish relatives, crushed the Bohemians and other Protestant forces, moving steadily to bring all Germany under Catholic control. By 1629 he was on the verge of triumph, and the Protestant cause seemed lost.

Then, however, two powerful outside forces intervened on the Protestant side. One was Gustavus Adolphus (*gus-TAH-vus ah-DOLL-fus*), Sweden's Lutheran king, who feared for his country's safety should northern Germany come under Catholic control. A talented warrior, he defeated the Habsburgs in several key battles before dying in combat in 1632. The other force was Cardinal Richelieu (*RISH-lib-YOO*), France's chief minister, who first supplied aid to the Protestants, and then had his country join the war on their side in 1635.

As a cardinal in the Catholic Church, Richelieu seemed an unlikely supporter of German Protestants. But his main loyalty was to France, which already faced Habsburg Spain to its South and the Spanish Netherlands to its North. Bent on blocking Habsburg unification of Germany to the East, he aided Protestants as a way to keep Germany divided and weak.

The last phase of the war, from 1635 to 1648, resulted in mass devastation. France and Spain, both deeply involved in the German conflict, battled each other as well. Armies crisscrossed central Europe, assaulting each other and brutalizing the people, while disease and famine stalked the land. The German population was greatly diminished, and wolves roamed the streets in desolate towns and villages.

Although France and Spain fought on until 1659, the German nightmare ended in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia (Map 20.3). Each German state remained virtually independent, with rulers free to conduct their own diplomacy and decide whether their realms should be Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist. The Holy Roman Empire was left with only nominal authority, and it no longer included the Dutch, the Swiss, or the Italians. The Habsburgs remained emperors in name, but their efforts to unify Germany and restore Catholicism throughout Europe had failed. After decades of destructive warfare, Europe remained divided along religious lines.

Catholic Habsburg rulers
battle Central Europe's
Protestant nobles

Map 20.3 Peace of Westphalia Leaves Central Europe Divided, 1648

In 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years War, the Peace of Westphalia left Europe divided along religious lines, while the various states in the Holy Roman Empire retained and enhanced their autonomy. Notice the empire was also diminished by the loss of Switzerland, the Dutch United Netherlands, and the northwest Italian states. Why did the Habsburgs fail in their efforts to unite Central Europe under Catholic Habsburg rule? How did this failure bolster the power of France?



The Globalization of Western Christianity and Commerce

Europe's fragmentation was, paradoxically, accompanied by global expansion. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Europe was torn by ruinous religious and political strife, European Christianity and commerce spread across the globe, aided by enterprising missionaries, officials, and merchants.

Catholicism's Global Expansion

Catholics at first took the lead, based on the efforts of empire builders and religious orders. The Spanish and Portuguese, who justified imperial expansion by claiming they were carrying Christ's message to distant lands, systematically imposed their faith on the people they conquered (Chapter 19). Thus in the American colonies, where Iberian Catholics controlled governance and commerce, and where Catholic priests and nuns ran numerous missions and schools, most people adopted the religion of their rulers through coercion, convenience, or conviction.

Jesuits and other orders work to convert Asians to Catholicism

The Jesuits, joined and often rivaled by other Catholic orders, including Franciscans and Dominicans, also strove to implant Catholicism in Asia. Their work was begun by Francis Xavier (*ZĀ-vē-ur*), one of the first Jesuits, a former Paris roommate of Ignatius Loyola. Arriving in India on a Portuguese ship in 1542, Xavier worked for several years among that country's poor pearl fishers, then traveled to Malaya and the Spice Islands, founding various missions before returning to India. From 1549 to 1551 he lived in Japan, whose culture he greatly admired, and converted thousands to the Catholic faith. In 1552 he set out to begin the conversion of China but grew ill and died on an island off the Chinese coast.

Jesuits gain some success by adapting to Asian cultures

Xavier's deep respect for Asians, and his tireless efforts to understand their languages and cultures, set an example for thousands of Jesuits who followed in his footsteps. Jesuits learned local languages, adapted local customs, and blended Catholic teachings into local cultures, rather than simply seeking to impose European ways. Their success in Asian countries was nonetheless often limited by resistance from local religions and rulers. Still, spread by the Jesuits and their fellow missionaries, preachers, and teachers, Catholicism became a global faith, with thousands of missions, parishes, and schools, and millions of followers, around the world (Map 20.4).

Merchant Capitalism and Global Trade

As some Europeans globalized their religion, others were transforming the global economy. Western merchants, eager to enhance their incomes, worked to gain control over the production of goods and to establish worldwide trading networks. European governments, seeking to increase state wealth, encouraged the growth of overseas commerce and the exploitation of colonies.

For many centuries, Chinese, Muslim, and European merchants had conducted inter-regional trade, engaging in many practices—such as credit, banking, and marketing of goods—later associated with **capitalism**, an economic system based on competition among private enterprises. But merchants usually did not manufacture the goods they sold. These goods were typically produced by artisans, who owned their own tools and workshops, purchased raw materials such as metals, leather, wool, wood, and wax, and used their labor and skill to make these materials into finished products. The artisans then sold the finished goods to customers or merchants, often at prices fixed by artisans' guilds. Merchants were mostly middlemen: traders who bought goods in one place, took them to another place, and sold them at a profit.

European capitalists increasingly control both production and commerce

From the fifteenth century onward, however, European merchants increasingly sought to enhance their profits by gaining control of production. They bought mines, woodlands, and herds of sheep and cattle, thereby acquiring their own raw materials. They also bought tools and equipment, then hired their own workers so as not to be dependent on artisans and guilds, many of whom in turn organized their own enterprises. Thus arose a dynamic new class of capitalists: entrepreneurs who created and ran enterprises that produced and sold their own goods.

In this system, later called merchant capitalism, the merchant entrepreneur owned the means of production—tools, machines, and raw materials—and decided how much to produce and to charge for finished goods. The producer worked for the merchant and was paid a fixed wage or a prearranged price for each piece made. The finished products were thus owned by the entrepreneur, who arranged for their transport and sale, setting

Map 20.4 Globalization of Western Christianity and Commerce, 1500–1750

While Europe was torn apart by religious conflict, Europeans were extending their sway over the Americas and parts of Africa and Asia. Note that Europeans not only helped connect these regions by commerce, but also spread their Christian religions, with the Spanish, French, and Portuguese imposing Catholicism, the Dutch and English promoting Protestantism, and the Russians fostering their Orthodox faith in expanding across northern Asia. How did the spread of Christianity and commerce help to bolster Europe's wealth and power?



prices so as to be competitive in a free market based on supply and demand. Over time, independent artisans were largely replaced by wage laborers, employed and paid by wealthy merchant capitalists.

In expanding production and trade, merchant capitalists often found allies in their national monarchs. Rulers increasingly realized that, as commerce grew, so did their revenues from taxes and tariffs. They could then use these revenues in hiring armies to fight their wars and officials to administer their realms, thus expanding the power of their government. Rulers therefore instituted policies, later referred to as **mercantilism**, that aimed to create a favorable balance of trade, a condition in which a country's trading exports exceeded its imports in value. Since the nation as a whole would thus sell more than it bought, fortune supposedly would flow into the realm, and into the royal treasury.

Mercantilist policies typically included government support of enterprises engaged in overseas trade. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portuguese voyagers backed by the government set up numerous trading posts on African and Asian coasts, creating a commercial empire that made one of Europe's smallest kingdoms into one of its richest (Chapter 19). By 1600, eager to gain some of this wealth, England and the Netherlands had begun to follow suit.

In these countries, and later in France, government support for overseas trade was provided through **charter companies**, trading associations protected by royal monopoly. Since overseas trade involved risks and expenses beyond what one investor could bear, merchants in these countries pooled their resources to form a large company in which many owned shares. To support the company and protect it from competition, the country's ruler then issued a charter giving the company a monopoly of trade between that country and a specified region.

Especially notable were the English East India Company, which monopolized commerce between England and India starting in 1600, and the Dutch United East India Company, founded two years later, which dominated trade between the Netherlands and the East Indies. For the next two centuries, these companies and others, with large fleets of merchant vessels, maintained profitable trading posts in various parts of the world, gaining vast riches for themselves and their rulers. Global trading networks supplied European consumers with products from distant lands, such as silks, spices, sugar, coffee, tea, and tobacco, while the revenues this trade produced helped European monarchs centralize their governments and increase their royal powers.

English and Dutch East India Companies dominate east-west trade

Colonies, Commerce, and Religion

Overseas colonies also enhanced a country's commerce and power. The foremost example was Habsburg Spain, which used silver from its American colonies to buy luxury goods in Asia for resale elsewhere, and to finance its powerful armies and navies, making it sixteenth-century Europe's richest and mightiest realm. Another example was Portugal, which gained wealth in that same century through the sale of sugar, grown in Brazil and other colonies using African slaves.

Other Europeans, seeing these successes, imitated the Iberians. Hence, in the seventeenth century, the French, Dutch, and English established North American colonies. The French set up trading posts in eastern Canada and the Mississippi Valley, bartering with Amerinds for animal furs that sold for a fortune in Europe, and the Dutch did likewise in the Hudson Valley of what is now New York State. The English established a Virginia colony that prospered in time from tobacco, a crop that Amerinds taught them to grow, which was sold in Europe for a big profit. The French, Dutch, and English also set up colonies on Caribbean islands that, imitating the Spanish West Indies and Portuguese Brazil, profited greatly from production and sale of slave-grown sugar. By the late 1600s, bolstered by wealth from their commerce and colonies, England, France, and the Netherlands had replaced Spain and Portugal as Europe's dominant political and economic powers.

These developments also had profound religious implications. France, like Spain and Portugal, promoted Catholicism in its colonies, aided by Jesuits and other French priests who worked among French settlers and Amerinds. Dutch Calvinists established settlements in the Hudson River region, while English Calvinists known as Puritans, fleeing persecution in their native land, moved in large numbers to what became New England starting in the 1620s. English Catholics colonized Maryland in succeeding decades, while Anglicans and other English Protestants populated additional new English North American colonies. By the mid-1600s, like Europe itself, North America had a variety of Christian denominations (Map 20.4).



French Jesuit baptizing Amerind convert.

The French, Dutch, and English impose their religions in their colonies

Western Society in an Age of Religious and Economic Change

As Europeans spread their creeds and commerce to diverse lands and peoples, religious divisions and global expansion were transforming Europe's society. On one hand, religious strife led to suffering and fear; on the other hand, global expansion helped foster growing prosperity.

Warfare, Disease, and Witch Hunts

The era of religious upheaval brought hardship to many Europeans. Religious leaders and warriors, fueled by righteous fury, engaged in persecutions and bloodshed, claiming they were doing God's will. Bands of armed fighters, feeding on the chaos of religious conflict, often roamed the countryside, looting, pillaging, and raping at will. Dislocation and devastation frequently followed in their footsteps.

Adding to anxieties in the sixteenth century was a pandemic of syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease whose victims initially suffered sores and rashes, and later often blindness, insanity, and death. Some experts think syphilis was a virulent form of an earlier European ailment; others assume that European sailors brought it from the Americas after contracting it from Amerinds. Either way, it spread misery and fear in Europe, where it was called the great pox (to distinguish it from smallpox) or the "French disease" (as it was often blamed on French soldiers).

Even more unsettling were the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this era, over a hundred thousand Europeans, most of them women, were placed on trial for witchcraft, supposedly for using supernatural powers to make evil things happen. Perhaps fifty thousand people were executed for this alleged crime.

Various factors contributed to the witch hunts. One factor was the Reformation, which led Catholics and Protestants alike to persecute heretics and to accuse dissenters of doing the devil's work. Luther, Calvin, and the Catholic Church all favored burning witches. A second factor was the misery bred by religious war, leading many to seek scapegoats for the suffering. A third factor was the syphilis pandemic, causing miscarriages, stillbirths, blindness, and insanity, easily ascribed to satanic influence.

A fourth factor was a pamphlet called *Malleus Maleficarum* (MAH-lā-oos MAH-lā-fē-CAH-room), "The Hammer of the Wicked." First published by two Dominican friars in 1486, and circulated widely over the next two centuries, it sought to supply an explanation of witchcraft. It alleged that witches made pacts with the devil, sealed by sex with him, which empowered them to make evil things happen to others. Although witches could be male or female, this book portrayed them mainly as women, whom it considered weaker than men and more easily won over to evil. Witches were said to meet their devils at assemblies called synagogues or sabbaths, thereby indirectly linking witchcraft to Jewish worship.

Those accused of witchcraft were usually women, typically single or widowed, aging, and poor, who often had no family to protect them and thus were easy targets. Older women, beyond childbearing age, were sometimes seen as burdens on society and accused of erratic behavior. Aging might bring on deeper voices and a haggard appearance, leading fearful neighbors to label them "hags." Women's customary roles as midwives and healers also left them open to blame when infants or sick people died. Such circumstances, and depictions of women as tools of the devil going back to the biblical Eve, reinforced the tendency to associate witchcraft with women.

War and global contacts help produce syphilis pandemic

Disease, devastation, and religious conflict help to promote witch hunts



Women accused of witchcraft being hanged.

Document 20.1 Excerpt from a Witchcraft Trial

Witchcraft trials were held throughout European countries and their colonies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the seventeenth-century indictment excerpted below, couched in the formal legal language of the day, a woman named Rose Cullender is charged with using “incantations” and “enchantments” to harm a certain Ann Baldinge. Rose is identified as a widow, and Ann is identified as spinster, a term commonly used for women who never married, since many earned their living by spinning thread.

The King’s sworn officers maintain upon their oaths that Rose Cullender, late of Lowestoft in the aforesaid county, on the 1st day of February in the 14th year of the reign of our lord Charles . . . , being a common witch and “enchantress” and not having God before her eyes but moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil did . . . violently, unlawfully, diabolically, and

feloniously use, practice, and employ certain evil and diabolical “fascinations”—in English “witchcrafts”—and “incantations”—in English “enchantments”—on one Anne Baldinge, spinster, then and there living in the peace of God . . . , and by the aforesaid evil and diabolical witchcraft and enchantments then and there did feloniously bewitch and enchant her, by which evil and diabolical witchcraft and enchantments . . . the aforesaid Ann Baldinge from the . . . 1st day of February of the above mentioned year to the day of the holding of the inquisition at Lowestoft . . . has languished and languishes still and is greatly wasted in her . . . body and is consumed to the injury of the same Anne Baldinge and in the breach of peace of the said lord King . . . and also in breach of peace of the form of the state given forth and provided for such cases.

SOURCE: Gilbert Geis and Ivan Bunn, *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Prosecution* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) page 39.

Women depicted as witches were blamed for numerous misfortunes, such as accidents, illnesses, sudden deaths, bad weather, infertility, and sexual impotence. Charges were typically brought by someone who had suffered a loss or by professional witch hunters who made a career of identifying witches (see “Excerpt from a Witchcraft Trial”). Many of the accused were tortured, often until they confessed or implicated others to save themselves. The convicted might be burned to death, hanged (in England), banished, or imprisoned. Some of them may actually have tried witchcraft, but most were no doubt innocent victims of fear, superstition, and witch hunts.

Social Effects of Economic Expansion

Less dramatic, but far more enduring, were changes wrought in Western society by capitalism and global trade. The main beneficiaries were the growing middle classes who lived in towns (burgs) and cities, and hence were called *burghers* or *bourgeoisie* (*boorzh-wah-ZĒ*). They included merchants and bankers who profited from increased trade; doctors, lawyers, and others who prospered by serving wealthy people’s needs; and artisans and manufacturers who raised prices on their products as more wealth became available.

Global trade helped prosperous townsfolk live well, enjoying cottons, furs, tea, coffee, sugar, spices, and later tobacco and chocolate, imported from the Americas and Asia. Towns and cities sported rows of tidy townhouses, along with markets, plazas, taverns, inns, banks, and shops. Wealthy bourgeois even challenged nobles for social and political preeminence. But many wage laborers were hurt by rising prices that increased faster than their incomes. And the urban poor, roughly half the townsfolk, lived in squalid slums full of vermin, beggars, criminals, prostitutes, drunks, and gangs.

Urban middle classes benefit from global commerce

The nobles, descendants of medieval lords and owners of rural estates, also were affected by the changing economy. Many came to live in cities, where they dwelt in elegant townhouses and enjoyed luxuries provided by global trade, while leaving hired stewards to manage their estates. To enhance their incomes some nobles even invested in commercial concerns or married their children to sons and daughters of wealthy bourgeois parents. In Western Europe, where access to the sea trade enhanced the size and wealth of the bourgeoisie, the nobles' power declined as monarchs and merchants shaped strong political and economic institutions. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, where lack of access to such commerce kept the urban middle classes small and weak, the nobles remained the dominant political and economic force.

Initially the peasants, some 80–90 percent of the population, were little affected by the economic changes. They lived in isolated villages, with little access to the wonders of the wider world. Occasionally they might travel to a town to visit its markets or attend an annual fair. As a rule, however, they rose with the sun, worked the fields by day, and retired to their villages after dark. In Eastern Europe most peasants were still serfs, bound in service to their landlords; but even in the West, where most were legally free, peasants were subject to burdensome taxes and dues.

By the 1600s, however, capitalist commerce was beginning to affect many peasants. To get around dealing with town artisans and guilds, merchants started lending, or “putting out,” equipment and raw materials (such as weaving looms and wool) to peasant families, who used them to make products (such as clothing) in their own huts and cottages. The merchant capitalist paid them a fixed price for each item produced and then sold these items at a lower cost than guild artisans charged for such products. This “putting out” system, later called **cottage industry** or the “domestic system,” not only lowered merchants' costs and the price of goods produced but also increased peasant incomes, further reducing the landlords' leverage over local villagers.

New “cottage industries” tie rural villagers into global economy

Family, Gender, Education, and Diet

Religious and economic change also affected family patterns, gender roles, education, and diet. Arising in the 1500s, these effects became increasingly visible in the following century.

In the 1500s, as in eras past, the basic unit of Western society was the patriarchal family, headed by men regarded as masters of their households. Noblemen acted as lords of the family estate and often also as military officers or government officials. Middle class men ran the family business or practiced the family trade, while peasant men farmed the strips of land allotted to their family in fields around their village. As household heads and providers, men expected to be waited on by their wives and to make key decisions for their children, including assignment of family duties and selection of spouses.

Although thus considered subservient to men, women played central roles in family life. They raised children, baked bread, prepared meals, and made clothes, often joining in social circles to support and learn from other women. Women also functioned as midwives and caregivers, delivering babies and treating illnesses with folk remedies passed on from previous generations. Lower-class mothers breast-fed their own infants, while wealthy women often hired a “wet-nurse” to breast-feed theirs. Peasant women sustained their families mainly on dark bread and soups made from peas, beans, cabbages, and carrots, supplemented sometimes by eggs, butter, and cheese. Meat meals, white bread, and sweet pastries, standard fare in the upper classes, were rare among the common people.



Peasant couple at market (engraving by Albrecht Dürer).

Women typically have little freedom or choice

Yet women had little control over their own lives. Parents arranged their marriages, often with more concern for enhancing family status than for their daughters' happiness. Women who wound up with drunken, abusive, or unfaithful husbands had little choice but to endure their plight. Since childhood diseases killed 20–30 percent of all children, women commonly bore at least six or seven children to ensure that some would survive to adulthood.

By the 1600s, despite considerable continuity, some basic family patterns were changing. Increased incomes from commerce and cottage industry, for example, helped many married couples maintain separate households, rather than living as in the past with their extended families. **Nuclear families**, made up of only parents and children, gradually became the norm. And, although their parents still had to approve their marriages, young people increasingly chose their own spouses, often after years of courtship, waiting to wed until their mid-twenties when they could support themselves. Divorce and remarriage, banned by the Catholic Church, were often allowed among Protestants, especially in cases of adultery or abuse.

Printing press and religious schools boost literacy and learning

Learning and literacy, too, were becoming more common. The great increase in the number of books produced by the printing press, combined with the Protestant emphasis on individual reading of the Bible, accelerated the spread of education. Protestant pastors and Catholic religious orders set up schools to teach reading and writing, not only to the offspring of merchants and nobles but also to growing numbers of lower-class children. Although such schools were intended mainly for males, prosperous parents increasingly managed to educate their daughters too, enabling them in time to play a larger role in social and cultural life.

Diets are enhanced by new foods such as potatoes from the Americas

European diets also evolved as new foods from the Americas were added. In the seventeenth century, European farmers began growing crops developed by Amerinds, such as corn (maize), which originated in Mexico, and potatoes, which came from Peru. Potatoes proved especially useful, since they took less space to cultivate than grain crops such as wheat or rye, were easier to preserve, and could feed more people. Europe's global expansion thus enhanced not only its prosperity but also its food supply.

Changes in the Role of Religion

Religion's role was likewise altered in the age of religious conflict. Before the Reformation, since most Europeans sought salvation through the Church, religion was central to society. The Church provided sacraments and religious education, collected and distributed donations for the poor, and kept records of births, deaths, baptisms, and marriages. It also offered festival occasions, including baptisms, weddings, and holy days such as Christmas and Easter. It even condoned midwinter Carnival festivities—also called Shrovetide, Mardi Gras (*MAR-dē GRAH*), or Fasching (*FAH-shing*)—during which people dressed in costumes and ate and drank excessively in preparation for Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and sacrifice leading up to Easter.

After the Reformation, changing outlooks slowly started altering religion's role. Since Protestants needed no Church for salvation, their faith was often private and plain, marked by Bible reading in the home and simple Sunday services. Their sober moral code also frowned on such excesses as Catholic pre-Lenten festivities, while their certainty of salvation removed the need for Lenten fasts and sacrifices.

Religious wars and witch hunts also provoked disenchantment with religion, while growing prosperity left Europeans less focused on death and salvation. In Protestant areas,

Religious wars, witch hunts, and economic change diminish religion's role

and even Catholic lands, the saints, shrines, monasteries, pilgrimages, and fasts that earlier meant so much grew less important. Freed by Luther and Calvin from the need to earn salvation, many Protestants focused their energies on material success—and many ambitious Catholics did too.

Most people continued to worship and pray, but their lives were less centered on religion than before and they were less inclined to look to religious leaders for guidance. Europe's age of religious upheaval, begun by efforts to enhance religion and diminish the wealth and worldliness of the Roman Church, instead diminished the role of religion and enhanced the wealth and worldliness of European society.

Chapter Review

Putting It in Perspective

In the early sixteenth century, hoping to reform the Catholic Church, reduce Church corruption, improve public morals, and strengthen piety among the people, religious reformers started a rebellion known as the Protestant Reformation. They were supported in their efforts by many political leaders, alarmed at the growing power of the Habsburg family, and by numerous other people who resented the extravagance of popes and bishops, financed by the donations of the faithful.

But the Reformation's outcome was not what its originators intended. Europe's religious unity was shattered, generating all sorts of new beliefs and competing Christian churches, as religious strife and religious zeal fueled wars, inquisitions, persecutions, and witch hunts. Central Europe was left divided and weak, thwarting Habsburg efforts to transform the Holy Roman Empire, including Germany and much of Italy, into a centralized state. And Europe as a whole was left divided among diverse states, each with its own religious institutions and issues.

Despite this destruction and division, however, Europe's wealth and influence expanded. The worldwide spread of Western Christianity, the growth of global commerce and capitalism, the exploitation of the Americas, the flourishing of the bourgeoisie, and advances in literacy and learning all boded well for Europe, especially for European countries that bordered the Atlantic. By the late seventeenth century, profiting from connections created by global expansion, the West was emerging from its religious strife more prosperous and powerful than ever.

Reviewing Key Material

KEY CONCEPTS

sacraments, 483	puritanical, 488
purgatory, 484	capitalism, 496
indulgence, 484	mercantilism, 497
Ninety-five Theses, 485	charter companies, 498
predestination, 488	cottage industry, 501
the elect, 488	nuclear families, 502

KEY PEOPLE

Martin Luther, 485	John Knox, 489
Emperor Charles V, 485	King Edward VI, 489
John Wyclif, 484	Queen Mary, 490
John Hus, 484	Queen Elizabeth I, 490
Pope Sixtus IV, 484	Pope Paul III, 490
Pope Alexander VI, 484	Angela Merici, 491
Pope Julius II, 484	Ignatius Loyola, 491
Maximilian of Habsburg, 485	King Philip II, 492
Friar John Tetzel, 485	Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots), 493
Frederick the Wise, 486	Catherine de Medicis, 493
Huldrych Zwingli, 486	King Henri IV, 493
King Henry VIII, 487	Emperor Ferdinand II, 494
Catherine of Aragon, 487	King Gustavus Adolphus, 494
Anne Boleyn, 487	Cardinal Richelieu, 494
Pope Clement VII, 487	Francis Xavier, 496
John Calvin, 488	

ASK YOURSELF

1. Why did Martin Luther challenge the authority of the Catholic Church? Why did his challenge become a revolt against the Church, rather than a reform movement within the Church?
2. Why did Luther's challenge result in the formation of many new Christian sects? How did the challenges of John Calvin and Henry VIII differ from Luther's challenge?

3. How did the Catholic Church respond to the Protestant challenge? Why were the popes and the Habsburg rulers unable to crush the Protestants?
4. What circumstances led to the globalization of Western Christianity and commerce? What roles did missionaries, merchants, and monarchs each play in this process?
5. What factors account for the economic and social changes in Europe during the age of religious upheavals? Why were women, especially aging women, so often the targets of witch hunts?

GOING FURTHER

- Asch, Ronald. *The Thirty Years' War*. 1997.
- Bainton, R. *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*. Rev. ed. 1985.
- Barstow, A. *Witchcraft: A New History of European Witch Hunts*. 1994.
- Braudel, F. *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400–1800*. 1973.
- Brendler, G. *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*. 1991.
- Brodrick, James. *The Origin of the Jesuits*. 1971.
- Cameron, E., ed. *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*. 1999.
- Davidson, Nicholas S. *The Counter-Reformation*. 1987.
- Dunn, R. S. *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715*. 2nd ed. 1979.
- Duplessis, R. *Transitions to Capitalism in Early Modern Europe*. 1997.

- Holt, M. P. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562–1629*. 1995.
- Kamen, H. *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power*. 2003.
- Kittelson, J. M. *Luther the Reformer*. 1986.
- Levack, Brian. *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. 1995.
- Lindberg, C. *The European Reformations*. 1996.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *The Reformation: A History*. 2005.
- Mattingly, Garrett. *The Armada*. 1959, 1988.
- McGrath, A. *A Life of John Calvin*. 1990.
- Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Between God and the Devil*. 1989.
- Olin, J. C. *The Catholic Reformation: From Savonarola to Loyola*. 1993.
- O'Malley, J. W. *The First Jesuits*, 1993
- Ozment, Steven. *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution*. 1992.
- Parker, G. *The Thirty Years War*. 2nd ed. 1997.
- Parker, T. H. L. *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought*. 1995.
- Pettegree, A., ed. *The Early Reformation in Europe*. 1992.
- Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. 1971.
- Warnicke, R. *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*. 1983.
- Wier, Allison. *The Life of Elizabeth I*. 1999.
- Wiesner, M. E. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. 2nd ed. 2000.

Key Dates and Developments

- 1517** Luther's Ninety-five Theses initiate Reformation
- 1519** Charles V becomes Holy Roman Emperor
- 1521** Luther appears before Diet of Worms
- 1525** German nobles crush Peasants' Revolt
- 1527** King Henry VIII begins to seek annulment
- 1529** Ottoman Turks besiege Vienna
- 1533** Henry VIII defies Rome and marries Anne Boleyn
- 1534** Parliament makes Henry VIII head of English Church
- 1536** Calvin publishes Institutes of the Christian Religion
- 1540** Pope Paul III approves Society of Jesus (Jesuits)

- 1545** Pope Paul III convenes Council of Trent
- 1556** Charles V retires; Philip II becomes King of Spain
- 1562–1594** Wars of Religion in France
- 1566** Dutch Revolt begins
- 1588** Spanish Armada defeated
- 1598** Edict of Nantes in France
- 1600** English East India Company founded
- 1602** Dutch United East India Company founded
- 1618** Defenestration of Prague begins Thirty Years War
- 1648** Peace of Westphalia ends Thirty Years War