Columbus and the New World

While other European monarchs listened to Columbus's dream of reaching the East by sailing west into the Atlantic Ocean, they did not offer him support. Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain decided to underwrite his voyage, however. Why did they decide to support Columbus when others did not?

Their decision was partially based on the success of the Portuguese and their continuing explorations of the western African coast. By 1488, Bartolomew Dias had sailed all the way to the southern tip of Africa, proving ships could make the journey all the way to the East. The Spanish king and queen were certain the Portuguese would dominate the African route to the Orient. Looking for an alternative, they found it in Columbus.

Ferdinand and Isabella provided Columbus with three of the most famous ships in history—the flagship Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Santa Clara, which was nicknamed the Niña because of its small size. The vessels were manned by a crew of approximately 90 experienced sailors who set sail in August of 1492.

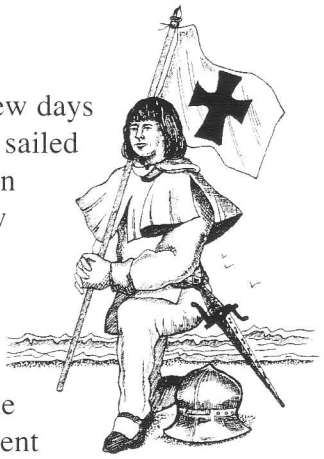
Columbus's agreement with the Spanish crown was to claim Spanish sovereignty over all lands and peoples he discovered, sharing any profits made from his voyage.

Columbus estimated the journey across the Atlantic to the Orient to be about 4500 miles (it was closer to 12,000). After landing at the Canary Islands and getting provisions, Columbus pointed his ships to the west into waters unknown.

The ships soon fell into a strong westward current. Crewmen wondered how they would get back home if the winds blew incessantly west. After covering 3000 miles of open ocean, with no land in sight, they grew anxious and fearful.

On October 10, the weary sailors began to mutiny. Columbus promised to turn back if they failed to discover land in three days. Two days later, by the light of the moon, a crew member caught sight of the shore.

It was the island that Columbus later named San Salvador, in the Bahamas. Within ten hours of the sighting, Columbus stood on the shores at Fernandez Bay and claimed possession of the land in the name of Spain.



After spending a few days on the island, the fleet sailed on, landing off Cuba on October 28. There they encountered natives Columbus named Indians, since he was certain he had landed in the East Indies of the Orient. Excited men went ashore, looking for the fabled riches and gold of Marco Polo's book. Disappointed, they found only poor natives smoking a strange plant unknown to the Europeans—tobacco.

Over the next few months, Columbus continued his search for evidence of Oriental wealth. He found little. On Christmas Eve, the Santa Maria met with tragedy, wrecked off the coast of modern-day Haiti. By January 1493, Columbus decided to return home with his two remaining ships, taking with him several Indians. He left a small garrison of Spanish soldiers on the island of Hispaniola, where they erected a fort.

Other voyages followed. His second trip, in September 1493, included 17 ships and nearly 1500 men. On their arrival in the New World, they still found little gold or other quick riches. Instead, to turn a profit, they began enslaving the native peoples. Although Columbus continued to be discouraged, he never gave up hope of finding the riches of the East. He commanded two additional voyages in 1498 and 1502, exploring the mainland of South and Central America. By his death in 1506, he was still certain he had discovered the Orient. He never admitted he had found a whole other place—the Americas.

Review and Write

1. In your opinion, did Columbus discover America? Why or why not?

2. After Columbus landed in the New World, what disappointments did he face?

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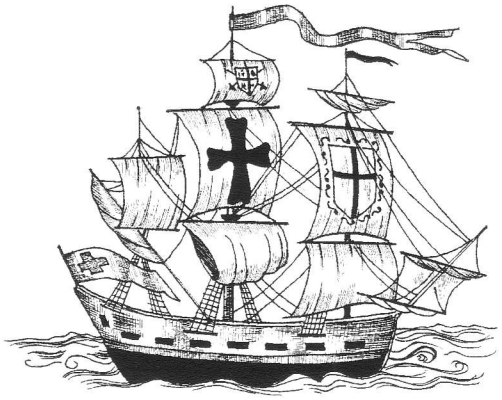
The Voyages of Columbus



As Portugal sponsored exploratory voyages along the western regions of Africa in the late 1400s, Spain looked on with envy. As with any other European power, Spain longed for direct access to the Oriental markets of the East.

In the 1490s, a middle-aged seaman named Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) arrived in the court of Spain offering a unique opportunity to the co-rulers, Ferdinand and Isabella. The voyages he sailed on behalf of Spain changed the history of the Western world.

Columbus is perhaps one of the most famous men in the history of Western civilization. As a young man, he gained much experience sailing on Mediterranean trading ships (he was an Italian from Genoa). He spent years living in Portugal, where he married a Portuguese noblewoman and made regular voyages along the west coast of Africa on Portuguese ships. After his wife died in 1485, he moved to Spain with a dream.

Through his travels, Columbus had heard many stories about the mysterious Orient. Tales of great Eastern riches filled his nights on board Portuguese ships. He heard stories of an earlier Italian explorer and writer named Marco Polo.

Polo's book *Description of the World* had fascinated Europeans for over a century prior to Columbus. Polo visited China during the late 1200s. He spent many years in China during the rule of the great Kublai Khan. Polo filled his book with tales of the Khan's great wealth, including gold, ivory, jade, silks, and spices.

Polo's book was considered fraudulent by some skeptics. After all, he included fantastic tales about exotic animals and birds, and black stones which the Chinese burned as fuel. (He was describing the use of coal, which was not used in medieval Europe.)

Columbus read such books over and over and longed to sail to the East. He became obsessed with reaching the Orient by ship. More specifically, he decided he wanted to reach the riches of China and Japan by sailing west across the Atlantic, rather than south and east around Africa.

This idea was not a new one. Two hundred years before Columbus made his first voyage across the Atlantic in 1492, two Genoese brothers known as the Vivaldis had the idea of sailing into the western ocean to reach the Orient. In 1291, they began their journey to the west and were never heard from again.

For the next two centuries, the eastern Atlantic became well known to Europeans. By the 1420s, Portuguese sailors were traveling into the Atlantic as far as the Azores Islands, one-third the ocean distance between Portugal and the Americas.

Few people in the 15th century believed the world was flat. They knew the earth was a globe and some, like Columbus, believed that sailing across the Atlantic would be a shorter, more direct route to the treasures of China. According to his calculations, the distance across the Atlantic from western Europe to the Orient was approximately 3000 miles of sailing in a straight line.

As Columbus tried to gain royal sponsorship for his proposed Atlantic voyage, he met with rejection. The king of Portugal turned him down, as did the French monarchy. Their royal advisors and mapmakers knew that Columbus's theory of sailing west to reach the East had a serious flaw. They knew the distance across the Atlantic to China was much greater than Columbus had estimated. Instead of 3000 miles, it was closer to 12,000!

Yet Columbus pressed on until, in 1492, he found support from the king and queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella. They outfitted his expedition with three small ships. Columbus's dream of Eastern wealth became their dream. Little did they or Columbus know that an immense land mass—the Western Hemisphere—lay directly in his path. For Columbus, another discovery lay ahead.

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Europeans in the New World

Although Columbus sought a western route to the Orient, he found instead two continents unknown to Europeans: North and South America. Many Spanish, and later Portuguese, heard the news and followed in the path of the famous Genoese explorer.

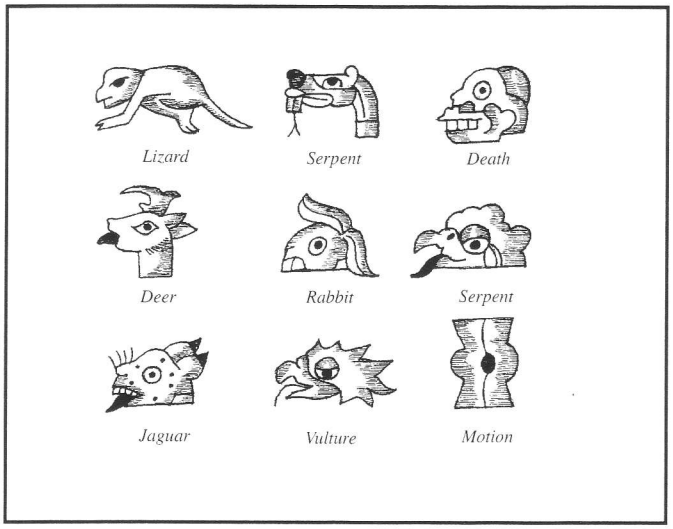
Ironically, Columbus was eventually edged out of the colonizing of the New World. Although he was made Viceroy of the Indies following his first voyage in 1492, many of those who went as colonists grew malcontent in Columbus's colonies. They found little gold and hated the Native American diet of corn and cassava root bread.

Many returned home to Spain. Columbus was so unpopular that his own sons, who were pages in the court of the king and queen, were hounded by street gangs who followed them all over Madrid shouting, "There go the sons of the Admiral of the Mosquitoes, of him who discovered lands of vanity and delusion, the grave and ruin of Spanish gentlemen."

Over the decades following Columbus's voyages, the Spanish established permanent colonies in the New World, and some of their explorations yielded great riches. Two Spanish explorers, Hernando Cortes (1485 –1547) and Francisco Pizarro (1470 –1541) took men into Central and South America and discovered civilizations where gold existed in great quantities.

Cortes ventured into modern-day Mexico in 1519, encountering the advanced civilization of the Aztecs. By 1521, his soldiers—called *conquistadores*—defeated the Aztecs, enslaved them, and began siphoning off their golden treasures.

A few years later, Pizarro conquered the Indians living in the Andean Mountains of modern-day Peru. He, too, plundered the great wealth of these Native Americans. In 1536, the city of Lima became a Spanish capital in the New World. By the 1550s, the Spanish had built a great empire which stretched from Mexico to Chile. The gold and silver mines were manned by native slaves who worked for the Spanish.



The Spanish put the natives to work through a system of labor known as the *encomienda*. Under this structure, the Spanish monarchs, through their appointed representatives in the New World, granted control of Indian lands to various Spanish landlords. In exchange for converting the natives to Christianity and educating them, the landlords—called *encomenderos*—expected the local Indians to work for them in the fields and in the gold and silver mines. It was a harsh system which exploited the natives.

But the New World was not to be Spain's alone. As early as 1500, just eight years after Columbus's first voyage, the Portuguese, under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral, landed off the coast of Brazil. However, they did not establish a permanent colony until 1532.

In North America, the French continued their search for a western water route—called the Northwest Passage—through the Americas. By 1504, they had established fishing settlements in Newfoundland in modern-day Canada.

By the 1530s, the French explorer, Jacques Cartier, mounted three voyages to Canada, exploring the St. Lawrence River south to the site of today's Montreal. Attempts to establish a permanent colony failed because of hostile Indians.

By the 1600s, other European powers, including the French, English, Swedes, and Dutch, took steps to establish permanent colonies in the New World, changing life in the Western Hemisphere forever.

Review and Write

What problems did the coming of Europeans to the New World cause the Native Americans living there? (You may want to include problems not given on this page.)

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The Protestant Reformation

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the most powerful institution in Europe. However, beginning in the 1400s, a basic discontent developed on the Continent with the Church, its doctrines, its structures, and its clergy—and by the early 1500s, it had spread throughout most of Europe. Historians refer to this great religious, social, and political movement as the Protestant Reformation. How it all came about is complicated. How it changed the face of Christianity is extraordinary.

As early as the mid-1400s, the Catholic Church faced criticism from within. Some clerics saw the need for moral revivalism, such as the Italian Dominican Savonarola, who preached against the love of luxury he saw in his fellow Florentines. Still others were tired of clerical abuses; of priests, monks, bishops, even popes, who were very worldly. Even longstanding Church doctrine came under occasional fire.

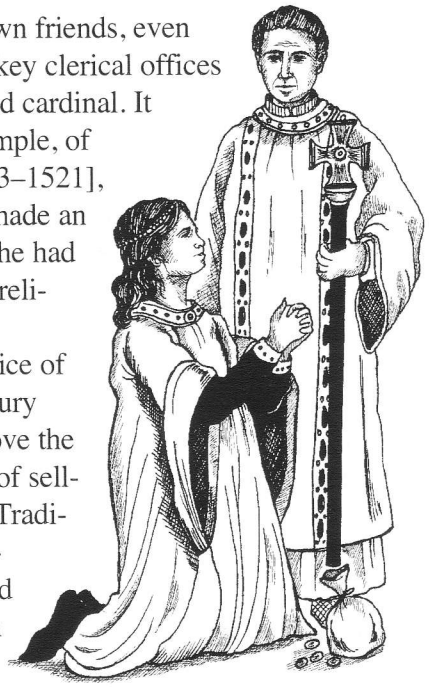
One such early critic of Church doctrine was John Huss (1369?–1415). This Bohemian preacher from Prague taught at Oxford University. Huss believed that all Christians comprise a "priesthood of believers," and considered professional priests unnecessary. Such ideas—including his belief that the State is supreme to the Church—landed him in trouble. A Catholic council condemned Huss and he was burned at the stake for his beliefs.

Huss was far ahead of his time. By the late 1400s and early 1500s, however, more Europeans were questioning the doctrines and policies of the Church. Because of changes during the Renaissance, Europeans were more apt to question authority, any authority, whether it be a local lord, a town council, a king, or even a pope.

By the 1500s, then, the Church was falling out of step with the populace in many corners of Europe. As a result, the Church of the early 16th century was in the greatest state of danger it had faced since the Great Schism of the 1300s.

Making matters worse for the Church were the popes. Renaissance popes were notoriously worldly. Many were considered morally corrupt: men who gave in constantly to extravagance and luxury. These popes often kept mistresses and fathered children illegitimately. Everything seemed to be for sale.

Renaissance popes sold church offices and even appointed their own friends, even their children, to key clerical offices such as bishop and cardinal. It was said, for example, of Pope Leo X [1513–1521], "he would have made an excellent pope if he had only been a little religious."



But one practice of the late 15th-century Church stood above the rest: the practice of selling indulgences. Traditionally, an indulgence was granted to someone when he or she confessed a sin. When sinners performed penance to receive forgiveness, the Church sometimes required an indulgence, usually an act of piety, to help provide complete forgiveness and to prove that the sinner was, indeed, sorry for having done wrong.

By the Middle Ages, the doctrine of indulgences allowed people to pay money rather than do a pious act. By the 15th century, Pope Sixtus IV claimed to have the power to release the souls of the dead from the penance they were experiencing in Purgatory. This meant that someone could buy an indulgence to help expedite a deceased loved one's release from Purgatory. Indulgences took on a whole new value to people and to certain unscrupulous people in the Church.

This practice—profiteering in Indulgences—was the catalyst for the Protestant Reformation. And one Catholic cleric—a German named Martin Luther—was soon to lead the assault on the Church.

Review and Write

By the 1500s, how had the Catholic doctrine of indulgences changed? Why did such a change lead to criticism of the Church?

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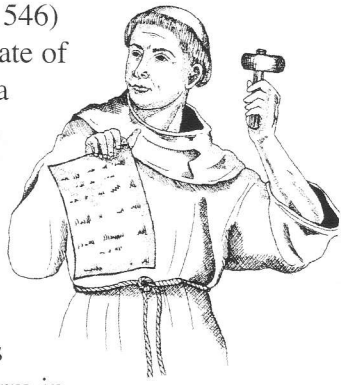
The Life of Martin Luther, Part I



Martin Luther (1483–1546) was born in the German state of Thuringia. His father was a copper miner who became relatively prosperous.

When Luther was a young man, his father sent him to law school. According to legend, young Luther, while on his way home from his first term in law school, found himself caught in a violent storm. A lightning bolt struck close by. He was so terrorized he prayed to St. Anne, the traditional mother of Jesus' mother Mary, that if she helped him survive the storm, he would enter a monastery.

Luther survived the lightning and thunder and was true to his promise. He became a monk or, more accurately, a friar in the Augustinian Eremite Order. He continued his studies, however, studying theology at the University of Erfurt, an important German school of the period.

After graduation, he became a theology teacher, taking a position at the newly founded University of Wittenberg in Saxony. There, he inspired students with lectures known for their depth and scholarship.

Luther's studies caused him to begin to doubt some Church doctrines and practices. One practice which he felt was seriously abused was the selling of indulgences. One such indulgence salesman whose techniques Luther despised was John Tetzel. Tetzel was a Dominican friar who sold indulgences in the German state of Mainz.

Tetzel was notorious for his tactics. He preyed on ignorant, well-intentioned peasant Christians who wanted to help relieve their loved ones' time in Purgatory. Everywhere he went, he took with him a large barrel into which people were to pay their indulgences. He even told the believing crowds that "As soon as coin in coffer [barrel] rings, the soul from Purgatory springs."

Because of unscrupulous clerics like Tetzel, Luther came to object to indulgences. For example, he questioned whether popes had the power to release someone from Purgatory after an indulgence was paid.

As a protest of indulgences and other abuses, Luther took dramatic steps. He developed a list of 95 questions, or theses, taking issue with certain Catholic doctrines and practices, and nailed them to the church door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, which was All Saints' Day.

Luther intended his theses to provoke scholarly debate, but could not have anticipated the dramatic public response. In no time at all, his protest was published, and translated from Latin to German, causing widespread interest throughout the German states.

The Church took immediate note of Luther's objections and criticisms. A representative of the pope summoned Luther in 1518 and ordered him to confess his wrong for questioning Church doctrine. Luther refused. In 1519, Luther's teachings won over more converts after he debated a noted scholar named John Eck. During that debate, Luther said that earlier popes and Church councils had made wrong decisions. With that statement, Pope Leo X condemned Luther's teachings. When Luther burned a copy of the condemnation in a public fire, the pope excommunicated him.

The next year, 1521, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V [ruled 1519–1556] (only 21 years old at the time) summoned Luther to a council called the Diet of Worms [verms]. There, the emperor ordered Luther to recant his teachings. Luther refused. The emperor condemned him.

As Luther left the royal hall and walked into the streets, shaken after having stood before the emperor, he was greeted by guards shouting, "Into the fire!" Luther, fearing for his life, clasped his hands over his head and shouted, "I am finished!" He was certain the emperor would order his death.

Review and Write

1. Why did Martin Luther have problems with the practices of John Tetzel?

2. Describe the events of Martin Luther's life between 1517 and 1521 which caused him problems with the Church and with Emperor Charles V.

The Life of Martin Luther, Part II

After standing before the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, and defying his command to recant his teachings, Martin Luther assumed that death would come shortly. However, it was not to be. He had a friend in Frederick the Wise of Saxony.

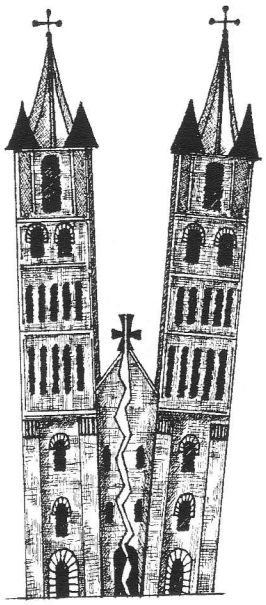
Frederick was the elector of the German state of Saxony where Luther lived and taught. As an elector, he was one of a handful of men in all the Germanies with enough personal power to take bold steps and help Luther. Frederick, too, favored change in the Catholic Church and he was no friend of Rome. He felt that the pope exerted too much power over his German subjects. Frederick, like Luther, had despised the work of John Tetzel, the indulgence salesman, and had forbidden him from entering Saxony.

Now it was time for Frederick to make his move. On April 26, just a week after Luther's confrontation with Charles V, men under orders from Frederick whisked Luther out of the city and out of immediate harm's way. A dramatic escape followed, with the men hiding out by day and rushing through dark forests by night.

Luther was taken to a remote castle at Wartburg. There he hid out for nearly a year translating the Greek New Testament into German. He managed to accomplish this great scholarly feat in only three months. This work led to other such translations in other places in Europe by other reform-minded scholars. No longer would only those educated in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew be able to read the Bible.

By now, Luther had clearly developed his own personal theology. It did not follow the lines of strict Catholic doctrine. For example, Luther believed in salvation through faith in God rather than through ceremonies and good works. He no longer accepted the seven sacraments as a whole; instead, he kept only two: baptism and the Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper. Luther no longer believed in a professional priesthood. He believed that all Christians together formed a priesthood.

Luther also came to disregard the authority of Church traditions and decisions made by popes and Church councils. He only accepted the authority of the Bible.



By 1522, Luther returned to Wittenberg where he was still under the protective eye of Frederick the Wise. Charles V was busy with the Italian Wars and had little time to pay attention to religious problems.

Despite the delay, change was in the wind. What started as Luther's private protest against corruption in the church became a nation-wide movement across whole regions of Germany. In Wittenberg, the town council passed the first city ordinance of the Protestant Reformation, deciding to abolish the Catholic Mass (the elaborate, priest-led celebration of the Eucharist) and conduct all church services in German rather than Latin.

Other aspects of church worship changed as well. Church singing was done by the entire congregation of a church, not just a choir. This was an extension of Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

Support for Luther and his new theologies and doctrines spread rapidly through the German states. Many of his most active supporters were former monks, nuns, and friars, as well as priests and other clergymen. Such clerics often lived in poverty while resenting the wealth and privilege of bishops, archbishops, and even popes. (Incidentally, Luther renounced his vows as a monk and married a former nun.) Because of the work of Martin Luther, change was coming to Christianity in 16th-century Europe.

Review and Write

List Luther's grievances with the Catholic Church which lead him to defy its authority.

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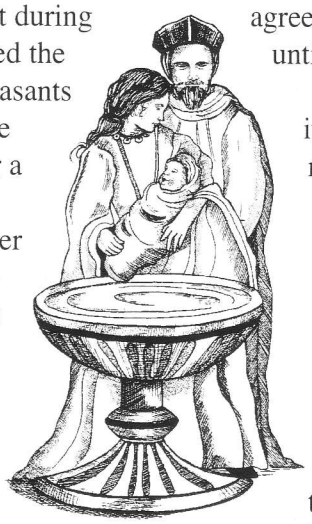
The Spread of Protestantism

What Luther began in the German state of Saxony spread to other places where people were disenchanted with the Catholic Church. With the success of his message, however, the Protestant Reformation took turns even Luther could not predict or support.

Luther's teachings faced a major threat during 1524–25 through a series of conflicts called the German Peasants' War. In this conflict, peasants tried to rebel against their landlords. While the war was not a religious one, but rather a response to poverty and high taxes, some claimed inspiration in Luther's words. After all, Luther preached the *equality* of a *priesthood of all believers*. Some peasants extended their new status into the social and economic world, and sought their freedom.



Luther did not support the peasant revolt. Ultimately, it failed, with as many as 100,000 peasants losing their lives. Thousands were blinded and maimed. The result of Luther's lack of support for the Peasants' War was to turn many peasants against Lutheranism.

With support from sympathetic German leaders, such as Frederick the Wise, the followers of Luther, in 1529, published a document protesting the pro-Catholic Emperor Charles V. This paper gave *protestantism* its name. In 1530, Luther again appeared before Charles V at the Council (Diet) of Augsburg where he presented his theological beliefs in a paper called the Augsburg Confession.

Luther did not actually write the Augsburg Confession. It was written by another leader of the movement, Philip Melanchthon (mel LANG thun) [1497–1560], who also wrote the Protest of 1529. Melanchthon's writings were important to the early Protestants, helping define their goals and beliefs.

After Luther made his Augsburg Confession, key German rulers, including the rulers of Saxony, Hesse, and several important German cities formed an alliance called the Schmalkaldic League. Its purpose was both religious and military, and was designed to protect the movement from the Catholic forces of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V.

These two forces went to war in 1546–47. The Schmalkaldic War was lost by the League.

By 1555, both sides were weary of conflict between German Catholics and Lutherans. In that year, both sides agreed to the Peace of Augsburg. Under this agreement, each German prince or elector could decide whether his state would be Protestant or Catholic. This agreement managed to keep the peace in Germany until the coming of the Thirty Years' War in 1618.

As Lutheranism grew in the German states, it spread to other countries where other men rose as important reform leaders. As early as 1518, Olaus Petri (1493–1552) introduced Lutheranism to Sweden. By 1593, Lutheranism had become the Swedish state religion.

In Switzerland, the reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484 –1531) became prominent. He believed and preached many of Luther's ideas concerning justification by faith and the supreme authority of the Bible. He was killed by Catholics during a Swiss civil war in 1531.

France saw its greatest reformer in John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin became a follower of Luther's ideas as well, but was forced out of France into exile in Switzerland. Through his studies, Calvin came to believe differently than Luther. In his belief system, people were born with no free will. He believed God selected those whom he would save. This doctrine is known as *predestination*. Also, Calvin established churches with elders.

Calvin's ideas, later known as Calvinism, became the source for new sects of believers in Switzerland, France, Scotland, and England. English Calvinists were known as Puritans.

Other sects created during the Reformation included the Anabaptists. They believed in adult, rather than infant, baptism. They became popular in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and Belgium. They came into existence after the Peasants' War.

Review and Write

Name three significant leaders of the Protestant Reformation (other than Martin Luther) and identify one contribution each made.

The English Reformation

The theology of Martin Luther helped spark the Reformation in continental Europe, from Bohemia to France to the Scandinavian countries. In England, however, the Reformation began differently.

In 1527, the king of England, Henry VIII, longed for a male heir to inherit his throne. His wife, Catherine of Aragon, had only given birth to one child, a girl, named Mary. Henry decided to have his marriage annulled, so he would be free to marry another woman, a young beauty named Anne Boleyn. Such annulments were granted in Henry's time by the Catholic Church. (The Church did not sanction divorce.) Henry's request for annulment had some legal grounds. His wife was the widow of Henry's brother, Arthur, and such marriages were a violation of canonical law.

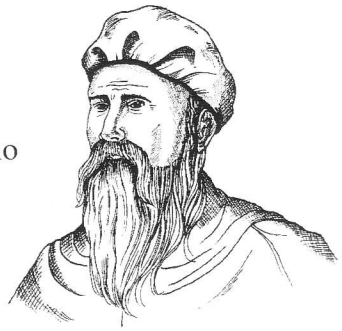
Henry's request was not an unusual one. Popes had annulled marriages for the French kings Louis XII and Francis I, and two of Henry's sisters had been granted annulments. But Henry's request was to no avail. Pope Clement VII would not grant the annulment. At that time, Rome and much of the Italian peninsula were under the control of Emperor Charles V. Henry's wife, Catherine, was Charles's aunt.

Furious, Henry VIII took other steps, appealing for support from theologians at several universities. He used diplomacy to convince the pope to change his mind. Nothing seemed to work.

Then, in 1531, an English Church Council, known as the Convocation, declared Henry VIII head of the Catholic Church in England. They took this step after much harassment and many threats from Henry. He then began to collect for himself the taxes annually raised to support the papacy.

Over the next few years, Henry solidified his leadership over the Church in England. Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, recognizing Henry as the head of the English Church. This decision by Parliament brought about the formal separation of England from the Roman Catholic Church.

With that, the pope excommunicated Henry, a decision he dismissed as unimportant. At the same time, the Convocation agreed to the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine. (By that time, Henry VIII had secretly married Anne Boleyn, who was already pregnant.)



Pope Clement VII

For these reasons, the beginning of the English Reformation was different, indeed, from the reform movement on the Continent. Officially, the break of England from Rome was a separation within the existing Church structure. Henry, in fact, had not been a supporter of the Luther-inspired Reformation. He even wrote a book in opposition to Luther in 1521. In many ways, Henry never stopped thinking of himself as a devout, believing Catholic.

Yet the English government began systematically tearing down Catholicism. Monasteries were closed, and monastic lands were confiscated by the government. Many of the monks and nuns retired under the threat of such moves.

The English Reformation had many supporters in England. Englishmen resented the Church's great wealth and landholdings. Church taxes, called tithes, were high, as well as the fees clergymen charged for funerals and burials.

Henry VIII legitimized his defiance against the Catholic Church through a series of Parliamentary laws. He also made former monastic lands available for sale to English lords and other wealthy people in an effort to garner their support for him and his new English Church.

Research and Write

1. During the 1500s, the English Reformation found its way to neighboring Scotland. Research the history of the Reformation in Scotland in the 1500s.

2. How did Henry VIII solidify his control over the Catholic Church in England?

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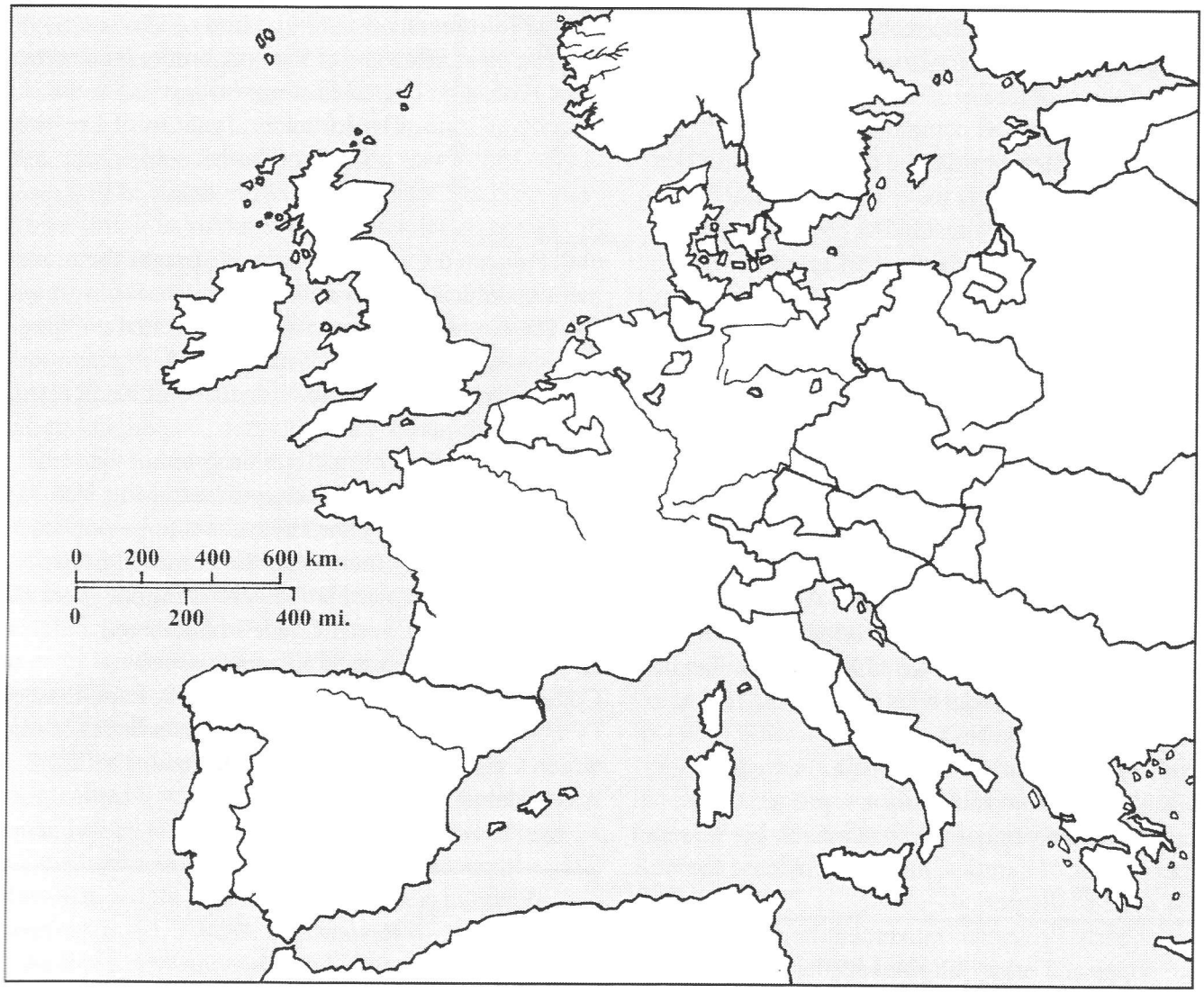
Reformation Era Map

The 1500s saw the rise of the Reformation and the spread of its influence. Beginning in the German states, Luther's influential doctrines and theologies ultimately changed the nature of Christianity across the whole of 16th-century Europe, not only on the Continent, but in the British Isles as well. Religious change seemed to know no borders as the Protestant faith found followers everywhere.

Using the map below and additional sources, identify the following places: Spain, England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, Norway, the Papal States, Portugal, Ireland, Swiss Confederation, Saxony, Wittenberg, Worms, Nuremberg, Munich, Augsburg, Erfurt, Thuringia, Vienna, Zurich, Geneva, Rome, Paris, London, Canterbury, and Madrid.

By 1560, most European nations had established state religions which supported either Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Anglicanism. Using outside sources, identify three states which were predominantly Catholic, three which were Protestant, and one Anglican.



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The Catholic Reformation

The Protestant Reformation of the 1500s caused the Catholic Church much grief and concern. In response to the success of Lutheranism and other Protestant theologies, the Catholic Church launched a Counter-Reformation. Church leaders wanted to reclaim control of regions which were moving toward Protestantism.

Ironically, the Church used traditional medieval structures—new religious orders, church councils, even the Inquisition—to regain lost control. Such strategies succeeded in retrieving lost ground and helped focus Catholic theologies.

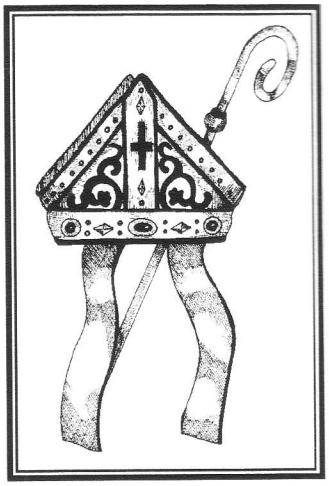
By the end of the 16th century, however, the Church accomplished all the recovery it was going to experience. Protestantism stood firm in many places, and the supremacy of Catholicism among European Christians had come to an end.

One factor which limited the effectiveness of the Catholic Reformation was the instability of the papacy. Eighteen popes presided over the Catholic Church in the 1500s. Only two of them—Paul III and Gregory XIII—held the office for over ten years. Many of these pontiffs ruled for four years, some for only a few months. With so many popes, it was difficult for the leadership of the Church to remain focused and organized against the Protestant movement.

Pope Paul III [1534–1549] served longer than any other 16th-century pope and his tenure included crucial years of the Protestant movement. Pope Paul III was a moderate reformer. He was followed by Pope Julius III [1550–1555], who was a notoriously worldly pontiff. His style of leadership, one of luxury and corruption, was what caused the Protestant revolt in the first place.

It fell to Pope Pius V [1566 –1572] to lead the Catholic Reformation. Pius truly wanted to see the Church respond strongly to Protestantism. He was a strict persecutor of heretics, and is considered the greatest pope of the period.

As the early Protestant movement began to gain ground, popes and other religious leaders tried to reach compromise positions with the reformers. Rarely were these attempts successful. When it became obvious to the Catholics that the break between them and the Protestants was permanent, the church launched an active campaign against the movement.



The primary tools used by the Church to combat the Protestant movement were new religious orders, the Council of Trent, the Index, and the Inquisition. In nations where Protestantism was strong, the Church often became involved in wars to rout out the reformers.

The most effective of the new orders created to fight Protestant doctrines were the Jesuits, or the Society of Jesus. Their founder, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), was a former Spanish soldier who had converted to Catholicism. Loyola believed that the Protestant dissatisfaction was due to an unruly and undereducated Catholic clergy. He fought the movement by educating clerics and missionaries.

The Council of Trent (which convened on three occasions: 1545–47, 1551–52, 1562–63) helped to more clearly define Catholic doctrine. It also created training seminaries for clergymen.

The Index was basically a program of Catholic censorship. The new printing presses of the 16th century were used by the Protestants to help spread their ideas, greatly increasing the amount of religious literature in circulation across Europe. As early as 1515, a Church Council banned any published work printed with a license issued by Catholic authorities. In 1557 and 1559, Pope Paul IV issued the Roman Index. This was a list of books which Catholics were forbidden to read. The list was updated in 1564.

Review and Write

Most of the steps taken by the Church to combat Protestantism failed. Do you think the Church did enough? What else might the Church have done to combat the Protestant movement?

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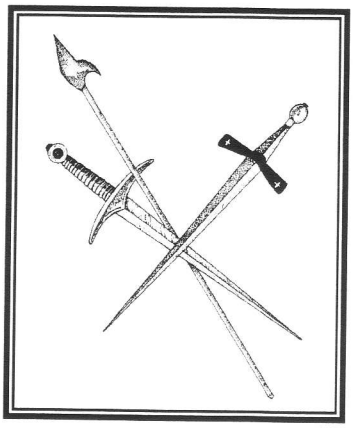
The Italian Wars Begin

Between 1494 and 1559, the Italian peninsula, against the backdrop of the Renaissance, was the battleground for the powerful nation-states of western Europe. The New Monarchies of England, Spain, and Austria fought against France for supremacy of the Continent.

The New Monarchies included the Tudors in England, the Valois line in France, the combination of the Houses of Castile and Aragon in Spain, and the Habsburgs of Austria, who came to rule over the Holy Roman Empire of the Germanies.



All these new power players worked actively to build up their own nations and the institutions of the modern state. In earlier centuries, weak kings had allowed their lords and noblemen to engage in petty wars, feudal rebellions, and just simple outlawism. With the rise of the New Monarchies came relative guarantees of law and order. They firmly established their families on thrones, gaining support from the urban middle-class and other townspeople who were tired of having their villages and cities raided by bands of marauding, feuding knights.

With tax money paid by the towns and cities, these now powerful kings and queens were able to pay for and equip their own armies, allowing them to bring unruly nobles under control. New weapons such as the longbow (which had been used effectively during the Hundred Years' War), the pike, the cannon, and early handguns changed the nature of warfare. Foot soldiers could now do battle against mounted knights and win.

Such kings embodied the authority of their states, carrying with them the power of the old Roman law by which they were considered *sovereign* over the land and their subjects. It was during the 1400s that people began to address their monarchs as *majesty*.

As these new rulers expanded their power at home, they also attempted to expand influence and control abroad. Such rivalries caused the Italian Wars of the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

During this period, Italy was a fragmented yet wealthy land. While its extensive trade system, plus domestic production of such prized commodities as wool, made Italy a tempting prize, it was not really Italy yet. There was no unified control. Each city-state governed itself. With little centralized political power or stability, the peninsula became the site of a western European power struggle.

The Italian Wars began in 1494 when the French king, Charles VIII [ruled 1483–1498], invaded Italy. Charles intended to regain the kingdom of Naples, which Spain had wrested from France in 1435. Charles succeeded in taking Naples, but a coalition of Austria, Spain, England, and the Italian city-states of Milan and Venice, led by Pope Alexander VI, soon drove him out again.

In 1499, a new French king, Louis XII [ruled 1498 –1515], invaded Italy, seizing Milan and Naples, with help from the Spanish. But five years later, Louis and the Spanish king, Ferdinand, had a falling out, and the Spanish threw the French out of Naples.

War returned to Italy in 1508 when the League of Cambrai (an alliance of France, Austria, Spain, and the Papal States) attacked Venice and won. Three years later, the same alliance (with the addition of the Swiss) turned on the French and drove them out of Milan.

Francis I [ruled 1515–1547] invaded Italy in 1515. Although opposed by Austria, Spain, and the Papal States, he took back Milan. For the next several years, Francis I fought the Holy Roman Empire for control of Milan, with the Habsburgs defeating him in 1525. When Francis tried to mount a coalition of Italian city-states against the Habsburgs, they were defeated, and Rome was sacked by 22,000 restless German and Spanish troops. Approximately 13,000 Romans were killed.

Review and Write

Describe the New Monarchies of the 16th century. What defined them as different from earlier monarchies?

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The Italian Wars Continue

During the mid-1500s, when the Reformation was seizing Europeans from the Germanies to Scotland, the New Monarchies continued their wars of assertion. The first phase of the Italian Wars lasted until the 1520s. Much of the conflict was a seesaw of control wielded by various states, such as France or the Habsburg-led Holy Roman Empire. But little occurred that was permanent.

In the second phase of the Italian Wars, which lasted until 1559, Italy was not the exclusive site of conflict and combat. The rivalry between the French Valois family and the German Habsburgs expanded into a greater and larger struggle, taking the fighting outside the Italian peninsula.

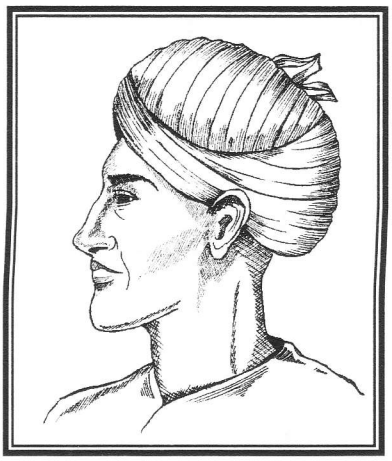
After Francis was defeated in 1525 in the Battle of Pavia, he signed a peace treaty and promised to surrender the Italian city-state of Milan. (Francis had been captured during that battle and forced to sign the treaty.)

After his release, he denied the validity of the treaty and began a new campaign against the Habsburgs. This, too, brought defeat to Francis. The Habsburg star was on the rise in Italy, and in 1530, Pope Clement VII crowned the Habsburg ruler, Charles V, as a dual monarch: Holy Roman Emperor, and king of Italy.

During the Renaissance, Italy exercised a strategy of governance called *balance of power.* Such an adjustment of power allowed the Italian city-states to keep one another in check, so that no one city-state gained too much power over its neighbors. During the Italian Wars, the same policy was used to define western European politics and power. Alliances shifted back and forth between states ensuring that no nation dominated any other.

While these earlier conflicts pitted European monarchs against one another, the 1520s brought a new player to the power game: the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. During the reign of Sultan Suleiman I the Magnificent [ruled 1520 –1566], Muslim forces and Christian armies fought in Hungary, the Mediterranean, and even in the German state of Austria. The Turks laid siege to Vienna in 1529, but were unsuccessful.

These invasions of the eastern Turks kept Emperor Charles V quite busy. When Francis I joined in an alliance with Suleiman, Charles had his hands full for years to follow. Combined with the rising threats of the Protestant Reformation, these were difficult years for Charles.



Suleiman the Magnificent

In 1547, Francis I died (as well as Henry VIII, who had fought in the wars, often switching sides). The struggle between France and the Habsburgs continued under a new French king, Henry II [ruled 1547–1559]. This final phase of the Italian Wars lasted throughout his reign. And this struggle dominated the politics of central and western Europe.

After breaking the siege of Vienna in 1529, Charles V then campaigned against the Turks in North Africa, seizing Tunis from the Muslims. This was the high point of Charles V's reign.

In following years, Charles was less successful against the Turks. Defeats came to the Spanish Habsburgs in North Africa in 1541 and 1551.

In the latter years of his reign, Charles was besieged by a German alliance against him. The Protestant princes, led by Duke Maurice of Saxony, fought the emperor, declaring war on him in 1552. His empire nearly bankrupt by years of war, Charles was forced to sign the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.

This settlement managed to hold the peace in central Europe until 1618. It also gave the German princes the power to determine whether their states would be Protestant or Catholic. Charles V, exhausted from years of war, was a defeated man. He surrendered his thrones in 1555 and 1556 to his son, Philip, and his brother, Ferdinand. Charles V retired to a monastery in southern Spain, and lived out the remainder of his years in quiet and peace.

Review and Write

What problems did some European powers have with the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire? How were they dealt with?

The High Cost of War

The constancy of war in the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe had a profound and inevitable effect on the growth of the technology of war. European armies depended more heavily on the use of gunpowder and cannons. As early as the 1300s, smallish cannons were used in European conflicts, such as the Battle of Crecy in 1346 (Edward III brought three to the engagement). Handguns followed cannons, and the first one used in European combat appeared in 1388.

The Catholic Church opposed using gunpowder in military actions; its use was considered the equivalent of dabbling in the Black Arts. But clerical protests fell on deaf ears.

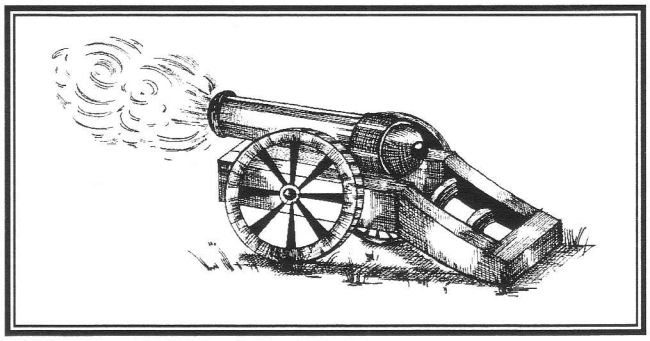
Throughout the 1300s and 1400s the quality of cannons improved, as did the aim of the artillerymen. As cannons were cast in larger and larger bores, the size of their shot and the distance covered expanded as well. While an English longbow of the 1400s had an accurate range of 200 to 250 yards, a light cannon of the 1500s, called a Saker, was accurate to 350 yards with a maximum range of one mile. Heavier cannons could lob a 60-pound ball a distance of 2,000 yards.

By the latter years of the 1400s, hand-held guns were developed and put to use. One model, called the *arquebus*, looked much like the later muskets, with an enlarged wooden stock. The arquebus was fired while resting on a vertical support jabbed into the ground. Early models were accurate to a distance of 50 yards. When fired, an arquebus was not raised to the shoulder, but held under the right arm.

Arquebus models were eventually replaced by muskets. Like the arquebus, early muskets were heavy weapons, weighing about 25 pounds. They were fired from the shoulder, with the musketeer sighting his aim down the barrel, like a modern rifle. The firing mechanism on an arquebus or an early musket was typically a matchlock design, which required a soldier to carry a long length of fuse that burned constantly. The end of the burning match or fuse was placed in a priming pan which set off the powder charge, sending the musket ball out toward its target.

Such weaponry was expensive. Added to the increasing size of European armies of the period, the cost of waging war in Europe increased dramatically. For example, early cannons were typically used to lay siege to fortified positions such as a castle, fortress, or city wall. A typical siege unit of the early 1600s included 100 cannons and 60 mortars, supported by 3000 wagons pulled by 15,000 horses. (This whole lot spread out along one 15-mile stretch of road moved two miles a day.)

Add huge increases in the numbers of soldiers in these European armies, and the resulting cost should not be surprising. Many armies numbered between 50,000 and 100,000 men. And all this had to be paid for by monarchs who were often strapped for money.



Examples are plentiful. Between 1542 and 1550, England spent 450,000 pounds on its military in campaigns against Scotland alone. Total revenues collected during those years amounted to only 200,000 pounds. Borrowing was typical by western European powers.

Between 1520 and 1522, Emperor Charles V borrowed 5.4 million ducats (gold coins) to pay his troops. Francis I spent 4.5 million in one year. When he died, Francis owed bankers 7 million French pounds—an amount equal to his entire royal income for the year!

Research and Write

One of the leading financiers of the period was the Fugger Bank, founded by Jakob Fugger. Write 100 words about the Fuggers and how they financed war for rival monarchs.

Years of Religious Wars

As the Protestant Reformation grew, animosity between Catholics and Protestants predictably worsened. Sometimes these clashes led to religious and political wars. Although the wars, fought in the latter decades of the 1500s, were often sparked by religious differences, they were also wars fought between nations and as civil wars.

Despite their best efforts, the Catholic Reformation in France met with strong resistance from over a million Protestants, most of whom were Calvinists. In France, the Calvinists were known as the Huguenots. The struggle between Catholics and Huguenots led to more than three decades of religious and civil war between the years 1562 and 1598.

During most of these years, the political leaders—a series of monarchs—were poor leaders.

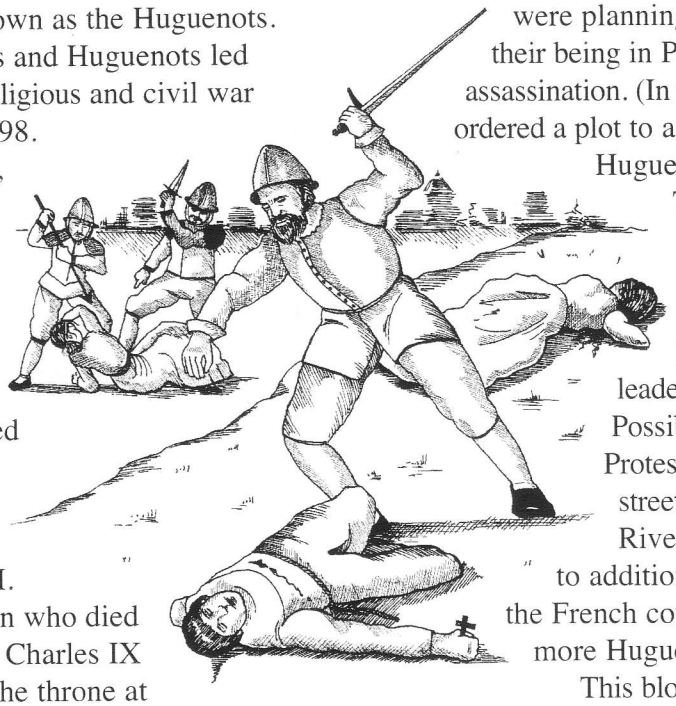
Calvinism managed to convert one-third of the French aristocratic families. These noble Huguenots resented the power of Catholic kings.

In 1559, King Henry II died in a tournament and was succeeded by his son Francis II. Francis was a sickly young man who died within a year. Another brother, Charles IX [ruled 1560 –1574], inherited the throne at the age of ten. Because of his age, his mother, Queen Mother Catherine de Medici (1519–1589), served as the boy's regent, or representative. Catherine was not popular with Protestants in France. She was a Catholic and an Italian. Although she encouraged a limited religious freedom and recognition for the Huguenots, conflict between Catholics and Protestants broke out in southern France in 1562.

This civil and religious war raged on for years with atrocities on both sides. Priests and other Catholic clergy were murdered. Both sides committed massacres in which hundreds were slaughtered. Catholic churches were destroyed. Monasteries and abbeys were invaded by Huguenot mobs, and monks and nuns were killed. Rampaging armies moved about the countryside murdering, pillaging, raping, and burning.

The most climactic massacre took place in the streets of Paris in August of 1572. Catherine de Medici invited thousands of Protestants to celebrate the marriage of Henry of Navarre, a leader of the Huguenots. Henry was to marry the sister of Charles IX. A truce was arranged to allow the Protestants safe passage into Paris.

The great wedding was attended by Protestants and Catholics alike. During the celebrations, Catherine convinced the king that the Huguenots were planning to take advantage of their being in Paris and were plotting his assassination. (In fact, Catherine had ordered a plot to assassinate all the Huguenot leaders in the city. That plot had failed.)



The result was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 24). Many of the Huguenot leaders were murdered. Possibly as many as 4000 Protestants were killed in the streets or drowned in the Seine River. This urban massacre led to additional violence throughout the French countryside where 10,000 more Huguenots were slaughtered.

This bloody series of attacks did not solve Charles IX's struggle against Protestantism. Two years later, the king died, and his brother, Henry III [ruled 1574 –1589], began a 15-year reign. In 1589, Henry was stabbed by a crazed Catholic monk.

Henry III had not produced a male heir. The royal house of Valois died with him. This opened the way for the Bourbon family line to take over as the royal line. And who was next in line to the throne but Henry of Navarre, the Protestant leader. To keep the peace, Henry (now Henry IV) renounced his Protestantism and publicly declared himself a Catholic. (In private, he was still a Huguenot.) In 1598, he issued the Edict of Nantes, which recognized religious toleration in France of all Huguenots, bringing an end to the religious wars in France.

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Test I

Part I. Multiple Choice (Worksheets 1–7)
Match the answers to the right with the statement on the left.

_____ 1. Italian explorer in the 1200s who wrote about his visits to China
_____ 2. Sailed west to reach the Orient in 1492
_____ 3. Spanish soldiers who helped defeat New World natives
_____ 4. Spanish labor system which exploited and converted Indians
_____ 5. French explorer who sailed into the St. Lawrence in the 1530s
_____ 6. Bohemian preacher who was burned at the stake in 1415
_____ 7. Act of piety or payment of money to prove a sinner's penance
_____ 8. Martin Luther nailed these to the Wittenberg Church door
_____ 9. Fat Dominican friar who was a supersalesman of indulgences
_____ 10. Emperor who condemned Martin Luther and his teachings
_____ 11. German elector of Saxony who protected Martin Luther
_____ 12. One of two Catholic sacraments which Luther continued to believe in

A. encomienda
B. 95 Theses
C. indulgence
D. Columbus
E. John Tetzel
F. Jacques Cartier
G. conquistadores
H. Charles V
I. Frederick the Wise
J. Eucharist
K. Marco Polo
L. John Huss

Part II. Multiple Choice (Worksheets 8–14)

_____ 1. 1530 council in which Luther faced Emperor Charles V
_____ 2. Author of the Augsburg Confession
_____ 3. Protestant military and religious alliance
_____ 4. 1555 agreement between Protestants and Catholics
_____ 5. Prominent Swiss reformer killed by Catholics in 1531
_____ 6. French reformer who preached doctrine of predestination
_____ 7. English monarch who separated from the Catholic Church
_____ 8. Founder of the Jesuits
_____ 9. Program of Catholic censorship
_____ 10. Turkish leader who laid siege to Vienna in 1529
_____ 11. Early musket model
_____ 12. Term for French Protestants

A. Peace of Augsburg
B. Henry VIII
C. Suleiman I
D. Diet of Augsburg
E. arquebus
F. Ignatius of Loyola
G. Ulrich Zwingli
H. Schmalkaldic League
I. the Index
J. Huguenots
K. Philip Melanchthon
L. John Calvin

Part III. Respond and Write
What were some of the reasons for the coming of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century? Why do you think the Reformation occurred when it did, and how did it spread faster than the Roman Catholic Church was able to stop it?