

The Age of Religious Wars and Overseas Expansion



I. Politics, Religion, and War

A. A New Kind of Warfare

1. The Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) between France and Spain made Spain dominant in Italy. It ended an age of dynastic warfare and began an age of religious and political warfare.
2. Warfare in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries differed from medieval warfare.
 - a. Armies were larger and more expensive.
 - b. Gunpowder weakened the notion that war was ennobling.
 - c. People did not realize that the medieval ideal of a pan-European society ruled by one emperor and one pope was dead.

B. The Origins of Difficulties in France (1515–1559)

1. Depopulation caused by the Hundred Years' War and plague meant the end of serfdom in France (due to labor shortages).
2. Inflation sapped noble income from land.
3. To pay for the Habsburg-Valois wars, French King Francis I sold government offices, creating a tax-exempt "nobility of the robe."
4. In the Concordat of Bologna with the Pope, Francis gained power to appoint bishops and abbots in France, a source of offices for patronage appointments (and one reason France remained officially Catholic).
5. Protestantism, however, continued to make rapid gains in France in the sixteenth century.

C. Religious Riots and Civil War in France (1559–1598)

1. French monarchs in the second half of the sixteenth century were weak.
2. During this period almost half of the French nobility was Calvinist. Being Calvinist was a way of demonstrating independence from central power.

3. Commoner Catholics and Calvinists wrought horrific violence against one another.
 4. In the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, Catholics in Paris killed thousands of "Huguenots" (French Calvinists).
 5. Civil War followed, and ended only in 1598 when King Henry IV converted to Catholicism and issued the Edict of Nantes, protecting Huguenots but limiting their right to proselytize.
- D. The Netherlands under Charles V
1. Late sixteenth-century international politics centered on the Netherlands.
 2. Emperor Charles V inherited the seventeen provinces that make up present day Belgium and Holland.
 3. The Netherlands was a center of commercial activity.
 4. As elsewhere, corruption in the Roman church led to calls for reform.
 5. In 1556 Charles V divided his realm between his brother Ferdinand and his son Philip.
- E. The Revolt of the Netherlands (1566–1587)
1. By the 1560s Calvinism had made rapid progress among wealthy Netherlands merchants.
 2. Phillip II of Spain (one of two successors to Emperor Charles V) appointed his half-sister Margaret regent of the Netherlands in 1559.
 3. Margaret brought the Inquisition into the area to crush Protestantism, and raised taxes.
 4. In August 1566 Calvinists rioted, destroying churches and libraries.
 5. Philip sent troops to crush the rebellion and civil war raged for ten years (1568–1578).
 6. Ultimately the areas the Spanish managed to hold became Belgium, and the areas that declared independence in 1581 became the Netherlands (or Holland).
 7. As the Spanish invaded the Netherlands after 1581, England aided the Protestant government there.
- F. Philip II and the Spanish Armada
1. Philip II of Spain was determined to crush heresy.
 2. In 1587 Philip, at the urging of the Pope, prepared a great fleet to attack England.
 3. In 1588 this "Spanish Armada" was defeated by the English fleet and bad weather, preventing Philip from forcing northern Europe back into the Catholic church.
- G. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648)
1. By the early seventeenth century Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists were violating the Peace of Augsburg in the Holy Roman Empire, proselytizing and converting rulers. The result was the formation of the Protestant Union of Lutheran princes (1608) and the opposing Catholic League (1609).
 2. A Protestant attack on German Emperor Ferdinand's officials in Prague, Bohemia, began war between Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire.

3. The first phase of the war (1618–1625) involved fighting in Bohemia between Ferdinand, supported by the Catholic League, and the Protestant Union. Ferdinand was victorious.
4. The second phase of the war (1625–1629) was the Danish phase, involving intervention by King Christian IV of Denmark on the Protestant side. During this phase too Ferdinand was victorious. However, the Habsburgs' chief general, Wallenstein, alienated many Catholic princes with his high-handed and self-interested behavior.
5. The third phase of the war (1630–1635) involved successful intervention by Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus on the Protestant side. France subsidized the Swedes to limit Habsburg power.
6. The fourth phase of the war (1635–1648) involved direct French intervention on the Protestant side.
7. In 1648 peace was at last achieved. The Peace of Westphalia recognized the Netherlands's independence, made 300 or so German princes sovereign on their own territories, gave France gains on her eastern frontiers, and denied the Pope the right to intervene in German religious affairs. The Peace also stipulated the same terms as Augsburg, dividing up Germany among Lutheran, Catholic, and Calvinist princes.

H. Germany after the Thirty Years' War

1. The Thirty Years' War was probably the worst economic and social disaster Germany suffered before the twentieth century.

II. Discovery, Reconnaissance, and Expansion

A. Overseas Exploration and Conquest

1. Political centralization in Spain, France, and England helps explain their expansion.
2. Portugal led the expansion, seeking to Christianize Muslims, import gold from West Africa, find an overseas route to India to obtain Indian spices, and contact the mythical Christian ruler of Ethiopia, Prester John.
3. Beginning in 1415 the Portuguese sent their ships further down the west coast of Africa until they rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached India in 1497–1499.
4. The Portuguese reached Brazil in 1500.
5. The Portuguese fought Muslim rulers to control the Indian Ocean and won.

B. Technological Stimuli to Exploration

1. With the development of large cannon and their placement on heavy-hulled sailing vessels, Europeans had a naval weapon without parallel.
2. Advances in navigation, such as the compass and the astrolabe, helped navigation.

C. The Explorers' Motives

1. 1. Overpopulation did not motivate the explorers; Europe wasn't overpopulated at the time.
2. The Crusading drive was one force behind exploration.
3. So too was a shortage of opportunity in Spain for small-time nobles and merchants.

4. Government sponsorship encouraged the voyages.
5. Renaissance curiosity was a motive.
6. Mostly, though, the explorers wished to get rich, in part through the spice trade.

D. The Problem of Christopher Columbus

1. Columbus was an extremely religious man.
2. Columbus was very knowledgeable about the sea.
3. Columbus aimed to find a direct sea route to Asia.
4. Columbus described the Caribbean as a Garden of Eden.
5. When he settled the Caribbean islands and enslaved their inhabitants, he was acting as “a man of his times.”

III. Later Explorers

A. Expansion

1. News of Columbus’s voyage quickly spread throughout Europe.
2. The search for precious metals determined the direction of Spanish exploration and expansion.
3. In 1519 Ferdinand Magellan, working for Spain, rounded Cape Horn and entered the Pacific Ocean, eventually circumnavigating the globe.
4. From 1519–1522 Hernando Cortés sailed from Hispaniola to Mexico and crushed the Aztec Empire of central Mexico.
5. Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire of the Andes between 1531 and 1536.
6. Although wealth flowed into Lisbon and Seville, in the end Flemish towns became the bankers of Europe.
7. The Dutch East India Company expelled the Portuguese from many of their East Indian holdings in the first half of the seventeenth century. The Dutch West India Company established outposts in Africa, Spanish colonial areas, and North America.
8. In 1497 John Cabot, working for England, explored the northeast coast of North America.
9. From 1534–1541 Frenchman Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence River region of Canada.

B. The Economic Effects of Spain’s Discoveries in the New World

1. During the 1500s and 1600s there was a huge influx of precious metals into Spain from its American colonies.
2. Population increase in Spain and the establishment of new colonies created greater demand for goods in Spain. The economy could not meet the demands. Together with the influx of specie, this led to inflation.
3. Inflation caused the Spanish government to go bankrupt several times.
4. Payment of Spanish armies in bullion created inflation throughout Europe, which greatly hurt nobles on fixed incomes.

C. The Columbian Exchange

1. The most important changes brought by the Columbian voyages may have been biosocial in nature.
2. Flora, fauna, and diseases traveled in both directions across the Atlantic.
3. New World foods became Old World staples.

4. Domestic animals were brought to the New World.
 5. European diseases ravaged Amerindian populations.
 6. Sailors and settlers brought syphilis back with them to Europe.
 - D. Colonial Administration
 1. Spain set up four viceroyalties in its American territories, with a viceroy and an audencia of twelve to fifteen judges that made up the advisory council and a kind of higher court. Spain took one-fifth of all specie mined in America.
 2. Portugal followed Spain closely.
- IV. Changing Attitudes
- A. Uncertainty
 1. New discoveries contradicted Biblical and classical accounts of geography.
 2. In spite of all the religious fervor of the age, Europeans were conquering and enslaving peoples overseas.
 3. A new spirit of inquiry was simultaneous with persecution and burning of witches.
 - B. The Status of Women
 1. Manuals on marriage and the family from the seventeenth century place women in the home, reject the double standard on adultery, urged marriage based on mutual respect and trust, and reject marriages arranged by parents.
 2. Religious writers of the Reformation did not express consistent views on women.
 3. Protestants all held that women and men were spiritually equal.
 4. Catholic thinkers supported the teaching that the celibate life was the highest form of Christian life.
 5. Protestants recognized a mutual right to divorce that Catholics did not.
 6. The seventeenth century was an "age of the flesh."
 - a. Protestant and Catholic governments licensed houses of prostitution.
 - b. With the closing of convents in Protestant countries, marriage became the only acceptable occupation for upper-class Protestant women.
 7. Single women worked in many occupations and professions.
 8. Protestants believed that celibacy had no scriptural basis and favored the suppression of women's religious houses.
 - C. The Great European Witch-hunt
 1. Witch-hunting peaked between 1560 and 1660.
 2. Tens of thousands of "witches" were executed in this period.
 3. There are a variety of explanations offered by scholars for the witch-hunts.
 - a. Witches explained inexplicable misfortunes.
 - b. Communities really believed witches worshipped the devil.
 - c. Communities persecuted nonconformists through charges of witchcraft.

- d. Unbridled sexuality attributed to witches was a psychological projection on the part of their accusers, whose sexuality was repressed by Christianity.
 - 4. Scholars can trace the broad strand of misogyny in the West, the belief that women were especially susceptible to the Devil's wiles, and the belief that women were sexually insatiable. All of these contributed to the witch scares.
- D. European Slavery and the Origins of American Racism
 - 1. Before the 1400s virtually all slaves in Europe were white.
 - 2. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople cut off slaves from the Black Sea region.
 - 3. With Portuguese voyages to West Africa and the occupation of the Canary and Madeira islands, slavery hooked up with sugar culture.
 - 4. Native Americans did not survive long under conditions of slavery and forced labor.
 - 5. The Spaniards brought in enslaved Africans as substitutes.
 - 6. Modern racism against blacks had its origins in medieval Christian theology and to a lesser extent, medieval Arab views of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.
- V. Literature and Art
 - A. The Essay: Michel de Montaigne
 - 1. Montaigne (1533–1592), a French nobleman, created the essay as a means of clarifying his own thoughts.
 - 2. Montaigne was a skeptic; that is, he rejected the notion that any single human being knew the absolute truth. He also rejected the notion that any one culture was inherently superior to any other.
 - B. Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature
 - 1. Literature and drama flowered in England during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I (r. 1603–1625).
 - a. William Shakespeare's plays.
 - b. The King James Bible.
 - C. Baroque Art and Music
 - 1. The Baroque style had its origins in the desire of Catholic Counter-Reformation thinkers to appeal to the common people with an emotional and awe-inspiring style.
 - 2. The Baroque in architecture peaked in Italy after 1600, and then moved to Spain, Latin America, Poland, and other places.
 - 3. Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) was the epitome of the Baroque in painting.
 - 4. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) epitomized the Baroque style in music (although he was a Lutheran, not a Catholic).