

The French Wars of Religion

The French Protestants were called Huguenots and they represented only a small part of the population. Before the 1560s it was illegal for Huguenots to worship publicly. In 1562, Catherine, the Queen of France took a major step in religious toleration by allowing Huguenots to hold public worship *outside* the boundaries of towns. They were also allowed to hold church assemblies. Catherine was a Catholic and wanted France to remain Catholic; she also did not want a Protestant France. This began the French Wars of Religion which lasted for almost forty years and destroyed thousands of lives.

Catholics began to target and kill many Huguenots. Fearing a Huguenot uprising, Catherine convinced Charles IX that the Huguenots were plotting his overthrow. On August 24, 1572, the day before St. Bartholomew's Day, royal forces hunted down and executed over three thousand Huguenots in Paris. Within three days, royal armies had hunted down and executed over twenty thousand Huguenots. The St. Bartholomew Massacre was a turning point in the history of the Christian Church.

In 1576, Henry III ascended to the throne. And some Catholics formed a violent and fanatical group which was aided by Philip II of Spain who wanted to overthrow the Protestant churches of other countries. Henry III was stabbed to death and Henry IV became king. Henry IV stated that the only way France would find peace is if it were ruled by a tolerant *Catholic* king. On April 13, 1598, Henry IV ended the religious wars in France by proclaiming the Edict of Nantes. This Edict gave Huguenots the right to worship publicly, to hold office, to assemble, to gain admission to schools and universities.

1. What were the French wars fought over?
2. What was the Edict of Nantes?

Henry VIII and England

King Henry VIII had married Catherine of Aragon. The marriage produced no male children to occupy the throne at Henry's death. In the mid-1520's, he met and fell in love with Ann Boleyn. He wished to annul his marriage to Catherine and marry Ann to produce a male heir. In order to marry Ann, the marriage with Catherine had to be annulled by the pope. The answer to Henry's request was no.

Henry replaced his advisor with men that were sympathetic to the ideas of Martin Luther. They gave the king some radical advice: if the pope does not grant the annulment, then split the English from the Roman Church. This would make the king the spiritual head of the English church. If the King wants an annulment, he wouldn't have to go through the pope, the King can grant his own annulment.

In 1531, the clergy recognized Henry as the head of the church, and in 1533, Parliament passed a law which placed the clergy under Henry's control. In that same year Henry married Ann Boleyn. In 1534 Parliament stopped all contributions to the Roman church. And the Act of Succession declared the children of Ann Boleyn to be the heirs to the throne and declared the king the head of the church.

The Church really did not change much. It was still for all practical purposes a Catholic Church; the only real difference that anybody would notice was the use of English Bibles in the church. Henry was made the *head* of the church. The English church, however, would radically change under Henry's successor, Edward VI.

1. List some changes Henry VIII made in England.
2. What were the changes from Catholic Church to the Church of England?

England Changes

Edward VI was Henry's third child, born by his third wife, Jane Seymour. Edward was only a teenager when he became king, but he thoroughly sympathized with the Protestant cause. Edward set about turning the Church of England into a thoroughly Protestant church. He allowed clergy to marry. He also ordered any and all images and altars to be removed from churches. Had Edward lived, England would have become a more or less Calvinist country.

Edward, however, died only six years into his reign. He was succeeded by Mary (1553-1558), who was Henry's first child by Catherine of Aragon. Mary declared England to be a Catholic country and went about converting churches back to Catholic practices. Images and altars were returned and clerical celibacy was re-imposed. She executed a many Protestant leaders. She was eventually called "Bloody Mary" by the people. Had she lived longer, England would have reverted to Catholicism.

Mary was succeeded by Elizabeth. She assumed the throne in 1558 and reigned until 1603. Elizabeth understood that her country was being torn apart by the warring doctrines. She worked out a compromise church that retained as much as possible from the Catholic Church while putting into place most of the foundational ideas of Protestantism. Elizabeth's greatest legacy was the spirit of compromise that infused her version of the Church of England. She managed to please Catholics by retaining several important aspects of Catholicism and also managed to please moderate Calvinists. She effected this by allowing English Calvinists (called "Puritans" because they wanted to purify the church from all Roman influences) to participate in Parliament and to set up semiautonomous congregations that practiced Calvinist doctrine but still recognized the Queen as the head of the church.

1. What happened in England before Elizabeth became Queen?
2. What was Elizabeth's greatest legacy?

The Thirty-Years War

With the exception of the English civil war, the last major war of religion was the Thirty Years War. Germany, which was called the Holy Roman Empire, was not a unified state, but rather a collection of three hundred and sixty autonomous states. Each was a more or less sovereign state that levied taxes and tariffs, had its own armies, made its own money, and even enforced its own borders. Religious differences fueled the fires of the political and economic rivalries between these separate states. About half the states were predominantly Protestant while the other half were predominately Catholic.

The Treaty of Augsburg recognized Lutheranism, but it did not recognize Calvinism. But Calvinism was still present in these states. In 1618 the Thirty Years War began and involved nearly every state in Europe. This war was the most disastrous war in European history before the nineteenth century.

After thirty years of untiring bloodshed, the war came to an end with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Treaty was not really an innovation; it simply reaffirmed the Treaty of Augsburg and allowed each state within the Holy Roman Empire to decide its own religion. The only important innovation of the treaty was the recognition of Calvinism.

1. Why did the Thirty Years War begin?
2. What was the Treaty of Westphalia?

The Counter-Reformation

The Catholic Church was not unaware of the Reformation. In answer to the growth of the Protestant movement, the Catholic Church instituted its own series of reforms that balanced real reform with a conservative reaction to Protestantism. This movement was called the Counter-Reformation.

Many aspects of this movement were genuine reforms. Groups such as the Modern Devotion and the Oratory of Divine Love were organizations that included both clergy and lay people and encouraged a return to simple ethical living and piety, principles that had been championed by Erasmus.

Other aspects were conservative reactions to the criticisms leveled against the church by Protestants and Reformers. The most important of the reactionary movements was the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits, founded by Ignatius of Loyola in the 1530's and recognized officially by the Catholic Church a decade later. The basis of the Society of Jesus was a return to the strictest and most uncompromising obedience to the authority of the church. In 1521 Ignatius read the classics of Christianity and was deeply impressed by the lives of the martyrs and the saints. This instilled in him a deep sense of the value of absolute sacrifice; he underwent a conversion and dedicated his life to the same level of self-sacrifice that he saw in the lives of the saints, and dedicated it to the Catholic Church.

At the start, the Jesuit movement was a small movement. The original Society of Jesus had only ten members. By 1630, it had over fifteen thousand members all over the world. Ignatius dedicated the mission of the Society to the rooting out of heretics who refused to obey the church—this not only included Protestants, but non-Christians as well. The Society of Jesus became the most powerfully influential carrier of Western culture and Christianity to the non-Western world.

The Protestant gains in Europe and the chaotic evolution of the Counter-Reformation finally forced Pope Paul III in 1545 to convene a council in Trent in order to define church doctrine once and for all. This council, called the Council of Trent, worked on this problem in three separate sessions from 1545 to 1563. This council eventually advised some far-reaching reforms in the abuses practiced by the church, such as the selling of indulgences, which they banned. The Council forced bishops to reside in the region they presided over and also forbade the selling of church offices. On the reactionary side, the Council advised that a seminary be built in every diocese so that church doctrine could be fully and accurately represented. The reforms were very bold in many respects, but they were too little and too late. The new Protestant churches were the wave of the future; and Catholicism—although it would remain a major religion—would in a few centuries cease to be the major religion in the Western world.

1. Who was Ignatius of Loyola?
2. What was the Society of Jesus?
3. What was the Council of Trent?
4. How did it help strengthen Christianity?

The Council of Trent

In order to combat the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church devised the Council of Trent. At this council numerous problems and abuses were finally ironed out to help rebuild the Church from within.

CONCERNING PROHIBITED BOOKS

Since it is clear from experience that if the Sacred Books are permitted everywhere and without discrimination in the vernacular, there will...arise...more harm than good, the matter...is left to the judgment of the bishop or inquisitor...who may permit the reading to Catholic authors who will do no harm to the Sacred Books and inspire faith and piety in those around.

ON INDULGENCES

Since the power of granting indulgences was conferred by Christ and the Church,...the holy council teaches and commands that the use of indulgences...is to be retained by the Church, and it condemns...those who assert that they are useless or deny that there is in the Church the power of granting them. In granting them however, it desires that...moderation be observed, less by too great facility ecclesiastical discipline be weakened. But desiring that the abuses which have become connected with them...be amended and corrected, it ordains...that all evil traffic in them, which has been a most prolific source of abuses among the Christian people, be absolutely abolished...

ON THE VENERATION OF SAINTS AND SACRED IMAGES

The holy council commands all bishops and others who hold the office of teaching instruct the faithful diligently, teaching them that the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men, that it is good and beneficial...to invoke them and to have recourse to their prayers, assistance and support in order to obtain favors from God through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord... Those who maintain that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of the saints, or that these and other memorials are honored by the faithful without profit, and that the places dedicated to the memory of the saints.

1. What does the Church do about the Bible's written in the vernacular?
2. How do they deal with the problem of indulgences?
3. What is the purpose of the Council of Trent?