Chapter 22

The Transformation of the West, 1450-1750

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

After 1450, western Europe became commercially active and established the foundations of industrialization. Science and technology were more advanced than previously. More centralized governments developed. In areas of popular beliefs and family structure, the West was developing concepts not seen in other civilizations. After 1450, the spirit of innovation spread beyond Italy and the Iberian peninsula to the rest of Europe. These ideas spread beyond the West with the development of European colonialism and the growing Western control of the international trade system.

II. The First Big Changes: Culture and Commerce

A. Introduction

As Europe began to assume a more dominant position in world trade, the Protestant Reformation produced sweeping internal changes in Western society and religion.

B. The Italian Renaissance

The Renaissance, built on a commercial society, challenged medieval intellectual foundations. Writers such as Petrarch and Boccaccio embraced classical models in preference to medieval ones. In the 15th century, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo introduced classical forms into the fine arts. Political realism appeared in the writing of Niccolo Machiavelli. The Italian Renaissance stressed humanism: emphasis on classicism and human endeavor. Renaissance merchants openly embraced the ideals of capitalism. Italian city-states patronized the arts, became more militarized, and began the formal use of diplomacy.

C. The Renaissance Moves Northward

Foreign invasions of the Italian peninsula after 1500 and the introduction of Atlantic trade routes diminished the role of Italy in commerce and politics. The sense of creativity endemic to the Renaissance moved northwards after 1450. Classicism became popular in northern European countries, although classical literature was balanced by innovation in the vernacular languages. As in Italy, the Northern Renaissance produced political change. States became more powerful, attempted to control religion within their boundaries, and engaged in the manipulation of national economies. In northern Europe, however, restraints on the state remained significant. The cultural movement was largely limited to the ranks of the elite.
D. The Commercial Economy and a New Family Pattern

Western technology in areas such as metallurgy and printing advanced after 1500. The advent of the printing press led to improvements in literacy and the rapid dissemination of ideas. The European family pattern featured a relatively late marriage age and the adoption of the nuclear family as the norm. These patterns of household formation linked family to individual property and stressed the importance of husband-wife relations.

E. The Protestant and Catholic Reformations

The Protestant Reformation began when Martin Luther protested the papal approval for the grant of indulgences in Germany. Luther argued against not only indulgences but also the general authority of the pope, monasticism, clerical celibacy, and the restriction of the Bible to the clergy. Many German princes responded positively to Luther’s message, at least in part as a means of advancing their independence. Luther’s message also reached peasants seeking greater freedom from their lords and townsman eager for justification for their pursuit of wealth. Once Luther’s followers broke away from unified Christendom, other reformers emerged. In England, Henry VIII established the Anglican Church, both as a means of securing an annulment of his first marriage and because of his attraction to some new religious doctrines. Jean Calvin established a church in Geneva based on the doctrine of predestination. Calvinists engaged all believers in church administration and popular education. Calvinism spread from Switzerland to other parts of Europe and eventually to North America. The Catholic Church could not enforce unity but it did continue to hold the majority of believers in France, Spain, Austria, Poland, Italy, and much of Germany. Catholic theologians continued to defend celibacy and the special role of the priesthood in religious worship.

F. The End of Christian Unity in the West

The end of religious unity led to a series of religious wars throughout Europe. A civil war between Protestant and Catholic factions devastated France until the Edict of Nantes of 1598 granted toleration for Protestant practices. Wars raged periodically among the German states. The most important of these conflicts was the Thirty Years’ War, 1618-1648. When it ended with the Treaty of Westphalia, it was agreed that each ruler might determine the religion for his state. Spain, an ally of the Catholic German princes, also lost power in Europe as a result of the war. France, an ally of the Protestant princes, replaced Spain as the most powerful European nation. A civil war, the causes of which were in part religious, raged in England after 1640. Although the conflict ended earlier, religious toleration was only granted in 1689. The religious wars established that ecclesiastical unity could not be restored but did not confirm the idea of individual freedom of religion. England and the Netherlands emerged as winners in the European balance of power on the basis of their prowess at sea. France was most powerful on the continent. The wars drained Spain’s treasury and its ability to maintain a massive army. In some cases, Protestant churches challenged the concept of absolute monarchy and encouraged the growth of parliamentary government. The spread of Protestantism separated nature and market activities from religious belief. In the aftermath of the Reformation, there was greater emphasis on family life. The debate over religion stimulated the growth of literacy in many parts of Europe.

G. The Commercial Revolution

In the 16th century, the economic structure of Europe underwent substantial change. One of the stimuli to greater trade was massive price inflation caused by the influx of bullion from the
New World and the inability of the supply of goods to keep up with demand. Inflation encouraged investment and borrowing. Governments granted regional trade monopolies to great trading companies. With sufficient capitalization, European merchants began to supplant Arab and Indian traders in East Asia. Trade and colonial markets served to create a demand for manufactured goods. In both agriculture and crafts, there was a shift toward production for the market rather than for subsistence. Between 1500 and 1650, the European population grew by nearly 20 percent. Urbanization accompanied population growth. The increase in disposable wealth among all classes led to higher standards of living. Not everyone prospered. Commercialization produced a new class of people, the proletariat, without access to producing property. Most became at least partially dependent on labor in some aspect of the manufacturing process. Increasingly, the proletariat clustered in the cities, where poverty became their constant condition. Growing prosperity for some groups and more disposable wealth produced greater expenditure within the household.

H. Social Protest

Changes in social structure produced anxiety, particularly among the peasantry and the new urban working class, the proletariat. From the end of the 15th century to 1650, popular uprisings sought to protect traditional patterns of living and doing business and to end exploitation. These uprisings failed to halt change. Witchcraft prosecutions were directed against the poor and women.

III. Science and Politics: The Next Phase of Change

A. Introduction

The disruption of religious unity prepared the way for a fundamental reorientation of Western intellectual life. The scientific revolution of the 17th century was evidence of the search for new means of organizing knowledge and belief. Following the Reformation, a new form of government, the nation-state, dominated the structure of European polity.

B. Did Copernicus Copy?

Copernicus’s work placing the sun at the center of the solar system set other scientific advances in motion. Recent discoveries of much older Arabic texts raise questions about the originality of his work.

B. Science: The New Authority

Johnnes Kepler, building on Copernicus, described planetary motion mathematically. In medicine, Vesalius made important discoveries that also overturned accepted beliefs. After 1590, the pace of discoveries quickened. Galileo publicized the Copernican system and theorized about gravity and planetary motion. John Harvey demonstrated the circulation of blood in animals and humans. A new methodology was developed for scientific experimentation. Francis Bacon argued for empirical research, and René Descartes urged skepticism and rationalism in developing natural laws. In the Principia, published in 1637, Isaac Newton arrived at a series of scientific laws concerning motion, gravity, and mathematical calculus. Scientific theories gained rapid circulation among the educated elite of Europe. Governments patronized institutions for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. Popular beliefs in witchcraft began to be replaced by trust in a system of laws through which nature could be controlled and understood. Scientific popularizers attacked religious ideas,
such as miracles, that lacked scientific foundation. John Locke argued that faith was unnecessary because humans could approach the reality of nature through their senses and reason. Although other intellectual fields made advances and there remained widespread support for traditional beliefs, science became the most important means through which Europeans understood their environment. The West, more than any other civilization, described its world view in scientific terms.

D. Absolute and Parliamentary Monarchies

In the 17th century, more centralized monarchies replaced feudal governments. Kings gained power at the expense of the regional aristocracy through militarization and more extensive administration. France was the best example of a centralized monarchy with more absolute powers. Under Louis XIV, France developed a national economic policy (mercantilism), encouraged scientific development, and destroyed the independent power of the nobility. In eastern Europe, monarchs attempted to emulate the centralization of authority established in France. The kings of Prussia and Austria-Hungary built strong armies and created national economic plans. Louis XIV of France used his newly won power to intimidate other European nations in a series of wars. To halt French aggression, other states formed alliances. Prussia also used its military as a means of expanding its borders in eastern Europe. Britain and the Netherlands created more centralized states, but under parliamentary regimes. The Glorious Revolution of 1699 produced a government in which parliament won sovereignty over the monarchs. John Locke, in supporting the concept of parliamentary government, argued that power was derived from the people and that kings ought to govern in the public interest. Although both absolute monarchies and parliamentary governments gained many new powers, they were unable to displace the nobility completely.

E. The Nation-State

The nation-state was the most prevalent form of government in the West. These smaller nations were basically culturally homogeneous and able to engender public loyalty to a common institution. It was a common belief that the state ought to operate to the benefit of the governed, even in absolute monarchies. With this duty, states developed numerous public functions, often associated with the creation of a national economic policy.

IV. The West by 1750

A. Introduction

Commercialization, cultural change, and the rise of the nation-state continued after 1700.

B. Political Patterns

In western Europe, there were few alterations in the political pattern during the middle of the 18th century. In central Europe, the governments of Prussia and Austria-Hungary introduced greater religious toleration and increased the role of the state in formulating economic policy. Frederick the Great of Prussia considered himself an enlightened monarch. There were numerous wars during the 18th century over competition for colonial empire or expansion of European borders.
C. Enlightenment Thought and Popular Culture

In culture, the Enlightenment followed the scientific revolution. Enlightenment thinkers continued to press for scientific discoveries and applied the methods of scientific research to the study of human society. Enlightenment thinkers believed that social relations could be described by the same sorts of laws that regulated nature as a whole. The study of social sciences included criminology, politics, and economics. As a group, Enlightenment thinkers believed in the basic goodness of humans and the possibility of their improvement. Some of the more radical philosophers attacked Catholicism, condemned slavery as an institution, argued for economic equality, and assailed the concepts of patriarchy. Although the most important intellectual movement of the time, the Enlightenment was only one trend. Methodism in England demonstrated the continued appeal of religion. Novels offered sentimentality and emotion as an alternative to rationalism. Ideas were popularized through reading clubs, coffee houses, and interest groups. During the 18th century, ideas concerning children changed. Care of children involved less harsh correction and greater concern for play and education. There appear to have been stronger emotional ties among all family members.

D. Ongoing Change in Commerce and Manufacturing

Western consumers began to buy the products of colonial plantations, such as sugar, coffee, and tea. New technologies to increase productivity were introduced in agriculture. The spread of potato cultivation improved food supplies. During the 18th century, household production of textiles spread rapidly. Capitalist merchants supplied raw materials to households who produced yarn or cloth. Technology in the weaving industry spurred production. Improvements in agriculture and the demand for labor produced rapid population growth after 1730. The increased population enhanced the process of proletarianization.

E. Innovation and Instability

During the 18th century, changes in economy, social organization, politics, and culture were intertwined. The process of change produced a particularly dynamic society whose position depended on establishing a prominent position in the world trade system.

V. Global Connections: Europe and the World

In 1450, Europeans saw Christianity as making them superior, though they were impressed by other civilizations achievements. With the Scientific Revolution, Europe began to critique societies based on their technology and their rationalism, increasingly viewing other societies as backwards and a source of the bizarre.
TIMELINE

Insert the following events into the timeline. This should help you to compare important historical events chronologically.

- end of Thirty Years’ War
- Luther initiates Protestant Reformation
- Newton publishes *Principia*
- Kay introduces flying shuttle to weaving
- Glorious Revolution in England
- Edict of Nantes offers religious toleration in France

TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS

The following terms, people, and events are important to your understanding of the chapter. Define each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/Person/Event</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Niccolo Machiavelli</td>
<td>humanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johannes Gutenberg</td>
<td>Martin Luther</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglican Church</td>
<td>Jean Calvin</td>
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<td>Catholic Reformation</td>
<td>Jesuits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thirty Years’ War</td>
<td>Treaty of Westphalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>scientific revolution</td>
<td>witchcraft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaac Newton</td>
<td>Deism</td>
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<tr>
<td>mercantilism</td>
<td>Glorious Revolution</td>
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<td>Frederick the Great</td>
<td>Enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Smith</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
MAP EXERCISE

The following exercise is intended to clarify the geophysical environment and the spatial relationships among the important objects and places mentioned in the chapter. Locate the following places on the map.

Mark Protestant countries with a $P$ and Catholic countries with a $C$.  
Mark absolute monarchies with an $A$ and parliamentary governments with $p$.

Where were most Catholic countries located? Where were most Protestant nations? Is there any apparent connection between religious preference and the existence of absolute monarchy? Can you offer an explanation?
MAKING CONNECTIONS

The following questions are intended to emphasize important ideas within the chapter.

1. Between what dates did the major pattern of change in Western civilization occur? What are the major historical trends?
2. What are the major differences between the Italian Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance?
3. What Protestant churches were established by the Reformation? What was the nature of religious warfare?
4. Describe the causes and results of the commercial revolution.
5. What was the scientific revolution? What were some of the major discoveries?
6. What are the elements of absolute monarchy? Where did absolute monarchies develop?
7. What was the Enlightenment? How did it expand the scientific revolution?
8. How did the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment change popular culture and daily life?

PUTTING LARGER CONCEPTS TOGETHER

The following questions test your ability to summarize the major conclusions of the chapter.

1. In what ways did the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment have an impact on the political organization of Europe?
2. How did economic change between 1450 and 1750 alter the social organization of Europe?
SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. In characterizing the period from 1450 to 1750 in the West, which of the following statements is NOT accurate?
   a. What was once agricultural society had become a predominantly manufacturing economy.
   b. Government had expanded.
   c. Science came to form the centerpiece of intellectual life.
   d. The popular outlook, including ideas about personality and family as well as concepts of nature, had shifted.

2. Which of the following accounts in part for the decline of the Italian Renaissance?
   a. Venice’s political unification of all of northern Italy
   b. the Protestant Reformation
   c. the invasion of the peninsula by France and Spain
   d. the economic depression that ended artistic patronage

3. By the 16th century, at what age did most Europeans marry?
   a. 16
   b. 23
   c. 25
   d. 27

4. What was one of the primary differences between the Italian and Northern Renaissances?
   a. The Northern Renaissance occurred a century earlier than the Italian Renaissance.
   b. Northern humanists focused more on religion than their Italian counterparts.
   c. There were no major literary figures in the Northern Renaissance.
   d. The Northern Renaissance did not make use of the classical languages typical of the Italian Renaissance.

5. Which of the following statements most accurately describes popular support for Luther’s religious movement?
   a. German princes opposed Luther because he advocated the overthrow of their authority.
   b. German princes who became Protestants could increase their independence from the emperor.
   c. The poor supported Luther’s movement in return for Luther’s promise to redistribute land.
   d. German merchants refused to support Lutheranism because the new religion was opposed to profit-making.

6. Which of the following was NOT a result of the Thirty Years’ War?
   a. It reduced German prosperity and power for a full century.
   b. The treaty that ended the war established Spain as the principal power of western Europe.
   c. The treaty that ended the war granted political independence to the Protestant Netherlands.
   d. Some princely states in Germany chose one religion, some another.
7. Which of the following was characteristic of the commercial revolution of the 16th century?
   a. Imports of American bullion led to a decline in prices in western Europe.
   b. European nations progressively adopted free trade and dropped tariff systems.
   c. The establishment of colonies led to increased foreign competition and a decline in European manufacturing.
   d. The commercial revolution saw the formation of great trading companies which purchased monopolies of trade with specific regions or over specific commodities.

8. Louis XIV of France was associated with the form of government called
   a. enlightened despotism.
   b. corporatism.
   c. feudal monarchy.
   d. absolute monarchy.

9. Which of the following states stood apart from the trend toward absolute monarchy in the 17th century and retained a parliamentary regime?
   a. France
   b. Britain
   c. Spain
   d. Austria-Hungary

10. What crop introduced into Europe in the 17th century substantially improved the food supply?
    a. cucumbers
    b. peas
    c. millet
    d. potatoes