CHAPTER 14
The Age of Confessional Divisions, 1550-1618

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

The late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century was a period characterized by anxiety for the European people. Confessional divisions, inflation and population expansion exacerbated religious and political tensions and provoked civil wars. European states allied themselves with the churches in an attempt to discipline their peoples.

A. The Peoples of Early Modern Europe

1. Introduction

From the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, Europe experienced several crises caused by periodic famine, plagues such as the Black death and economic collapse that led to population decline. In the sixteenth century the population and economic life began to rebound.

2. The Population Recovery

During the lost sixteenth century (ca. 1480-1640) the population of Europe grew from 60.9 million to 77.9 million. The rate of population growth was much higher in northern Europe than in southern Europe with France having the largest population. The population and economic growth of this period can be explained in part by the change from subsistence to commercial crops, which produced greater availability of food, and fewer children starved.

3. The Prosperous Village

The success of commercial agriculture required on the availability of free labor, access of capital investment and markets. Villages like Buia in northeastern Italy made a successful transition from subsistence to commercial crops because serfdom no longer existed in the area allowing people to sell their labor, the form feudal lords were willing to invest their capital in the village and the village had access to the markets of Venice.

4. The Regulated Cities

By the 1480s cities had begun to grow as the surplus population and crops of the villages flowed to the cities. The cities were unhealthy places with no sewage systems and were cluttered with people, animals and garbage, which made them vulnerable to epidemics. City governments made up of officials
elected by the richer inhabitants attempted to deal with the problem of a growing population. They maintained grain storehouses and regulated the price of bread to ensure that the poor had access to food. They also implemented swift and gruesome punishment for even petty crimes. The cities’ economic guilds ensured the quality of the cities’ economic production. As much as a quarter of the cities’ population was the destitute. Several public and religious institutions helped provide for the welfare of the indigent by establishing orphanages, hospitals and poorhouses. Efforts were also undertaken to distinguish between the “honest” and “dishonest poor.”

5. Price Revolution

The Price inflation was one of the major problems of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Inflation was partly the result of the discovery of new sources of gold in Africa and silver in central Europe and in Potosí (Bolivia). Inflation caused widespread human suffering for the common people whose real wages declined as the cost of living increased substantially. The Price inflation severely weakened governments whose sources of taxes became inadequate to cover the government expenses. Charles V resorted to deficit financing by selling juros to cover the expenses of his wars, and his son Philip II of Spain was forced to declare bankruptcy.

B. Disciplining the People

1. Introduction

The First generation of Protestant and Catholic reformers had dealt with doctrinal disputes. Their successors faced the more formidable task of building institutions that firmly established Catholic and Protestant cultures.

2. Establishing Confessional Identities

Between 1560 and 1650 confessional identities shaped European culture. A confessional consisted of the followers of a particular statement of religious belief. For Lutherans it was the Confession of Augsburg, for Calvinists the Helvetic Confessions, for Anglicans, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and for Catholics the decrees of the Council of Trent. Based on these statements of faith, clergy disciplined the people and promoted a distinct culture and behavior pattern. The princes of each state associated conformity to the particular religious confession with loyalty to the prince. In each state the clergy of the dominant confession became members of the bureaucracy and received government stipends.

3. Policing the Family

All religious groups viewed the authority of the father over the family as the foundation of society. The father’s authority reflected the authority of the clergy and state over society.
In the same period the structure of the family underwent a major transformation. The new family pattern first appeared in Northern Europe when couples began to marry in their mid- to late-twenties. Parental approval remained more important than romantic love in choosing a spouse. The new families were also smaller as families began to space out their children.

From the fifteenth century onward, middleclass families began to place greater emphasis on the moral guidance and religious education of their children. Also great emphasis was placed on strict discipline. The ideal father cultivated both love and fear in his children.

4. Supressing Popular Culture

Religious Reformers placed great emphasis in purifying society by imposing strict regulation of human behavior. They acted to suppress un-Christian practices in popular culture such as rough sports, card games, drinking and dressing up in costumes. One of their main targets was the festival of Carnival, which preceded Lent. They also used preaching and instruction to encourage values of thrift, modesty and chastity.

5. Hunting Witches

The major manifestation of the great anxiety felt by people in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the witch hunting. Thousands of people were accused and tried for practicing witchcraft either in the form of maleficia (doing harm) or diabolism (devil worship). In the German lands between 1550-1650, over 100,000 people were tried for witchcraft and about 50,000 executed.

C. Confessional States

1. Introduction

In 1555 the Peace of Augsburg provided the solution to the religious divisions caused by the Protestant Reformation in the principle cuius region eius religio whereby the ruler determined the religion of the land. It was expected that a state would have one king, one faith and one law and no religious group—Lutheran, Calvanist or Catholic—advocated toleration. In states where significant religious minorities existed, there was constant tension and suspicion which at times led to civil wars. In each religious group there appeared persons, commonly called fanatics, who were willing to pursue their mission to violent ends.

2. The French Wars of Religion

By 1560, there were significant communities of French Calvinists called Huguenots, which included large numbers of nobles. The accidental death of King Henry II (r. 1547-1559) of France, left his fifteen-year-old son, Francis II (r. 1559-1560) and, widowed queen, Catherine de Medici in control of the
kingdom. Francis II and his successors failed to maintain the internal peace of the country. The result was a confusing set of intrigues between the royal family, the leading Huguenot nobles led by the Châtillon family and Catholic nobles led by the Guise family. When a plot to kill the Guise was discovered, the Protestant plotters were ambushed. The Guises were intent on the destruction of the Protestants and in 1562 massacred the Protestant congregation of the village of Vassy. In response Protestant nobles led by the Bourbon family and Henry of Navarre raised armies and initiated a civil war that lasted forty years. Neither side was able to gain a decisive advantage. In 1572 an attempt was made to end the wars when Henry of Navarre was offered the hand of Henry II’s daughter, Marguerite Valois in marriage. When Protestants arrived in Paris for the wedding, many were slaughtered by the Guise retainers with the approval of Queen Catherine de Medici and King Charles IX in what came to be known as Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. Many other Huguenots were murdered throughout France, but the leaders escaped.

In the aftermath of the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, the religious wars were renewed. Huguenot political thinkers François Hotman and Théodore de Beze launched an attack on the monarchy itself by justifying political revolution, arguing that since the authority of all officials even the low nobility came from God, they were obligated to resist tyrannical kings. The assassination of King Henry III in 1589 left Henry Bourbon, king of Navarre and leader of the Huguenots, as sole successor to the French throne. In order to make his claim acceptable, Henry IV renounced Protestantism and converted to Catholicism. The conversion, allowed Henry to claim the support of the papacy and the moderate Catholics. Resistance to the monarchy collapsed. In 1589, Henry conciliated Huguenots by offering them limited toleration in the Edict of Nantes. During his reign he promoted economic development of the kingdom. The passions of religious division were not entirely calmed. After 18 attempts on his life he was finally assassinated in 1610.

3. Philip II, the King of Paper

Spain under Charles V abdicated in favor of King Philip II. Spain was the most powerful state in Europe. His domain included Naples, Milan, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the colonies of the New World. Philip exercised a personal supervision over the affairs of his far-flung empire from the seclusion of the palace of El Escorial, making him an office-bound bureaucrat. Philip saw himself as the protector of Catholicism and enemy of Muslims and Protestants. Fearful that the Moriscos of Spain would give support to the Ottoman Turks, he banned all vestiges of Muslim culture. He also maintained garrisons in North Africa and joined with Venice in defeating the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Briefly married to Mary I, the Catholic queen of England, Philip hoped to retain England for Catholicism and as a Spanish ally. But Mary’s successor, Elizabeth I, returned to the Protestant Anglican Church and allowed English pirates to attack Spanish ships. In 1588 Philip amassed a
4. The Dutch Revolt

The Netherlands held some of Europe’s richest cities. In 1548, Charles V had annexed the northern provinces to the southern provinces he had inherited from his father to they were not subject to the clauses of the Peace of Augsburg allowing local provinces to determine the religion of their lands. The consolidation of the region under Spanish rule was very difficult. Philip’s harsh attitudes toward Protestantism and the arrival of French Huguenot refugees increased the fanatical anti-Catholicism of the Calvinists. In 1566, Calvinists attacked Catholic churches and destroyed paintings and statues. In response Philip introduced the Spanish Inquisition to the Netherlands and dispatched an army under the command of the Duke of Alba to restore order. Alba imposed a martial reign of terror. Protestant nobles and suspected revolutionaries were executed under the authority of the military tribunal, the Council of Blood. Alba’s cruelty backfired and a full-scale civil war between the Spanish and Protestants ensued after 1572. The Protestants led by Prince William the Silent of Orange controlled the provinces of Holland and Zealand. Alba’s failure led to his removal leaving unpaid Spanish troops to loot Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp, which were loyal to Spain. The seven northern provinces declared independence in 1581 with William the Silent as stadholder, while the 10 southern provinces remained loyal to Spain. The Dutch carried on a sporadic war until they were recognized as independent in 1648

5. Literature of the Age of Confessional Division

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century saw the vernacular languages of Europe become literary languages. In France royal decrees in 1520 and 1539 made French the official Language. The greatest French writers of the period were François Rebelais (1483-1553) and Michal de Montaigne (1533-1592). In Portugal, Luis Vas de Camões (1524-1580) wrote the Lusiads (1572) a great epic poem celebrating Vasco da Gama’s discovery of the sea route to India. In Spain, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616) who participated in the Battle of Lepanto and spent five years in a Turkish prison wrote Don Quixote. In England, Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) avoided the civil wars affecting other parts of the continent. Among the great literary figures was the poet Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Edmund Spencer. The major literary figure was the dramatist William Shakespeare (1564-1616).
D. States and Confessions in Eastern Europe

1. Introduction

Eastern Europe escaped the religious controversies that disrupted the confessional states of Western Europe.

2. The Dream World of Emperor Rudolf

The Holy Roman Empire was made up one emperor, seven electors and hundreds of small states. The empire famed many challenges caused by the turmoil resulting from the Lutheran reformation and the foreign threat of the French in the West and the Ottoman empire in the east. A further crippling weakness was the lack of leadership of emperor Rudolf II (r. 1576-1612) who was incapable of governing because of mental illness. Without a strong emperor, the empire was unable to function and religious conflict was allowed to reach a boiling point.

3. The Renaissance of Poland-Lithuania

Late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Poland-Lithuania experienced a great cultural revival. Many of its greatest minds went to study at Italian universities. Politically Poland was ruled by an elected king. The nobles held real power through their control of the provincial assemblies and by demanding the principle of unanimity in the diet. They also had the right to organize armed confederations to resist the power of the king. The rule of the nobles in Poland-Lithuania hurt the peasant by forcing them into serfdom and depriving them of legal rights. During the mid-sixteenth century Poland-Lithuania held great religious diversity. During the late sixteenth century Poland-Lithuania reconverted to Catholicism through the work of the Jesuits.

4. The Troubled Legacy of Ivan the Terrible

Russia experienced the strengthening of royal power in the sixteenth century. The grand-dukes of Moscow freed themselves from the control of the Tartars in the fifteenth century. They then increased their authority at the expense of the nobles (boyars) and cities while allowing nobles to impose serfdom on the peasants. Ivan III, “the great” (1462-1505) married a Byzantine princess and adopted the title of tsar. Ivan IV, “the Terrible” (1533-1584) carried out a reign of terror against his enemies. He set aside half of the kingdom for his personal domain and used it to finance the army, which successfully fought Poland-Lithuania and Sweden. In the early seventeenth century, Russia experienced great chaos known as the “Time of Troubles” (1604-1613), which concluded with the election of Michael Romanov as tzar.
TIMELINE

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

- Calvinists begin revolt of Netherlands
- Moriscos expelled from Spain
- Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre
- Edict of Nantes
- Defeat of the Spanish Armada

1566
1572
1588
1598
1609

TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS

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

Catherine de Medici  Guise family  Pappenheimer Family
Henry IV of France  Huguenots  Michael Romanov
Saint Bartholomew’s Day  Edict of Nantes  Ivan “the Terrible”
Poland-Lithuania  Philip II of Spain  Spanish Armada
Revolt of the Netherlands  Duke of Alba  William the Silent
Time of Troubles  Stanislaus Hosius  Luís Vaz de Camões
William Shakespeare  Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra  Michel Montaigne
Price Revolution  Confessions  auto-da-fé
Carnival  magic  witch-hunt
fanatic  French Wars of Religion  Dutch Revolt
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.

1. Locate the following places on the map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>Poland-Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>Bavaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAKING CONNECTIONS

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

1. What was the price revolution? How did it affect people?

2. In what ways did the family structure change in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries?

3. How did cities attempt to regulate the lives of people living in them?

4. How did religious differences lead to internal violence in France and the Spanish Empire? How were the revolutions different? How were they similar?

5. In what ways did Poland-Lithuania and Russia develop differently in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries?

6. In what ways did the union between church and political authority help discipline the peoples?

DOCUMENT QUESTIONS

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

1. In what ways does the document “Disciplining Children and Encouraging Informants” reflect the idea that children’s behavior must be strictly controlled?

2. How does the document “How Women came to be accused of Witchcraft” reflect popular fears about the actions of witches?

PUTTING LARGER CONCEPTS TOGETHER

1. How did demographic and economic changes affect European society in the period 1480-1640? Describe the impact of population rates, commercial agriculture, urbanization, guilds, banking, and the Price Revolution.

SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. Which of the following did NOT occur during the Price Revolution?
   a. Grain prices rose faster than those of manufactured goods.
   b. Landlords with long-term rents suffered.
   c. Landlords received payment in kind benefits.
   d. Wages continued to rise throughout the century.

2. Magical practices and the belief in witchcraft
   a. were restricted to the poor and illiterate.
   b. were limited to circles of witches and sorcerers.
   c. appealed to people at all levels of society.
   d. were virtually unknown in the sixteenth century.

3. The most common targets of investigation for magical practices were
   a. the insane.
   b. children.
   c. men.
   d. women.

4. Which of the following community activities was strongly attacked by religious reformers?
   a. perambulation
   b. All Hallows’ Eve
   c. Carnival
   d. rites of May

5. In the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre
   a. Henry Bourbon was assassinated.
   b. the Guises were assassinated.
   c. there was indiscriminate slaughter of Protestants, but most of the Huguenot leaders escaped.
   d. there was indiscriminate slaughter of Catholics, but most of the Catholic leaders escaped.
6. Which of the following was initially a French Huguenot?
   a. Henry Guise
   b. Henry Bourbon of Navarre
   c. Catherine de Medicis
   d. Henry II

7. Which Russian ruler succeeded in getting rid of the Tartar Woke?
   a. Ivan III, the Grea
   b. Henry II
   c. Catherine de Medicis
   d. Ivan IV, “The Terrible”

8. Who was the author of *Don Quixote*?
   a. Luis Vas de Camões
   b. William Shakespeare
   c. Michal de Montaigne
   d. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

9. During the reign of Elizabeth I, England
   a. conquered France.
   b. became Catholic.
   c. Queen Elizabeth carried out a reign of terror against the nobility.
   d. avoided religious wars.

10. During the late sixteenth century, Poland became Catholic through
    a. the efforts of Michal de Montaigne.
    c. religious wars.
    d. the epic poem, the *Lusiads*.
    d. the reign of terror of Ivan IV.