

I. The French Wars of Religion

A. Calvinism and Catholicism had become **militant** (combative) religions by 1560. Their struggle for converts and against each other was the main cause of Europe's sixteenth century religious wars.

B. The French civil wars known as the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) were shattering. The **Huguenots** were French Protestants influenced by John Calvin. Only 7 percent of the population, Huguenots made up almost 50 percent of the nobility, including the house of Bourbon, which ruled Navarre and was next in line for the Valois dynasty.

C. The Valois monarchy was strongly Catholic. A group in France called the **ultra-Catholics** also strongly opposed the Huguenots.

D. Many townspeople were willing to help nobles weaken the monarchy, so they became a base of opposition against the Catholic king. Civil war raged for 30 years until in 1589, **Henry of Navarre**, leader of the Huguenots, succeeded to the throne as Henry IV.

E. He converted to Catholicism because he realized that a Protestant would not have the support of French Catholics. He issued the **Edict of Nantes** in 1598. It recognized Catholicism as France's official religion, but gave the Huguenots the right to worship and to have all political privileges, such as holding office.

II. Philip II and Militant Catholicism

A. King Philip II of Spain was the greatest supporter of militant Catholicism. He ruled from 1556 to 1598, and his reign began a period of cultural and political greatness in Spain.

B. Philip II wanted to consolidate control over his lands—Spain, the **Netherlands**, and possessions in Italy and the Americas. He strengthened his control of his domain by insisting on strict adherence to Catholicism and support for the monarchy. Spain saw itself as the nation God chose to save Catholic Christianity from the Protestant heretics.

C. Philip II became a champion of Catholicism. Under Spain's leadership he formed a Holy League against the Turks. He roundly defeated their fleet in the famous Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

D. The Spanish Netherlands—modern Netherlands and **Belgium**—was very rich. Nobles there resented Philip II trying to consolidate his control of their lands. He also tried to crush Calvinism there. When Calvinists began to destroy church statues, Philip sent ten thousand troops to stop the rebellion.

E. In the north, the Dutch prince **William the Silent** offered growing resistance to Philip. In 1609, a 12-year truce stopped the wars. The north became the United Provinces of the Netherlands, which was one of Europe's great powers and the core of the modern Dutch state.

F. Spain was the world's most populous empire when Philip's reign ended in 1598. It seemed a great power, but in reality Philip had bankrupted the country by spending too much on war. His successor continued to overspend, now on court life. Further, Spain's armed forces were out-of-date and the government was inefficient. Real power shifted to England.

III. The England of Elizabeth

A. Elizabeth Tudor ascended to the throne of England in 1558. During her reign, this small island became the leader of the Protestant nations and laid the foundation for becoming a world empire.

B. Elizabeth quickly tried to resolve the religious conflicts. She repealed laws favoring Catholics. A new Act of Supremacy named her as “the only supreme governor” of church and state. The Church of England practiced a moderate Protestantism.

C. Elizabeth was moderate in foreign affairs as well. She tried to keep France and Spain from becoming too powerful by supporting first one and then the other, balancing their power. Even so, she could not escape a conflict with Spain. Philip II had long toyed with the idea of invading England to return it to Catholicism.

D. In 1588, Spain sent an **armada**—a fleet of warships—to invade England. Yet the fleet that sailed had neither the manpower nor the ships to be victorious. The Spanish fleet was battered in numerous encounters and finally sailed home by a northward route around **Scotland** and **Ireland**, where storms sank many ships.