

In an attempt to obtain religious adherence, some princes declared that church attendance would be mandatory and those who were absent would be punished. Nonetheless, compelling people to attend Sunday services did not guarantee what or even if they believed. One can never know how typical were the thoughts of one girl who related that the sermon she had just sat through was "such a deale of bible babble that I am weary to heare yt and I can then sitt downe in my seat and take a good napp." In one English parish in 1547, it was reported that "when the vicar goeth into the pulpit to read what [he] himself hath written, then the multitude of the parish goeth straight out of the church, home to drink."

In some places, to be sure, ordinary Protestants and Catholics coexisted and even shared churches. In Saxony, Catholics heard Mass in the lavishly decorated front part of a church and Lutherans used the end of the nave, which had little adornment, for their own services, by common accord. The division of the church was marked by a painting of the Last Supper, the importance of which both sides agreed upon. In some towns in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century, dissenters from the Dutch Reformed religion, including Catholics, could worship in churches that were deliberately hidden from public view. Ordinary people thus greatly contributed to the religious peace that emerged in the immediate post-Reformation period, sometimes defying tyrannical rulers who insisted on religious orthodoxy.

The Peace of Augsburg and the Council of Trent did not end the rivalry between Catholics and Protestants, nor, for that matter, the rivalry between different Protestant denominations. Religious intolerance and conflict would, to a great extent, help define the first half of the seventeenth century, the age of the wars of religion.

## THE WARS OF RELIGION



On May 23, 1618, a crowd of protesters carried a petition to Prague's Hradcany Palace, where representatives of the royal government of Bohemia were gathered. The crowd stormed into the council chamber, engaged Catholic officials in a heated debate, organized an impromptu trial, and hurled two royal delegates from the window. The crowd below roared its approval of this "defenestration" (an elegant term for throwing someone out a window), angered only that neither man was killed by the fall. Catholic partisans construed their good fortune as a miracle, as the rumor spread that guardian angels had swooped down to pluck the falling dignitaries from the air. Protestants liked to claim that the men had been saved because they fell on large dung heaps in the moat below.

The different reactions to the Defenestration of Prague illustrate how the Reformation left some of Europe, particularly the German states, a veritable patchwork of religious allegiances. Religious affiliation, like ethnicity, frequently did not correspond to the borders of states. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 ended the fighting between German Protestant and Catholic princes. It stated that the religion of each state would henceforth be that of its ruler. Hundreds of thousands of families left home and crossed frontiers in order to relocate to a state where the prince was of their religious denomination.

The German states entered a period of relative religious peace, but in France in 1572, the Huguenots (the popular name for the French Protestants) rebelled against Catholic domination, setting off a civil war. Moreover, after years of mounting religious and political tension, Dutch Protestants led the revolt against Spanish Catholic authority in 1572, beginning a bitter struggle that lasted until the middle of the next century.

Then in 1618, religious wars broke out again in the German states with unparalleled intensity. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) devastated Central Europe, bringing into the conflict, in one way or another, almost all of the powers of Europe. Armies reached unprecedented size, and fought with a cruelty that may also have been unprecedented.

The wars of religion in France and the Thirty Years' War began because of religious antagonisms, but the dynastic ambitions of French princes lay

not far behind the rivalry between Protestants and Catholics. In the Thirty Years' War, the dynastic rivalry between the Bourbons of France and the Habsburgs of Austria—both Catholic dynasties—came to the fore, eventually dominating religious considerations.

The wars of religion resulted in the strengthening of the monarchies of France, Austria, and the smaller German states as well. Kings and princes further extended their administrative, judicial, and fiscal reach over their subjects in the interest of maintaining control over their populations and waging war. In France, a stronger monarchy emerged out of the trauma of religious struggles and competing claimants to the throne. Germany, in contrast, remained divided into several strong states and many smaller ones. Competing religious allegiances reinforced German particularism, that is, the multiplicity of independent German states.

## THE WARS OF RELIGION IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Early in the sixteenth century, France was divided by law, customs, languages, and traditions. Under King Francis I (ruled 1515–1547), the Valois monarchy effectively extended its authority. Of Francis I, it was said, “If the king endures bodily fatigues unflinchingly, he finds mental preoccupations more difficult to bear.” Yet, the French monarch ruled with an authority unequaled in Europe, however much he was still dependent on the good will of nobles. When the king sought loans to continue a war, a Parisian noble assured him that “we do not wish to dispute or minimize your power; that would be a sacrilege, and we know very well that you are above the law.”

When the Reformation reached France in the 1540s and 1550s, Calvinism won many converts (see Chapter 3). At a time when nobles were resisting the expansion of the king's judicial prerogatives and the proliferation of his officials, religious division precipitated a crisis of the French state and brought civil war.

### *A Strengthened Monarchy*

Francis I and his successors became more insistent on their authority to assess taxes on the towns of the kingdom, many of which had held privileged exemptions granted in exchange for loyalty. Raising an army or royal revenue depended on the willingness of the most powerful nobles to answer the king's call. The monarchs had justified such requests with an appeal to the common good in tactful language that also held out the possibility of the use of force. Now the French king wished to tax the towns even when there was no war.

Francis reduced the authority of the Catholic Church in France. The Concordat of Bologna (1516), signed between Francis and Pope Leo X, despite



King Francis I of France, looking very regal and proud of his increased authority, despite not being painted wearing his crown.

the resistance of the French clergy, established royal control over ecclesiastical appointments. Many more royal officials now represented and enforced the royal will in the provinces than ever before. One sign of the growing power of the monarchy was that nobles lost some privileges of local jurisdiction to the royal law courts. Francis confirmed and enhanced Paris's identity as the seat and emerging symbol of royal power. The sale of offices originated in the king's desire for the allegiance of nobles and for the revenue they could provide the monarchy. His successors would depend increasingly on the sale of offices

and titles for raising revenue. Finding nobles unwilling to provide all the funds the king desired, the monarchy, in turn, put the squeeze on peasants, extracting more resources through taxation.

The political and religious crises in the middle decades of the sixteenth century threatened monarchical stability in France. They pushed the country into a period of chaos brought by the lengthy, savage war of religion during which the four Valois kings who succeeded Francis I proved unable to rule effectively.

### *Economic Crisis*

The end of a period of economic expansion provided a backdrop for the political and religious struggles of the French monarchy. The population of France had risen rapidly between the late fifteenth century and about 1570, reversing the decline in population resulting from plagues and natural disasters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Land under cultivation increased, particularly near the Mediterranean, where landowners planted olive trees on hills and terraces. But by 1570, the increase in cultivable land slowed down in much of France. The European population, which had risen to about 100 million people during the sixteenth century, outstripped available resources. Prices rose rapidly in France, as in most of Europe, pushed upward relentlessly by population increase. Beginning in the late 1550s, the

purchasing power of the laborer declined dramatically, whereas that of landowners remained stable, fed by high prices. As agricultural income fell, nobles demanded vexing services from peasants, such as repairing roads and paths on their estates. Many wealthy nobles rented out land to tenant farmers, then took the proceeds back to their luxurious urban residences. Nobles of lesser means, however, did not do as well as the owners of great estates, because the rents they drew from their land failed to keep pace with rising prices.

As the price of profitable land soared, peasant families tried to protect their children by subdividing land among male offspring. Many peasants with small parcels of land became sharecroppers at highly disadvantageous terms—working someone else's land for a return of roughly half of what was produced. Both trends worked against increased agricultural efficiency, reducing land yields. Landless laborers were barely able to sustain themselves.

Taxes and tithes (payments owed the Catholic Church—in principle, 10 percent of income) weighed heavily on the poor. Peasants, particularly in the southwest, sporadically revolted against taxes, and against their landlords, during the period from 1560 to 1660. The popular nicknames of some of the groups of rebels reflect their abject poverty and desperation: the “poor wretches,” who rose up against the nobles in central and southern France in 1594–1595, and the “bare feet.” Many of the rebels espoused the popular belief that their violence might restore an imagined world of social justice in which wise rulers looked after the needs of their people.

### *French Calvinists and the Crisis of the French State*

Followers of John Calvin arriving in France from nearby Geneva attracted converts in the 1540s and 1550s. Henry II (ruled 1547–1559), who succeeded his father Francis I, began a religious repression that created Calvinist martyrs, perhaps further encouraging Protestant dissent. The spread of Calvinism led the king to sign the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, ending the protracted struggle between France and Spain. After decades of reckless invasions, Henry II agreed to respect Habsburg primacy in Italy and control over Flanders. King Philip II (ruled 1556–1598) of Spain, in return, promised that Spain would desist in its attempts to weaken the Valois kings. These two most powerful kings in Europe ended their struggle for supremacy not only because their resources were nearly exhausted, but also because as Catholic rulers they viewed with alarm the spread of Calvinism in Western Europe, both within the Netherlands (a rich territory of the Spanish Habsburgs) and within France itself. After signing the treaty, Henry II and Philip II could now turn their attention to combating Protestantism.

Some nobles in France, wary of the extending reach of the Valois monarchy and tired of providing funds for wars, resisted the monarchy. The conflict between the monarchy and the nobility compounded growing religious

division in the last half of the sixteenth century. Perhaps as many as 40 percent of French nobles converted to Calvinism, some of them nobles of relatively modest means squeezed by economic setbacks.

In 1559, King Henry II was accidentally killed by an errant lance during a jousting tournament celebrating peace with Spain. He was succeeded by his fifteen-year-old son, who became Francis II (ruled 1559–1560). Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589), Henry II's talented, manipulative, and domineering widow, served as regent to the first of her three sickly and incapable sons. Catherine was reviled as a "shopkeeper's daughter," as her Florentine ancestors had been merchants, bankers, and money changers, all things incompatible with the French concept of nobility (but not with the Italian one). That she was the daughter of the man to whom Machiavelli had dedicated *The Prince* added to the "legend of the wicked Italian queen" in France.

The throne immediately faced challenges to its authority by three powerful noble families, each dominating large parts of France. Religious differences sharpened the rivalry between them. The Catholic Guise family, the strongest, concentrated its influence in northern and eastern France. In the south, the Catholic Montmorency family, one of the oldest and wealthiest in the kingdom, held through marriage alliances the allegiance of some of the population there. The influence of the Huguenot Bourbon family extended into central France and also reached the far southwestern corner.

In 1560, Louis, prince of Condé (1530–1569), a member of the Huguenot Bourbon family, conspired to kidnap Francis II and remove him from the clutches of the House of Guise, who were related to Francis's wife, Mary Stuart, queen of Scotland. The Guise clan, who discovered the plot, killed some of the Bourbon conspirators. Francis died after a stormy reign of only eighteen months, succeeded by his ten-year-old brother Charles IX (ruled 1560–1574), under the regency of their mother.



Catherine de' Medici, widow of Henry II, served as regent to Francis II.

The rivalry between the Guise, Montmorency, and Bourbon families undermined royal authority. Henry II's lengthy war with Spain had drained the royal coffers, and the economic downturn made it extremely difficult to fill them again. Catherine's efforts to bring some of the nobles who had converted to Protestantism to the royal court and to bring about a rapprochement

between the two denominations failed utterly. Such attempts only infuriated the House of Guise, several of whose members held important positions within the Catholic Church hierarchy. For their part, Philip II of Spain and the Jesuit religious order backed the Guise family. The political crisis of France, then, became increasingly tied to the struggle of the Church with Protestants.

Taking advantage of the confusion surrounding the throne, French Calvinists became bolder in practicing their religion. Religious festivals occasioned brawls between Catholics and Huguenots. Calvinists seized control of Lyon in 1562, forcing the rest of the population to attend their services. Where they were a majority, Calvinists desecrated Catholic cemeteries, smashed ornate stained-glass windows, shattered altar rails of churches, and covered statues of saints with mud. Catholics replied by slaughtering Calvinists, more than once forcing them to wear crowns of thorns, like Christ, to their death. Both sides burned the "heretical" books of the other denomination. The violence of a holy war was accentuated by rumors that the Huguenots indulged in orgies, while Protestants accused Catholics of idolatry and of doing the devil's work.

Yet in France—as in other parts of Europe where the Reformation had taken hold—some brave souls urged religion toleration. For example, an abbot warned in 1561:

I am well aware of the fact that many think it wrong to tolerate two religions in one kingdom, and in truth it could be wished that there were only one, provided it were the true religion. . . . there is indeed no sense in wanting to use force in matters of conscience and religion, because conscience is like the palm of the hand, the more it is pressed, the more it resists, and lets itself be ordered only by reason and good advice.

In 1562, the first full-scale religious war broke out in France. It began when Francis, the duke of Guise (1519–1563), ordered the execution of Huguenots who had been found worshipping on his land. In the southwestern town of Toulouse, more than 3,000 people were killed in the fighting; the bodies of Protestants were tossed into the river, and their neighborhoods were burned as part of a "purification." Members of the Catholic lay confraternities took oaths to protect France against "heresy" and erected crosses in public places as a sign of religious commitment. Catholics won back control of several major cities.

This first stage of the war, during which a Huguenot assassinated Francis, the duke of Guise, ended in 1563. A royal edict granted Huguenots the right to worship in one designated town in each region, as well as in places where Calvinist congregations had already been established. Intensifying the eagerness of the powerful quarreling noble families to impose their will on the monarchy was the fact that Francis had died childless and

young King Charles IX and his younger brother had no sons. There was no clear heir to the throne of France.

In 1567, war between French Protestants and Catholics broke out again. It dragged on to an inconclusive halt three years later in a peace settlement that pleased neither side. In 1572, Charles and Catherine, though Catholics, at first agreed to provide military support to the Dutch Protestants, who had rebelled against Spanish authority. The goal was to help weaken France's principal rival. But pressured by his mother and fearful of upsetting the more radical Catholics, as well as the pope, Charles soon renounced assistance to the Dutch and agreed to accept instead the guidance of the Catholic House of Guise. With or without the king's knowledge or connivance, the Guise family tried but failed to assassinate the Protestant leader Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1519–1572), a Montmorency who had converted to Protestantism and whom they blamed for the earlier murder of the Catholic Francis, duke of Guise.

The marriage between Charles's sister, Margaret, a Catholic Valois, and Henry of Navarre, a Bourbon Huguenot, was to be, in principle, one of religious reconciliation. The negotiations for the wedding had specified that the Huguenots in Paris come to the wedding unarmed. But the king's Guise advisers, and perhaps his mother as well, convinced him that the only way of preventing a Protestant uprising against the throne was to strike brutally against the Huguenots. Therefore, early in the morning on August 24, 1572, Catholic assassins hunted down and murdered Huguenot leaders. During what became known as the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the (new) duke of Guise killed Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, whose battered corpse was thrown through a window, castrated, and then dragged through the dusty streets of Paris by children. For six days Catholic mobs stormed through the streets, killing more than 2,000 Protestants. Outside of Paris, another 10,000 Protestants perished. The Parlement of Toulouse, one of the twelve judicial courts of medieval origin that combined judicial and administrative functions, made it legal to kill any "heretic." The pope had a special Mass sung in celebration of the slaughter. Thousands of Huguenots emigrated or moved to safer places, including fortified towns they still held in the southwest.

Charles IX died in 1574 and was succeeded by his ailing brother, Henry III (ruled 1574–1589). At his coronation, the crown twice slipped from Henry's head, a bad omen in a superstitious age. The new king was a picture of contradictions. He seemed pious, undertook religious pilgrimages, and hoped to bring about a revival of faith in his kingdom. He also spent money with abandon and enjoyed dressing up as a woman, while lavishing every attention on the handsome young men he gathered around him.

Henry III also had to confront a worsening fiscal crisis compounded by a series of meager harvests. But when he asked the provincial Estates (regional assemblies dominated by nobles) for more taxes, the king found that his promises of financial reform and of an end to fiscal abuses by royal revenue





The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, 1572, in which more than 2,000 Huguenots perished in Paris.

agents were not enough to bring forth more revenue. The Estates deeply resented the influence of Italian financiers at court, the luxurious life of the court itself, and the nobles who had bought royal favor.

The Catholic forces around the king were not themselves united. A group of moderate Catholics, known as the *politiques*, pushed for conciliation. Tired of anarchy and bloodshed, they were ready to put politics ahead of religion. The *politiques* therefore sought to win the support of the moderate Huguenots, and thereby to bring religious toleration and peace to France.

In 1576, Henry III signed an agreement that liberalized the conditions under which Protestants could practice their religion. Concessions, however, only further infuriated the intransigent Catholics, who became known as the "fanatics" (*dévots*). Angered by these concessions to Huguenots, a nobleman in the northern province of Picardy organized a Catholic League, which because of its size posed a threat not only to Huguenots but also to the monarchy. It was led by the dashing Henry, duke of Guise (1550–1588), who was subsidized by Philip II of Spain, and vowed to fight until Protestantism was completely driven from France. But another military campaign against Protestants led to nothing more than a restatement of the conditions under which they could worship.

Henry III's reconciliation with the House of Guise did not last long. The death of the last of the king's brothers, Francis, duke of Anjou, in 1584 made Henry of Navarre, a Protestant, heir to the throne. This was the Catholics' worst nightmare. The Catholic League threw its full support

behind the aged, ambitious Catholic Cardinal de Bourbon, who was next in line after Henry of Navarre.

### *Henry of Navarre*

Henry of Navarre (1553–1610) was born in the town of Pau on the edge of the Pyrenees Mountains in southwestern France. The son of Antoine of Bourbon, patriarch of the powerful Bourbon family, and Jeanne d'Albret, Henry inherited the keen intelligence of his mother and his father's indecisiveness. His mother was a committed Huguenot and raised Henry in that faith. When his father, who was notoriously unfaithful to his wife, sent her back to the southwest in 1562, Henry converted to Catholicism, his father's religion. After his father's death in battle, Henry reembraced Protestantism. Taken to the royal court as a hostage by Catherine de' Medici, he was permitted to have Huguenot tutors. Among his friends at court were the future Henry III and Henry, duke of Guise. It was after Henry of Navarre's wedding in Paris in August 1572 to Margaret, Catherine de' Medici's daughter, that the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre occurred. Henry then was given the choice of embracing Catholicism or being executed. He chose the former. When the fighting temporarily ended, Henry had more time for his favorite pursuits—pursuing women and hunting.

The Huguenots had every reason to be wary of a young man who seemed to change faiths with such ease. Furthermore, he seemed to have reconciled himself to the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, still counted the duke of Guise among his friends, had accompanied the Catholic army, albeit under guard, and had written the pope begging forgiveness for past misdeeds.

But having left Paris and the watchful eye of the Catholic dukes, Henry then formally abjured Catholicism and took up residence as royal governor in the southwest, where Protestantism was strong. There he tried to steer a path between militant Catholics and Huguenots. His endorsement of mutual religious toleration won wide approval. After Henry of Navarre became heir to the throne in 1584, the Catholic League rallied its forces, drawing its muscle from the artisans of Paris and other northern towns. In defiance of the king, it forced the Parlement of Paris to withdraw the toleration afforded the Huguenots. The Catholic League's goal was to put the Cardinal de Bourbon on the throne, although the duke of Guise wanted it for himself.

The struggle between the "three Henrys" now began in earnest. Henry (Valois) III first allied with Henry (Bourbon) of Navarre and with the duke of Montmorency against Henry, duke of Guise. The Guise family provocatively accused the king in 1585 of destroying the kingdom through inept rule and called for a rebellion that would bring the duke of Guise to the throne and drive Protestantism from the kingdom.

Henry III then switched partners, joining the duke of Guise against Henry of Navarre. The Treaty of Nemours (1585) between Catherine de' Medici and Henry, duke of Guise, abrogated all edicts of religious toleration and turned over a number of towns to the Catholic League. Now the odd man out, Henry of Navarre prepared for a new war. He denounced Spanish meddling and in a quintessentially *politique* statement, called on soldiers "to rally around me . . . all true Frenchmen without regard to religion." Although he increasingly depended on German and Swiss mercenaries for his army and benefited from the intervention of a German Protestant force, Henry's denunciation of foreign influence was a shrewd piece of political propaganda aimed at moderate Catholics—the *politiques*—and the Catholic clergy.

In 1587, Henry of Navarre defeated the combined forces of the king and the Catholic League at Coutras, near Bordeaux. Here his defensive position and use of artillery and cavalry proved decisive. But instead of following up his surprising victory by pursuing the Catholic army, Henry went back to hunting and making love. As a contemporary put it, "All the advantage of so famous a victory floated away like smoke in the wind."

That year, 1587, Queen Elizabeth I of England put to death Mary Stuart, the Catholic queen of Scots and the niece of the duke of Guise (see Chapter 5). Angered by Henry III's inability to prevent the execution of his niece, Guise, at the urging of the king of Spain, marched the next year to Paris, where he and the Catholic League enjoyed support. The Spanish king hoped to keep the French king from contemplating any possible assistance to England as the Spanish Armada sailed toward the English Channel. When Henry III sent troops to Paris to oppose the duke of Guise, the Parisian population rose in rebellion on May 12, 1588, stretching barricades throughout the city center. The king ordered his troops to withdraw. The "Day of Barricades" marked the victory of a council led by clergymen known as the Sixteen, then the number of neighborhoods in Paris.

For several years, the Sixteen had been energetically supporting the League, while denouncing the king, the Catholic *politiques*, and Huguenots with equal fervor. The hostility of the population of Paris convinced the king to accept Cardinal de Bourbon (1523–1590) as his heir, the duke of Guise as his lieutenant-general, and to convoke the Estates-General (representatives of the provincial Estates, which the monarch could summon in times of great crisis).

Then in 1588, the delegates to the Estates-General, many of them members of the Catholic League, gathered in the Loire Valley town of Blois. Scathing written grievances were submitted to the delegation, including one from Paris that denounced the king as a "cancer . . . filled with filth and infectious putrefaction" and called for "all heretics, whatever their quality, condition or estate, [to] be imprisoned and punished by being burned alive." By now, however, the English fleet had defeated Philip II's Armada in the Channel (see Chapter 5), and the nobles found Henry III



Assassination of Henry, duke of Guise.

less intimidated than they had anticipated. When the duke of Guise heard a rumor that the king was planning his assassination, he replied, "He does not dare." But Henry III's bodyguards murdered Henry, duke of Guise, shortly before Christmas 1588 in the Château of Blois, as Catherine de' Medici lay dying in a room beneath the bloody struggle. The Valois king had the Cardinal de Bourbon and other prominent members of the Catholic League arrested.

The duke of Guise's assassination drove the Catholic League to full-fledged revolt against Henry III. More than 300 towns, most of them in the north, now joined the "Holy Union" against the king. As Catholics prepared to fight Catholics, Henry of Navarre (again Protestant) appealed for peace: "We have been mad, senseless and furious for four years. Is that not enough?"

Henry III was then forced to make an alliance of convenience with Henry of Navarre against the Catholic League. As their combined armies besieged Paris, a monk assassinated Henry III in August 1589. The king's Swiss guards, who had not done a terribly good job protecting their king, threw themselves at the feet of Henry of Navarre, telling him, "Sire, you are now our king and master."

The Catholic League, however, had proclaimed five years earlier that Cardinal de Bourbon would become king upon Henry III's death. Henry imprisoned his potential rival. Henry of Navarre's forces defeated Catholic League armies twice in Normandy, in 1589 and in 1590. But once again

Henry failed to take advantage of the situation his shrewd generalship had made possible. He dawdled before finally laying siege to starving Paris.

The arrival of a Spanish army from Flanders to provision Paris helped win Henry further support from moderate Catholics, who resented Spanish intervention that might prolong the siege. Fatigue began to overcome religious conviction. Henry also played on resentment at the involvement of the pope in French affairs (Henry had been excommunicated in 1585 and, for good measure, a second time six years later). As Henry's army besieged Paris, Spanish troops defeated forces loyal to him in several provinces. The death of Cardinal de Bourbon in 1590 led Philip II to proclaim the candidacy of the late Henry II's Spanish granddaughter as heir to the throne of France, and then to suggest that he might claim it himself. In the meantime, Henry's continued successes on the battlefield and conciliatory proclamations furthered his popularity.

Henry of Navarre, a man of changing colors, had another major surprise up his sleeve. In 1593, he astonished friend and foe alike by announcing that he would now again renounce Protestantism. This move, however, reflected his shrewd sense of politics. Paris, as he put it, was worth a Mass, the price of the capital's obedience. Following his coronation as Henry IV at Chartres the following year, Paris surrendered after very little fighting. Henry's entry into his capital was a carefully orchestrated series of ceremonies that included the "cure" of hundreds of people afflicted with scrofula (a tuberculous condition) by the royal touch, a monarchical tradition in France and England that went back centuries. Henry nodded enthusiastically to the women who came to their windows to catch a glimpse of the first Bourbon king of France.

Catholic League forces gradually dispersed, one town after another pledging its loyalty to Henry, usually in return for payments. Henry's declaration of war on Spain in 1595 helped rally people to the monarchy. The pope lifted Henry's excommunication from the Church. Henry invaded Philip's territory of Burgundy, defeating his army. In 1598, the last Catholic League soldiers capitulated. Henry, having secured the frontiers of his kingdom, signed the Treaty of Vervins with Philip II to end the war that neither side could afford to continue. However, bringing stability to France would be no easy matter. The wars of religion had worsened the plight of the poor. Disastrous harvests and epidemics in the 1590s compounded the misery. The wars of the Catholic League caused great damage and dislocated the economy in many parts of France. The indiscriminate minting of coins by both sides worsened inflation.

Henry's emissaries gradually restored order by promising that "the Well-Loved," as the king became known, would end injustices and provide "a chicken in every pot." He did slightly reduce the direct tax, of which the peasants bore the brunt. Henry also rooted out some of the corruption in the farming of taxes, whereby government officials allowed ambitious middlemen to collect taxes in exchange for a share. But, in all, even more of the tax burden fell upon the poor.

Gradually Henry succeeded in putting the finances of the monarchy on a firmer footing. In 1596, he convinced an Assembly of Notables to approve a supplementary tax. A new imposition (the *paulette*) permitted officeholders, through an annual payment to the throne, to assure that their office would remain in the hands of their heirs. The *paulette* gave the wealthiest nobles of the realm a greater stake in the monarchy. But while increasing royal revenue, it intensified the phenomenon of the venality of office: the purchase of offices and the noble titles that went with them.

Henry could rarely rest at ease. In 1602 and again two years later, he uncovered plots against him by nobles in connivance with the Spanish monarchy. He survived nine assassination attempts. Indeed, Jesuit pamphleteers called for his assassination. Small wonder that he carried two loaded pistols in his belt and that some nervous soul tasted his food and drink before he did.

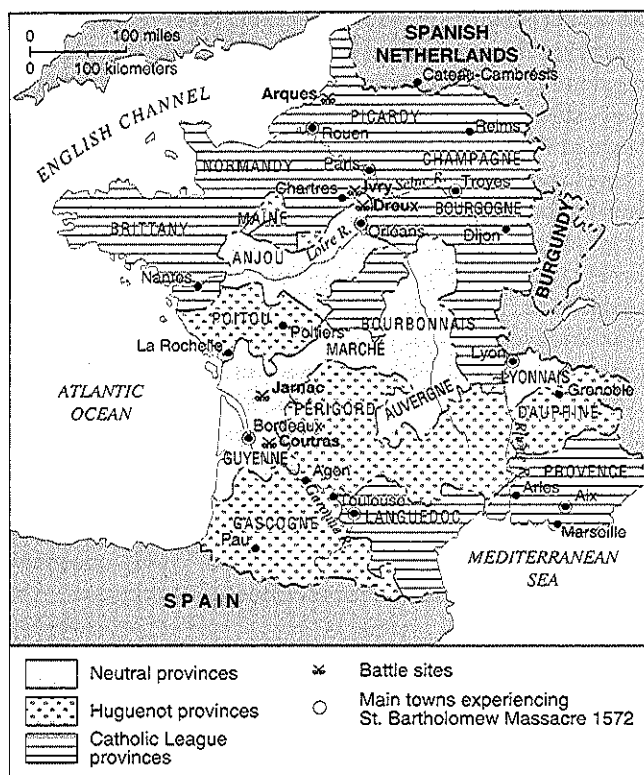
In 1598, Henry's Edict of Nantes made Catholicism the official religion of France. But it also granted the nation's 2 million Protestants (in a population of about 18.5 million) the right to worship at home, hold religious services and establish schools in specified towns—almost all in the southwest and west—and to maintain a number of fortified towns. The Edict of Nantes also established chambers in the provincial parlements, or law courts dominated by nobles, to judge the cases of Protestants (see Map 4.1).

But careful to placate powerful sources of Catholic opposition, a series of secret decrees also promised Paris, Toulouse, and other staunchly Catholic towns that Protestant worship would be forbidden within their walls. The Edict of Nantes thus left the Protestants as something of a separate estate with specified privileges and rights, but still on the margin of French life. "What I have done is for the sake of peace," Henry stated emphatically. Yet former Catholic Leaguers howled in protest. By registering royal edicts, the parlements gave them the status of law. In this case, they only gradually and grudgingly registered the edict, which provided the Huguenots with arguably more secure status than any other religious minority in Europe.

Henry's foreign policy, which appeared pro-Protestant, supporting the Dutch rebels against Spain and certain German states against the Catholic Habsburgs, was based on dynastic interests. This support of Protestant rebels and princes made it impossible for Henry to consider further concessions to the Huguenots.

At the same time, the Catholic Reformation bore fruit in France. The Church benefited from a revival in organizational zeal and popularity. Henry allowed the Jesuits to return to France in 1604, a sign that religious tensions were ebbing, and he admitted several Italian religious orders.

With various would-be assassins lurking, Henry had to think about an heir. He sought a papal annulment of his marriage to Margaret of Valois, whom he had not seen in eighteen years. While waiting, he prepared to marry one of his mistresses, but she died miscarrying their child. With the



MAP 4.1 WARS OF RELIGION IN FRANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY France at the time of the Edict of Nantes, 1598. The map indicates neutral provinces, Huguenot provinces, and Catholic League provinces during the wars of religion, as well as Huguenot and Catholic League towns and battle sites during the wars.

blessing of the Church, he then arranged to marry Marie de' Medici (1573–1642), a distant relative of Catherine de' Medici. This second marriage of convenience brought a sizable dowry that Henry used, in part, to pay off more international debts.

Intelligent and well organized, Henry kept abreast of events throughout his vast kingdom. But he had little sense of protocol, often rushing out of the Louvre palace by himself as his guards scurried to catch up. His wit was well known: when formally welcomed by a long-winded representative of the town of Amiens, who began "O most benign, greatest and most clement of kings," Henry interjected, "Add as well, the most tired of kings!" When a second spokesman began his official greeting, "Agesilaus, king of Sparta, Sire," Henry cut him short, "I too have heard of that Agesilaus, but he had eaten, and I have not."

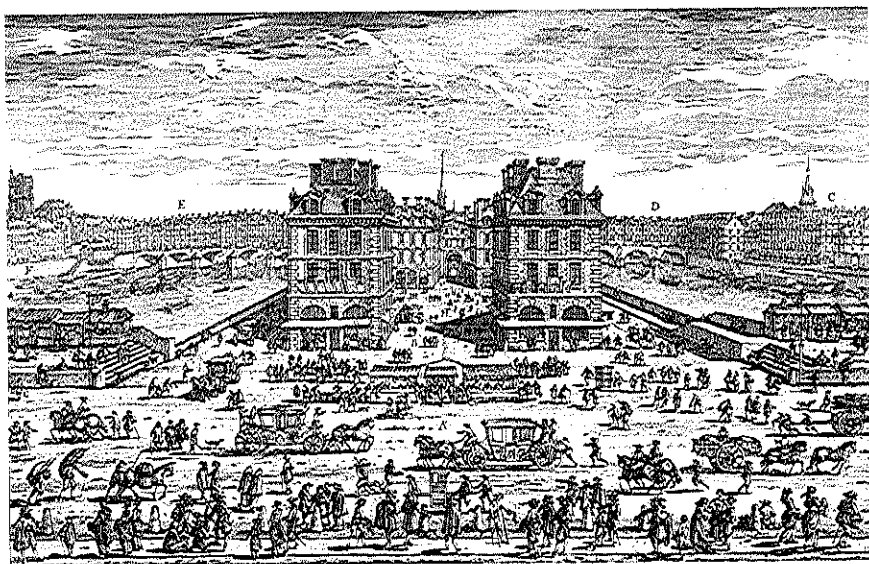
Henry had a charismatic and somewhat contradictory personality. In contrast to the portraits he encouraged depicting him as Hercules or Apollo, or arrayed in a splendid white plume and a warrior's helmet, the king of France was extremely slovenly, sometimes wearing torn or ragged clothes. He became renowned for his physical vigor on the battlefield and gambled large sums, with a notorious lack of success. Marie de' Medici bore the constant burden of her husband's various infidelities and occasional bouts of gonorrhea. Henry produced six illegitimate children by three mistresses, along with the three born to the queen. His nine offspring made up what he proudly referred to as his "herd."

Although he knew nothing of music or poetry, and regularly fell asleep at the theater, Henry IV nonetheless was a patron of new architectural projects that added to the beauty of the city of Paris and imprinted his rule upon it. He ordered the construction of four quays facilitating the docking of boats along the Seine River, and had built the splendid Place Dauphine, ringed by elegant buildings on the western end of the island of Cité, where his equestrian statue now stands. And he orchestrated the construction of the Place Royale, with pavilions of symmetrical arcades, brick construction, and steeply inclining roofs in the northern architectural style.

### *Statemaking*

Restoring monarchical prestige and authority in France, Henry IV laid the foundations for what would become the strongest power in seventeenth-

The Place Dauphine, seen here from Pont-Neuf, was one of Henry IV's grand architectural projects.





century Europe. His reign was an exercise in early modern European statemaking as he reimposed royal authority throughout the realm. Henry was suspicious of any representative institutions, which he believed threatened the exercise of royal authority: he never convoked the Estates-General, and he ignored the provincial parlements.

Henry IV made the monarchy more powerful by dispensing privilege, favors, and, above all, money with judiciousness that earned loyalty. The difficulties of extracting resources were complicated by the division of the provinces into more peripheral "state provinces" like Languedoc, Burgundy, and Provence, which had been recently added to the realm and retained some of their traditional privileges, and the "election provinces." In the former, the noble Estates assessed and collected taxation; in the latter, royal officials assumed these functions. Provincial governors represented the interests of the monarchy in the face of the privileges and resistance to taxes maintained by the provincial parlements and Estates. Conciliatory royal language began to disappear when it came to asking for money. The governors strengthened the monarchy at the expense of towns that prided themselves on their ancient privileges, further eroding their fiscal independence.

The royal privy council, some of whose members were chosen, like Sully, from the ranks of lesser nobles known for their competence and dedication, strengthened the effectiveness of state administration and foreign relations. The king personally oversaw this council, excluding troublesome nobles. Henry monitored the activities of his ambassadors and his court, whose 1,500 residents included the purveyors of perfume, of which he might have made greater use.

Much of Henry's success in achieving the political reconstruction of France can be credited to his arrogant minister of finance, Maximilien de Béthune, the baron and, as of 1604, the duke of Sully (1560–1641). Sully was the son of a prosperous Protestant family whose great wealth had earned ennoblement. He established budgets and systematic bookkeeping, which helped eliminate some needless expenses.

The monarchy gradually began to pay off some international debts, including those owed to the English crown, and the Swiss cantons, whose good will Henry needed to counter Spanish influence in the Alps. These repayments allowed Henry to contrast his honor in the realm of finances with that of the Spanish monarchy, whose periodic declarations of bankruptcy left creditors grasping at air.

Meanwhile, the nobles reaffirmed their own economic and social domination over their provinces. In 1609, Charles Loyseau, a lawyer, published a *Treatise on Orders and Plain Dignities* that portrayed French society as a hierarchy of orders, or three estates: the clergy, the nobility, and everyone else. He portrayed the king as the guarantor of this organic society. Henry restored the hierarchy of social orders based upon rank and privilege. But the boundaries between and within these estates were fairly fluid. A few



A FAUT ESPERER Q'EU SE JEU LA FINIRA BENTOT

At the time of the Estates-General in 1789, an image of an impoverished, elderly peasant carrying on his back a noble and a priest while scratching out a living from the soil.

newcomers ascended into the highest rank of dukes and peers who stood above even the "nobles of the sword," the oldest and most powerful nobles traditionally called on by the monarchy to provide military support. The "nobles of the robe," while not a coherent or self-conscious group, were men who claimed noble status on the basis of high administrative and judicial office, for example, in the parlements. Henry strengthened the social hierarchy by bolstering established institutions, including the parlements, the treasury, the universities, and, ultimately, the Catholic Church.

Henry also took an interest in encouraging French manufacturing, particularly silk and the production of tapestries. To promote internal trade, he encouraged investment in the construction of several canals linking navigable rivers. He was the first king to take an active interest in supporting a permanent French settlement in the New World, thereby increasing the prospects of French fishermen and trappers following Jacques Cartier's

exploration of the St. Lawrence River in 1534. Samuel de Champlain founded the colony of Quebec in 1608. Two years later, the first two French Jesuit missionaries arrived in what became known as New France.

On May 14, 1610, Henry's carriage became ensnared in traffic in central Paris. When some of his guards dashed forward to try to clear the way, a crazed monk named François Ravaillac jumped up to take revenge for the king's protection of Protestants. He stabbed the king three times, fatally.

### *Louis XIII and the Origins of Absolute Rule*

Henry's sudden death left Marie de' Medici, his widow, as regent for his young son, Louis XIII (ruled 1610–1643), who was eight years old at the time. Neither Philip III (ruled 1598–1621) of Spain nor James I of England, nor any of the princes of the German states, were in a position to try to intervene in France on behalf of either Huguenots or Catholics. Marie put aside Henry's planned campaign against the Habsburgs and adopted a policy that considered Catholic powers to be friends.

Marie foiled several nobles' plots against her in 1614–1616. The convocation of the Estates-General in 1614 accentuated the eagerness of noble rivals to gain influence with the young king. One of them convinced Louis to impose his own rule. The king ordered the murder of one of his mother's confidants; Louis then exiled his unpopular mother, hoping to restore calm. When a group of nobles took this as occasion to raise the standard of revolt, the young king's army defeated them at Ponts-de-Cé near Angers in 1620. The royal army then defeated a revolt by Huguenot nobles in the southwest and west.

Emotionally, the stubborn and high-strung boy-king Louis XIII never really grew up. Throughout his life, he demonstrated the psychological burdens of having been regularly whipped as punishment on his father's orders. His father's murder when he was young also marked him. Louis XIII's marriage to an Austrian princess began with a wedding-night fiasco that, whatever happened between the precocious young couple, led to a six-month period in which they did not even share a meal. Finally, things went better. After suffering several miscarriages, the queen produced an heir in 1638, but the royal couple was otherwise unhappy.

Louis XIII was intelligent and liked to sketch and listen to music, the latter calming him when he fell into a rage. He enjoyed hunting and winning at chess, once hurling the offending pieces at the head of a courtier who had the bad grace to checkmate him. Louis was a pious man who attended church every day. But he was also invariably willful, ruthless, and cruel, lashing out savagely at his enemies; indeed, no other ruler of France ordered as many executions as Louis XIII. Among those executed were a number of nobles convicted of dueling, a practice that the king detested because it represented to him the possibility that nobles could raise private armies against the throne.

During Louis XIII's reign, Cardinal Armand Jean du Plessis de Richelieu (1585–1642) expanded the administrative authority and fiscal reach of the crown, dramatically increasing tax revenues. Richelieu's family, solidly entrenched in the west of France, had long served the monarchy in court, army, and church. The gaunt, clever Richelieu staked his future on and won the patronage of the queen mother. He perfected the art of political survival during the court struggles of the next few years. Richelieu was a realist. His foreign and domestic policies reflected his *politique* approach to both.

In 1629, Richelieu prepared a long memorandum for his king. "If the King wants to make himself the most powerful monarch and the most highly esteemed prince in the world," he advised that "[The Estates and the parlements] which oppose the welfare of the kingdom by their pretended sovereignty must be humbled and disciplined. Absolute obedience to the King must be enforced upon great and small alike." Richelieu divided France into thirty-two districts (*généralités*), organizing and extending the king's authority. Officials called intendants governed each district, overseen by the king's council and ultimately responsible to the king himself.

In order to enhance the authority of the monarchy and the Church, Richelieu turned his attention to the Huguenots. After forcing the surrender of insurgent Protestant forces at La Rochelle in 1628, he ordered the destruction of the Huguenot fortresses in the south and southwest, as well as the châteaux of other nobles whose loyalty he had reason to doubt.

During the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648, see p. 145), Louis XIII, influenced by Richelieu, reversed his mother's pro-Spanish foreign policy, returning to the traditional French position of opposition to the Habsburgs. The dynastic rivalry between the two powers proved greater than the fact that both kings were Catholic. Louis XIII thus surprised and outraged the Spanish king by joining England and the Dutch Republic, both Protestant powers, against the powerful Catholic Austrian Habsburgs during the Thirty Years' War. And in 1635, France declared war against Spain itself.

Richelieu's successes, however, did not stand well with his resentful enemies within France. His toleration of Huguenot worship drew the wrath of some Catholic nobles, as did continuing costly wars against the Catholic Habsburgs, which led to French subsidies to Protestant Sweden. Revolts occurred in Dijon and Aix, both seats of provincial parlements, where local notables resented having to bow to the authority of royal officials.

One of the most conservative Catholic nobles, a royal minister, briefly turned the king against Richelieu. Marie de' Medici, returned from brief disgrace, tried to convince her son to dismiss the cagey cardinal. The "Day of Dupes" (November 10, 1630) followed, which amounted to little more than a high-stakes family shouting match between Marie de' Medici, Louis XIII, and Richelieu. Marie left thinking she had won the day, but awoke the next morning to find that the king had ordered her exile. The king's

own brother led a second plot against Richelieu from 1641 to 1642, backed by the king of Spain.

After decades of religious wars, the assassination of Henry IV, and a fragile, temperamental young monarch around whom plots swirled, the monarchy of France had nonetheless been greatly strengthened, building upon the accomplishments of his predecessor. Louis XIII's sometimes decisive and brutal actions enhanced the reputation of the king who was known to many of his subjects as "The Just," whether fitting or not. A hypochondriac whose health was even worse than he feared, Louis XIII died of tuberculosis in 1643 at the age of forty-two. But the man-child monarch had, with Richelieu, laid the foundations for absolute monarchical rule in France.



Philippe de Champagne's portrait of the sad-eyed Louis XIII.

## THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR (1618–1648)

In Central Europe, religious divisions and intolerance led to the Thirty Years' War, a brutal conflict during which the largely mercenary armies of Catholic and Protestant states laid waste to the German states. Dynastic rivalries were never far from the stage, bringing the continental Great Powers into the fray. When the war finally ended, the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) established a territorial and religious settlement that lasted until the French Revolution.

### *Factionalism in the Holy Roman Empire*

The Holy Roman Empire was a loose confederation of approximately 1,000 German autonomous or semi-autonomous states. These states ranged in size from powerful Habsburg Austria to Hamburg, Lübeck, and other free cities in the north, and even smaller territories no more than a few square kilometers in size run by bishops. It would have been almost impossible for a traveler to determine where one state stopped and another began had it not been for the frequent toll stations, which provided revenue for each. The

southwestern German state of Swabia, for example, was divided among sixty-eight secular and forty ecclesiastical lords and included thirty-two free cities.

Geographic factors further complicated the political life of the German states. A few of the largest states included territories that were not contiguous. The Upper Palatinate lay squeezed between Bohemia and Bavaria; the Lower Palatinate lay far away in the Rhineland. The former was predominantly Lutheran, the latter Calvinist.

Since 1356, when the constitutional law of the Holy Roman Empire had been established, seven electors (four electoral princes and three archbishops) selected each new Holy Roman emperor. The empire's loose federal structure had a chancery to carry out foreign policy and negotiations with the various German princes. But only in confronting the threat of the Turks from the southeast did the German princes mount a consistent and relatively unified foreign policy.

Other institutions of the Holy Roman Empire also reflected the political complexity of Central Europe. An imperial Diet brought princes, nobles, and representatives of the towns together when the emperor summoned them. An Imperial Court of Justice ruled on matters of importance to the empire. The Holy Roman Empire, once the most powerful force in Europe, had been weakened by its battles with the papacy in the thirteenth century. Yet for some states the empire offered a balance between the desire for a figure of authority who could maintain law and order and their continued political independence.

The Peace of Augsburg (1555), which ended the war between the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and the Protestant German states, had stated that, with the exception of ecclesiastical states and the free cities, the religion of the ruler would be the religion of the land (*cuius regio, eius religio*) (see Chapter 3). This formula, however, did not end religious rivalries or the demands of religious minorities that rulers tolerate their beliefs. The Peace of Augsburg, in fact, reinforced German particularism. It also helped secularize the institutions of the Holy Roman emperor by recognizing the right of the German princes to determine the religion of their states. This also served to end the hope of Charles V to establish an empire that would bring together all of the Habsburg territories in the German states, Spain, and the Netherlands.

### *The Origins of the Thirty Years' War*

Rudolf II (1557–1612), king of Bohemia and Holy Roman emperor (he succeeded his father Maximilian II as Holy Roman emperor in 1576), wanted to launch a religious crusade against Protestantism. He closed Lutheran churches in 1578, reneging on an earlier promise to Bohemian nobles that he would tolerate the religion to which a good many of them had converted.

Moreover, Rudolf's cousin Archduke Ferdinand II (1578–1637) withdrew the religious toleration Maximilian II had granted in Inner Austria.

Rudolf's imperial army, which had been fighting the Turks on and off since 1593, had annexed Transylvania. The emperor moved against Protestants both there and in Hungary. But in 1605, when Rudolf's army undertook a campaign against the Turks in the Balkans, Protestants rebelled in both places. A Protestant army invaded Moravia, which lies east of Bohemia and north of Austria, close to the Habsburg capital of Vienna. In the meantime, Emperor Rudolf, only marginally competent on his best days (he was subject to depression and later to fits of insanity), lived as a recluse in his castle in Prague. His family convinced his brother Matthias (1557–1619) to act on Rudolf's behalf by making peace with the Hungarian and Transylvanian Protestants, and with the Turks. This Peace of Vienna (1606) guaranteed religious freedom in Hungary. Matthias was then recognized as head of the Habsburgs and Rudolf's heir.

Most everyone seemed pleased with the peace except Rudolf, who concluded that a plague that was ravaging Bohemia was proof that God was displeased with the concessions he had granted Protestants. He denounced Matthias and Ferdinand for their accommodation with the Protestants and with the Turkish "infidels." Matthias allied with the Protestant Hungarian noble Estates and marched against Rudolf, who surrendered. Rudolf ceded Hungary, Austria, and Moravia to Matthias in 1608, and Bohemia in 1611. Rudolf was forced to sign a "Letter of Majesty" in 1609 that granted Bohemians the right to choose between Catholicism, Lutheranism, or one of two groups of Hussites (see Chapter 3). Protestant churches, schools, and cemeteries were to be tolerated.

The decline in the effective authority of the Holy Roman emperor contributed to the end of a period of relative peace in the German states. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, these states had become increasingly quarrelsome and militarized. "The dear old Holy Roman Empire," went one song, "How does it stay together?" Rulers of some member states began to undermine imperial political institutions by refusing to accept rulings by the Imperial Supreme Court and even to attend the occasional convocations of the Diet. "Imperial Military Circles," which were inter-state alliances responsible for defense of a number of states within the empire, had become moribund because of religious antagonisms between the member states.

For a time, the Catholic Reformation profited from acrimonious debates and even small wars between Lutherans and Calvinists. But increasingly Protestants put aside their differences, however substantial, in the face of the continued determination of some Catholic rulers to win back territories lost to Protestantism.

Acts of intolerance heated up religious rivalries. In 1606, in Donauwörth, a southern German imperial free city in which Lutherans held the upper hand and Catholics enjoyed toleration, a riot began when Lutherans tried

to prevent Catholics from holding a procession. The following year, Duke Maximilian of Bavaria sent troops to assure Catholic domination. This angered Calvinist princes in the region, as well as some Lutheran sovereigns. The imperial Diet, convoked two years later, broke up in chaos when Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II refused to increase Protestant representation in the Diet. The political crisis now spread further when some of the German Catholic states sought Spanish intervention in a dispute over princely succession in the small northern Rhineland Catholic territories of Cleves-Jülich, which Henry IV of France threatened to invade. In 1609, Catholic German princes organized a Catholic League, headed by Maximilian of Bavaria. Six Protestant princes then signed a defensive alliance, the Protestant Union, against the Catholic League.

Matthias, who had been elected Holy Roman emperor in 1612, wanted to make the Catholic League an institution of Habsburg will. He also hoped to woo Lutherans from the Protestant Union, which was dominated by the Calvinists. But Matthias's obsession with Habsburg dynastic ambitions, his history of having fought with the Protestant Dutch rebels against Spain (see Chapter 5), and his opportunistic toleration of Lutheranism cost him the confidence of some Catholic princes. Archduke Ferdinand, ruler of Inner Austria, waited in the wings to lead a Catholic crusade against Protestantism. Ferdinand, who had inherited the throne of Hungary in 1617 and that of Bohemia the following year, became Holy Roman emperor upon his uncle Matthias's death in 1619. Ferdinand was a pious man whose confessor convinced him that he could only save his soul by launching a war of religion. In the meantime, Protestant resistance in Bohemia mobilized, seeking Protestant assistance from Transylvania and the Palatinate.

### *Conflict in Bohemia*

In Bohemia, Ferdinand imposed significant limitations on Protestant worship. In Prague, Calvinists and Lutherans began to look outside of Bohemia for potential support from Protestant princes. Protestant leaders convoked



1651.  
FERDINAND II PAR LA GRACE  
DE DIEV EMPEREUR DES ROMAINS.  
A. Houssier sc.

Ferdinand II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia.





MAP 4.2 THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR, 1618–1648 Protestant and Catholic armies clashed in battles that ranged back and forth across Europe.

an assembly of the Estates of Bohemia, citing rights specified by Rudolf's "Letter of Majesty" of 1609. Ferdinand ordered the assembly to disband.

Following the Defenestration of Prague in 1618, Protestant leaders established a provisional government in Bohemia. "This business of Bohemia is likely to put all Christendom in combustion," predicted the English ambassador to the Dutch capital of Amsterdam. Indeed it began a destructive war between Catholic and Protestant forces that would last thirty years, lay waste to many of the German states, and finally bring a religious and territorial settlement that would last for two centuries.

Bohemia rose in full revolt against not only the Church but the Habsburg dynasty as well. With almost no assistance from the nobles, the rebels turned to the Protestant Union, promising the Bohemian crown to Frederick, the young Calvinist elector of the Palatinate and the most important

Protestant prince in Central Europe. In 1619, the Estates offered Frederick the crown, and he accepted.

The Protestant cause, like that of the Catholics, became increasingly internationalized and tied to dynastic considerations (see Map 4.2). Now Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II learned that Protestant rebels had refused to recognize his authority in Bohemia and had offered his throne to Frederick. Even more determined to drive Protestants from his realm but lacking an army, Ferdinand turned to outside help. The Catholic king of Spain agreed to send troops he could ill afford; the price of his intervention was the promise of the cession of the Rhineland state of the Lower Palatinate to Spain. The Catholic Maximilian I of Bavaria also sent an army, expecting to be rewarded for his trouble with the Upper Palatinate and with Frederick's title of elector in the Holy Roman Empire.

### *The Expansion of the Conflict*

Protestant armies besieged Vienna, the Habsburg capital, until the arrival of Catholic armies in 1619. The Dutch could not provide assistance to the Protestants, as they were fighting for independence from Spain. Several of the German Protestant states also declined, fearing Catholic rebellions in their own lands. However, with Spanish armies and monies already on the way, the internationalization of the Bohemian crisis had reached the point of no return.

In 1620 the Catholic League raised a largely Bavarian army of 30,000 troops. Count Johannes von Tilly (1559–1632) commanded the Catholic forces. The depressed, indecisive count from Flanders managed to subdue Upper Austria and then defeated the main Protestant Union army at the Battle of White Mountain, near Prague, in November. With the Catholic forces now holding Bohemia, Tilly's army then overran Silesia, Moravia, Austria, and part of the Upper Palatinate. The extent of the Catholic victory expanded the war, increasing the determination of the Catholic League to crush all Protestant resistance and, at the same time, of the Protestant forces to resist at all costs.

Frederick's Protestant forces fought on, counting on help from France and other states who had reason to fear an expansion of Habsburg power in Central Europe. Frederick also hoped to convince James I of England that a victory of the Catholic League would threaten Protestantism. But the English king had placed his hopes on the marriage of his son, Charles, to the sister of Philip IV of Spain (see Chapter 5). Again dynastic rivalries outweighed those of religion.

The war went on, and Tilly's army won a series of small victories. In 1622, the Spanish army defeated Dutch forces at Jülich in the Rhineland, eliminating any possibility of English armed assistance to Frederick through Holland. For the moment, Frederick's only effective force was a plundering mercenary horde in northeastern Germany. Tilly's victory over a Protestant army in 1623

and conquest of most of the Palatinate forced Frederick to abandon his claims to Bohemia's throne after having been king for all of one winter. But encouraged by the renewed possibility of English assistance after James's plans for the marriage of his son to the Spanish princess fell through, Frederick turned north to Scandinavia for assistance.

### *The Danish Period*

Christian IV (ruled 1588–1648), the Protestant king of Denmark, had ambition and money, but not a great deal of sense. Also duke of the northern German state of Holstein, the gambling, hard-drinking Dane wanted to extend his influence and perhaps even add territories in the northern German states. Frederick's difficulties seemed to offer the Danish sovereign the opportunity of a lifetime. In 1625, he led his troops into the northern German states, assuming that the English and the Dutch, and perhaps the French as well, would rush to follow his leadership against the Habsburgs.

But King James I of England had died and was succeeded by Charles I, whose provocative policies generated increasing opposition from Parliament (see Chapter 6), leaving him little time to consider intervening on behalf of the Protestant cause on the continent. England and the Netherlands sent only some money and a few thousand soldiers to help the Danish king. Moreover, Louis XIII of France, who was besieging Protestants at La Rochelle, provided the Danes with only a modest subsidy to aid the fight against the Habsburgs. Christian, essentially left to his own devices, was unaware of the approach of a large imperial army commanded by one of the most intriguing figures in the age of religious wars.

Albrecht Wallenstein (1583–1634) was a Bohemian noble who, after marrying a wealthy widow, had risen to even greater fortune as a supplier of armies. Raised a Lutheran, he converted to Catholicism at age twenty and became the most powerful of the Catholic generals. The fact that a convert could rise to such a powerful position again reveals how a religious war evolved into not only a dynastic struggle between the rulers of France, Spain, and Austria, as well as Sweden and Denmark, but also into an unprincipled free-for-all in which mercenary soldiers of fortune played a major part. Wallenstein, an ardent student of astrology, was ambitious, ruthless, and possessed a violent temper. His abhorrence of noise was obsessive—and odd, for a military person. Because he detested the sound of barking or meowing, he sometimes ordered all dogs and cats killed upon arriving in a town, and forbade the townspeople and his soldiers from wearing heavy boots or spurs or anything else that would make noise. He alternated between extreme generosity and horrible cruelty, and was always accompanied by an executioner awaiting his master's command. Wallenstein, entrusted by Ferdinand with raising and commanding an army drawn from states for the Catholic cause, marched north with 30,000 men.

The Catholic army defeated the Danes in 1626, and then marched to the Baltic coast, crossed into Denmark, and devastated the peninsula of Jutland. But Wallenstein's successes engendered nervous opposition within the Catholic states. Furthermore, his troops devastated the lands of friend and foe alike, extracting money and food, plundering, and selling military leadership positions to any buyer, including criminals.

Christian, who had bankrupted his kingdom during this ill-fated excursion, signed the Treaty of Lübeck in 1629, whereby he withdrew from the war and gave up his claims in northern Germany. The treaty was less draconian than it might have been because the seemingly endless war was wearing heavily on some of the Catholic German states. They feared an expansion of Habsburg power, and some of them did not want to add Protestants to their domains.

Ferdinand II now implemented measures against Protestants without convoking the imperial Diet. He expelled from Bohemia Calvinist and Lutheran ministers and nobles who refused to convert to Catholicism and ennobled new men, including foreigners, as a means of assuring Catholic domination. He confiscated the property of nobles suspected of participating in any phase of the Protestant rebellion. With Frederick's electorship now transferred to Maximilian I of Bavaria, the Habsburgs could count on the fact that a majority of the electors were Catholic princes. Captured Habsburg dispatches in 1628 made clear that Ferdinand sought to destroy the freedom of the Protestant German cities of the Hanseatic League in the north in the interest of expanding the Habsburg domains. These revelations alarmed Louis XIII of France.

Ferdinand found that it was not easy to impose Catholicism in territories where it had not been practiced for decades. In the Upper Palatinate, the first priests who came to celebrate Mass there were unable to find a chalice. Half of the parishes in Bohemia were without clergy. Italian priests brought to Upper Austria could not be understood by their parishioners. The Edict of Restitution (1629) allowed Lutherans—but not Calvinists, who were few in number in the German states except in the Palatinate—to practice their religion in certain cities, but ordered them to return to the Catholic Church all monasteries and convents acquired since 1552, when signatories of the Peace of Augsburg had first gathered. Because the Edict of Restitution also gave rulers the right to enforce the practice of their religion within their territories, the war went on.

### *The Swedish Interlude*

In the meantime, England, the Dutch Republic, the northern German state of Brandenburg, and the Palatinate asked the Lutheran king Gustavus Adolphus (ruled 1611–1632) of Sweden to intervene on the Protestant side. The possibility of expanding Swedish territory, a kingdom of



King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden in battle.

barely a million inhabitants, was more than Gustavus, with an adventurer's disposition, could resist.

Gustavus, the "Lion of the North," who survived a shipwreck at the age of five, had been tutored in the art of war by mercenary soldiers. He also played the flute, composed poetry, and conversed in ten languages. Gustavus retained, as did a disproportionate number of rulers in his century, a violent temper. Once, coming upon two stolen cows outside an officer's tent, he dragged the thief by the ear to the executioner. His courage was legendary—he barely paused as cannonballs exploded nearby and as his horses were shot out from under him or fell through the ice.

Gustavus, influenced by an appreciation of Roman military tactics, formed his battle lines thinner—about six men deep—than those of rival commanders. This allowed his lines to be more widely spread out. Gustavus organized his army into brigades of four squadrons with nine cannon to protect them, sending the unit into battle in an arrow-shaped formation. Superior artillery served his cause well, hurling larger shot farther and more accurately than the cannon of his enemies.

The dashing young Swedish king subdued Catholic Poland with his army of about 70,000 men. Swedish intervention and the continuing woes of Spain, now at war in the Alps, Italy, and the Netherlands, gave Protestants reason for hope. After defeating a combined Polish and Habsburg army in 1629, Swedish troops occupied Pomerania along the Baltic Sea.

In 1630, sure of a Catholic majority, Emperor Ferdinand convoked the imperial electors to recognize his son as his heir. He also wanted them to support his promise to aid Spain against the Dutch in exchange for Spanish

assistance against the Protestant armies. But the Protestant electors of Saxony and Brandenburg refused even to attend the gathering. Catholic electors demanded that the powerful Wallenstein be dismissed; even the king of Spain feared the general's powerful ragtag army. Ferdinand thereby dismissed the one man whose accomplishments and influence might have enabled the Habsburg monarchy to master all of the German states.

Despite a sizable subsidy from the king of France, Gustavus Adolphus enjoyed the support of only several tiny Protestant states. Some Lutheran German states still hoped to receive territorial concessions from the Habsburgs. The Catholic dynasty preferred Lutherans to Calvinists, viewing the latter as more radical reformers. Ferdinand now sent Tilly to stop the invading Swedes. He besieged the Protestant city of Magdeburg in Brandenburg, forcing its surrender in 1631. The subsequent massacre of the population and accompanying pillage had an effect similar to that of the Defenestration of Prague; the story of the atrocities spread across Protestant Europe. Brandenburg and Saxony now allied with Sweden. The combined Protestant forces under Gustavus Adolphus defeated Tilly's imperial Catholic army at Breitenfeld near Leipzig. The Swedish army, swollen by German mercenaries, then marched through the northern German states, easily reversing Habsburg gains over the previous twelve years.

The expansion of Swedish power generated anxiety among both Protestant and Catholic states, including France, although Louis XIII had helped finance Gustavus Adolphus. In Bavaria, the Swedes defeated Tilly, who was killed in battle in 1632. The rout of the Catholic imperial forces seemed complete. Spain, its interests spread too far afield in Europe and the Americas, could not then afford to help. The plague prevented another Catholic army from being raised in Italy; even the pope begged off a request for help by complaining that the eruption of Mount Vesuvius was preventing the collection of taxes.

In April 1632, Ferdinand turned once again to Wallenstein to save the Catholic cause, the latter agreeing to raise a new imperial army in return for almost unlimited authority over it. Wallenstein reconquered Silesia and Bohemia. Against him, Gustavus led the largest army (175,000) that had ever been under a single command in Europe. Although reason dictated that the Swedish army should dig in for the winter of 1632, Gustavus took a chance by attacking Wallenstein in the fog at Lützen in Saxony in November. The two sides fought to a bloody draw, but a draw amounted to a Catholic victory. Gustavus Adolphus fell dead in the battle, facedown in the mud.

Wallenstein's days were also numbered. His new army was now living off the land in Central Europe, engendering peasant resistance. Furthermore, Wallenstein, who was ill, demanded command of a Spanish army that had subsequently arrived to help the Catholic forces. In the meantime, it became known that Wallenstein had considered joining Gustavus after the Battle of Breitenfeld in 1631, and that he was offering his services to both France and the German Protestants. Ferdinand dismissed Wallenstein for

the final time, and then ordered his murder. In February 1634, an Irish mercenary crept into Wallenstein's room, and killed him with a spear.

With the aid of the remnants of Wallenstein's forces, the Spanish army defeated the combined Swedish and German Protestant army in 1634 in Swabia. The elector of Saxony abandoned the Protestant struggle, making peace in 1635 with Ferdinand. One by one, other Protestant princes also left the war. The Catholic forces now held the upper hand.

### *The Armies of the Thirty Years' War*

The Thirty Years' War was certainly one of the cruelest episodes in the history of warfare. A contemporary described the horror of the seemingly endless brutalities that afflicted Central Europe:

[The soldiers] stretched out a hired man flat on the ground, stuck a wooden wedge in his mouth to keep it open, and emptied a milk bucket full of stinking manure droppings down his throat—they called it a Swedish cocktail. . . . Then they used thumb-screws . . . to torture the peasants. . . . They put one of the captured bumpkins in the bakeoven and lighted a fire in it. . . . I can't say much about the captured wives, hired girls, and daughters because the soldiers did not let me watch their doings. But I do remember hearing pitiful screams in various dark corners.

Several factors may have contributed to the barbarity of soldiers during the Thirty Years' War. Mercenaries and volunteers were usually fighting far

Soldiers pillaging a farmhouse during the Thirty Years' War, some torturing the farmer over his hearth while others rape the women and steal the food.



from home, living off the land to survive. Strident propaganda against other religions may have contributed to the brutality. In response, however, Gustavus Adolphus and other leaders imposed harsh penalties, including execution, for atrocities, not wanting to so frighten the local population that ordinary channels of provisioning the army would disappear.

During the Thirty Years' War, at least a million men took arms. The armies were enormous for the time. Even Sweden, where there was no fighting, felt the impact of the death of at least 50,000 soldiers between 1621 and 1632 from battle wounds and, more often, disease. Yet, considering the number of troops engaged in the long war, relatively few soldiers perished in battle, particularly when compared to those who succumbed to illness and to civilians who died at the hands of marauding troops. Armies rampaged through the German states, Catholic and Protestant, speaking many languages, taking what they wanted, burning and looting. Marburg was occupied eleven different times. Atrocity followed atrocity.

The armies themselves remained ragtag forces, lacking discipline and accompanied by, in some cases, the families of soldiers. The presence of large numbers of women (including many prostitutes) and children as camp followers may have contributed to the length of the war, making life in the army seem more normal for soldiers.

Soldiers, for the most part, wore what they could find. Some, if they were lucky, had leather clothes, carried rain cloaks against the damp German climate, and wore felt hats. Some Habsburg troops sported uniforms of pale gray, at least at the beginning of a campaign. As the months passed and uniforms disintegrated, soldiers were forced to disrobe the dead, friend and foe alike, or to steal from civilians. At best, soldiers wore symbols indicating their regiment and fought behind banners bearing the colors of the army—thus the expression “show your colors.” The Swedes wore a yellow band around their hats. The imperial forces placed red symbols in their hats, plumes, or sashes if they could find them.

Most armies also lacked a common language. The Habsburg army included Saxons, Bavarians, Westphalians, and Austrians; Maximilian's Bavarian army counted various other Germans, Italians, Poles, Slovenes, Croats, Greeks, Hungarians, Burgundians, French, Czechs, Spaniards, Scots, Irish, and Turks.

Some soldiers may have joined regiments because they were searching for adventure; others joined out of religious conviction. Yet a multitude of soldiers fought against armies of their own religion, changing sides when a better opportunity arose. Army recruiters gave religion not the slightest thought in their search for soldiers to fill quotas for which they were being handsomely paid. In any case, recruits on both sides were attracted by the strong possibility that they would be better clothed and fed—bread, meat, lots of beer, and occasionally some butter and cheese—than they were when they joined up.



*The Wars of Religion and Dynastic Struggles (1635–1648)*

Between 1635 and 1648, what had begun as a religious war became a dynastic struggle between two Catholic states, France and Habsburg Austria, the former allied with Sweden, the latter with Spain. France declared war on Philip IV of Spain in 1635. Richelieu hoped to force Habsburg armies away from the borders of France. He took as a pretext the Spanish arrest of a French ally, the elector of Trier. Alliances with the Dutch Republic and Sweden had prepared the way, as did reassurances given by neighboring Savoy and Lorraine, and by French protectorates in Alsace.

The French incursions into the Netherlands and the southern German states did not go well. Louis XIII's army was short on capable commanders and battle-experienced troops, largely because France was already fighting in Italy, the Pyrenees, and the northern German states. But France's involvement, like that of Sweden before it, did provide the Protestant states with some breathing room. French forces joined the Swedish army, helping defeat the imperial army in Saxony.

The wars went on. When the pope called for representatives of the Catholic and Protestant states to assemble in Cologne for a peace congress in 1636, no one showed up. Four years later, another combined French and Swedish force defeated the Habsburg army. Maximilian I of Bavaria then sought a separate peace with France. Devastating Spanish defeats in northern France in 1643, as well as in the Netherlands and the Pyrenees, and the outbreak of rebellions inside Spain, left the Austrian Habsburgs with no choice but to make peace.

At the same time, unrest in France, including plots against Richelieu, and the English Civil War, which began in 1642, served to warn other rulers of the dangers that continued instability could bring. The Swedish population was tiring of distant battles that brought home nothing but news of casualties. In the German states, calls for peace echoed in music and plays. Lutheran ministers inveighed against the war from the pulpit. Among the rulers of the great powers, only Louis XIII wanted the war to go on, at the expense of the Austrian Habsburgs. He helped subsidize an invasion of Hungary by Transylvanian Protestants in 1644. As Swedish and Transylvanian forces prepared to besiege the imperial capital of Vienna, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III (ruled 1637–1657), who had succeeded his father, concluded a peace treaty with the prince of Transylvania, promising to tolerate Protestantism in Hungary. After Habsburg armies suffered further defeats in 1645, Ferdinand III realized that he had to make peace, and offered an amnesty to princes within the empire who had fought against him.

The preliminaries for a general peace agreement had begun in 1643 and dragged on even as a Franco-Swedish army drove the imperial army out of the Rhineland and Bavaria in 1647. Following another French victory early in 1648, only the outbreak of the Fronde, a rebellion of nobles against the

king's authority in France (see Chapter 7), forced the young Louis XIV to seek peace.

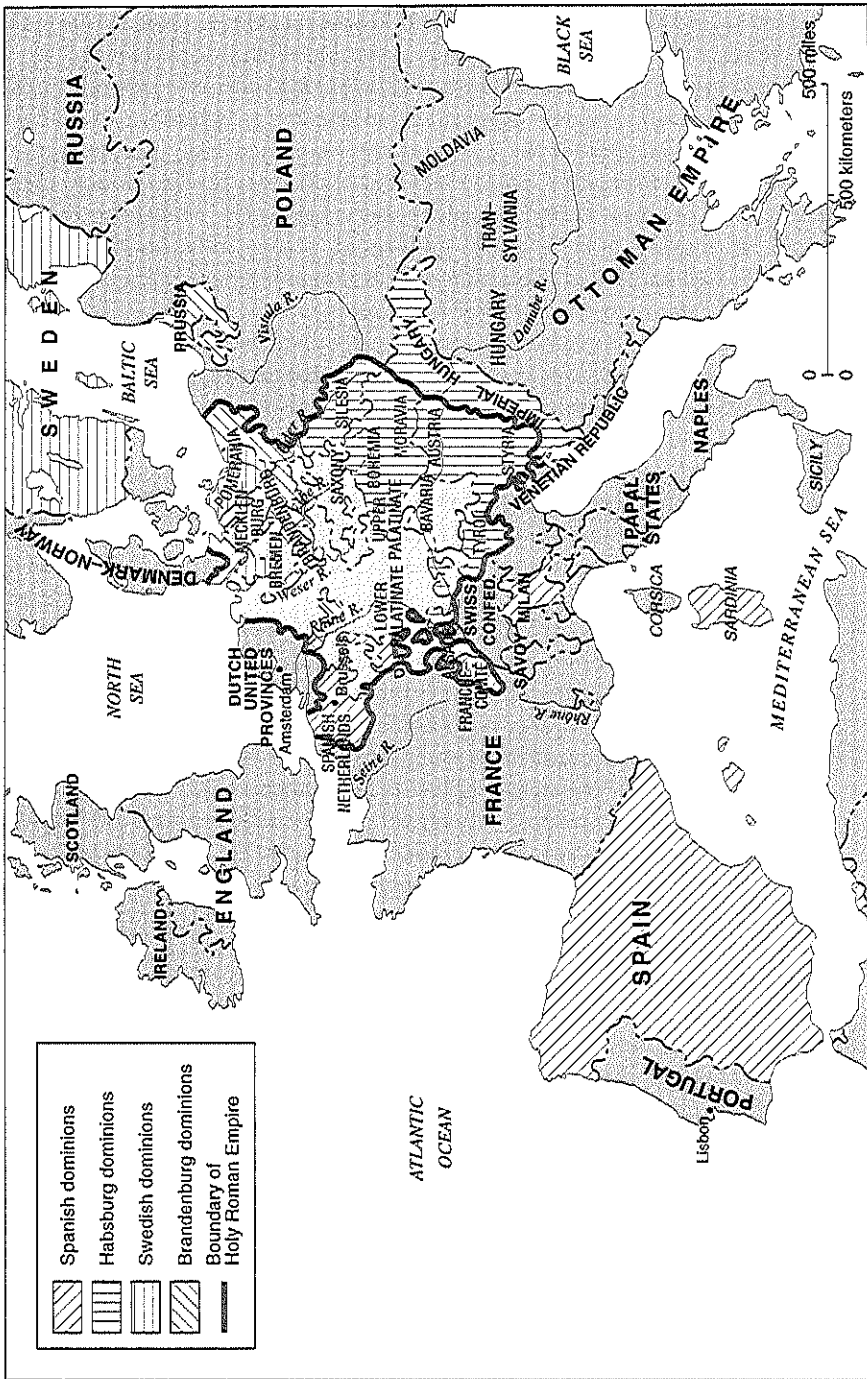
### *The Treaty of Westphalia (1648)*

The Treaty of Westphalia was unlike any previous peace settlement in history, which had invariably been between two or three states, rarely more. Its framers believed that they could restore international stability and diplomatic process in a Europe torn by anarchy by eliminating religious divisions as a cause of conflict. The treaty proved almost as complicated as the Thirty Years' War itself. Two hundred rulers converged on Westphalia. Thousands of diplomats and other officials shuttled back and forth between two towns. Letters took ten to twelve days to reach the courts of Paris and Vienna, at least twenty to Stockholm, and a month to arrive in Madrid. In the meantime, the French tried to delay any treaty, hoping to force Spain to surrender. In the summer of 1648, the Swedes reoccupied Bohemia, hoping to win a larger indemnity and toleration for the Lutherans. When, by the separate Treaty of Münster, Spain finally formally recognized the *fait accompli* of Dutch independence, the Spanish Army of Flanders fought against France in a last-ditch effort to help Ferdinand III. In August 1648, the French defeated a Spanish force a month after the Swedes had captured part of Prague. His back to the wall, Ferdinand signed the peace treaty, finally concluded on October 24, 1648.

The Treaty of Westphalia redrew the map of Europe, confirming the existence of the Dutch United Provinces and Switzerland. The treaty did not end the war between Spain and France, but it did end the wars of the German states and in doing so put an end to one of the most brutal, ghastly periods in European history. Sweden absorbed West Pomerania and the bishoprics of Verden and Bremen on the North Sea (see Map 4.3). France, by an agreement signed two years earlier, annexed the frontier towns of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, and parts of Alsace. Maximilian I of Bavaria kept the Upper Palatinate, and therefore the status of elector. Frederick's Protestant son ended up with the Lower, or Rhine Palatinate. With this addition of an elector, eight votes would now be necessary to elect the Holy Roman emperor.

With minor exceptions, the territorial settlement reached in Westphalia remained in place until the French Revolution of 1789. For the most part, the treaty ended wars of religion in early modern Europe. It encouraged religious toleration, finally rewarding those people who had worked for and advocated religious toleration, or suffered intolerance and repression, during the long, bloody conflicts. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), who had been forced to flee intolerance in Portugal, undoubtedly spoke for many when he wrote, "As for rebellions which are aroused under the pretext of religion . . . opinions are regarded as wicked and condemned

### Map 4.3 EUROPE AFTER THE TREATY OF WESTPHALIA, 1648



as crimes, and their defenders and followers sacrificed. Not to the public well-being, but only to the hate and barbarism of their opponents.”

The Treaty of Westphalia reinforced the strong autonomous traditions of the German states, which emerged from the long nightmare of war with more independence from the considerably weakened Holy Roman Empire. Member states thereafter could carry out their own foreign policy, though they could not form alliances against the empire. The Habsburg dynasty’s dream of forging a centralized empire of states fully obedient to the emperor’s will had failed. Bohemia lost its independence. Bohemian Protestant landowners recovered neither their lands nor their religious freedom.

By the Treaty of Westphalia, German Calvinists gained the same rights as those previously granted to Lutherans. The settlement granted religious toleration where it had existed in 1624. But it also confirmed the Peace of Augsburg’s establishment of territorial churches—Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist—still to be determined by the religion of the ruler. Dissident groups were often forbidden, and their followers were persecuted. Generally speaking, Lutheranism remained dominant in the northern half of the Holy Roman Empire, Catholicism in the southern half, with Calvinists in the Rhineland.

Before his death in battle, Gustavus Adolphus noted “all the wars of Europe are now blended into one.” More than 200 states of varying sizes had fought in the war. The devastation brought by thirty years of war is simply incalculable. Catholic Mainz, occupied by the Swedes, lost 25 percent of its buildings and 40 percent of its population. In four years, the predominantly Protestant duchy of Württemberg lost three-quarters of its population while occupied by imperial troops. Almost 90 percent of the farms of Mecklenburg were abandoned during the course of the war. Many villages in Central Europe were now uninhabited. Although devastation varied from region to region during the Thirty Years’ War, German cities lost a third of their population, and the rural population declined by 40 percent. Central Europe, like the rest of the continent, may have already been suffering from the economic and social crisis that had begun in the 1590s. But the wars contributed to the huge decline of the population of the states of the Holy Roman Empire from about 20 million to 16 million people.

A year before the Treaty of Westphalia, a Swabian wrote in the family Bible: “They say that the terrible war is now over. But there is still no sign of peace. Everywhere there is envy, hatred and greed; that’s what the war has taught us. . . . We live like animals, eating bark and grass. No one could have imagined that anything like this would happen to us. Many people say there is no God . . . but we still believe that God has not abandoned us.”

War was not alone in taking lives: epidemics, the worst of which was the bubonic plague, and diseases, including influenza and typhus, also took fearsome tolls. Towns were clogged with starving, vulnerable refugees from the fighting and marauding. The flight of peasants from their lands reduced

agricultural productivity. It would be decades before the German states recovered from the Thirty Years' War.

Although much of the religious settlement of the Treaty of Westphalia would endure, dynastic rivalries still raged. France had emerged from its religious wars with a stronger monarchy; Louis XIII had made his state more centralized and powerful. France's rivals, too, would extend their authority within their own states. In the mid-seventeenth century, Europe would enter the era of monarchical absolutism. The most powerful European states—above all, Louis XIV's France—would enter a period of aggressive territorial expansion. Dynastic wars would help shape the European experience from the mid-seventeenth century to the French Revolution of 1789.

