

# GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND THE REMAKING OF EUROPE, 1450–1750

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- TRANSITIONS: OVERSEAS EXPANSION AND CAPITALISM
- THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION
- CHANGING STATES AND POLITICS
- THE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURES AND SOCIETIES

## PROFILE

Rembrandt van Rijn  
Dutch Artist

## WITNESS TO THE PAST

Queen Elizabeth I  
Rallies Her People



Amsterdam  
founder of the  
Dutch Republic  
Europe

"O, wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here!  
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world That hath  
such people in't!"

—MIRANDA, IN *THE TEMPEST* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1611

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

The European and world economies changed rapidly in the sixteenth century, and few places exemplified change more than the Flemish port city of Antwerp (AN-twerp), with its fabulous Bourse (boors), a huge building that served as a combination of marketplace and stock exchange. The posted motto above its entrance read: "For the service of merchants of all nations and all languages." An economic boom enriched Antwerp's merchants and bankers, as well as the businesspeople from many lands who came to the Bourse to buy and sell. As many as 2,500 ships from different lands anchored at one time in the harbor, many laden with gold and silver from the Americas. Every day goods were put on sale in the Bourse, and bustling crowds of merchants, foreign visitors, and affluent local consumers thronged the rooms to buy spices from Southeast Asia and India, American sugar, tin from England, Venetian glass, Spanish lace, German copper, paintings by great Flemish artists, and even the service of assassins or professional soldiers. Thus one great city linked the economies of Europe and the wider world. The Antwerp Bourse represented a postmedieval Europe shaped by overseas exploration, conquest, and expanding commerce, contributing the changes in life and thought that the English playwright Shakespeare referred to as a "brave new world."

1. How did exploration, colonization, and capitalism increase Western power and wealth?
2. How did the Renaissance and Reformation mark a crucial cultural and intellectual transition?
3. What types of governments emerged in Europe in this era?
4. How did major intellectual, scientific, and social changes help to reshape the West?

In 1500, western Europeans were still medieval in many respects: they were dominated by the Roman church, had little national identity, were skeptical of science, were minor participants in hemispheric commerce, and were barely aware of distant lands. By the mid-1700s, however, Europe had undergone a profound economic, intellectual, and political transition. Europeans were conquering and settling the Americas, as well as establishing colonies or trading networks in Asia and Africa. Wealth flowed into Europe, fostering investment in science and technology, while new knowledge of, and influences from, non-European cultures reshaped European thinking. The Catholic Church also faced severe challenges as some European thinkers became influenced by secular ideas, including science. Such changes often produced long and bloody wars. By 1750 many Europeans had left their medieval institutions and beliefs behind and were on the verge of introducing even more profound changes to the world.

## CHRONOLOGY

1300	1350–1615	Renaissance
1400		
1500	1517–1615	Protestant Reformation
1600	1600–1750	Scientific Revolution
	1642–1648	English Civil War
	1688–1689	English Glorious Revolution
	1588	Defeat of Spanish armada

ish island of Majorca (muhr-JOR-kuhl), used Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions and travelers' accounts to produce a map that placed Jerusalem rather than Europe at the center of the world. Innovative Portuguese maps from the 1400s influenced Flemish mapmakers of the 1500s such as Gerardus Mercator (muhr-KAY-tuhr). But these maps, unlike Cresques' effort, did not decenter Europe. Mercator's 1569 world map vastly exaggerated the size of Europe and North America while diminishing the size of Africa, India, China, and South America. In spite of these distortions, Mercator's approach, which pictures the earth as an uncurved rectangle intersected by straight lines for latitude and longitude, is still widely used.

Developments in technology and mathematics, often inspired by earlier Arab, Chinese, and Indian innovations, also fostered change. Between 1450 and 1550 Europe's technology surpassed that of the Arabs and was catching up to China, with major improvements in shipbuilding, navigation, weaponry, and printing. European ships took advantage of Arab lateen sails and Chinese sternpost rudders, and they also used the Chinese magnetic compass to navigate. Facing much rougher, stormier waters than the placid Mediterranean, the people along Europe's Atlantic coast also built sturdier ships that gave them a naval advantage. Gunpowder weapons and printing processes, both invented in China, were improved, and the printing press fostered the dissemination of knowledge to an increasingly literate audience. Europeans also blended the Indian numeral system and Arab algebra with their own insights to improve quantification.

## "Gold, God, and Glory": Explorations and Conquests

The rise of Europe as a world power resulted from overseas expansion and conquest (see Chapters 16–18). The phrase "Gold, God, and Glory" describes European motives. "Gold" was the search for material gain by acquiring and selling Asian spices, African slaves, American metals, and other resources. A desire to directly connect with Asian trade led to the first voyages of discovery in the 1400s. "God" refers to the crusading tradition of Christianity, the rivalry with Islam, disdain of non-Christian religions, and the desire to convert the world to Christianity. Reflecting this view, a Catholic missionary in Spanish America argued that "it is a great thing that so many souls should have been saved and that so many evils, idolatries, and great offenses against God [by Native Americans] should have been halted."<sup>2</sup> "Glory" describes the goals of the competing monarchies, who sought to establish their claims to newly contacted territories so as to strengthen their position in European politics. Motivated by these three aims, various western European peoples expanded overseas, gaining control over widening segments of the globe. By the late nineteenth century Europeans dominated much of the world, politically and economically.

During the 1400s the seafaring Spanish and Portuguese ventured out from the Iberian peninsula into the Atlantic and discovered the Azores, Madeira, and Canary island chains off northwest Africa (see Map 15.1). These Iberians enjoyed a favorable geographic location facing the Atlantic Ocean and North Africa, a tradition of deep-sea fishing, a history of aggressive crusading, and possession of Europe's best ships and navigation techniques. They also had economic motives. For centuries West African gold had passed through North Africa to southern Europe, where it was used for coins, treasures, and jewelry. Furthermore, the Portuguese sought a way to break the Venetian monopoly over the valuable trade from southern Asia through Persia and Egypt.

Maritime exploration required new technologies. The Portuguese invented the caravel, an easily maneuverable ship designed to travel long distances. Later the Iberians built larger galleons,

## Iberian Voyagers

## TRANSITIONS: OVERSEAS EXPANSION AND CAPITALISM

How did exploration, colonization, and capitalism increase Western power and wealth?

The foundations for the dramatic changes in many Early Modern European societies were established in the 1400s and early 1500s. The European encounter with America and its riches, the growth of a trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the opening of direct trade with Asia all increased European wealth and fostered **capitalism**, an economic system in which property, exchange, and the means of production, such as factories, are privately owned. Capitalism gradually expanded its operations to a global level, so that by the 1600s valuable Asian spices and precious American metals and plantation crops were pouring into Europe. The economic revolution also fostered stronger European states and reshaped the daily lives of most Europeans.

### Roots of Change

Some of the changes continued trends already apparent in western Europe. During the 1400s, when merchants flourished, cities grew larger, the feudal social systems and values broke down, and commerce became a part of everyday life. By 1500 cities such as Paris and London had grown to over 200,000, though still small by Asian standards, they were unique for their growing political power and autonomy. Unlike Chinese or Ottoman cities, European cities existed in a politically fragmented region rather than a centralized empire. Thus city leaders could bargain with kings for advantages and autonomy. As the middle classes bought more luxury goods, especially fine clothes, industries like textile manufacturing grew.

However, most Europeans were still peasants who worked the soil, their lives organized around the male-dominated household; men tilled the fields while women had responsibility for the house, barn, and gardens. Although many peasants were now free or tenant farmers rather than serfs, they were still burdened with taxes and service obligations to lords and to the church. Yet, population growth and climate change fostered economic change. The European population (excluding Russia) increased from 70 to 100 million between 1500 and 1600, and then to 125 million by 1750, making for larger commercial markets. The global cooling that began around 1300 reached its height in the late 1600s and finally ended in the mid-1800s. This "Little Ice Age" brought winter freezing to canals and rivers, caused poor harvests, and helped motivate overseas explorers to seek better conditions and food sources elsewhere. Imported foods from the Americas, such as maize and potatoes, helped avert mass famine.

Merchants benefited from more favorable attitudes toward commerce, which gave them a status and power unusual in the world. Many western European societies offered an opportunity for making profit and also had institutions, such as banks, that favored economic growth. Blessed with these advantages, late medieval Europeans laid the foundation for an economic transition that began to fundamentally alter western European life and later spread its influences around the world. Some western European societies developed capitalism, a dynamic system highly oriented to economic growth. In the 1400s cities such as Venice and Genoa in Italy, and Bruges (broozh) and Antwerp in Belgium, became centers of capitalistic enterprise. Venetians and Genoese, fierce competitors, traded all over Europe, western Asia, and North Africa. However, early capitalism was limited by the Catholic Church's condemnation of usury, and not until after 1500 did capitalism change dramatically, allowing the Antwerp merchants to build a Bourse that became a marketplace for world products.

Western European politics also began to shift in the 1500s. Medieval Europe had remained politically fragmented, and in 1500 it contained some five hundred states or minisates. Unlike in China, Ottoman Turkey, or Mughal India, no single bureaucratic imperial state could dominate the economy and enforce conformity. But in the 1500s some of the small states were gradually transformed into integrated monarchies, enriched by resources obtained in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Both merchants and monarchs resented the independence of the landed aristocracy and cooperated to destroy their influence in a series of bloody wars. For the first time since the Carolingians, large but competitive centralized states developed in Europe, particularly in England and France, making the political system dynamic and unstable.

During this time new intellectual currents fostered broader horizons, especially in France, making the political system dynamic and unstable. During this time new intellectual currents fostered broader horizons, especially in France, making the political system dynamic and unstable. During this time new intellectual currents fostered broader horizons, especially in France, making the political system dynamic and unstable.

**capitalism** An economic system in which property, exchange, and the means of production are privately owned.

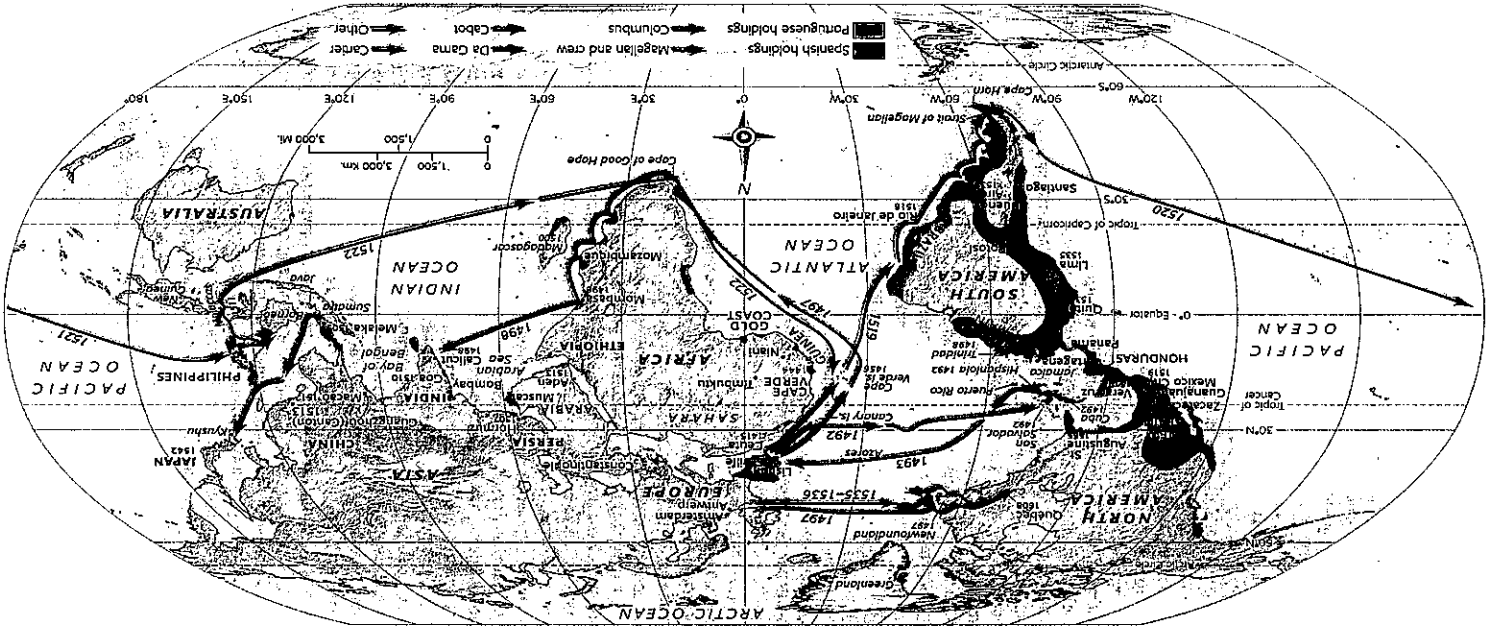
### Cities and Farms

### Commerce and Politics

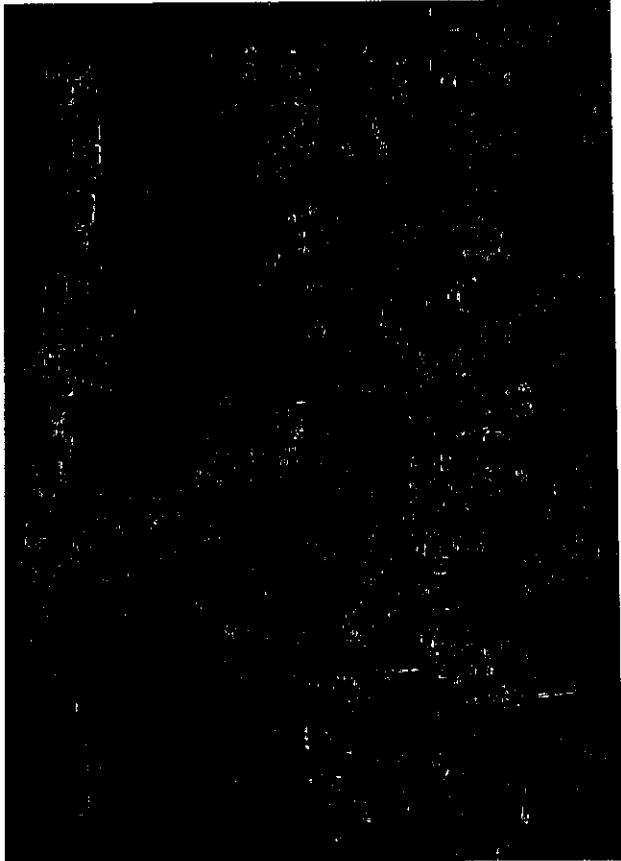
### Intellectual Currents

Interactive Map

Map 15.1 European Exploration, 1450-1600 Between the early 1400s and mid-1600s explorers sponsored by Portugal, Spain, France, Holland, and England discovered the sea route around Africa to South and Southeast Asia and crossed the Atlantic to the Americas, permanently connecting the two hemispheres. They also sailed across the Pacific Ocean from the Americas to Asia.



Musees Royaux Beaux-Arts de Belgique



**Antwerp Marketplace** The marketplace at the center of Antwerp, in what is today Belgium, was the main hub for European trade in the 1500s, the place where goods from all over Europe and from Africa, the Americas, and Asia were bought and sold.

which provided much more cargo space and room for larger crews. To chart the position of the sun and stars, Iberian sailors used the Arab astrolabe (AS-truh-labe). Learning how to mount weapons on ships enabled Europeans to overwhelm coastal defenses and defeat lightly armed ships. The Spanish in the Americas and the Portuguese in Africa and Asia, using artillery, naval cannon, and muskets, could control large territories if the inhabitants lacked guns. By the late 1500s, the English were building the most maneuverable ships and the best iron cannon, and by the 1700s European land and sea weapons greatly outclassed those of once militarily powerful China, India, Persia, and Ottoman Turkey. Europeans now posed a threat to the great Asian states.

The intense competition between major European powers led to increased exploration and a scramble for colonies, subject territories where Europeans could directly control primary production. In the 1400s the Portuguese began direct encounters with western Africa, and by 1487 they had reached East Africa and then sailed across the Indian Ocean to India. Soon they seized key Asian ports such as Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, Goa in India, and Melaka in Malaya. Meanwhile, the Spanish discovered that a huge landmass to the west, soon to be named America, lay between Europe and Eastern Asia. The Spanish explored the Americas and conquered many of its peoples, including the great Inca and Aztec Empires, making them the most powerful European state in the 1500s. Portugal, England, France, and Holland also colonized in the Americas and sent emigrants to what they called "the New World." European states also established colonies or footholds in coastal Africa and carried enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere to work on plantations growing cash crops, such as sugar, cotton, and coffee, for European consumption. The Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish colonized various Southeast Asian islands, including the Philippines, Java, and the Spice Islands of Indonesia. American minerals, especially silver, supported a great expansion of the European economy and allowed Europeans to buy into the rich Asian trade. These developments enabled the transfer of vast quantities of resources to Europe, especially silver, gold, sugar, coffee, and spices, and the fortunes of European trading ports such as Venice, Genoa, Lisbon, Seville, Antwerp, and Amsterdam rose or fell depending on overseas trade.

During the Early Modern Era Europeans laid the foundations for Western dominance in the world after 1750. The Portuguese and Spanish prospered in the 1500s, while in the 1600s the overseas trade of the Dutch, English, and French enabled them to become the most powerful European countries. But European influence was still limited in many regions. Asian and African societies such as China, Siam, Japan, and Morocco remained powerful and successfully resisted or ignored

**Conquest and Colonization**

banker, leaving much commerce and banking to the Jewish minority. By the late 1500s, however, many rejected these church teachings and heeded the cynical saying that "he who takes usury goes to hell; he who doesn't goes to the poorhouse." Acceptance of interest by Christians reflected a gradual shift to an entirely different type of society in western Europe.

Capitalism also produced a new social group, the **bourgeoisie** (BUR-swah-zee), an urban-based, mostly commercial, middle class ranging from small-scale merchants to financiers. Jacob Fugger (FOOG-uhf) (1459–1525) of Augsburg, a southern German city, was proof that an ambitious commoner could prosper from the capitalist trends. The grandson of a weaver and son of a successful merchant, Fugger built a financial empire of banks, factories, silver mines, and farmlands, becoming Europe's richest man, loaning money to royal houses, and acquiring a castle and the title of count. He praised himself as "behind no one in attainment of extraordinary wealth, in generosity, purity of morals and greatness of soul."<sup>4</sup> His sons also published the first newsletter for merchants and bankers, which tracked political and economic developments in Europe.

Capitalism continually changed in character and expanded in scope. Under **commercial capitalism**, dominant in western Europe between 1500 and 1770, most capital was invested in commercial enterprises such as trading companies, including the world's first joint-stock companies (see Chronology: Political, Economic, and Intellectual Developments, 1500–1750). These precursors of today's giant multinational corporations pooled their resources by selling shares, or stocks, to merchants and bankers. Under directors chosen for their experience, joint-stock companies encouraged investment and mobilized great capital. A typical company employed many cashiers, bookkeepers, couriers, and middlemen skilled in languages, and it invested in diversified economic activities such as real estate, mining, and industry. Few Asian or African merchants could compete with this collective power.

Commercial capitalism was strongly shaped by the state and big business enterprises working together for their mutual benefit. In particular, England, Holland, France, and Spain practiced **mercantilism**, an economic approach based on building a nation's wealth by expanding its reserves of precious metals such as gold and silver bullion. Trading was controlled by semimilitary, government-backed companies that were protected from competition. To attract bullion held by other nations, these governments tried to limit imports and increase exports. Some joint-stock companies obtained royal charters granting them monopolies and the right to colonize other lands in the name of the state. In England such companies financed overseas exploration and supported piracy against Spanish and French shipping. Spurred by mercantilism, commercial capitalism expanded out of western Europe and into Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

**SECTION SUMMARY**

- Europe's political decentralization allowed for the growth of cities and the development of capitalism.
- Europeans made great strides in mapmaking and improved technologies such as shipbuilding, navigation, weaponry, and printing by borrowing and building on the work of Arabs, Chinese, and Indians.
- Motivated by "Gold, God, and Glory," Europeans, led by the Spanish and the Portuguese, acquired colonies in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.
- Despite entrenched value systems that opposed an emphasis on accumulating wealth, capitalism took hold in western Europe, while eastern European leaders resisted it and instead mandated serfdom.
- Amsterdam established itself as the center of capitalist Europe in the 1600s.
- Commercial capitalists, assisted by the mercantilist policies of their countries, increased their market power by pooling resources in such organizations as joint-stock companies.

**THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION**

How did the Renaissance and Reformation mark a crucial cultural and intellectual transition?

Two major movements, the Renaissance and the Reformation, reshaped European thought and culture in the 1500s. During the Renaissance, a dramatic flowering in arts and learning that began in Italy around 1350 (see Chapter 14), new philosophical, scientific, artistic, and literary currents paved the way for more creative, secular societies. The movement reached its peak

European demands. Nonetheless, overseas trade and exploitation provided some European societies with valuable human labor and natural resources, contributing to the growth of capitalism.

**The Rise of Capitalism**

Capitalism has taken many forms and fostered new values around the world. Under capitalism, the drive for profit from privately owned and privately invested capital has largely determined what goods are produced and how they are distributed. Capitalism was revolutionary because, on a greater scale than before, money in the form of investment capital was used to make profits. The various forms of capitalism had certain common features—the need for constant accumulation of additional capital, economic self-interest, the profit motive, a market economy of some sort, and competition—that shaped relations between people. For example, carpenters who once shared their services with the community on a barter basis and their profits with their guild began to charge fees instead, competing for customers with other carpenters. Later capitalism included private ownership of the means of production, and competition were incompatible with some cultural values. Many traditional cultures had a bias against people accumulating more wealth than their neighbors or working hard only to maximize income. Even today, some Asian, African, American Indian, and Latin American cultures value cooperation, religious piety, or generosity more than acquiring great wealth. In precapitalist societies governments siphoned off surplus wealth, and the elite spent their resources on conspicuous consumption of luxuries, such as the building of the magnificent cathedrals, palaces, and pyramids that now impress tourists.

Medieval Europe's merchant and craft guilds accepted a strict regulation of economic activity for the greater good. By contrast, to make more money capitalists invested some profits in further exchange or production, fostering an economic expansion and transforming small-scale trade into global capitalism.

While western Europe became increasingly capitalist, eastern European nobles discouraged capitalism. Allied with the landowning aristocracy, who faced a labor shortage on their estates, kings in Poland, Lithuania, Prussia, and Russia mandated serfdom on the peasants and imposed laws forbidding people to leave the land. By providing little support to merchants, they thwarted capitalist expansion. Foreign merchants, including Dutch, Germans, Jews, and Armenians, became the major middlemen and gradually dominated eastern Europe's commerce. As the economies became chiefly agrarian, many once-thriving cities declined into sleepy provincial towns, inhabited by many foreign-born merchants or their descendants. For example, many Polish and Lithuanian cities had large populations of Jewish merchants and artisans.

During the 1500s capitalism took hold in northwest Europe. The English, Flemish, and Dutch developed the most dynamic capitalism and soon eclipsed Italy, shifting the economic balance of power from the Mediterranean to the English Channel and North Sea. Enriched by distributing American silver and controlling Baltic grain, Antwerp became Europe's main financial capital. By the 1620s Amsterdam emerged as Europe's capitalist powerhouse, dominating much European and Asian trade. This clean, orderly, and prosperous Dutch city boasted amenities rare elsewhere, such as street lamps. In 1728 the English writer Daniel Defoe concluded that "the Dutch are the Middle Persons of Trade, the Factors and Brokers of Europe. They buy to sell again, and the greatest part of their vast commerce consists in being supply'd from all parts of the world that they may supply the world again."<sup>5</sup> Old concepts of investing wealth in land gradually gave way to investing capital in business and industry to increase production of ships, arms, and textiles, creating more capital. Many western Europeans were affected by the new materialism, purchasing consumer goods from tea, coffee, and sugar to docks, china, and glassware.

People needed more money because the import of American metals caused a rapid rise in prices. Increasing capital changed business methods, especially the use of credit, which fostered banking. As a result, many Europeans shifted their attitudes toward charging interest for loans and seeking profit. The medieval church had denounced charging interest as usury, a mortal sin, and had also opposed commercial profit. A good Christian could not become a merchant or

**CHRONOLOGY**

Political, Economic, and Intellectual Developments, 1500–1750

- 1500–1770 Era of commercial capitalism.
- 1532–1586 Reign of Ivan the Terrible in Muscovy.
- ca. 1600–1750 Scientific Revolution.
- ca. 1600–1750 Baroque era.
- 1668 Dutch independence.
- 1618–1648 Thirty Years' War.
- 1641–1645 English Civil War.
- 1648 Congress of Westphalia.
- 1661–1715 Reign of Louis XIV in France.
- 1675–1800 Enlightenment.
- 1682–1725 Reign of Peter the Great in Russia.
- 1688 Bill of Rights.
- 1689–1693 Glorious Revolution and Declaration of Rights in England.
- 1700–1709 Great Northern War.
- 1701–1714 War of the Spanish Succession.
- 1707 United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Wales.

**The Reformation** The movement to reform Christianity that was begun by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century.

**Primary Source: The Prince: Power Politics** During the Italian Renaissance, Leon from the man himself what it means to be "Machiavellian."

## Renaissance Thought, Art, and Literature

During the Renaissance spurt in knowledge, thinkers and artists rediscovered the ideas of the Classical Greeks and Romans while consuming products and ideas from the Islamic world and China. The Renaissance promoted individualism, secularism, tolerance, beauty, creativity, and a philosophy known as humanism, that emphasized humanity and its creations rather than God and a troubled church. A crisis of confidence in the Roman Catholic Church, including abuses by leadership and clergy, grew after 1400. Some Renaissance thinkers favored church reform and less rigid ideas. The Dutch philosopher Erasmus (uh-RAZ-muhts) (1466-1536) called for a more personal religion and tolerance of diverse beliefs, arguing that Jesus commanded people nothing except to love one another. He also advocated the use of living languages rather than Latin. The French humanist writer François Rabelais (RAB-uh-ly) (ca. 1494-1553) was even more critical, calling monks "a rabble of counterfeit saints, hypocrites, pretended zealots, who deceive the world."<sup>8</sup> By spurring freedom of thought and offering critical insights, humanists undermined medieval attitudes that had crippled scientific investigation. But popes rejected any changes in doctrine or institutions.

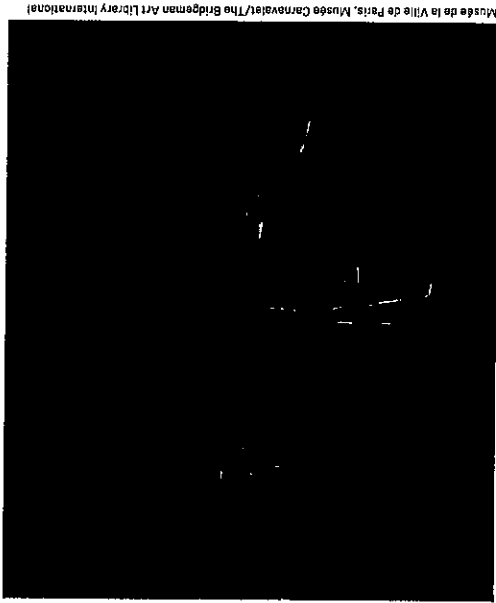
In humanist political thought, Niccolò Machiavelli (MAK-ee-uh-VEL-ee) (1469-1527), the Florentine author of a political manual, *The Prince*, studied power as separate from moral doctrine. Machiavelli claimed to draw on the lessons of history, but he also used his experience as a diplomat. *The Prince* argued that the ruler must always keep the end in mind and apply ruthless policies, such as deception and violence, in pursuing vital national interests. But since rulers must avoid being hated, they ignore popular moral values at their peril; a leader need not have piety, faith, integrity, and humanity, but must seem to have them. Machiavelli's writings became very influential guides for European leaders.

Some thinkers developed more interest in science, employing direct experimental methods and observation. The Florentine Leonardo da Vinci (lay-oh-ni-AY-oh-doh) (1452-1519), a painter, sculptor, architect, scientist, mathematician, and engineer, exemplified the versatile Renaissance personality and openness to varied influences. Knowledgeable about Muslim science and architecture, he negotiated unsuccessfully with the Ottoman sultan to build a bridge in Istanbul. Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (koh-PUR-nuh-kuhs) (1473-1543) studied the skies and Islamic scholarship on astronomy that suggested the earth might not be the center of the universe. Copernicus transformed astronomy and physics when he devised his revolutionary "heliocentric" or sun-centered theory of the solar system in 1543, refuting the traditional idea that earth was the center of the universe and arguing that earth and the planets revolved around the sun. He did not dare publish his findings until after his death, fearing persecution by the church.

The Renaissance spread Italian artistic influence that deepened knowledge of humanity by more accurately representing real life in sculpture, painting, architecture, and literature. Some of the inspiration came from contacts with Islamic, Asian, and African peoples and their artistic traditions. Italians such as the Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini (ca. 1430-1516) worked in or visited Muslim cities, spreading Italian influences but also returning with new perspectives. Rome replaced Florence as the hub of Italian art, attracting the eccentric Florentine Michelangelo Buonarroti (mi-KHEL-AN-juh-loh bwah-uh-RAW-tee) (1475-1564), who became famous for his realistic sculptures, paintings, and frescoes. The attitudes and gestures of each figure he painted on the ceiling of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel are carefully rendered. Later Venice became the main Italian art center, where rich merchants and aristocrats offered artists generous financial support to produce landscapes and portraits rather than the religious artworks that had once been common. One Venetian, Titian (TISH-uhn),

in the 1500s as the gold and silver imported from the Americas provided more people with money to purchase art and books (see Chronology). The Renaissance and Reformation, 1500-1615). Many historians believe that the Renaissance, sparked in part by trade with Asia and North Africa, provided a bridge between medieval and modern western Europe. **The Reformation**, the movement to reform Christianity, spawned new Christian churches that provided alternatives to the Roman Catholic Church. Both movements helped to undermine the pillars of medieval society and changed western European cultural and religious life.

**Bruegel's Peasant Wedding** Painted around 1567, Pieter Bruegel's *The Peasant Wedding* celebrates the rituals of peasant life, in this case a wedding dinner for a village. The Flemish artist may also have intended the painting of the feasting villagers as a satire on self-indulgence. The bride, composed and radiant, presides over the feast under a canopy.



Musée de la Ville de Paris, Musée Carnavalet/The Bridgeman Art Library International

(ca. 1498-1576), broke with Christian tradition by painting nudes and pre-Christian fables. Some women artists also gained a following. Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-ca. 1652), who survived a rape by her art teacher and torture to test her allegations, painted heroic women from Greek mythology and the Bible. Beyond Italy, in the Low Countries, Pieter Bruegel (BRU-guh) the Elder, (ca. 1525-1568) painted realistic landscapes and sympathetic scenes of peasant and town life. El Greco (el GREK-oh) (1541-1614), a native of Crete who studied in Italy before settling in Spain, blended Venetian, Byzantine, and Spanish traditions.

The growing secularism and humanism also had literary consequences. In England during the brilliant reign of Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), writers replaced concern for the hereafter with stories of human passions. The plays of William Shakespeare (1564-1616) reflected the Elizabethans' celebration of the individual person and their nation. The son of a prosperous businessman, Shakespeare acted in the theater and began writing histories, comedies, and tragedies that many literary scholars have believed transcend time and place. Yet, his work was shaped by his milieu, and some of his plays, such as *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*, addressed English or ancient history. Other plays, such as *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, commented on the world beyond England. One of his best-known characters, Hamlet, voiced Renaissance exuberance: "What [a] piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties." In Spain in 1615, Miguel de Cervantes (suh-VRAN-teez) Saavedra (1547-1616) published one of the era's great novels, *Don Quixote* (keh-HO-tee). Cervantes had worked as a steward and soldier, was enslaved in Algiers, and then became a purchasing agent eventually imprisoned for debt. His book portrayed Spain at the end of its golden age. The main character, Don Quixote, sets out to battle dragons and evil men, right injustice, and defend the oppressed, but he mainly makes a grand nuisance of himself. Cervantes dignified the human spirit but also, like some classical Greek playwrights, made fun of its plight.

Growing knowledge about other cultures forced some Europeans to reconsider their assumptions about the world and also stimulated debate about the nature of Native American society. In *Utopia*, published in 1516, the English author Thomas More (1478-1535) portrayed Native Americans as living in a paradise and views European society as filled with poverty, injustice, hatred, and war. The French writer Michel Byquem de Montaigne (moh-TAYNE) (1533-1592) idealized Native American societies, popularizing the notion of a "Noble Savage" uncorrupted by "civilization." In his 1611 play *The Tempest*, Shakespeare mocked the Noble Savage idea, contrasting the civilized Prospero and the savage Caliban (KAL-uh-ban) (an anagram for *cannibal*), who is fierce and brutal. The play may reflect the often hostile encounters between English settlers and Native Americans in Virginia.

## The Reformation and Religious Change

A questioning of the old order also spawned the Reformation (1517-1615), a movement that transformed the religious makeup of Europe and profoundly reshaped Western thought (see Map

## CHRONOLOGY

### The Renaissance and Reformation, 1350-1615

- ca. 1350-1615 Era of Renaissance
- ca. 1517-1615 Protestant Reformation
- 1532 Formation of Church of England (Anglicans)
- 1534 Founding of Society of Jesus (Jesuits)
- 1536 Move of John Calvin to Geneva
- 1545-1563 Council of Trent
- 1558-1603 Elizabethan era in England
- 1562-1589 Wars of Religion in France
- 1571 Defeat of Turks at Lepanto by "Holy League"
- 1588 English defeat of Spanish Armada
- 1598 Edict of Nantes

**Protestants** Groups that broke completely with the Roman Catholic Church as the result of the Reformation.

15.2). For centuries the Roman church had dominated Europe. But to critics, it had become corrupt, often led by incompetent popes who intervened rashly in political affairs and by church leaders and clergy who sometimes blatantly violated requirements for celibacy and poverty. The spread of literacy inspired some to examine Christian writings for themselves, and throughout the 1500s various groups sought church reform. Some, later called **Protestants**, broke completely with the Roman Catholic Church. By 1600 almost 40 percent of non-Orthodox Europeans, mostly in the north, had renounced the Catholic faith and adopted some form of Protestantism. Protestant faiths were then carried across the Atlantic by English and Dutch settlers into North America. Eventually dozens of differing Protestant churches competed with each other and with Catholics for influence.

**Luther** Martin Luther (1483–1546), a German, launched the movement that ended the unity of Western Christianity. The Holy Roman Emperor's power was weakening as conflicts with princes and cities produced widespread discontent, and many Germans also resented the pope and the bishops for leading luxurious lives. Luther, an Augustinian monk who later taught at the University of Wittenberg (WIT-n-burg), concluded that nothing in scripture justified papal power and church rituals. Tormented, he came to believe that only faith, not good works, could wipe away a person's sin and ensure salvation. Luther's break with the church was prompted by the lucrative church practice of selling indulgences, clerical statements that canceled punishment due for sins in exchange for cash contributions to the church. In 1517 Luther distributed a paper attacking indulgences. His arguments became the talk of the country. After Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther in 1520 for refusing to retract his views, Luther translated the Bible into German and developed his religious doctrines, condemning Rome as "the greatest thief and robber that has ever appeared on earth or ever will. Poor Germans, we have been deceived!" Lutherans formed a church rooted in the Augsburg Confession, a doctrinal statement issued in 1530 that argued for the Bible as the only source of faith, stated that every believer had the freedom to interpret scripture, and attacked the cults of the Virgin Mary and the saints, priestly celibacy, and the monastic orders.

Lutheranism spread widely in northern Germany, Scandinavia, and the eastern Baltic coast. Many German city officials, princes, professors, and common people threw their support to the reform cause. But in 1524 a major conflict split the reform movement when peasants revolted against the lords and church leaders who owned the land. Luther unsuccessfully mediated between the sides and then supported the nobles, who crushed the uprisings, causing over 100,000 deaths. The Lutheran Church became closely linked to governments, and many German princes became Lutheran, while the Holy Roman Emperor remained staunchly Catholic.

Inspired by Luther's example, non-Germans founded Protestant movements. Calvinism was more radical than Lutheranism in rejecting Catholic doctrine. Its founder, John Calvin (1509–1564), was forced to leave France and settled in Geneva (juh-NEE-wuh), Switzerland. Unlike Luther, Calvin believed not in human free will but in predestination, the doctrine that an individual's salvation or damnation was already determined at birth by God. Since good behavior and faith could not guarantee reaching Heaven, governments must enforce morality. Calvin demanded strict morality and attacked worldly pleasures such as dancing and playing cards. Under Calvin, Geneva became a theocratic society, ruled by church leaders with growing intolerance of other views who burned some dissenters at the stake. Calvinism spread rapidly in Switzerland, England, and Holland, and in 1561 the Calvinist John Knox founded the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, where it became the dominant church.

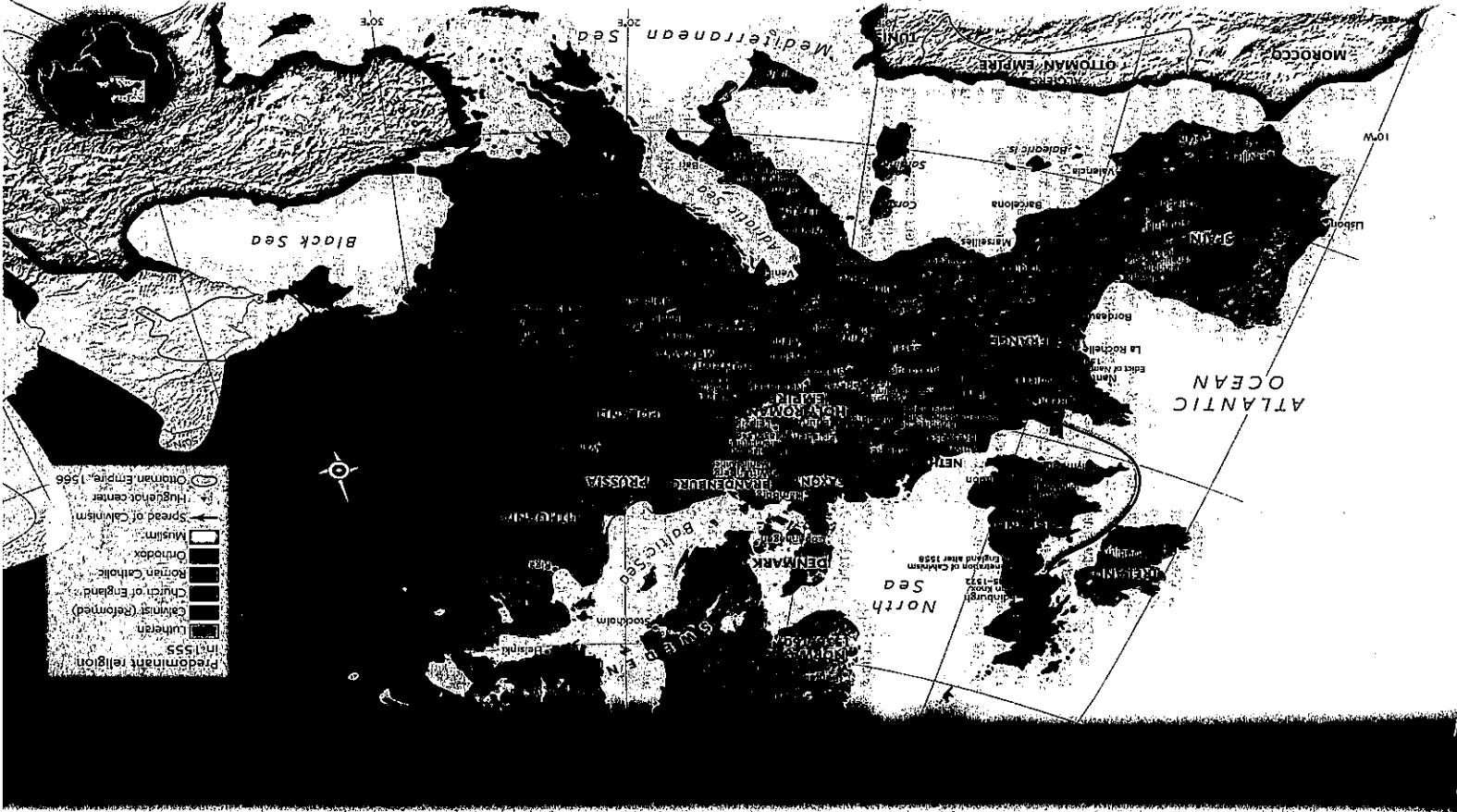
In England, the initiative for religious change came from the king, Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547). When Henry had no male heir with his wife, Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish princess, he asked the pope to annul his marriage so that he could marry Anne Boleyn (1501–1536), the much-courted daughter of English aristocrats. When Rome refused, Henry broke with the church in 1532, rejecting papal supremacy. He announced his divorce, married Anne Boleyn, and arranged to be made head of the newly formed Church of England, later known as the Anglican Church, which retained much Catholic dogma and ritual. Quickly moving to suppress both Calvinism and the Catholic Church, Henry closed the English monasteries and distributed their lands to his aristocratic and business allies. However, he grew disenchanted with Anne Boleyn, who also bore him no sons, and had her beheaded in 1536. Henry married four more times. Henry's moves generated religious strife in England. His only male heir died at sixteen of tuberculosis and was succeeded by Henry's daughter by Catherine of Aragon, Queen Mary Tudor (1500–1558) (r. 1553–1558), a Catholic who suppressed the Anglican Church. But she was replaced by Elizabeth I (1533–1603), the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, who restored the Anglican Church. English Calvinists (known as Puritans) were persecuted by Elizabeth's successors, and some emigrated to Holland. From there one Puritan group, the Pilgrims, moved to North America in 1620 to seek more religious freedom, helping plant Puritan influence in the New England colonies.

## Calvinism

## English Protestantism

**Map 15.2** Reformation Europe  
The Protestant Reformation reshaped Europe's religious landscape in the 1500s and early 1600s. By the mid-1550s some form of Protestantism had become dominant in much of northern Europe, England, and Scotland. Catholicism remained predominant in the southern half of western Europe and parts of eastern Europe.

Interactive Map





## Protestantism, Capitalism, and Catholic Reaction

The emergence of Protestantism had many consequences. Modern historians avidly debate whether the rise of capitalism and Protestantism were connected and how much Protestant doctrines supplied religious underpinnings for capitalist values. Calvinists believed that citizens demonstrated their fitness for salvation by being law-abiding, industrious, thrifty, and sober, all values that supported the capitalist order. Like Protestants, capitalists favored productive labor, frugality, and accumulation of wealth as good in themselves. Both Protestantism and capitalism also encouraged individualism. Although capitalism also emerged in some Catholic societies, it flourished especially in the Protestant societies of Holland, England, and northern Germany. The strongest capitalist societies were also the most intellectually diverse and produced some secularized free thinkers. Although Luther and Calvin were intolerant of other religious views, they opened the doors to democracy: once people had freely voiced their opinions on religion, they moved on to seeking a voice in government. Similarly, when women became literate so that they could read the scriptures, they also gained some new options.

### Counter Reformation

A movement to confront Protestantism and crush dissidents within the Catholic Church.

The Protestant challenge generated the **Counter Reformation**, a movement to confront Protestantism and crush dissidents within the Catholic Church using varied strategies, including the Holy Inquisition, the church court formed in medieval times to combat heretical ideas (see Chapter 14). Several thousand people believed to hold dissident ideas were burned at the stake in Spain. The pope formed the Congregation of the Index to censor books and to decide which ones were to be forbidden altogether. To outflank Protestantism, the Spanish Basque former soldier, Ignatius Loyola (1491–1566), founded a new, highly disciplined missionary order, the Society of Jesus, in 1534. One Jesuit, the Spanish Basque St. Francis Xavier (ZAV-vee-uh'r) (1506–1552), became a pioneering missionary in India, Southeast Asia, and Japan.

For all their harsh punitive measures, the Inquisition and Index did not suppress dissidence, prompting the pope to sponsor the Council of Trent (a city in northern Italy) to reconsider church doctrines. However, the council (1545–1563) reaffirmed most Catholic dogma, supporting the value of both tradition and scripture, endorsing the church hierarchy and papal authority, and maintaining priestly celibacy. But the council did impose more papal supervision on priests and bishops, and it mandated that all clergy be trained in seminaries. The Trent reforms enabled Catholicism to check its loss of believers to Protestantism, to recover some lost ground, and to survive and flourish in a modified form.

But religious passions fostered intolerance. Religious minorities, such as Jews, French Protestants, and English Catholics, faced discrimination and sometimes violence. Several popes pursued anti-Jewish policies, while Luther advocated burning synagogues, arresting rabbis, and confiscating Jewish property. Many Jews faced expulsion from their countries or segregation in city ghettos. To escape this persecution, many Jews and minority Catholics and Protestants emigrated to other European countries or to the Americas.

## Religious Wars and Conflicts

Religious divisions contributed to European wars and conflicts from the late sixteenth through early eighteenth centuries. Habsburg-ruled Spain, which controlled a vast empire in the Americas and Southeast Asia, was particularly troubled by religious tensions. The Spanish Habsburgs also ruled Portugal, the Low Countries, and parts of Italy. King Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–1598), known as “the most Catholic of kings,” put imperial resources toward defending the Catholic cause in Europe while spreading the faith abroad.

In the Low Countries, Philip’s suppression of Calvinism antagonized businessmen and the nobility, who demanded autonomy and freedom of worship. Inflamed Protestants attacked Catholic churches, and Spain’s execution of dissident leaders spurred a general revolt in 1566, with both Catholics and Protestants rallying behind the Calvinist leader, the Dutchman William of Nassau (NAS-aw), Prince of Orange. Philip dispatched an occupation army that executed over 1,000 Protestants and, in 1576, sacked Antwerp. In 1579, Philip promised political liberty to the ten largely Catholic, Flemish- and French-speaking southern provinces of the Low Countries, forging the foundations of modern Belgium and Luxembourg. Because of English assistance to the Low Country rebels and English attacks on Spanish shipping in the Americas, Philip II tried to invade England by sea in 1588 but faced a determined foe in Queen Elizabeth I (see Witness to the Past: Queen Elizabeth I Rallies Her People). The English ships outnumbered Spain’s armada of 130 ships and then triumphed when a fierce storm in the English Channel devastated the once-invincible Span-

### Protestant-Catholic

Tensions

## Queen Elizabeth I Rallies Her People

For women have ever enjoyed the power and respect of England’s Renaissance queen, Elizabeth I. Her forty-five years on the throne (1558–1603) mark a brilliant period for English literature, especially in literature and theater. On her death, the reigning playwright Ben Jonson wrote her epitaph: “For thy virtues and true passion, Earth, thou hast not such another; therefore may have been, as her generation’s plumes were, new, and autocratic, but thy intelligence and formal political skills helped her reign to be successful through the strife of both English and European politics. But English-Spanish relations deteriorated prompting war. In 1588, as the powerful Spanish armada sailed toward the English coast, Elizabeth launched the English ships with as peace-loving subjects, but ultimately played by the gendered rules of war, the link with the English people. With the help of foul weather, the English defeated the Spanish, changing the fortunes of both countries.

My loving people, We have been compassed by some enemies that call for our unity to take heed how we commit ourselves; to arm all virtues for fear of treason, we should assure you, I do not desire the office of testimony in judgment, nor loving people, I pray you fear not, we have always behaved in that under God, I have placed my trust in his strength, and thus guard in the belly hearts and good will to my subjects, and therefore I am content to give you such a death, and to form my reputation and disposal, but I trust that the midst of combat of the battle will be a clear memory of you all, God will be my witness.

God and to my kingdom, and for my people, my honor, and my blood, even in the death.

I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and I am going to lead you, and I think it is comfort that . . . Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm, to which rather than my honor shall I give my time, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

I know already for your own weakness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and we do assure you in the word of a prince, that you shall be richly rewarded in the meantime, my intention is general, that he may stand, then, whom we do prize, I command a more noble work, worthy subject to do, and by your obedience, generally, by your consent, and the empty, and your faith, that it is, was, shall shortly have a numerous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdoms, and of my people.

## THINKING ABOUT THE READING

1 How did Elizabeth justify the forthcoming battle with Spain?

2 What personal qualities of this Renaissance monarch suggest she could offer to her people in their time of peril?

Source: Charles W. Coley, *Arch-Secretary James Source of Elizabeth I* (London: Longmans, Green, 1933), pp. 152–153. Original in introduction from A. S. House, *The Elizabethan Age* (London: The Folio Society, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970), p. 53.

fish fleet. The mostly Protestant, Dutch-speaking northern provinces broke away from Spain in 1588 and became fully independent in 1609, forming the Netherlands, popularly known as Holland.

Religious conflicts also raged across France. The French Calvinists, known as Huguenots (HYOO-guh-nauts), were led by the powerful Bourbon family. In 1572, after the assassination of Calvinist leaders sparked Huguenot rioting in Paris, Catholic forces massacred 30,000 Huguenots. In 1593 Henry of Bourbon (1553–1610), remarking that “Paris is well worth a mass,” renounced Calvinism for Catholicism in order to become King Henry IV. In 1598 he signed the Edict of Nantes (nahnt), which recognized Roman Catholicism as the state church but gave Huguenots the right to freely practice their religion.

While Protestant-Catholic tensions in Europe were intense, Christian-Muslim conflicts also simmered and often translated into political and military conflict. The Muslim Ottoman Turks sought to expand their empire, which already included Greece, much of the Balkans, and Bulgaria (see Chapter 16). When some Balkan people abandoned Christianity for Islam, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V marshaled allies to defeat the Turks at Vienna in 1529. In 1571 the so-called Holy League of Spain, Rome, and Venice used advanced naval gunnery to destroy the Turkish fleet at the Battle of Lepanto (li-PAN-toh), off Greece, temporarily ending Turkish ambitions. Then in 1683 the Turks besieged Vienna, but Polish intervention saved Austria. The Austrians pushed the Turks out of Hungary, ending Ottoman expansion in Europe and with it the Christian fear of more losses to Islam.

## Christian-Muslim Conflicts

## SECTION SUMMARY

- Renaissance humanists questioned the authority of the Catholic Church, while thinkers such as Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Copernicus challenged accepted truths of morality, science, and astronomy.
- Renaissance artists such as Michelangelo aimed to represent humanity more realistically, and writers such as Shakespeare and Cervantes examined the concerns of individuals and the broad sweep of society.
- Martin Luther, who criticized the corruption of the Catholic Church, set the Reformation in motion; it was propelled by figures such as John Calvin, whose ideas were taken up by the Puritans, and King Henry VIII of England, who made England Protestant.

- While not all capitalists were Protestant, many historians see a link between the individualism and thrift of Protestants and their success in business.
- In the Counter Reformation, the Catholic Church attempted to reassert its dominance, but ultimately it focused its energy on converting non-Europeans rather than combating Protestants.
- Religion sparked several wars: Spain's attempts to keep the Low Countries Catholic led to costly conflict with England and the eventual fragmentation of the area; Catholics massacred Huguenots in France; and several battles finally ended Ottoman expansion in Europe.

## CHANGING STATES AND POLITICS

What types of governments emerged in Europe in this era?

Capitalism, Renaissance humanism, the Protestant Reformation, and the encounters with the wider world fostered new institutions, beliefs, and politics. The transition unleashed forces that consumed Europe in bloody wars: kingdoms were torn asunder and reconfigured, old states declined, and new states gained influence. These states were not nations in the modern sense but multiethnic entities ruled by royal families who married across national lines. Patriotic feelings were mostly restricted to the elites. While in some states royal absolutism flourished, a few others developed representative governments with elements of democracy.

### Regional Wars and National Conflicts

Various wars raged, some prompted by religious divisions, others spawned by tensions between rival states and within large multinational empires such as the Habsburg-ruled Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Even after religious tensions subsided, warfare remained a constant reality. The major conflict that continued the religious wars and national rivalries of the 1500s was the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), a long series of bloody hostilities that claimed millions of lives and involved many countries. This complex struggle started in the Holy Roman Empire, as Czech Protestants revolted against Habsburg Catholic rulers who were trying to limit religious freedom. Eventually the fighting drew in German princes and mostly Lutheran Denmark and Sweden. Finally France, although mostly Catholic, went to war against its Habsburg rivals who ruled Austria and Spain. In 1648 the conflict ended after a four-year-long congress produced the Treaty of Westphalia (west-FALE-yuh), which reaffirmed religious freedom but failed to end Protestant-Catholic conflict. France enjoyed unrivaled prestige after 1659, while Spain and the Holy

#### Soldiers' Return

In the early 1600s the French artist Jacques Callot made a series of moving etchings about the Thirty Years War called "Miseries of War." This etching shows a group of discharged soldiers, so impoverished and brutalized by war that they either beg for food or die alongside the road.

Roman Empire were militarily exhausted. The conference also recognized Swiss independence from Habsburg rule, and the Dutch benefited because the long struggle had weakened their former ruler, Spain. After Westphalia, Europe fought wars with well-drilled professional soldiers, large warships, and more deadly cannon and rifles.

The most widespread conflict, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), brought together England, Holland, Austria, Denmark, Portugal, and some German states to battle France and Spain over who would inherit the Spanish throne from the last Habsburg king, and how the Spanish Empire might be partitioned as a result. The human costs of war increased. For example, in one battle 40,000 French soldiers were killed or wounded. The Treaty of Utrecht (YOO-treht), which ended the war, forced Spain to transfer its territory in Belgium and Italy to Austria. The once-prosperous Dutch had overextended themselves, damaging their economy. England received most of the war's spoils, including the strategic Gibraltar peninsula at Spain's southern tip, which commanded the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, as well as some French territory in eastern Canada. Utrecht fostered a new European system dedicated to maintaining a balance of power between rival states.

### Absolutist and Despotic Monarchies

The conflicts and new mindsets fostered diverse political patterns by the seventeenth century, among them **absolutism**, a system of strong monarchical authority in which all power was placed under one supreme authority, a king or queen. Supporters saw absolutism as the best way to avoid chaos. Spain and Habsburg-ruled Austria, the Papal States of central Italy, governed by the Vatican, and the Turk-dominated Ottoman Empire all exercised absolutist power. But the French kings and the Russian czars best represented this increasing concentration of power.

For a time the French absolute monarchy of King Louis XIV (r. 1661–1715), envied by other rulers, dazzled Europe. French became the language of European diplomacy, while French art and architecture were imitated as far away as imperial Russia. By the mid-1600s France, with 18 million people, was western Europe's largest country, was self-sufficient in agriculture, and had thriving industries. Louis XIV believed that he was the state and that his power derived from God; thus he was a monarch by divine right. Known as "the Sun King" for the brilliant extravagance of his court, Louis demanded obedience from all at the expense of the nobility. His dominant passion was love of glory. Few French kings valued martial fidelity, and Louis had many mistresses and children, legitimate and illegitimate.

The king imposed mercantilism, fostering industries and companies subject to royal domination; he also revoked the Edict of Nantes, forbade Protestant pastors to preach, and closed Protestant schools and churches, leading 200,000 Huguenots to emigrate to England, Holland, and North America. Some 5,000 servants and courtiers lived on the grounds of the Sun King's spectacular palace at Versailles (vuh-SIGH), a Paris suburb. Versailles became the center of French cultural life, regularly visited by French nobles and foreign leaders, all spied upon by the king. Louis' brilliant finance minister, Jean Baptiste Colbert (kol-BEAR), complained that "every day is one long round of dances, comedies, music of all kinds, promenades, hunts and other entertainments." The king patronized the arts and literature by giving annual allowances to a court composer and financing playwrights and ballet dancers.

Louis XIV's search for power caused four major wars aimed at preventing Habsburg dominance. French power reached its height around 1680, but the wars proved financially ruinous and fell short of their objectives. The War of the Spanish Succession sapped the French treasury and military, enabling Austria, England, and Holland to counterbalance French power. Although France remained a major state, it had lost some of its glory. The absolutist French monarchy collapsed in revolution in the late 1700s.

Russia also developed a tyrannical government led by czars. After the Russians had freed themselves from Mongol domination, Ivan (ee-YON) IV (r. 1533–1584), known as Ivan the Terrible because of his paranoia and brutality, built a centralized state while fighting wars with neighboring Poland and Sweden and conquering the Tartar states founded by Mongols and Turks. Ivan also ordered the death or torture of Russians whom he considered enemies. To gain support from the landed nobility, Muscovite czars after Ivan imposed tight control over the Russian Orthodox Church and a serfdom-based rural economy. Lords could sell their serfs, making them little better than slaves. The czars also began extending their sovereignty toward the Black and Baltic Seas, where the Russians came into conflict with the Poles and Lithuanians.

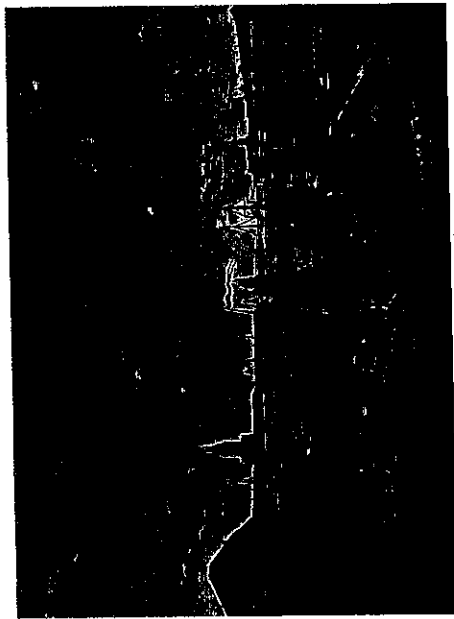
Peter I the Great (r. 1682–1725), an enlightened but despotic czar nearly 7 feet tall, attempted to transform his backward realm into a modern state by copying Western technology and



Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum



**St. Petersburg** This painting, made around 1780, shows the Winter Palace, inhabited by the Russian royal family, occupying the left side of the Neva River in St. Petersburg, a major port that attracted many trading ships. Other government buildings occupy the right bank.



Michael Holford

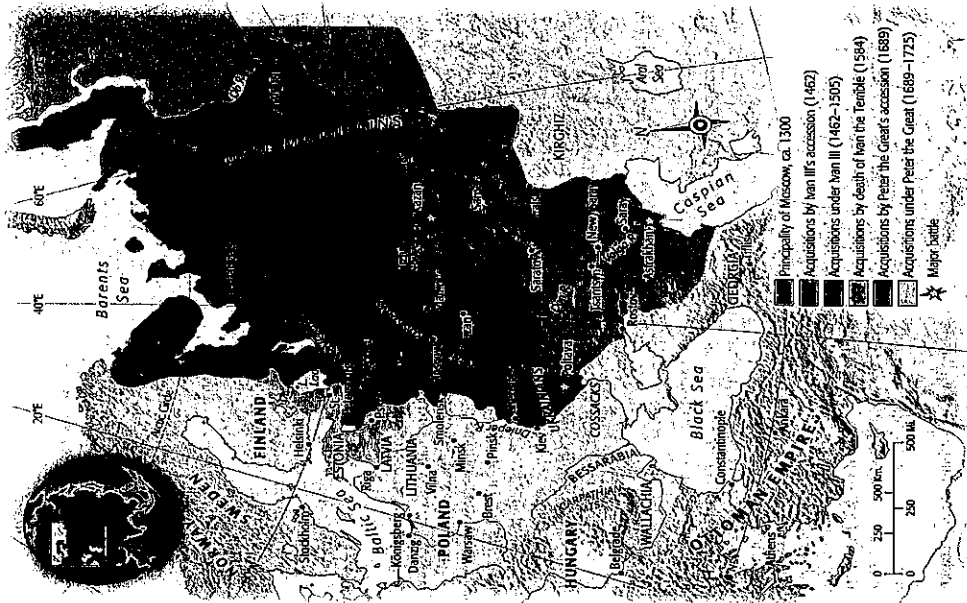
administrative techniques. He secretly toured Europe for eighteen months, visiting factories, museums, government offices, hospitals, and universities, and even worked as a carpenter in a Dutch shipyard to view firsthand the most advanced industrial and military technology. Returning to Russia, the czar launched ambitious political, economic, military, and educational reforms and hired foreign specialists to advise him. Peter's Westernizing policies had mixed consequences. Some were superficial and unpopular, such as banning beards, no longer fashionable in western Europe. Peter also increased royal power at the expense of the church and nobility, often in a harsh manner. With such great power, Peter expanded Russia's frontiers, established industries, strengthened serfdom, formed a navy to protect his Baltic flank, and developed a more efficient government. Since he hated gloomy, medieval Moscow, he began building a new capital on the Baltic, modeled on Amsterdam and Venice, and named it St. Petersburg.

Peter had many foreign achievements. Wanting a stronger presence on the Baltic Sea, mostly dominated by Sweden, he forged a secret alliance with Denmark and Poland. During the Great Northern War (1700–1709), Russia and its allies battled the formidable Swedes, finally forcing them to abandon the eastern Baltic to Russia. Anxious to forge permanent access to the Mediterranean Sea, which was open to shipping year-round, Russian forces pushed south toward the Black Sea and the Straits of Bosphorus (see Map 15.3). They also began acquiring territory in Siberia and Muslim Central Asia (see Chapter 16). By eventually creating a huge empire and exploiting its resources, Russia developed a largely self-sufficient economy but had limited trade with western Europe, since most czars after Peter were wary of Western influence. Today Russia remains the last great land empire, ruling over various non-Russian peoples.

## The Rise of Representative Governments

Some European countries moved toward greater political freedom. Iceland had an elected assembly, while Switzerland was a multilingual, decentralized, and constitutional confederation of Catholic and Protestant districts. A fading power, Venice was a self-governing republic, although noble and merchant families dominated political life. The Netherlands and England developed the most open and accountable governments because, enriched by sea trade, the commercial classes and many nobles amassed huge fortunes and hence played political roles, eventually demanding more influence.

The Netherlands enjoyed a golden age during much of the 1600s, building a colonial empire with holdings in the Americas, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia and dominating the Atlantic, Baltic, and Indian Ocean trade. Large Dutch joint-stock companies controlled the overseas market. The Dutch East India Company, formed in 1602, monopolized the spice trade from Southern Asia, making huge profits from cinnamon and pepper, and imported Chinese silks and porcelain, Japanese art, Indian cotton textiles, and precious metals. Some of the capital amassed was invested in Dutch industry. The Netherlands became Europe's most prosperous society, with Amsterdam serving as a major hub of world trade, and the flow of wealth also fostered an innovative republican political system. Holland's long-standing climate of freedom and tolerance



**Map 15.3**  
**Russian Expansion,  
1300–1750**

Beginning in the 1300s the Russians expanded from a small remote northern state, based in Moscow, into an empire. By the mid-1700s the Russians had spread over a wide area and gained political domination over western Siberia, the northern Caucasus, and part of what is today the eastern Baltic region and the Ukraine.

**Interactive Map**

attracted people fleeing from persecution, such as Portuguese Jews, or seeking a more open intellectual atmosphere. After breaking away from Spain, the predominantly Protestant Netherlands became a republic linked by assemblies of delegates. But the powerful Nassau family held the top post, Stadtholder General, and controlled the army and navy. The Nassaus' desire for more authority put them chronically at odds with the merchant elite, who favored provincial autonomy, resulting in continued tensions.

The English also forged a colonial empire. England sent Protestant settlers to some districts in their mostly Catholic colony of Ireland, and the English East India Company, founded in 1601, pursued commerce and conquest in Asia while England established colonies in North America and the Caribbean. By 1700 it overtook its rivals as major international traders. Empire and growing profits fostered profound political changes, with two upheavals in the 1600s securing first a republic and then a constitutional monarchy. The English had long struggled to define the rights of kings and parliaments. The Stuarts, the Scottish royal family who became the monarchs after Elizabeth I died without an heir, had absolutist ambitions and made Anglicanism the only recognized faith, antagonizing the Puritans and Presbyterians. In 1641, Parliament condemned despotic Stuart policies, prompting the English Civil War. Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), a zealous Puritan convinced he was doing God's will, led parliamentary troops who defeated the royalist forces in 1645 and beheaded Stuart king Charles I.

## Dutch Golden Age

Parliament abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a republican Commonwealth (1649–1660) dominated by Cromwell. The defeat of the royalists was a turning point as Puritans favoring capitalism and property rights ended the last vestiges of English feudalism. But the Puritan majority in Parliament were fanatics determined to root out “godlessness” and establish laws based solely on the biblical edicts of Moses. They had no patience with constitutional government and expelled the Presbyterians from Parliament. Eventually, Cromwell became dictator and imposed Puritan morality, banning newspapers, executing dissidents, and crushing a Catholic rebellion in Ireland by burning crops and massacring many thousands of Irish resistors. On Cromwell’s death Parliament restored the Stuarts to the throne after they agreed to guarantee individual freedom of religion. However, the Protestant-Catholic conflicts resumed and eventually led to a stronger Parliament, now dominated by Anglicans, which offered the kingship to Dutch Stadtholder William of Orange (r. 1689–1702), a champion of the Protestant cause. Riots in London forced pro-Catholic James II (r. 1685–1689) to abdicate and flee to France. In the Glorious Revolution (1688–1689), Parliament decreed William and his wife, Mary, sovereigns after they accepted a Bill of Rights recognizing the right of petition and requiring parliamentary approval of taxes. The Toleration Act, establishing freedom of religion, followed.

### England’s Glorious Revolution

After the Glorious Revolution, royal power was modified but the government represented only the landed nobility, wealthy merchants, and property owners, who had political influence and wealth. Only the aristocrat-dominated Parliament could vote the money for the king and his army. In 1707 England, Scotland, and Wales officially combined as the United Kingdom, often known as Great Britain. But English supremacy came at the expense of ethnic minorities. To better control them, the feisty Scottish highlanders were cleared from their lands, and their Celtic languages, Gaelic (GAY-lick), was banned. In colonized Ireland, Protestant English and Scottish settlers acquired land and Catholics became second-class citizens. Laws denied the majority Irish Catholics the right to education, property, and political office.

### Rising New States, Declining Old States

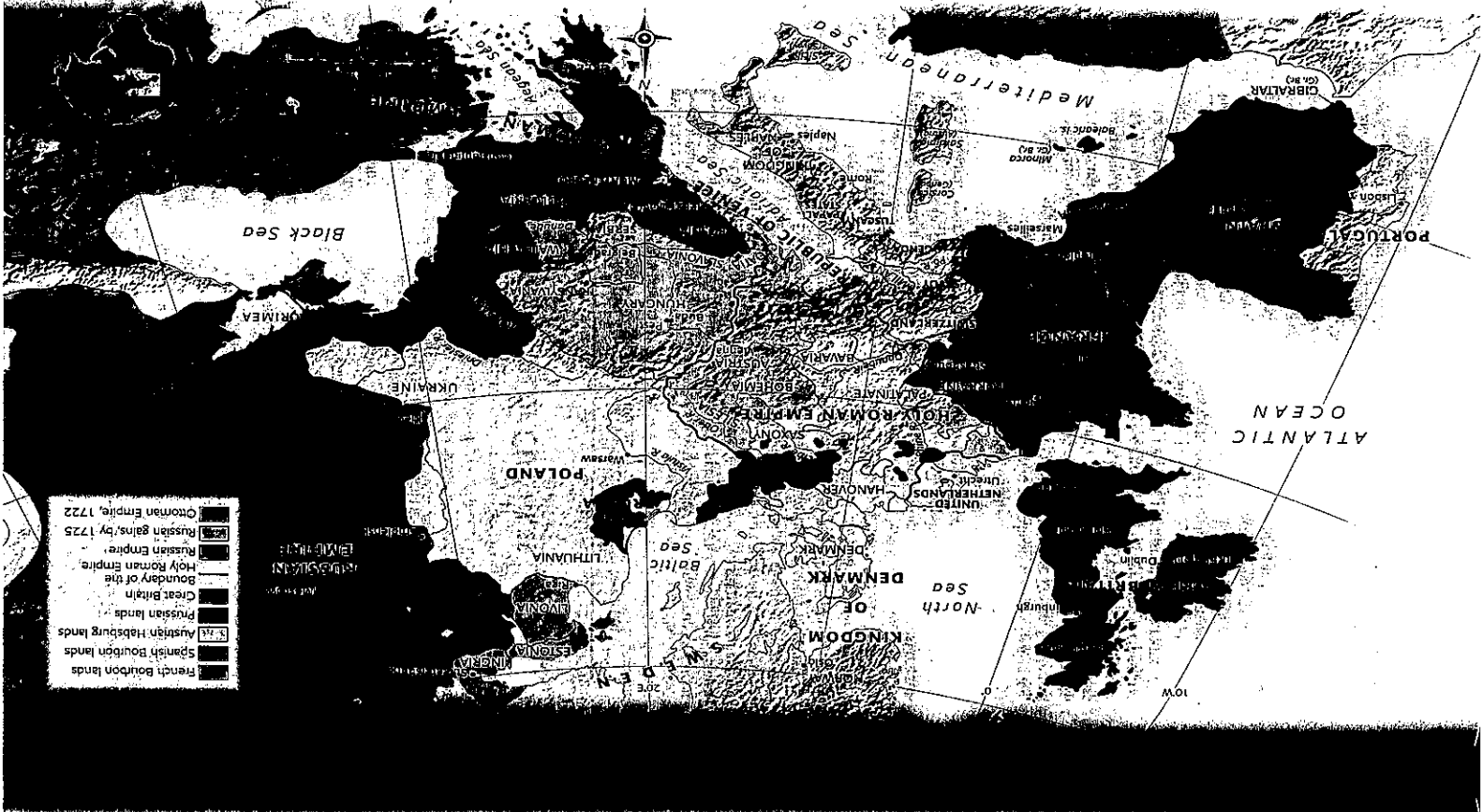
The forces unleashed by capitalism, religious change, warfare, and shifting political fortunes fostered several powerful new states and harmed several longtime powers (see Map 15.4). German-speaking, Catholic Austria under the Habsburg monarchs became a major empire after the Thirty Years War, governing Czechs, Croats, Slovenians, Hungarians, and some Italians, Romanians, and Serbs. Sweden became independent of once mighty Denmark in 1520, forging a hereditary but not absolutist monarchy with an efficient administration, a national assembly, and Lutheranism as the state religion. Soon Sweden dominated Baltic trade but eventually lost its economic position to the Dutch. Under King Gustavus Adolphus (r. 1611–1632), an earthy but brilliant military strategist, Sweden conquered parts of Poland and Prussia and most of the eastern Baltic societies. By 1721, however, the Swedes had lost all their possessions in the eastern Baltic, except Finland, to Russia or Prussia.

Prussia, a small, mostly German-speaking state along the eastern Baltic coast, became independent from Poland in 1660. In the mid-1700s Prussia built a formidable standing army under an authoritarian but constitutional monarchy. Under King Frederick the Great (r. 1740–1786) Prussia rapidly expanded at the expense of Poland, Austria, and the Holy Roman Empire. A brilliant leader and strategist, Frederick was warlike and ruthless but also a fine musician who enjoyed conversations with philosophers.

Several older states declined. The Holy Roman Empire had little coherence. The emperors, elected by leading princes, were figureheads presiding symbolically over some three hundred states representing assorted Germans, eastern Europeans, and Italians. The French writer Voltaire (waw-TARE) mocked the entity as neither holy nor Roman nor an empire. The empire was effectively swept away in 1740, when Austria and Prussia began a 130-year struggle for dominance in the region. Italians remained divided into small states ruled by the pope, the Habsburgs, or the Holy Roman Empire. Predominantly Catholic Poland and Lithuania had been major states and in 1569 combined to form a republican commonwealth under elected kings and noble-dominated national and local assemblies, launching a golden age of economic prosperity and religious tolerance. Their large Jewish communities enjoyed many legal rights. But by the mid-1600s the commonwealth struggled amid rebellion and invasion, losing territory to the Russians, who slaughtered Jews. Catholics turned on Protestants, and after 1717 Poland became an appendage to the Russian Empire. Lithuania became a Russian province, and Catholicism became crucial to Polish and Lithuanian identity.

### German States

### Holy Roman Empire



Map 15.4  
Europe in 1740

By the mid-1700s France and Great Britain were the most powerful western European states. While once powerful Spain and Portugal had lost influence and the Germans and Italians remained divided, Sweden, Russia, and Habsburg-ruled Austria were gaining strength.

Interactive Map

## SECTION SUMMARY

- Europeans fought a series of wars, some religiously motivated and some not, in the Thirty Years War, which involved many countries. Catholic France triumphed over the Catholic Habsburgs.
- Louis XIV of France, the archetypal absolutist monarch, lived in astounding luxury and wielded great power.
- Russian czars, from Ivan the Terrible on exercised tight control while expanding Russia's territory; traditions that Peter the Great continued while pushing to modernize and Westernize his country.
- The Dutch were successful colonial merchants and instituted a decentralized republican system of government that was strained by the military power held by the Nassau family.
- Through a series of struggles between Parliament and monarchs, English political power became more equally shared, though it was still held largely by wealthy aristocrats and merchants.
- Amid the ongoing political turmoil in Europe, Austria and Prussia became major powers, Sweden saw its fortunes rise and fall, and Poland and Lithuania came under Russian power.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURES AND SOCIETIES

How did major intellectual, scientific, and social changes help to reshape the West?

Europeans' voyages of discovery and colonization altered their view of the world, broadened their horizons, and contributed to intellectual change. In England, Scotland, Switzerland, Poland-Lithuania, and especially the Netherlands some religious tolerance and diversity undermined barriers to free thought so that science, philosophy, and technology could proceed with fewer obstacles than elsewhere, while the Islamic world, China, and India produced less creative thought than before. Nevertheless, European thinkers borrowed Islamic and Asian ideas. Capitalism spurred by overseas expansion reshaped social patterns and fostered an increasingly urban society.

## Arts and Philosophy

The expanding horizons of the Renaissance and Reformation led to an extravagant artistic movement in the 1600s, the **baroque** ("contorted" or "grotesque"), that shocked people by encouraging release from restraints on expression and questioning accepted ideas. In Italy baroque art, such as the marble statues and fountains of the Roman sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini (1628–1680), was expressive and sensuous, emphasizing freedom. Many Dutch painters concentrated on landscapes, still lifes, and domestic scenes, a sharp break from medieval preoccupation with religious themes. The paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn (see Profile: Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch Artist) and Jan Vermeer (1632–1675) conveyed emotion, immediacy, personality, and the thoughts and feelings of individuals. Some of the paintings of artists like Vermeer also showed some of the imported foreign products, such as Chinese bowls, Turkish carpets, Southeast Asian spices, and American tobacco, that reflected a growing world economy. In contrast to Renaissance artists, Dutch artists saw their work as a capitalist enterprise and often produced for the wider market rather than for individual patrons.

Not all creative people worked in the baroque spirit. The German Lutheran composers George Frederick Handel (1685–1750) and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) produced work of enduring popularity that appealed to a wide audience. Handel settled in London, where he wrote his famous choral work, *The Messiah*. Bach wrote pieces for both Protestant and Catholic churches as well as a cantata about a young woman so madly in love with coffee that her father feared she would never find a husband. The growing fad for coffee that Bach memorialized suggested the significance of products obtained from abroad.

Baroque art corresponded to the greatest era of philosophical and scientific speculation in Europe since the classical Greeks. The Englishman Francis Bacon (1561–1626), once a politician, sought to eliminate intellectual restraints on science by separating philosophy from theology and advocating the use of reason. He developed a famous maxim: "Knowledge is power." Bacon's scien-

## European Thought

tific method involved developing an idea, testing it experimentally, and then drawing conclusions. These ideas, considered unsettling at the time, made him a major influence on later thinkers.

The founding father of modern philosophy, René Descartes (1596–1650), promoted a rationalist view of the world. Born in France, Descartes traveled widely and at various times served in both the Dutch and Bavarian armies. Human rationality, he believed, was founded on a distinction between mind and body. He wanted to sweep away traditional learning, much of which he doubted, and establish a new system of knowledge. The only thing he could not doubt was his own existence, writing: "While I wanted to think everything false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who was thinking thus, must be something. I think, therefore I am." Besides being a philosopher, he also studied mathematics, optics, physics, and physiology.

The English political thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) believed that society was not perfectible, even using reason or Christian teachings. Hobbes, a pessimist, held that with no government to control humanity's anarchic, power-seeking instincts, life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." His disturbing book, *The Leviathan* (in-VIA-thin), provided a new view of the state and its relationship to the individual, arguing that people needed despotic power to control them. Truth, reason, or justice were just artificial attributes created by social convention and language. Many of Hobbes's contemporaries condemned his views, including his royalist slant and apparent atheism. But his idea of a social contract between citizens and rulers influenced later thinkers.

## Science and Technology

**The Scientific Revolution** (ca. 1600–1750), an era of rapid advance in knowledge, particularly in mathematics and astronomy, built on the work of Bacon and Descartes to gain a new understanding of the natural and physical world. European scientists demolished the medieval view of the earth's position in the cosmos, stimulated European intellectual life, and laid the groundwork for later intellectual and industrial transitions. Although offering new ideas could be dangerous in a continent full of religious conflicts and despotic monarchs, advances occurred in many areas.

The Scientific Revolution derived in part from imported Asian and Islamic ideas and technologies. European scientists were familiar with the writings of earlier Muslim thinkers. The Jesuits who sojourned in China sent back reports that praised Chinese scientific traditions and inventions. Prompted by scientists, French King Louis XIV sent a mission to China to acquire scientific and technical knowledge. As Europeans assimilated and improved imported models while creating new ones, the leadership in science and technology gradually shifted from China and the Middle East to Europe.

Astronomers made some of the most significant discoveries. The German mystic Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) used mathematics to amplify Copernicus's discovery that all the planets revolved around the sun. The Italian Galileo Galilei (gal-uh-LAY-oh gal-uh-LAY-ee) (1564–1642) proved experimentally that Copernicus's theories were correct. By adapting spectacles, invented by the Dutch, Galileo built the first telescope in 1609. With this telescope Galileo discovered that the moon had mountains, Jupiter had four large moons, and our solar system was but a small part of a Milky Way galaxy containing countless stars that could not be seen with the naked eye. These findings were dangerous, especially given Galileo's talent for insulting critics, mocking conventional wisdom, and arguing that the biblical view of astronomy was ignorant. In 1615 the Catholic Church summoned the scientist to Rome to be tried as a heretic, and he was forced to publicly recant his views in order to leave prison. When he continued to publish, Inquisition officials placed him under house arrest for life.

Scientific activity reached its height with Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), a mathematics professor at Cambridge University who discovered some fundamental laws of physics. Newton's work was a synthesis of Bacon's methodologies, Descartes' mathematics, Galileo's discoveries, and other scientific findings. His importance was proclaimed in a famous epiphany by the poet Alexander Pope: "Nature and Nature's laws lay hidden in night; God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light." In 1687 Newton published *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, which accounted for all the motions of the planets, the comets, the moon, and the sea. He had found the connection, especially the law of universal gravitation, that tied together varied parts of the physical world into an ordered whole. Newton's ideas dominated Western scientific thinking for the next two hundred years.

In the wake of scientific discoveries, technology improved. Such useful items as the watch, lead pencil, thermometer, and concrete became available. An English mathematician developed the first slide rule, and a German mathematician invented the first mechanical calculator to perform multiplication, division, and much more. The Dutch scientist Christian Huygens (HYE-guhnz) introduced a more accurate clock. In the early 1700s, an English farmer, Jethro Tull, using a two-millennia-old Chinese model, developed a drill to sow seeds, the first step toward rural

**The Scientific Revolution** An era of rapid European advance in knowledge, particularly in mathematics and astronomy, that occurred between 1600 and 1750.

## Astronomy

## Newton

## New Technologies

# REMBRANDT VAN RIJN, DUTCH ARTIST

The boom in Dutch commerce in the 1600s helped foster a brilliant period of painting in the Netherlands. For the first time, artists made their livelihood in a free market, and they could be found in every town. Wealthy Dutch merchants commissioned works of art to decorate their houses, town halls, and guild halls; the painters catered to this demand with realistic pictures of everyday life, group portraits, landscapes, and the interiors of well-appointed homes. Most art celebrated personal success (the material world) and the Protestant faith. Nearly every Dutch family of means owned at least one original piece of art.

No artist had more success meeting this demand than Rembrandt van Rijn, born in 1639 in Leiden, a city on the Rhine River where his father's mill stood. As a youth, Rembrandt enjoyed watching ships and walking in the country side. He studied for a while at Leiden University but left to apprentice with a local artist. In 1651 he moved to Amsterdam and soon made a good living painting portraits of churchmen, poets, rich merchants, and fashionable ladies. His success enabled him to decorate his art studio and home with fabulous silks, velvets, and works of art. He collected the most famous paintings from Italian Renaissance artists. At twenty-seven the artist married Saskia, a young woman from the neighboring prominent city of Utrecht, and showed her the finest jewelry. He also began painting her portraits. They had four children, but only one lived to adulthood.

Rembrandt's work took art beyond the traditions of the Renaissance and even of the Baroque. The prolific artist produced many etchings (300 survive), some 2,000 drawings, and 650 paintings. For Rembrandt, influenced by baroque interest in emotions and light, the subject was usually humankind, its pain, power, and pride. He found that by manipulating the direction, distance, and intensity of light and shadow, he could reveal nuances of mood and character. He mastered light, which washes over all forms in his paintings with a special glow.

In his portraits, including a sixty remarkable self-portraits, Rembrandt penetrates deeply into souls and inner feelings. In one of his most famous group portraits, *The Syndics of the Cloth Guild* (origin called *The Cloth Makers*), a splendid Oriental rug covers a table around which black-clothed drapers discuss the guild's affairs. Perhaps Rembrandt's finest work is *The Night Watch*, painted in 1642, where he discards the conventional portrait format to portray a military company scurrying about during a rousing themselves for a march. The public was confounded when *Night Watch* trans-

formed a typical group scene into a luminous baroque drama of movement and lighting filled with many mysteries. According to legend, the soldiers in shadow refused to pay their share of the commission; Rembrandt was the first major European artist to paint for himself rather than a patron, to pursue his own impulses and interpretations.

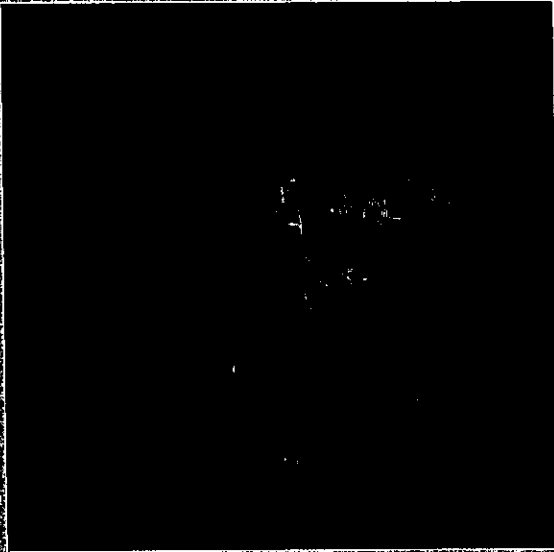
After Saskia's death, from tuberculosis, Rembrandt painted little for a while and had to sell his house and furnishings to pay his debts to merchants and bankers. He proved a poor businessman and, gradually, became removed from his clients. When he resumed painting, he concentrated on depicting Bible stories and celebrating the humility of Jesus. His religious paintings reveal a personal piety. This final stage in Rembrandt's career, in which he sought inner truth, was the least understood. While some admirers supported his work, his more inquisitive art did not attract a mass audience and he died bankrupt in 1669. Modern critics revere Rembrandt as an artist of great versatility and a unique interpreter of Protestant conceptions of biblical scripture.

## THINKING ABOUT THE PROFILE

1. What does Rembrandt's big belly, about Dutch society in the 1600s, say about the artist's background and interests in European history?

2. Why do you think Rembrandt is considered one of the greatest artists in European history?

3. How did his work reflect the baroque tradition?



Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, Rembrandt's most famous painting. *Night Watch*, completed in 1642, depicts a militia group that policed Amsterdam's streets. The masterful use of light and the portrayal of the men in action rather than just posing were artists' innovations. (Art History Resource, Inc.)

mechanization. Perhaps also inspired by old Chinese models, the Englishman Thomas Newcomen invented the first crude steam engine for use in pumping water from mines. By the 1730s the English textile industry became more efficient with spinning machines, similar to those introduced in China in the 1200s, for making cotton products.

## The Enlightenment

**The Enlightenment**, which began in 1675 and continued until 1800, was a philosophical movement based on science and reason that rejected many traditional ideas. This Age of Reason, as it was sometimes called, was perhaps the most fertile period in Western philosophy. The movement owed something to Bacon, Descartes, and Newton as well as to growing European knowledge of Native American societies and of secular Chinese thought. In 1687 a French observer wrote that the Confucian "moral system is infinitely sublime, sensible, reasonable. Never has Reason appeared so well developed with so much power."<sup>12</sup> Some historians call Confucius the Enlightenment's patron saint. An intellectual attitude more than a set of opinions, the Enlightenment replaced unquestioning religious faith with observed fact and suggested that objective truth could be established through reason, taking human destiny away from God and placing it in human free will. Many Enlightenment thinkers admired Christianity's moral authority but opposed the dogmatic attitudes of organized churches. Some adopted **deism**, the belief in a benevolent God who designed the universe but does not intercede in its affairs.

In England, France, and Scotland, new notions of tolerance, individual rights, and the relationship between citizens and the state emerged. The Enlightenment spread a humanistic secularism, promoted critical approaches to knowledge, and addressed gender issues such as women's education and equality in marriage. In France Louise d'Épinay (1726–1789) condemned gender discrimination and negative female stereotypes, arguing that both women and men "struggle against pain, difficulties, obstacles [and] have the same nature."<sup>13</sup> Some male thinkers also favored women's education and equality in marriage. Yet, gender issues were often marginalized, and many Enlightenment thinkers accepted the prejudices of the era.

The Englishman John Locke (1632–1704), a physician who lived for a decade in France and Holland, made experimental studies of science that led him to proclaim the value of **empiricism**, an approach stressing experience and testing of propositions rather than reason alone to acquire knowledge. Empirical approaches later became common in the social and natural sciences. Locke's influential political theories also provided a foundation for the modern democratic state and notions of human freedom. Unlike Hobbes, he condemned absolute monarchy and advocated defending freedom by cooperating for common goals and allowing the state only limited powers over the individual. If the state transgressed freedom and self-government, people had the right to oppose it. Locke favored individual rights, such as the separation of church and state, while proposing some limits, such as restricting political participation to people with property. Many of his ideas became influential not only in England but also among the founders of the United States, and

**The Enlightenment** A philosophical movement based on science and reason that began in Europe in the late seventeenth century and continued through the eighteenth century.

**deism** Belief in a benevolent God who designed the universe but does not intercede in its affairs.

**empiricism** An approach that stresses experience and the testing of propositions rather than reason alone in acquiring knowledge.

**Painting of Madame Geoffrin's Salon** This mid-eighteenth century painting by French artist Lemoinnier shows a gathering of Enlightenment thinkers and artists at the elegant Paris salon operated by Madame Geoffrin, seated toward the right. These salons offered dinners and stimulating conversation that allowed for a free exchange of ideas.



Reproduction of the painting 'Madame Geoffrin's Salon' by Jean-Louis Lemoinnier. (Art History Resource, Inc.)

**philosophes** The intellectuals who fostered the French Enlightenment.

his view that people were entitled to life, liberty, and estate became enshrined in the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776, drafted by Thomas Jefferson.

The French Enlightenment was fostered by intellectuals known as **philosophes** (fil-uh-SOHF) (philosophers). In Paris, educated women such as Madame Maria-Theres Geoffrin (JOFF-riin) (1699–1777) operated salons (sa-LAW); elegant rooms where thinkers and artists gathered for conversation. Baron de Montesquieu (maw-tuh-SKYOO) (1689–1755) attacked arbitrary, absolutist power and proposed a republican government with checks and balances, including the separation of powers between the executive, legislature, and judiciary. He also criticized religious dogma. His ideas, like Locke's, were widely discussed in the North American colonies. The best-known philosopher, Voltaire (1694–1778), a poet, dramatist, and historian, believed that science, empiricism, and rational behavior fostered happier lives. Occasionally imprisoned in France, he spent many years in England, Switzerland, and Prussia. Voltaire viewed China as an admirable political model of a despotic but secular and benevolent state, in contrast to absolutist France. A deist, he supported tolerance toward other views but fiercely attacked established religion and also disliked the Jews for their separation, often involuntary, from mainstream society.

## Capitalism and Rural Society

Capitalism gradually reshaped rural society and turned many peasants into a displaced labor force. In sixteenth-century England King Henry VIII seized the lands of the Catholic Church and distributed some to wealthy businessmen, who began buying land as an investment, turning agriculture from subsistence living to a commercial venture. The new hard-hearted landowners increased demands on peasants or shifted from agriculture to more profitable sheep raising, ejecting peasants from the land. The English peasantry, now landless, became tenant farmers and poor farm workers working for big landlords. Some former peasants found jobs in towns, some became rural craftsmen, and many became rural vagabonds, drifting around the countryside and resorting to any measures, including crime, to stay alive. Their plight and the negative, "blame the victim" attitudes they encountered are evident in nursery rhymes: "Hark the dogs do bark, the beggars are coming to town. Some give them white bread, and some give them brown, and some give them a good horsewhip and send them out of town." Whereas under feudalism people saw individual well-being as a product of the inequitable manor system, under capitalism people were considered responsible for their own condition. Some communities imprisoned debtors and flogged the homeless.

The peasants' loss of their land ruined many lives but also created a labor pool for fledgling industries, thus giving the English an advantage over the French, who were reluctant to abandon feudal laws protecting peasants, and the labor-short Dutch. Businessmen gave crafts production to displaced peasants and paid them for each item they made, undermining guilds and destroying medieval concepts of economic justice. Eventually these trends reached other western European societies. Nothing comparable to the forced poverty of the peasantry happened elsewhere in the world. The imperial power of the Chinese or Ottoman state could curb the greed of landowners and merchants, preventing peasant ejection from the land. Western European peasants, many of whom heavily consumed alcohol as an escape, were far worse off than peasants in Islamic societies.

The great contrast between the few rich and the many poor, amplified by famine and the devastations of war, brought on uprisings, such as the bloody peasant revolt in Germany in 1524. In England, the suffering of the Civil War fostered widespread discontent and radical movements such as the Levellers. Led by lower-class soldiers, the Levellers advocated equality, democracy, and complete religious freedom: in their 1648 manifesto, they pleaded, "May the pressing needs of our stomachs reach Parliament and the City [London]; may the tears of our starving babies be preserved; may the cries of their tender mothers begging for bread to feed them be given in metal."<sup>14</sup> Life was increasingly dangerous and unhealthy. Bandits prowled the roads and mercenary soldiers roamed the countryside attacking merchant convoys and plundering villages. Many rural folk fled to overcrowded cities, filled with beggars, drunks, trash-filled streets, polluted water, the stench of human waste, and disease. In the 1600s one-third of London's children died before the age of one. In France people said that nine-tenths of the people die of hunger, one-tenth of indigestion.

## Families and Gender Relations

Family life and gender relations also changed. For the growing middle classes of northern Europe, the nuclear family of parents and their natural-born children, rare in medieval times, became more common. In contrast to the large extended families of southern and eastern Europe. Societies increasingly recognized childhood as a distinct phase of life, inventing toys and games and

opening more schools, mostly for boys. However, half or more of children left their families by their early teens, many to become apprentices or servants with other families.

The economic roles and status of women shifted. With the growing availability of consumer goods, women no longer always had to produce but could now purchase such items as cotton clothing. Men now made much higher wages than women. These trends lowered women's social status. In contrast to medieval times, when many women never married and also worked in diverse occupations, women were now encouraged to look chiefly to marriage, motherhood, and the home. While women in northwest Europe married in their twenties, many women elsewhere married by their early teens. Still, between 10 and 20 percent of people never married at all, and the Roman Catholic Church encouraged church vocations over marriage. At the Council of Trent church leaders rejected the Protestant pattern of married clergy, denouncing the notion that "it is better and happier to be united in matrimony than to remain in virginity and celibacy."<sup>15</sup>

The experiences of women varied across Europe. Many Dutch women enjoyed liberated lives, some becoming merchants. Elsewhere, some women also engaged in trade. The German Jewish merchant Guelke (HAAH-muhin) (1646–1724), the mother of eight, traveled widely to trade furs. But few women controlled enough financial resources to become traders. A few educated French women achieved influence in the intellectual and cultural realms. Voltaire's friend and then lover, Emilie Du Chatelet (EM-in-lee de SHA-the-lay) (1706–1749), wrote works on mathematics and natural philosophy and analyzed the ideas of scientists such as Newton.

At the opposite extreme, many Russian women were, according to a German visitor, "most miserable; for men consider no woman virtuous unless they live at home, and be so closely guarded that she go out nowhere."<sup>16</sup> Lower-class women faced exploitation, mostly finding paid work as servants in affluent households. Some women faced worse problems. Because millions of people believed in magic, astrology, prophecy, ghosts, and witches, thought to destroy crops and cause personal misfortunes, official persecution of alleged witches provided a diversion from wars and religious conflicts. Thousands of women suspected of being witches were executed or banished from the community, often after horrific ordeals. In a Polish trial, a suspected witch was stripped naked, bound hand and foot, and suspended from the ceiling before the confessed.

More restrictive views of sexuality led to punishment of women and men who defied convention. Often prompted by churches, governments regulated sexual and moral behavior to encourage family life, prosecuting adultery and premarital sex. Despite this, premarital pregnancy rates ranged from 10 to 30 percent. Catholic and Protestant churches condemned homosexuality, and such behavior faced severe sanctions, including execution. Yet, laws were enforced erratically, especially in tolerant England and Scandinavia, and male homosexuals congregated in large cities. Moreover, antisdomy laws in Catholic countries often ignored the nobility and clergy, some of whom openly advocated same-sex relationships. Some very influential men were possible or probable homosexuals, among them Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Francis Bacon, and several popes and kings such as Prussian king Frederick the Great, and many European kings had same-sex bedmates. Fewer lesbians were public about their love life, but the Swedish queen Christina (1626–1689) was a notable exception. The cosmopolitan, flamboyant Christina, an outspoken supporter of the French Enlightenment and science who spoke some ten languages, had a long affair with one of her ladies-in-waiting and, after abdicating her crown, maintained an active sexual life in

## Gender Relations

### SECTION SUMMARY

- The extravagant baroque style that followed the Renaissance emphasized artistic freedom, while Dutch painters eschewed religious themes for natural ones.
- Bacon and Descartes emphasized the role of reason in science and philosophy, respectively, while Thomas Hobbes developed a pessimistic political philosophy.
- Advances in astronomy, particularly those made by Galileo, greatly antagonized Catholic officials, while Isaac Newton discovered fundamental laws of physics.
- Locke, Montesquieu, and Voltaire were among the prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment, a movement that favored reason over unquestioning faith.
- First in England and then elsewhere in western Europe, rural peasants were impoverished by landowners' greed and served as a ready source of labor for industry.
- As imported goods became more available, the economic role of women declined, as, in many cases, did their social standing.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

During the Early Modern Era many agrarian, feudalistic societies in Europe were reshaped. The Portuguese and Spanish pioneered maritime exploration and flourished from their conquests in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The Dutch, English, and French also developed overseas



empires that brought them considerable wealth. The growth of trade, capitalism, and mercantilism fostered a new commercial orientation while shifting economic and political power to the countries of the Atlantic seaboard. The Renaissance, which spread humanist and secular values, and then the Reformation changed Europe's philosophical and religious terrain, challenging the Roman church. Protestants organized churches, and by the mid-1500s much of northern Europe had become Protestant. These challenges generated a Counter Reformation within the Catholic Church.

Wars raged during much of the era and contributed to political changes. France and Russia developed absolutist monarchies, whereas England and Holland enjoyed greater political freedom. Powerful new states such as Austria and Prussia emerged while older states such as the Holy Roman Empire declined. The discovery of new lands as well as the changing political, religious, and economic forces renewed interest in scientific discovery and a stress on individual rights, leading to the Enlightenment. The Scientific Revolution produced such revolutionary thinkers as Newton and allowed Europe to surpass China and the Middle East technologically. Capitalism made many rural peasants homeless, and family life, including the status of women, also changed.

## KEY TERMS

capitalism  
bourgeoisie  
commercial capitalism  
mercantilism

baroque  
The Reformation  
Protestants  
Counter Reformation  
absolutism

empiricism  
philosophes  
The Scientific Revolution  
The Enlightenment  
deism

## EBOOK AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

### PRIMARY SOURCE

The Prince: Power Politics During the Italian Renaissance

### LINKS

British History (<http://www.british-history.com/>). Contains links to short essays on various periods of British history.  
Medieval Renaissance, Reformation: Western Civilization, Act II (<http://www.omnibusol.com/medieval.html>). A treasure trove of links on many aspects of society in these centuries.  
Modern History Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>). A very extensive online collection of historical documents and secondary materials.

## SUGGESTED READING

Ames, Glenn I. *The Globe Encompassed: The Age of European Discovery, 1500–1700*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008. Good brief summary of European explorations.  
Brook, Timothy. *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008. Fascinating examination of global trends through Dutch paintings.  
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the movements in a broader social, political, and economic context.  
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Wiesner-Hanks, Merry. *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Excellent survey emphasizing social history.  
Wiesner-Hanks, Merry. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. A readable and comprehensive study.

Russian History Index: The World Wide Web Virtual Library (<http://wib.iue.it/hist-russia/index.html>). Contains useful essays and links on Russian history, society, and politics.

Plus flashcards, practice quizzes, and more. Go to: [www.cengage.com/history/lockard/globalsocnet2e](http://www.cengage.com/history/lockard/globalsocnet2e).

### INTERACTIVE MAPS

Map 15.1 European Exploration, 1450–1600  
Map 15.2 Reformation Europe  
Map 15.3 Russian Expansion, 1300–1750  
Map 15.4 Europe in 1740