Wars of Religion (Spain, France & England) 1559-1648

Read: Spielvogel p 402 – 410 (overall),
Kagan p 403 (opposition to Elizabethan Settlement), 406 (Mary Queen of Scots, John Knox, Spanish Armada)

I. From 1560 to 1648 wars would be fought largely over religious issues.
   A. Spain sought to combat Protestantism in Western Europe and the spread of Islam in the Mediterranean.
      1. The Calvinist Netherlands sought break away from Spanish rule.
   B. French Catholics sought to squash the Huguenots.
   C. The HREmpire sought to re-impose Catholicism in Germany.
   D. A civil war occurred in England (we will cover the English Civil War in a later unit, but you should understand that, besides political causes, it also had religious connotations as Oliver Cromwell was a strict Calvinist and Charles I was an Anglican with Catholic sympathies.)

II. Spain’s Catholic Crusade (militant Catholicism)
   A. Philip II (1556-98): A Habsburg ruler like his father, Charles V, he fanatically sought to re-impose Catholicism in Europe and to protect Christianity in general.
      1. Charles V (grandson of Isabella and Ferdinand) was the king of Spain/Spanish Empire as well as the HRE.
         a. When he retired from the throne after the Peace of Augsburg, he split his realm between his son in Spain (Spanish Habsburgs) and his brother (Austrian Habsburgs/HRE)
      2. Spain waged a war against the Turks in the Mediterranean.
         a. Battle of Lepanto (1571): Spain defeated the Turkish navy off the coast of Greece.
         b. Spain’s victory ended the Ottoman threat in the Mediterranean
   B. The Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) aka “The Eighty Years War”
      1. 17 Spanish-controlled provinces in the Netherlands and Flanders rebelled against the Spanish Inquisition.
         a. The northern portion had become largely Calvinist
         b. Philip wanted to crush Protestantism in the Netherlands.
      2. The United Provinces of the Netherlands formed in 1581
         a. aka “the Dutch Republic” was aided by Elizabeth I of England
         b. major blow to Philip’s goal of maintaining Catholicism throughout his empire.
            c. The Spanish Netherlands (modern-day Belgium): 10 southern provinces remained under Spain’s control and mostly Catholic.
   C. Catholic Spain vs. Protestant England
      1. Queen Mary Tudor tried to re-impose Catholicism in England.
         a. She married Philip II before he became king of Spain.
         b. When Mary died after five years, Queen Elizabeth I reversed Mary’s policy via the “Elizabethan Settlement”
            c. Elizabeth also later refused Philip’s request for marriage.
      2. Elizabeth subsequently helped the Protestant Dutch in their revolt for independence from Spain.
         a. Also in 1587, she executed Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, angering European Catholics.
      3. Philip sought revenge for England’s support for the Dutch; he also sought to make England Catholic again.
         a. He planned a monumental invasion of England in 1588.
      4. The Spanish Armada, 1588
         a. Spain’s attempt to invade England ended in disaster.
         b. Much of Spain’s navy lay in ruins due to a raging storm in the English Channel as well as the effectiveness of England’s smaller but better-armed and more maneuverable navy.
         c. This signaled the rise of England as a world naval power.
D. **French Wars of Religion**

1. power struggle between three noble families for the Crown.
   a. throne was under fragile control of the Catholic Valois dynasty.
      • Three French kings from 1559 to 1589 were dominated by their mother, Catherine de Médicis, who as regent fought hard to maintain Valois control in France.
      • She is a politique.
   b. Between 40-50% of nobles became Calvinists (Huguenots)—represented by the Bourbon royal house.
      • The Bourbons were next in line to inherit the throne if the Valois did not produce a male heir.
      • Many nobles converted for religious reasons but sought independence from the crown.
         o Resistance to “new monarch” centralization
   c. The ultra-Catholic Guise family also competed for the throne
   d. Fighting began in 1562 between Catholics and Huguenots.

2. **St. Bartholomew Day Massacre** (August 24, 1572)
   a. marriage of Margaret (Valois) to Henry of Navarre (Bourbon Huguenot) intended to reconcile Catholics and Huguenots.
      • Arranged by Catherine to secure a Valois on the throne
   b. But the Guise family murdered a leader of Huguenots the night before the wedding.
      • Catherine de Médicis, scared of the Calvinist response, ordered the massacre of Calvinists.
      • 20,000 Huguenots were killed by early October.
   c. The massacre initiated the **War of the Three Henrys**: civil wars between Valois, Guise, and Bourbons families and their co-religionists.

3. **Henry IV (Henry of Navarre)** (r. 1589-1610): In 1589, became the first Bourbon king with the death of the last of Catherine’s sons
   a. one of the most important kings in French history.
      • ended the French Civil Wars
      • placed France on a gradual course towards absolutism.
   b. Henry was also a politique
      • sought practical political solutions (rather than ideological ones like Philip II)
         o Example: converted to Catholicism to gain the loyalty of Catholic Parisians
         o He allegedly stated: “Paris is worth a mass”
      • permitted Huguenots the right to worship privately.
         o Public worship, however, was not allowed.
      • It gave Huguenots access to universities, to public office, and the right to maintain some 200 fortified towns in western and southwestern France for self-protection.
      • In reality, the Edict was more like a truce in the religious wars rather than a recognition of religious toleration.
         o Nevertheless, the Edict gave Huguenots more religious protection than perhaps any other religious minority in Europe.