secularization in European society. Even granting the obvious secular tendencies in both Calvinist and Jesuit ethics, for example, it remains true that sixteenth-century Europe was more troubled by religious concerns than fifteenth-century Europe. Luther “revived the Christian consciousness of Europe,” Roland Bainton writes; “religion became again a dominant factor even in politics for another century and a half. Men cared enough for the faith to die for it and to kill for it. If there is any sense remaining of Christian civilization in the West, this man Luther in no small measure deserves the credit.”

In more concrete terms, this meant that at the height of “the Renaissance”—the moment in European history when the church’s prestige seemed near extinction, the secular national state irresistibly on the rise, and social life in general becoming more and more permeated by secular ideals—Christian ideals and institutions acquired a new autonomy and dynamism. The state churches of Germany and England of the 1530’s were not the final solution. By mid-century the Calvinists and the Jesuits were setting the pace, each representing a sort of supranational religious ideology embodied in a militant organization, proselytizing across national boundaries, and calling for an allegiance transcending every secular political tie. The clash of these new militant religious ideologies with the already deep-rooted dynastic and national loyalties gave the struggle for power of the later sixteenth century its peculiar character and intensity.

CHAPTER III

The Struggle for Power

THE latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed a sharp struggle for power resulting from the convergence of forces liberated by the religious upheavals of the preceding period.

Europe's economy was subjected to severe strain by the spectacular rise in prices which began about the middle of the century. The war expenditures and devaluation policies of European governments had something to do with the inflationary movement, but the main cause was the mounting flood of precious metal which poured into Europe from Spanish America after the opening of the fabulously rich silver mines at Potosí in Peru (1545). The influx of bullion far surpassed the normal need of a growing economy for an expanding medium of exchange and so pushed prices skyward, first in Spain and then in the rest of Europe. As always, inflation led to social stress, hurting the classes which like the older nobility depended upon fairly fixed incomes and favoring the entrepreneur and speculator. A "new nobility" began to appear in England and France, consisting of members of the bourgeoisie or the gentry who were able to climb to titles of nobility amid the economic or political ruin of older feudal families.

Religious animosities added to the general tension. Eu-
Europe was becoming a continent of exiles and displaced persons. The political exile had been a familiar figure in Italy since the party struggles of Dante's day. Now in Europe at large the refugee from an unsuccessful political revolt was joined by the religious outcast, and many towns were coming to accept as familiar figures the exiled Jew or Catholic, the fugitive Lutheran or Calvinist or Anabaptist.

Finally, the economic, social, and religious tensions were reflected in and aggravated by political tensions. The relatively simple dynastic war between Hapsburgs and Valois (1522–1559) gave place in the latter part of the century to a series of struggles which were partly international, partly civil wars. In these struggles religion sometimes reinforced patriotism but just as often undermined it. The wars and rebellions reflected the general economic and social instability as well as the new intransigence of religious groups (like the Calvinists and Jesuits). Governments struggled against bankruptcy with varying degrees of success. Ruined nobles and rising merchants often became warmongers, for different reasons but hoping for personal gain in the result. Embittered religious exiles urged governments on to more belligerent stands than they would otherwise have taken. The struggle for power which ensued was not only between states but also between churches and classes. Rebellions led to wars when traitors were supported by sympathizers or coreligionists abroad, and wars in turn induced rebellions. In the years 1568–1572, for instance, there were rebellions in Spain, France, the Netherlands, and England. In each case the rebels were more formidable because of the threat of support from friends abroad: the Moriscoes in Spain from Moslems in North Africa, the Huguenots in France from English Protestants, the Calvinists in the Neth-
erlands from French and English sympathizers, the Catholics in the north of England from Catholic Spain. The roots of war and rebellion were never simply economic or political or religious; they were all of these. In fact, in the confusion of social, political, and ideological elements in its wars and revolutions, the later sixteenth century was not unlike the twentieth.

**Mid-Century: The Crucial 50's**

During the ten years or so after the deaths of Luther (1546), Henry VIII (1547), and Francis I (1547), crucial decisions were made and important events took place which were to influence the course of European history for half a century. The 1550's are the turning point of the sixteenth century.

War broke out in Germany in 1546. It was partly a religious war of Lutheran against Catholic, partly a political revolt of discontented princes against the emperor Charles V. Charles won a signal victory over the rebels at Mühlberg in 1547, but he was unable to impose the kind of peace settlement he would have liked, a broad but firm re-Catholicizing of Germany. Lutheranism was by now too deeply rooted and the independence of the princes too firmly established for that. The emperor was weary of his long years of trying to roll back the Turkish tide on the Danube and in the Mediterranean, to curb French aggression, and to limit the spread of heresy in the empire, all at the same time. The task was too much for his resources, and in 1555 he agreed to the Religious Peace of Augsburg drafted by the Imperial Diet.

The Peace of Augsburg was an unwilling recognition of religious stalemate which resulted in a certain measure of
toleration. It stated simply that the emperor, princes, and states of the empire “will not make war upon any state of the empire on account of the Augsburg Confession” and the Lutheran doctrine contained in it, and that the Lutheran states would not disturb the Catholic states. This meant that each ruler or town council was now free to determine the religion of his own territory, provided it was one of the two confessions mentioned. Adherents of other religions were “altogether excluded” from the Peace—a provision which made trouble later because of the rapid growth of Calvinism in parts of Bohemia and the Rhineland. Individual Lutherans or Catholics caught in a territory of the opposite religion could “go with wife and children to another place” in the empire, and since it was usually not far to go to find a territory of their own persuasion, many left their homes to swell the army of displaced people.

Shortly before the Peace of Augsburg, Charles V seemed to have closed the iron ring about his life-long enemy France by marrying his son Philip to Queen Mary of England (1554). But the marriage was to prove barren in every respect. No heir was born, and instead of uniting England with Spain and the Netherlands in a powerful dynastic union as it was meant to do, the marriage taught Englishmen to dislike Spaniards and gained Philip nothing. In the winter of 1555–1556, Charles abdicated as ruler of the Netherlands and king of Spain in favor of Philip. He had already handed over the Hapsburg possessions in Austria to his brother Ferdinand, who was elected emperor. In 1558 Queen Mary died, and in 1559 Philip settled the latest phase of the Hapsburg wars with France and returned to Spain, never to leave the land he loved above all his other possessions until his death in 1558.
Charles's decision to leave the Netherlands to his "Spanish" son Philip rather than to his "German" brother Ferdinand was right by sixteenth-century dynastic reasoning. The money markets of the Netherlands were economically necessary to Spain, and England might yet be permanently swung into the Hapsburg orbit. But in the end the decision proved to be short-sighted. In splitting the Hapsburg empire into an Austrian and Spanish half, Charles was blind to the fact that the Netherlands belonged more naturally with the German states on grounds of religion and culture than with distant Spain. It was a fateful decision for both the Netherlands and Spain.

In France equally decisive events were taking place in the decade after Francis I's death. During the reign of Henry II (1547–1559) Calvinism grew and spread in France, in spite of the vigorous efforts of the government to prevent it. More by force of circumstances than by conscious design, the French government turned its main attention from Italy, where French armies had been involved off and on since 1494, to the northeastern frontier, taking important territory near the Rhine and expelling the English from their last continental foothold, Calais. This left Spain in control of Italy and inaugurated the long French attempts, undertaken in earnest during the next century, to expand toward the Netherlands and the Rhineland. Apparently all was well with France when peace was made with Philip of Spain in 1559. The monarchy appeared to be strong and growing stronger at home and abroad. But in July 1559 Henry II died of wounds received in a tournament, leaving three weakling sons all under age, and his shrewd but unpopular widow, the Italian Catherine de' Medici, as regent.
All the centrifugal forces, religious and political, which had hitherto been held in check by a strong monarchy now broke loose, and France found herself in the grip of a devastating intermittent civil war for over thirty years after 1562. From the dominant, aggressive power in European international politics, France almost overnight became a victim state and the cockpit of contending forces: Calvinism versus Catholicism, feudal and provincial rights versus monarchical centralization, English intervention versus Spanish intervention.

The eleven years between the death of Henry VIII (1547) and the accession of Queen Elizabeth (1558) are sometimes called a “barren interlude” in English history, and so they were perhaps from the point of view of political development. But Elizabeth’s caution and achievements cannot be understood apart from the violent swings of the religious pendulum under her younger brother, Edward VI (1547–1553), and her older sister, Mary (1553–1558), during this interlude. Under the boy-king Edward, the Protestant party gained control of the government and swung England more clearly into the Protestant camp. It was a strange and confused six years in which Archbishop Thomas Cranmer gave his countrymen the English Prayer Book, that masterpiece of English style and sane religious compromise, while some of the most unscrupulous adventurers in English history were scheming to exclude Mary the Catholic, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, from the throne in favor of their puppet, Lady Jane Grey. The Protestant reformers were a small minority, and their cause was not helped by their association with political adventurers who were bringing back the rule of feudal cliques to
English government. The mass of the English people were happy when Mary made good her claim to the throne in 1553.

Their happiness was short lived, however. Everyone knew that Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, would undo the work of her father and brother and restore England's obedience to the pope. There was no real opposition to the reconciliation as such. Significantly, the Act of Parliament which restored the papal supremacy in England (1554–1555) also guaranteed to hundreds of laymen the possession of monastic lands confiscated, and distributed, by Henry VIII—just as the Peace of Augsburg the same year guaranteed property rights in confiscated church property in Protestant lands in Germany. But Mary made two grave mistakes at least from the political point of view (it should be said that she was a conscientious woman, and no politician). She eagerly married Philip of Spain in spite of the patriotic protests of her Council, her Parliament, and her people; and she allowed her restored Catholic bishops to burn about three hundred persons for Protestant heresy, most of them (except for Cranmer and his associates) obscure, ordinary people. Whether deservedly or not, Spain and Catholic fanaticism became indissolubly associated in the English mind, and the Protestantism which Cranmer could not sell to the majority of Englishmen when he was in power began to become the mark of an English patriot in the fiery persecution of Mary's reign.

When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, it seemed likely that papal supremacy was through for good in England. The young queen had to move carefully because of fear of the power of Spain, but as the daughter of Anne Boleyn she had no choice but to steer England cautiously back
into the Protestant fold. The Elizabethan religious settlement was a compromise—more stable and longer lived than anyone would have guessed in the early years of the reign. The papal supremacy was once more rejected, but it was left very vague just where ecclesiastical authority was lodged in England. In succeeding years the queen, Parliament, and Convocation all claimed something of the pope's powers, but in practice the queen always had the last word. Cranmer's Prayer Book was again made the basis of the liturgy, and 39 Articles of Faith were drawn up, both documents drawing upon many streams of Christian tradition, from Catholicism and Lutheranism to Zwinglianism and Calvinism. Thanks to the way the breach with Rome originally took place (and perhaps thanks also to national temperament), the English were never so concerned about religious belief as they were about practice. Whether there should be bishops in the church, what they should wear, and whether there should be an "altar" or a "communion table"—these were the questions which agitated Englishmen, not salvation by faith and predestination. The Anglican ideal, never quite put into words, was to build a broad national church, closely linked to the secular state, which would exclude nobody but fanatical Romanists and religious radicals, and would rely not only upon the Bible but also upon tradition and reason for religious authority. The comprehensive Protestantism of Queen Elizabeth's religious settlement at least laid the basis for realization of this ideal.

The Hegemony of Spain

In the later sixteenth century military, political, and to some extent cultural predominance passed to Spain under
Philip II (1556–1598). Spanish military organization—with its balanced regiments of pikes, short swords, and harquebuses—Spanish battle tactics, and Spanish morale were the best in Europe. Spanish soldiers were the hardiest on the continent (they came from a climate which has been described as “nine months’ winter and three months’ hell”). Among the Spanish nobility, which included a large number of hidalgos or gentry, it was not fashionable to work, but it was fashionable to fight. So there was always a supply of men and officers for the army and of adventurers to help build a New Castile across the Atlantic. The monarchical bureaucracy which Philip developed at Madrid became the model, for better or worse, of the administrative practices of the next century. It was slow, cumbersome, and complicated. “If death came from Spain,” wrote the king’s viceroy in Naples, “we should live to a very great age.” But it was modern for its day and motivated by Philip’s passion for thoroughness, orderliness, and justice. He never forgot his father’s advice to him: “Depend on no one but yourself.” The result was an overcentralized bureaucracy which nevertheless bound Castile, Aragon, Portugal (under the Spanish crown from 1580 to 1640), most of Italy, the Netherlands, and Spanish America into a formidable empire until the long decline of Spanish power set in toward the end of the century. Spanish cultural ascendancy followed the peak of military and political power: the author of Don Quixote, Cervantes, and the painter, El Greco, died some fifteen years after the close of the century. That curious combination of the sacred and secular in literary and artistic style which we call the Baroque had many roots, but the strongest were in Spain. With the decline of France after 1559, in other words, Spain became the first example
in European history of the temporary “hegemony,” or predominance in power and leadership, of one of several sovereign states in a system usually characterized by a balance of power.

The reasons for this hegemony were partly material, partly spiritual. Spain’s command of the gold and silver of the New World was undoubtedly the main sinew of her strength. The flow of precious metals enabled the Spanish government simultaneously to maintain troops on the Danube and the Rhine, ships in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean (although the government went bankrupt twice in Philip’s reign). The inflation which the influx of bullion brought about was at first stimulating to the industry and agriculture of the country, and the early sixteenth century was a period of prosperity in Spain. Some scholars maintain that the Spanish economy remained vigorous and healthy till almost the end of the century, but others see a decline setting in by 1580 or even earlier. Spain seemed destined to share the fate of King Midas, who died of starvation when his wish that all he touched should turn to gold was fulfilled. The nation in effect used its treasure to pay its armies abroad and to import the manufactured goods which its own industries could not turn out so cheaply (because inflation in Spain always outran the price rise elsewhere). This hurt native industry, and in the end foreign imports and heavy taxation all but ruined Spanish production. Spain was left with nothing much but its gold and silver, and even this supply began to peter out in the next century.

There are also nonmaterial reasons for the brief but brilliant predominance of Spain under Philip II. The rulers and the ruling classes in sixteenth-century Spain had a sense of destiny. They believed that it had fallen to the Spanish
people to assume the burden of reviving and realizing the Christian empire of the Middle Ages. The Spaniards at first did not like it when their young king Charles was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1519. The following year the king-emperor had a spokesman explain to the Castilian Cortes (or representative assembly) what this meant to Spain:

Now the ancient glory of Spain has returned, as in the days when the old writers said of her that while other nations sent tributes to Rome it was her happy lot to send emperors. She sent Trajan, Hadrian, and Theodosius, and now the Empire has come to seek an Emperor in Spain, and by God’s grace our Spanish King is made King of the Romans and Emperor of the world.¹

Charles explained further that Spain would be the “fortress, strength, treasure, and sword” of his European policy, and that his true motive was to defeat the enemies of the Holy Catholic Faith. On the whole he lived up to this program: he spent his life opposing the Turk and the Protestant, and after his abdication he returned to die in Spain as a symbol of his attachment to the center of his empire. It was a bitter disappointment to Philip that the imperial title went not to him but to his uncle Ferdinand, and it was twice rumored in his reign that he was about to take the title of Emperor of the Indies. But he and his nobility developed a compensatory Spanish imperialism which grew directly out of his father’s theory. In essence it was Spanish nationalism combined with a sense of messianic mission. Spain was the nation divinely chosen to save Christendom from the Turkish infidel and from the Protestant heretic, to carry the Gospel

to the New World and to restore the true Catholic faith in the Old. It is difficult to measure the part this messianic faith played in the exploits of Spanish conquistadores in America and Spanish armies in Europe, but it was undoubtedly considerable.

It must be added immediately that this was a Spanish, not a papal imperialism. Philip began his reign by fighting a war with the pope in Italy; he opposed papal policy at the Council of Trent; and he never allowed the pope to have any say in ecclesiastical appointments or jurisdiction in Spain. In fact, he was almost as antipapal as Henry VIII himself. But he was genuinely religious and devoted to Catholicism as all his countrymen were. Generally Philip was in close alliance with the pope on Turkish or Protestant problems. Spain was the center of both Catholic Reformation and Counter Reformation, but Philip himself was never in full sympathy with the Jesuits or the Fathers of Trent. In practice his policy was always to choose whatever course would benefit Spain, but he easily persuaded himself that this course was automatically the best for Catholic Christendom. The grim, grey Escorial which he erected for his residence near Madrid—half palace, half monastery—was a symbol of this strange blending of secular and religious motives in himself and in his imperial ideal.

The first half of his reign was mainly occupied with measures to counter the Turk. Here Philip was simply taking up the centuries-long Spanish crusade against the Moslems. By 1560 the Christians had been driven from nearly all their footholds on the North African coast. When the Moriscoes or "converted" Moors in southeastern Spain rose in revolt in 1567, the fear ran through the country that the Moslems of North Africa would use the rebellion as an
entering wedge for an Islamic reconquest of the peninsula. The revolt was quelled, however, and in 1571 Philip's navy, aided by Venetian, Genoese, and papal ships, won a decisive victory over a Turkish fleet at Lepanto in the Gulf of Corinth. This victory marked the end of Turkish naval predominance in the Mediterranean and freed the Spanish to turn elsewhere. Meanwhile Spanish troops had been active all through the century in helping various other armies to hold the line against the Turks in the Danube valley. Until 1572 Philip and Spain were following their imperial destiny mainly in checking the expansion of the other great empire, the Ottoman, at the opposite end of the Mediterranean.

It was not till the second half of his reign that Philip realized that the real danger lay in northwestern Europe. The Protestants were apparently growing stronger in France, though they were obviously a minority. Philip could not allow France to go Protestant, and there might be great gain for Spain from fishing in the troubled waters north of the Pyrenees. The Netherlands were in open revolt against Spanish rule, and the brutal attempts of Philip's ablest henchman, the duke of Alva, to crush the opposition (1567–1573) had not succeeded. If the Netherlands were lost, the blow to Spanish economy and morale would be very severe. Finally, England was looming ever larger on the Spanish horizon as English freebooters made more and more daring inroads on Spanish commerce in the New World. Philip had offered Elizabeth his hand shortly after her accession, hoping to keep England in the Hapsburg orbit, but after the pope had formally excommunicated the queen in 1570, the king of Spain saw it might be better to try to unseat her from her throne. The Anglo-Spanish alli-
ance, which went back to 1489 and was firmly based on English economic interests in the Netherlands, had been first shaken by the unpopular marriage of Philip and Mary. By the 1570’s it was seriously threatened by Anglo-Spanish rivalry in America and in the rebellious Netherlands. There was much to gain and still more to lose for Spain in the North, and it was here that Philip turned his attention after Lepanto.

In Philip II’s struggle with the Protestant forces of northern Europe there was no glorious Lepanto at the end of the road. Instead there was the bitter defeat of the “Invincible Armada,” the Spanish fleet sent northward in 1588 to hold the English Channel so that Spanish troops under the duke of Parma could be ferried across from the Netherlands for the conquest of England. The defeat of the Armada by English seamanship and “Protestant weather” decided the fate of Philip’s efforts to crush out Protestantism in England and the Netherlands and to assure the victory of the extreme Catholic party in France. The high-built Spanish galleons crowded with Spain’s finest foot soldiers and helplessly riddled by shot from Drake’s faster-moving English vessels were somehow symbolic of the hollow brilliance of Spanish imperialism.

The Spanish people look back on the conscientious and imperturbable “Philip the Prudent” as their greatest king because better than any other he embodied the dream of Spain’s messianic mission to restore Catholic Christendom in its moment of greatest peril. But when he died in 1598 his country was exhausted, its economy on the decline, half the Netherlands lost, France restored to unity and strength, and England ready to contest the Spanish monopoly in America. His reign was a glorious failure.
The Trial of France

From 1562 to 1593 France underwent her severest trial between the Hundred Years’ War and her great Revolution of 1789. For thirty years the whole land was torn by intermittent civil wars of terrible ferocity, now concentrating in pitched battles which decided nothing, now degenerating into street fights, local massacres, and individual atrocities, now breaking out into destruction of images in churches or simply into wanton destruction of homes and crops. Uneasy truces brought temporary lulls, but there was no restoration of public order until a generation of bloodshed had so sickened the common people and ruling classes alike that all sides were willing to accept a peace of compromise.

These wars are called the French “Wars of Religion,” but this title does not quite describe their complexity. Religion was certainly the main cause. Although almost everywhere a minority doctrine, Calvinism had taken root in almost every important town in France by 1560 and was strong in Paris and in the cities around the periphery of the country such as Rouen in the north, La Rochelle in the west, and the towns of the Rhone Valley in the south. Furthermore, members of the lesser nobility had become converted and had carried with them whole districts, including the peasantry, where their influence was strong. Finally the Huguenots (as the French Calvinists were called) had made important converts among the highest nobility, particularly the family of Bourbon, kings of Navarre and closely related to the French royal family itself, and the family of Chastillon, of whom Admiral Coligny was the ablest representative. The Huguenots boasted some 2,500
organized churches in 1561, all of course strictly illegal. They probably never numbered more than 1,200,000 in a population of about 16,000,000 (some estimates are much higher), but they were a determined and dedicated minority, sure that God was on their side, and confident of sympathy and perhaps help from abroad—from Geneva, Germany, the Netherlands, and England.

The mass of the people were still Catholic, and most important of all, the monarchy was firmly Catholic, as were the theologians of the University of Paris and the lawyers of the Paris Parlement. In the Concordat of Bologna of 1516 the French monarchs had gained all the control they needed over the church in France. They were often as independent as Philip II in their attitude toward the pope, but none of them happened to find personal and dynastic reasons for breaking with papal jurisdiction as Henry VIII did. The steady adherence to Catholicism of the monarchy and the government until the very end of the civil wars is the most important reason why France today is predominantly Catholic rather than Protestant. French Calvinism failed to capture the government until the religious lines were hardened and until it was too late for such an event to be decisive.

The leaders of the extreme Catholic party in the 1550's were the family of Guise. In 1559 Mary Stuart, niece of the duke of Guise and soon to be queen of Scots, was married briefly to the young French king, Francis II, who died in 1560. This gave the Guises the kind of direct personal power at the court of Catherine de’ Medici which sent a thrill of terror through the whole Huguenot community. And when some troops of the duke of Guise happened on a Huguenot congregation at Vassy and massacred three hun-
dred of them in March 1562, it was the signal for confused religious and civil strife to break out all over France.

From the very beginning the religious issue acted as detonator for other explosive issues which had nothing necessarily to do with the mutual fear and hatred of Catholics and Protestants. Towns and provinces, particularly in the south, which had long unsuccessfully resisted the inexorable trend toward monarchical centralization now broke out into rebellion against a weakened monarchy. Feudal nobles who had been occupied in the dynastic wars of Hapsburg and Valois until the peace of 1559 now turned their turbulent energies into domestic feuds, such as that between the Guises and the Chastillons. Finally foreign powers intervened in France, either to help coreligionists or to slice off a bit of territory from a crippled French government. In the early years of the wars Philip II threatened to intervene on the side of the Guises, and Elizabeth of England did intervene on the side of the Huguenots. Although both became more cautious for a time, the Wars of Religion ended with English and Spanish armies on French soil. The French Wars of Religion were social, dynastic, and international, as well as religious in origin and character.

France in her time of trouble illustrated more poignantly perhaps than any other nation the characteristic sixteenth-century form of the ancient rivalry between church and state for men’s allegiance. The claim of religious belief on a zealous Calvinist or Catholic dwarfed or excluded the claim of the dynastic state on his loyalties. Huguenots, for instance, often had more in common with Dutch Calvinists and English Presbyterians than they had with fellow Frenchmen who were Catholics. In 1565 a close friend of the Guises remarked to the Spanish ambassador:
Nowadays Catholic princes must not proceed as they once did. At one time friends and enemies were distinguished by the frontiers of provinces and kingdoms, and were called Italians, Germans, French, Spaniards, English, and the like; now we must say Catholics and heretics, and a Catholic prince must consider all Catholics of all countries as his friends, just as the heretics consider all heretics as friends and subjects, whether they are their own vassals or not.  

Like twentieth-century ideologies, religion in the sixteenth century demanded loyalty to a cause higher than either the dynasty or the nation. At one time or another during the wars in France, both Calvinist and Catholic political pamphleteers argued for constitutional resistance to monarchical tyranny, for provincial “states’ rights,” and even for republicanism and tyrannicide. Religious truth was more important to them than strong civil government, and they were not afraid to be called traitors or rebels.

From the very beginning the regent, Catherine de’ Medici, was the center of a small party which believed the exact opposite of all this. They put politics before religion and thought that no truth was worth the cost of civil war. These politiques, as they were called, were to win out in the end, but only after both sides had become exhausted by bloodletting. As early as 1563 government edicts foreshadowed something of the ultimate solution: freedom of conscience, freedom of worship for the Calvinist minority, and guarantees that neither side would break the peace. During the 1560’s the Huguenots successfully held their own, even if they lost most of the pitched battles they fought. In the summer of 1572, however, the Guises persuaded Catherine and

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the young king, Charles IX (1560–1574), that the Huguenot problem could be solved at one blow by the murder of the Calvinist leaders. On the eve of St. Bartholomew’s Day (August 24), Coligny and others were done to death in Paris, and the fury spread throughout France during the next ten days. When it was over, more than ten thousand Huguenots had been massacred. This was the most spectacular of the innumerable atrocities on both sides which made any permanent settlement impossible until after almost thirty years of strife.

By the 1580’s several elements in the picture had changed. The Huguenot strength was less scattered geographically, concentrated chiefly in the south and the west. It was no longer growing. The extreme Catholic party had formed the Holy League in 1576 which by now was as dangerous to the integrity of the monarchy as the Huguenots had ever been, supported as it was by Philip of Spain. Religious tempers still ran high, but there was an increasing number who subscribed to the argument of the _politiques_ or who listened to the cool wisdom of the quizzical Montaigne, whose _Essays_ began to appear in 1580. “A thousand times,” Montaigne wrote, he had gone to bed expecting to be “betrayed or murdered before morning, and bargaining with fortune that it be done without terror or lingering.” Such a state of affairs was utterly senseless, he argued. “There is no enmity like the Christian.” But “after all,” he said, “it is setting a very high price on one’s conjectures to burn a man alive for them.” He was speaking of witchcraft, but to every sort of fanaticism he offered the antidote of a sane and humane skepticism. By now there were many who were ready to follow him.

The Wars of Religion ended like a Shakespearean tragedy.
In 1588 Henry Duke of Guise was murdered by order of King Henry III (1574–1589), the last of Catherine de’ Medici’s sickly sons. In 1589 King Henry himself was murdered by a Dominican friar, and the gallant Henry of Navarre, a Bourbon and a Protestant, became king. It took him five years to make good his title, be crowned at Chartres, and re-enter his capital city, Paris—and he had to renounce his Protestantism and become a Catholic (1593) in order to do it. The majority of his people were still Catholic, as were the Parliament, the university, and the League, which controlled Paris. Henry IV was a politique in the best sense, convinced that the peace of the nation was worth a Mass. His conversion at first outraged everyone, but in the end it opened the way to the recovery of France, which was far along the road to renewed economic and political strength by the time of his death in 1610.

In 1598, over the protests of the Catholic clergy, the Parliament, and many of the cities of France, Henry IV published the Edict of Nantes. This granted liberty of conscience to the Huguenots without restriction and liberty of worship in two places in each local district except large towns, where services had to be held outside the walls (in the case of Paris, twelve miles outside). Protestants were given all the civil and legal rights held by Catholics. As guarantee, mixed courts representing both Protestants and Catholics were set up, and two hundred fortified towns were left in the hands of Huguenot governors and garrisons. The Edict was thus a compromise; like the Peace of Augsburg, it recognized a religious stalemate. Further, it allowed a kind of “state within a state” to exist. It broke with the ancient principle of “un roi, une loi, une foi” by restoring the monarchy and the law but leaving France divided be-
between a Catholic majority and a Calvinist minority. This implied that the peaceful coexistence of two faiths in one state was perfectly possible. The grant of freedom of conscience and worship was declared "perpetual and irrevocable." But the Edict was a free grant by a restored monarchy. Less than a century later Louis XIV, a stronger if not a wiser king, would retract the measure of toleration which the first Bourbon monarch had granted.

Out of the French civil wars came a welter of political writings, but it is perhaps no wonder that the tracts which had most influence on the next century were those that preached the importance of authority and strong government, not the treatises by Calvinists and Jesuits, which advocated resistance to tyranny whenever its own party was out of power. Jean Bodin (1530–1596), the most powerful political thinker of the century and author of The Republic (1576), lived through the Wars of Religion. He came out with the conviction that sovereignty—the power "to lay down the law to all subjects without their consent"—must rightfully reside somewhere in every well-ordered state, preferably in the monarch. Bodin was a lawyer and a patriot who was trying to find a rational justification for strong government in the midst of civil war without throwing over entirely the best of mediaeval thinking about legal restraints on arbitrary power. But lesser thinkers were soon dropping his qualifications and speaking about the divine right of kings—a right bestowed on hereditary monarchs not by the pope of Rome, or by any company of self-appointed saints like the Calvinists, or (for that matter) by the people at large, but by God himself. The king, then, was responsible to no one but God. The theory of the divine right of kings was the answer to the threat of anarchy growing out of
the claims of absolutist religious organizations such as the Catholic and the Calvinist to make and unmake secular governments. To the Catholic claim that only the vicar of Christ has true divine right, and to the Calvinist claim that no human being can claim absolute power because only God is sovereign, men of the early seventeenth century who lived through a generation of religious and civil strife began to answer, the king is God's representative on earth —obey him and him alone.

The Revolt of the Netherlands

While France was undergoing her Wars of Religion, the Netherlands were plunged into a revolt against Spanish rule which proved to be even more furious and destructive than the troubles in France. Religion, patriotism, and economic grievances all played their part in the origins of the revolt, together with Spanish mistakes in policy. In the struggle the new forces of Calvinism and national sentiment were strangely allied with the older forces of feudal privilege and provincial rights against the steady pressure of Spanish attempts to crush out heresy and to centralize and unify the provinces.

The Netherlands consisted of seventeen provinces which had been gathered together over two centuries by the dukes of Burgundy and their heirs, the Hapsburgs Maximilian and Charles V. The Walloon provinces, which constituted the southern third of this territory, were French-speaking, the remainder Dutch-speaking. The northern third was geographically isolated by the line of the rivers Rhine and Meuse as they bend westward to empty into the North Sea. In the middle third was the largest and most important province, Brabant, with the Netherlands' capital city (Brus-
of Alva made a shambles of the country, confiscating, burning, and executing. He did what the Calvinist minority was unable to do—he united almost all classes in all seventeen provinces in hatred of Spain. This was the result particularly of his imposing a 10-per-cent sales tax (modeled on Spanish practice) which well-nigh ruined the trade of the country. Most of the people were still firmly Catholic and still loyal to Philip as the anointed ruler of the land (if not to Alva). But with economic depression, religious persecution, and national humiliation staring them in the face and with no apparent prospect of relief, they were soon driven to organized rebellion.

The revolution began in the north, in Holland and Zeeland, which carried on the burden of rebellion alone for four years (1572–1576). These were the provinces in most intimate contact with the sea, and it was the Sea Beggars (or anti-Spanish pirates and privateers) who were the strength of their resistance. The northern provinces found a leader in William of Orange, one of the greatest nobles and largest landowners in the Netherlands. In the welter of scheming or overbearing wielders of power in sixteenth-century politics, William stands out almost in a class by himself—far-seeing, fair-minded, gifted with almost incredible patience, imperturbably tolerant in religion, and as selfless as a practical statesman can ever be. Brought up a Catholic, married to a Lutheran, William was almost inevitably drawn into the Calvinist camp as the struggle developed, but he was first a patriot and a humanitarian, never a sectarian. He called upon his countrymen “to restore the whole fatherland to its old liberty and prosperity out of the clutches of the Spanish vultures and wolves.” Although he failed in the end to hold the whole nation together, he
The Struggle for Power

guided the course of the revolution from 1572 until an assassin's bullet cut short his life in 1584.

As early as 1573 a small Calvinist minority established complete political control over Holland and Zealand, for the simple reason that they were best organized and mentally equipped to carry on the war against Spanish tyranny. The fanaticism and intolerance of this minority was often a trial to William, but in 1576 it seemed as if he had attained his highest goal when the whole States-General approved what was called the Pacification of Ghent, under the shock of a terrible sack of Antwerp by Spanish troops in which seven thousand patriots lost their lives. The Pacification was an agreement between Holland and Zealand, on the one hand, and the provinces of the States-General, on the other, to stand together until the Spanish soldiers were expelled and to respect religious differences. In this last respect it was like the Peace of Augsburg, an agreement to live and let live with respect to religion. Apparently Orange’s dream of a United Netherlands, free of Spain and tolerant in religion, was about to come true.

Tragedy stalked the Pacification of Ghent, however. The Calvinists, though always a minority, were just as strong in the cities of Brabant and Flanders as they were in Holland. The example of Calvinist political dictatorship in Holland made Calvinists elsewhere restive and envious. A Calvinist coup d'état took place in Ghent in 1578, and the Catholics everywhere took fright. Early in 1579 the Walloon provinces formed a Catholic Union at Arras, and almost at the same time a Protestant Union of the provinces north of the great rivers (with some cities south of the line) was signed at Utrecht. The Union of Utrecht of 1579 was the direct origin of the independent United Provinces or Dutch
Netherlands, which formally renounced their allegiance to Philip II in 1581. Religion was the rock, therefore, on which the unity of the Netherlands foundered. There was no geographical localization of Calvinism when the revolt started, except that it was predominantly an urban affair. But as the fighting progressed—a peculiarly atrocious sort of fighting, with whole towns sometimes put to the torch and sword—the fact that the Spanish oppressors were Catholic and their toughest opponents Calvinist had its effect. Patriots had to become Calvinist, in sympathy at least, or submit to Spanish rule to preserve their Catholicism, as the Walloons did. Above all, the issue was finally determined by force—by the accidents of foreign intervention, Spanish and Dutch military genius, and geography.

After Alva’s departure in 1573 the prostrate Netherlands became the prize of a three-cornered duel between Spain, France, and England. Both France and England were afraid of Spain, but they were also afraid of each other. The result was that their intervention was usually halting and ineffective. Catherine de’ Medici’s youngest son, the duke of Anjou as he was later called, was the agent of French intervention until his death in 1584, but he played a confusing game of deceit and never drew any effective support from his own divided country. In 1585 Elizabeth sent the earl of Leicester to the Netherlands with an English army which was of some but not much benefit to the rebels. Both Anjou and Leicester at one time or another schemed to step into Philip’s shoes as ruler of the Netherlands, and both lost as many battles as they won. The dominating figure in the Netherlands after his appointment as Philip’s representative in 1578 was Alexander Farnese, duke of Parma. Parma was a first-rate general and a smart diplomatist. It was mainly
his genius which was responsible for the reduction once more of all the provinces south of the great rivers to Spanish rule. Beyond the rivers he could not operate effectively: geography was the chief defense of the United Provinces in the north. Furthermore, the defeat of the Armada (1588) and the accession of Henry IV in France (1589) were decisive for the ultimate freedom of the Dutch Netherlands. After the Armada they were always open to English support, and after the accession of Henry, Philip kept Parma busy invading northeastern France in a vain attempt to prevent the Protestant Henry IV from consolidating his power. Parma died in 1592, a much frustrated man, and the rebels under William's talented son, Maurice of Nassau, began to push a defensible frontier somewhat south of the rivers. It was on this line that a truce was finally concluded between the United Provinces and Spain in 1609, bringing to a close over a generation of bloodshed; and it is there that the frontier between Holland and Belgium lies today.

The revolt of the Netherlands has long interested Americans, who have seen in it close parallels to their own revolution. William of Orange plays the part of Washington, Philip II of George III. There are the same general grievances—economic, political, and sentimental—the same problem of uniting seventeen or thirteen separate political units in a common struggle. The parallel breaks down in two important respects, however. Thanks to the religious issue, the revolt of the Netherlands was a far more brutal and venomous struggle than the American. And in the case of the Netherlands, only half the country won its independence from foreign rule. It was as if the American Revolution had ended with all the colonies northeast of the Hudson still in English hands. The Dutch Netherlands went on to
experience their most glorious age of commercial prosperity, naval glory, and cultural achievement in the seventeenth century. Meanwhile the Spanish Netherlands sank back into apathy. There was no necessary reason for the differing fates of the two halves, as the Dutch historian Geyl insists, beyond the ability of Parma and the configuration of the rivers.

**Elizabethan England**

While the other major states of Europe were exhausting their energies in civil or foreign wars, England was husbanding her strength in twenty-six important years of peace (1559–1585). The nation owed these years of calm to its ruler, Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603).

The Protestant exiles who streamed back to England from Geneva and Strasbourg and Frankfort after the death of Mary the Catholic were not peaceful men. They wished to purify the Anglican Church of all practices which still savored of Rome and so later became known as Puritans. They disliked everything from priestly vestments and kneeling at communion to the use of altars and the institution of episcopacy. They were a minority, but a vigorous and important one. They dominated Parliament whenever it was called (the queen summoned ten parliaments in thirteen sessions during her forty-four years on the throne), were strong among the lower clergy, and had powerful friends in the government like the earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham. Their politically minded members constantly pressed for an aggressive and pro-Protestant foreign policy in support of the Presbyterians in Scotland, the Huguenots in France, and the Calvinists in the Netherlands.

On the other side of the religious fence, the Catholics
were a generally demoralized and dispirited group after the
death of Mary. Somewhere between the accession of Eliza-
beth and the arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries in 1579,
the Catholics sank for the first time to a minority in Eng-
land, thanks to neglect by the papacy, the tolerant policy
of the English government, and the growth of national
sentiment. But after the papal bull of 1570, which excom-
municated the queen and deposed her from her throne, good
Catholics had in theory to choose between their religion
and their loyalty to their queen. From the 1570's onward,
as the Counter Reformation gained headway all over Eu-
rope, the Catholics in England became a small but reinvig-
orated and potentially dangerous minority, hoping against
hope for the restoration of the papal obedience, perhaps by
French or Spanish arms.

England, in other words, had all the combustible materials
which in the case of France and the Netherlands were to
lead to civil war and involvement in international conflict.
But Elizabeth and her chief minister, Sir William Cecil,
were what the French called politiques. Elizabeth was first
a patriot and second (or third) a Protestant Christian. She
said she had no intention of opening windows into men's
minds, and all her life she consistently concerned herself
with men's acts, not their opinions. This meant that so long
as Catholics did not commit treason and so long as Puritans
did not infringe on her royal prerogatives, they might think
as they pleased. In her foreign policy the interests of Eng-
land, not of international Protestantism, always came first.
Her first and deepest impulse in a crisis was to do nothing,
to let time solve the problem for her. She often drove her
ministers to distraction by her apparent inability to make
up her mind. Her instinct was never to close doors, always
to preserve possibilities, always to encourage people on all sides of a controversy to believe that she would eventually do what they hoped she would do. “Among all great rulers,” wrote the English historian J. R. Seeley, “it is the distinction of Elizabeth to have shown how much may be achieved by simply allowing full play to the influence of time.” *

It is hard to point to any positive, constructive policies which were Elizabeth’s, but there are a great many things she might have done, and did not do, which would have made the Elizabethan Age impossible. She kept the ebullient energies of her people in check until the time was ripe for them to burst forth and then released them, not because she wanted to but because she could not help it. At home she skillfully encouraged industry and trade, recognized care of the poor as a national responsibility, kept the Puritans from liquidating the Catholics and upsetting the orderly regime of bishops, and managed to make herself fabulously popular, even with her Puritan political opponents. Abroad she steered England cautiously through the stormy waters of the early years of her reign until the nation was ready for the glorious triumphs of her later years.

The chief threat to England in 1558, as it had been for over two hundred years, was France. Mary of Guise was regent of Scotland, her daughter Mary Stuart was married to the French dauphin, and the Guise family thus seemed to have England caught in a Franco-Scottish vise, an ancient device of the French. Within a few short years the whole picture had changed. John Knox, trained in Geneva, together with his followers among the Scottish nobility, had worked a Calvinist revolution in Scotland with the support of Elizabeth, and France was on the eve of her civil wars.

After the death of her mother and her husband, Mary Stuart, now queen of Scots, returned to Scotland (1561). But within six years her utter lack of sympathy with both the religion and the national sensibilities of her people together with her marital mistakes cost her the throne, and she found herself an exile in England, much to Elizabeth's embarrassment. The old Scottish-French alliance was permanently broken, and the way was cleared for Mary's infant son James to become king of both Scotland and England after the death of his mother and of Elizabeth. France was never a serious threat to England from 1560 to the end of the century, and there were brief periods when the two ancient enemies were formal allies of each other.

For over half a century Spain had been England's ally. The bond was strengthened when Charles V became both lord of the Netherlands and king of Spain. In spite of the strains in the alliance caused by Henry VIII's falling-out with Catherine of Aragon and by the unpopularity of Philip of Spain as Mary's husband, Spain was still Elizabeth's one powerful ally when she became queen. Friction began to develop rapidly, however, in the 1570's, and during the 1580's the breaking point was reached. It now seems inevitable that England and Spain should eventually have become rivals. When the Atlantic replaced the Mediterranean as the chief highway of European ocean-borne commerce, the Iberian peninsula and the British Isles acquired a new importance. With France crippled by domestic troubles, Spain's first dangerous rival for the trade and treasure of the New World was England. English privateers were selling slaves in Spanish America in the 1560's, and by the 1570's Sir Francis Drake and his fellow Sea Dogs were becoming the terror of the Spanish Main, as the Dutch
Sea Beggars were of the waters around continental Europe. Spain and England were at war on the high seas long before there was any breach of the peace in Europe.

To trade rivalry were added two other major causes of Anglo-Spanish friction. The first, as already suggested, was the revolt of the Netherlands. From the beginning the sympathies of most Englishmen were with the rebels, and as the northern provinces began to establish their independence, the economic ties between English and Dutch merchants reinforced the sentimental bond. The final cause of friction was Spanish interference in English domestic affairs. If the English were the aggressors on the seas, the Spanish were the aggressors in the matter of fostering plots and subversive groups in the rival state. Between 1568 and 1572 Elizabeth was faced with a series of risings and plots which shook her throne. The manpower came from the Catholic nobility of the north of England, and the focus of every plot was Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth’s heir apparent and semiprisoner in England. Behind the conspiracies was the Spanish ambassador in London. These plots, together with the revolt of Holland and Zealand and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s in 1572, combined to push Elizabeth into a foreign policy she disliked, namely the underhand support of Protestant rebellion in France and the Netherlands in order to cripple the Catholic Spanish power which was threatening her at home. In 1584–1585 things came to a head. The assassination of William of Orange and the death of the duke of Anjou (lately Elizabeth’s instrument in her foreign policy) forced the queen to intervene openly and actively in the Netherlands to prevent the rebels’ failure, and in France to insure the accession and success of Henry of Navarre. At almost the same time Mary Queen of Scots
became involved in her last Spanish plot, and in 1587 Elizabeth was finally persuaded to send her to the block.

In 1585 undeclared war broke out between England and Spain. By the 1590's England was involved in ventures so large and numerous that they would have broken her strength a half-century before: a maritime war to the death with Spain which culminated but did not end with the defeat of the Armada in 1588, and three land wars, in northern France, in the Netherlands, and in Ireland, where the Jesuits had revived Irish morale and the Spanish were actively supporting a widespread rebellion against English rule. (English suppression of the Irish rebellion was as brutal as, but more effective than, Alva's bloody work in the Netherlands.) The war at sea broke Spanish naval supremacy for good, but proved that it was no more possible for England to conquer Spain from the sea than for Spain to conquer England. The legend of Spanish greatness survived to terrify Protestant courts in the seventeenth century, but that greatness had vanished in fact before England and Spain made peace shortly after Elizabeth's death.

Before her death the drain upon English financial and human resources became evident in the increasing unruliness of Parliament and the difficulty of raising men and money. But the striking thing about England after 1588 was not its exhaustion but its inexhaustible energy, its buoyancy, and its boundless confidence. The explanation of "golden ages" has ever been the despair of historians, and the Age of Shakespeare is no exception. Among the contributing factors, one can point to the steadily expanding population and economy, for which the long peace before 1585 was largely responsible. One can describe the virtues of the Tudor popular despotism which Elizabeth brought to per-
fiction and the broad-based religious settlement which she made. One can point to the long, slow development of English national consciousness, fanned into a sudden blaze of self-confident awareness in the glorious defeat of the Spanish Armada. But in the long run the poetry and drama of the turn of the century, the music and the style of living, the visions of overseas empire and the sense of destiny, everything that we associate with the Elizabethan Age is inexplicable in any simple historical terms.

It is tempting to compare England and Spain, the Protestant and Catholic champions and the two strongest powers in Europe in 1588, at the moment when they grappled with each other. Both were on the periphery of that Europe described at the beginning of this essay. Each had an independence of action which came from having little or no land frontier of its own to defend. Spain was supreme on land, England was soon to be supreme on the seas. Spain produced one of the two colossal literary figures of the turn of the century, Cervantes, and England produced the other, Shakespeare. England like Spain had also developed a sense of her national destiny. It was best expressed by Richard Hakluyt, the preacher, propagandist, and geographer who by narrating the "principal navigations" of the explorers had so much to do with impressing the voyages of discovery upon the imagination of his countrymen and firing them to dreams of colonization and empire overseas. To Hakluyt it was England's destiny to stem the tide of Spanish Catholicism and to build a Protestant counterweight to the Spanish empire in the New World. In a revealing phrase he once prophesied that Englishmen would carry even as far as Japan and the Far East "the incomparable treasure of the truth of Christianity, and of the Gospell, while we
use and exercise common trade with their marchants.” A mission to spread the benefits of Protestant Christianity, along with English freedom and the material benefits of advanced industry and trade—this vision was already in evidence before the great queen’s death in 1603 in writers like Hakluyt and Protestant buccaneering gentry like Drake. Coming later than the Spanish sense of destiny, it was fashioned partly in conscious opposition to the Spanish dream itself. It looked forward rather than backward, on toward the expanding economy and competitive tendencies of the modern world rather than back to the ordered and organic society of the Middle Ages. But in both dreams there was that peculiar combination of religion and politics, of idealism and materialism, which is the mark of the sixteenth century. Protestant England confronting Catholic Spain, each assured that in its own national interest there lay a religious destiny, this is the typical outcome of the political developments and the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century.

The Mind of the Sixteenth Century

From one point of view, the mind of the sixteenth century, the way men thought and felt, was very remote from our own. It was still a profoundly religious age, in spite of obvious trends toward secularism or the dominance of this-worldly ends and motives. Men accepted the existence of God as readily as we accept the existence of the atom. In the crises of individual and social life, they turned to the resources of religion as naturally and normally as many of us turn to science and social action.

It is no coincidence that the great thinkers of the first half of the century were primarily concerned, almost without exception, with religious problems. But this was a learned
concern, a concern of scholars, teachers, and intellectuals, not merely of mystics, prophets, and unlettered people. There probably never was another half-century in European history when Christian scholars had so much influence on so many people. The enthusiasm for what sheer learning could accomplish in this world was communicated by the Humanists to the religious reformers, who wrote not only in Latin but also in the common tongues and whose works were spread by the printing press. Erasmus made his living by research, editing, and writing. Thomas More was a lawyer by profession, but a Christian scholar at heart. Cardinal Ximenes in Spain, John Colet in England, and Lefèvre d'Étaples in France were three of a whole company who left their mark on Biblical scholarship. Luther was a professor of Bible, and one of his biographers calls him a "Biblical Humanist." Calvin always thought of himself as a scholar torn from his beloved books by the call of duty. The religious upheaval was above all an upheaval in thought as well as in experience and emotion. Except for harbingers of a more secular age like Machiavelli, for whom the spiritual world simply did not exist, and Rabelais, whose zest for this world in all its confusion was insatiable, the profoundest minds of the first half of the sixteenth century were concerned with religious problems.

What we call the scientific attitude was evident in only a handful of mathematicians and students of nature who were slowly fitting together experimental technique and mathematical analysis to form what would later be called the scientific method. The two greatest scientific works of the century appeared in the same "wonder year" 1543: Copernicus' *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Orbs*, which suggested that it was simpler mathematically to as-
sume that the sun, rather than the earth, is the center of the visible universe; and Vesalius' *On the Structure of the Human Body*, the first work on human anatomy since the time of the Greeks to be based upon careful firsthand observation and dissection. Together they represented the two major aspects of science, the theoretical and the experimental. When these two complementary aspects were brought together in the next century by Galileo and Newton, modern science could be said to have come of age. But the sixteenth century witnessed only its adolescence.

From another point of view, the sixteenth century mind was strangely like our own in spite of the differences suggested. It was a time of rapid and bewildering social change. Three centuries before, the thinkers of the high Middle Ages had come to the general conclusion, with Thomas Aquinas and Dante, that in spite of all the surface conflicts the world was ultimately a rational, intelligible, and orderly place—planned, created, and someday to be redeemed by God in Christ. "The Author of the universe is Intelligence," Aquinas had written, echoing Aristotle. It was much harder to believe this in the age of Machiavelli and Luther, Henry VIII and Suleiman the Magnificent, John Calvin and Ignatius of Loyola. If the Christian God was still in control—and only a few yet doubted it—He appeared to be a more majestic and mysterious God than the thirteenth century had imagined, a beleaguered God actively confronting evil, a God in whom will and power were more evident than reason and law. To a very few like Machiavelli it even appeared that God had retired altogether and that man was on his own in this world, compelled to rely on his own shrewdness and force of will to bring some order out of apparent chaos and ceaseless change. It was a time of half-understood
change when old ideas and institutions were rapidly losing their meaning and no acceptable substitutes were yet in sight. It was therefore natural that men turned from confidence in the rationality of the universe to faith in will and power and creativity, whether those of God or of man.

Machiavelli glorified the man of virtù, the man of virility and virtuosity, freed from older prejudices as to "what ought to be." Luther and Calvin were equally concerned to free God from all the trammels by which men had tried to bind Him in the recent past, for instance, the assumption that He must grant His grace only through the Roman Church and its sacraments. If the four dominating figures in early sixteenth-century statecraft were Charles V, Francis I, Henry VIII, and Suleiman the Magnificent, those of the latter part of the century were Philip II, Elizabeth, Henry of Navarre, and William of Orange. All were persons of great force of will. But it is interesting to note that of the later group all, excepting Philip, were weak at the beginning, and had to combine what Machiavelli called the cunning of the fox with the strength of the lion in order to establish their power. The going was harder for the statesmen of the latter half of the century. The inner spirit of the sixteenth century is revealed in its various facets in Machiavelli's *The Prince*; in the brooding, superhuman, hampered figures of Michelangelo's sculpture; in the startlingly earthy and determined faces which look at us from the canvases of Holbein, that most objective of painters; in the majestic sovereignty both of Calvin's God and of Bodin's ruler; in the iron will of the Jesuit, which could discipline the imagination and subject itself without reserve to the will of a superior. Reason was not forgotten in the sixteenth century, but the age was above all an age of will.
The religious schism appeared at the moment in European history when a strong trend toward political centralization was already under way in many parts of the continent. In some nations such as England, Scotland, and Sweden, Protestantism and national sentiment reinforced each other and political unification was furthered. In the same way Catholicism reinforced patriotism in Spain and Ireland. But in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Poland—in central Europe generally—religious conflict had a politically disintegrating effect which was more or less serious depending upon the previous history of each country. Like the Communist of the twentieth century, the devoted Calvinist or Jesuit of the sixteenth was swayed by a supranational loyalty which could lead straight to what was called “treason.” Religion could enforce patriotism, but it could also undermine it. As communism today is the criterion of patriotism in Russia and the mask of treason in the United States, so to be a Jesuit in Ireland four centuries ago was to be a patriot, to be a Jesuit in England was to be a traitor.

Small wonder that in such a divided age as this men searched desperately for some persuasive principle of authority, visible or invisible. The zealous Roman Catholic found it in the visible church headed by the vicar of Christ, its dogma defined by the Council of Trent. Most Protestants found it in the self-explanatory and self-authenticating Word of God enshrined in the Bible. Some few found it in mystical experience of the divine; still fewer, in the light of human reason applied to all the confusing data of experience. But it became evident to some after mid-century that the root of the trouble was this very search for absolute authority, which inevitably resulted in the bloody clash of
absolute and exclusive beliefs. Perhaps truth is not in some formula but in a feeling, said some mystics. Perhaps truth is not so easily defined as some dogmatists think, said the Humanists. Perhaps truth in any ultimate sense is unattainable by human beings, said a few skeptics. "I generally observe," Montaigne wrote drily, "that when a matter is set before them, men are more ready to waste their time in seeking the reason of it than in seeking the truth of it. . . . So much uncertainty is there in all things." If the doubters were right, then the civil wars in Germany, France, and the Netherlands, the war of Protestant England against Catholic Spain, the supranational struggle between Calvinists and Jesuits, were all futile and unnecessary conflicts. As increasing numbers turned in disgust from the fury of the theologians, the cult of the divine-right monarch was waiting to receive them. The last word of the sixteenth century apparently lay with the skeptic Montaigne—his motto "What do I know?" and his self-chosen emblem of a pair of evenly balanced scales—and with Elizabeth of England, who accounted it the glory of her reign that she was "mere English," that she had ruled with the loves of her people, and that she had made no windows into men's souls.

Yet this was not really the last word. It is of the essence of understanding the Age of Reformation to remember that it was still too early for the mass of Europeans to accept a worldly skepticism and a faith in the omnipotence of the state as the logical way out of their intellectual and institutional difficulties. Among other things, the fact that the sixteenth century witnessed the climax of the witchcraft mania should remind us that there were profound unresolved tensions in European society, untouched by rational control. Europe was shaken in its ancient faith in the priest, but
not yet ready to put all its trust in the king. As confidence in the mediaeval church waned and as men began to wonder confusedly whether the secular state could save them, it is not surprising that fear gnawed at their hearts and that they turned (as they still do) either to cynical indifference or to witch-burning. If one thing can be said of the sixteenth-century mind—in contrast with that of the thirteenth before or the eighteenth after—it is that it was not sure of itself. This is to say that the Age of Reformation was the watershed between the Middle Ages and modern times.