CHAPTER 18

Transformations in Europe, 1500–1750

I. Culture and Ideas
   A. Religious Reformation
      1. In 1500 the Catholic Church, benefiting from European prosperity, was building new churches including a new Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Pope Leo X raised money for the new basilica by authorizing the sale of indulgences.
      2. The German monk Martin Luther challenged the Pope on the issue of indulgences and other practices that he considered corrupt or not Christian. Luther began the Protestant Reformation, arguing that salvation could be by faith alone, that Christian belief could be based only on the Bible and on Christian tradition.
      3. The Protestant leader John Calvin formulated a different theological position in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin argued that salvation was God’s gift to those who were predestined and that Christian congregations should be self-governing and stress simplicity in life and in worship.
      4. The Protestant Reformation appealed not only to religious sentiments, but also to Germans who disliked the Italian-dominated Catholic Church and to peasants and urban workers who wanted to reject the religion of their masters.
      5. The Catholic Church agreed on a number of internal reforms and a reaffirmation of fundamental Catholic beliefs in the Council of Trent. These responses to the Protestant Reformation, along with the activities of the newly established Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) comprise the “Catholic Reformation.”
      6. The Protestant Reformation led to a number of “wars of religion,” the last of them being concluded in 1648.
   B. Traditional Thinking and Witch-Hunts
      1. European concepts of the natural world were derived from both local folk traditions and Judeo-Christian beliefs. Most people believed that natural events could have supernatural causes.
      2. Belief in the supernatural is vividly demonstrated in the witch-hunts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the witch-hunts over 100,000 people (three-fourths of them women) were tried and about half of them executed on charges of witchcraft.
      3. Modern historians have sought to explain the witch-hunts as manifestations of fear of unattached women or in terms of social stress. Some scholars believe that poor and marginal people may have believed that they were capable of witchcraft and welcomed the notoriety and attention gained from public confession.
   C. The Scientific Revolution
      1. European intellectuals derived their understanding of the natural world from the writings of the Greeks and the Romans. These writings suggested that everything on earth was reducible to four elements; that the sun, moon, planets and stars were so light and pure that they floated in crystalline spheres and rotated around the earth in perfectly circular orbits.
2. The observations of Copernicus and other scientists including Galileo undermined this earth-centered model of the universe and led to the introduction of the Copernican sun-centered model.

3. The Copernican model was initially criticized and suppressed by Protestant leaders and by the Catholic Church. Despite opposition, printed books spread these and other new scientific ideas among European intellectuals.

4. Isaac Newton’s discovery of the law of gravity showed why the planets move around the sun in elliptical orbits. Newton’s discoveries led to the development of Newtonian physics. However, Newton and other scientists did not believe that their discoveries were in conflict with religious belief.

D. The Early Enlightenment
1. The advances in scientific thought inspired European governments and groups of individuals to question the reasonableness of accepted practices in fields ranging from agriculture to laws, religions, and social hierarchies. This intellectual movement, which assumed that social behavior and institutions were governed by scientific laws, is called the Enlightenment.

2. The Enlightenment thinkers were also influenced by the Reformation and by accounts of other cultures (including Jesuit accounts of China).

3. The new scientific methods provided the enlightened thinkers with a model for changing European society. These thinkers were not a homogeneous group; they drew inspiration from disparate sources and espoused a variety of agendas. Most were optimistic that the application of reason would lead to human progress.

4. The ideas of the Enlightenment aroused opposition from many absolutist rulers and from clergymen, but the printing press made possible the survival and dissemination of new ideas.

II. Social and Economic Life
A. The Bourgeoisie
1. Europe's cities experienced spectacular growth between 1500 and 1700.

2. The wealthy urban bourgeoisie thrived on manufacturing, finance, and especially on trade, including the profitable trade in grain.

3. Amsterdam's growth, built on trade and finance, exemplifies the power of seventeenth-century bourgeoisie enterprise.

4. The bourgeoisie forged mutually beneficial relationships with the monarchs and built extensive family and ethnic networks to facilitate trade between different parts of the world.

5. Partnerships between merchants and governments led to the development of joint-stock companies and stock exchanges. Governments also played a key role in the improvement of Europe's transportation infrastructure.

6. The Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century provide evidence of the growing importance of trade in international affairs.

7. The bourgeois gentry gradually increased their ownership of land; many entered the ranks of the nobility by marrying into noble families or by purchasing titles of nobility.

B. Peasants and Laborers
1. While serfdom declined and disappeared in Western Europe, it gained new prominence in Eastern Europe.

2. African slaves, working in the Americas, contributed greatly to Europe's economy.

3. It is possible that the condition of the average person in Western Europe declined between 1500 and 1700.

4. New World crops helped Western European peasants avoid starvation.
5. High consumption of wood for heating, cooking, construction, shipbuilding, and industrial uses led to severe deforestation in Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Shortages drove the cost of wood up.

6. As the price of wood rose, Europeans began to use coal instead of wood. Some efforts were also made to conserve forests and to plant trees, particularly in order to provide wood for naval vessels.

7. Deforestation had particularly severe effects on the rural poor who had relied on free access to forests for wood, building materials, nuts and berries, and wild game.

8. The urban poor consisted of “deserving poor” (permanent residents) and large numbers of “unworthy poor”—migrants, peddlers, beggars, and criminals.

C. Women and the Family
1. Women's status and work were closely tied to their husbands' and families'.

2. Common people in early modern Europe married relatively late because young men served long periods of apprenticeship when learning a trade and young women needed to work to earn their dowries. The young people of the bourgeois class also married late, partly because men delayed marriage until after finishing their education. Late marriage enabled young couples to be independent of their parents; it also helped to keep the birth rate low.

3. Bourgeois parents put great emphasis on education and promoted the establishment of schools.

4. Most schools, professions, and guilds barred women from participation.

III. Political Innovations
A. State Development
1. Between 1516 and 1519 Charles of Burgundy, descendant of the Austrian Habsburg family, inherited the thrones of Castile and Aragon, with their colonial empires, the Austrian Habsburg possessions, and the position of Holy Roman Emperor. Charles was able to forge a coalition to defeat the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna in 1529, but he was unable to unify his many territorial possessions.

2. Lutheran German princes rebelled against the French-speaking Catholic Charles, seizing church lands and giving rise to the German Wars of Religion. When Charles abdicated the throne, Spain went to his son Philip while a weakened Holy Roman Empire went to his brother Ferdinand.

3. Meanwhile, the rulers of Spain, France, and England pursued their own efforts at political unification.

B. Religious Policies
1. The rulers of Spain and France successfully defended state-sponsored Catholicism against the Protestant challenge.

2. In England, Henry VIII challenged papal authority and declared himself head of the Church of England. Later English monarchs resisted the efforts of English Calvinists to "purify" the Anglican Church.

C. Monarchies in England and France
1. In England, a conflict between Parliament and king led to a civil war and the establishment of a Puritan republic under Oliver Cromwell. After the Stuart line was restored, Parliament enforced its will on the monarchy when it drove King James II from the throne in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and forced his successors, William and Mary, to sign a document, the Bill of Rights, that limited the power of the crown.
2. In France, the Bourbon kings were able to circumvent the representative assembly known as the Estates General and develop an absolutist style of government. Louis XIV’s finance minister Colbert was able to increase revenue through more efficient tax collection and by promoting economic growth while Louis entertained and controlled the French nobility by requiring them to attend his court at Versailles.

D. Warfare and Diplomacy
1. Constant warfare in early modern Europe led to a military revolution in which cannon, muskets, and commoner foot soldiers became the mainstays of European armies. Armies grew in size, and most European states maintained standing armies (except England, which maintained a standing navy).
2. In order to manage the large standing armies and in order to use the troops more effectively in battle, Europeans devised new command structures, signal techniques, and marching drills.
3. Developments in naval technology during this period included warships with multiple tiers of cannon and four-wheel cannon carriages that made reloading easier. England took the lead in the development of new naval technology, as was demonstrated when the English Royal Navy defeated Spain’s Catholic Armada in 1588, signaling an end to Spain’s military dominance in Europe.
4. With the defeat of Spain, France rose as the strongest power on continental Europe, while its rival England held superiority in naval power. During the War of the Spanish Succession, England, allied with Austria and Prussia, was able to prevent the French house of Bourbon from taking over the Spanish throne.
5. With the War of the Spanish Succession and with Russia’s emergence as a power after the Great Northern war, the four powers of Europe—France, Britain, Austria, and Russia—were able to maintain a balance of power that prevented any one power from becoming too strong for about two centuries.

E. Paying the Piper
1. The rulers of European states needed to raise new revenue to pay the heavy costs of their wars; the most successful made profitable alliances with commercial elites. The Spanish, however, undermined their economy by driving out Jews, Protestants, and the descendants of Muslims so that the bullion they gained from their American empire was spent on payments to creditors and for manufactured goods and food.
2. The northern provinces of the Netherlands wrested their autonomy from Spain and became a dominant commercial power. The United Provinces of the Free Netherlands and particularly the province of Holland favored commercial interests, craftsmen, and manufacturing enterprises, and Amsterdam became a major center of finance and shipping.
3. After 1650 England used its naval power to break Dutch dominance in overseas trade. The English government also improved its financial position by collecting taxes directly and by creating a central bank.
4. The French government streamlined tax collection, used protective tariffs to promote domestic industries, and improved its transportation network. The French were not, however, able to introduce direct tax collection, tax the land of nobles, or secure low-cost loans.