

IMPORTANT EVENTS OF 1350-1600

1594

- Henri IV is crowned.
- Aug.** An English force trying to supply a castle near Enniskillen, under siege by Irish rebels, is defeated at the Battle of the Ford of Biscuits, so named because of the scattered supplies on the battlefield.

1595

- Spanish troops, in support of Catholic factions in France, are defeated at the Battle of Fontaine-Française and driven from Burgundy.

1596

- The Articles of Folembray end the War of the Catholic League in France, stopping the attempt by the Spanish to deny Henri's claim to the throne.
- The Privy Council raises "Ship Money" from coastal regions for provision of the navy.

1597

- Irish discontent coalesces under the leadership of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, who is attempting to regain control of Ulster, though he appeals to broader nationalist sentiments. O'Neill's army achieves a stunning victory over an English army under Sir Henry Bagenal at Yellow Ford in Ulster (1598). However, the victory is short-lived as the Irish forces, reinforced by Spaniards, are crushed at Kinsale in 1601, although Tyrone does not submit until 1603.

1598

- The Edict of Nantes grants political rights to French Protestants; the Wars of Religion in France are over.
- 2 May** The Peace of Vervins between Spain and France gives back lost French land.
- 13 Sept.** Philip II of Spain dies and is succeeded by Philip III.
- Fyodor I of Russia dies, and Godunov is elected czar by the national assembly.

1599

- The Polish king Sigismund III Vasa, a Catholic, is deposed by Swedes and Charles IX, who establishes Lutheranism as the state religion of Sweden.

1600

- A government charter is granted to the English East India Company. Shares in the company are transferable and policy control is vested in a board of directors elected by stockholders. The company soon monopolizes trade in the Indian subcontinent.
- Henri IV of France marries Marie de' Medici.

OVERVIEW

Holy Roman Empire. In the Middle Ages the accepted form of government was the monarchy, in which one man had absolute authority, and the ideal was the universal empire, in which all the peoples of the world were subject to one emperor. The Holy Roman emperors claimed authority over all Christendom, but by 1350 the empire was called the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, indicating that it largely consisted of Germany. There were about three hundred territorial divisions that controlled their own local affairs. The emperor was elected by seven major lords of the empire. In 1438 Albert V, Duke of Austria, was elected, and the title stayed in the Habsburg family for the duration of the empire.

Ottoman Empire. The Turkish Ottoman Empire also claimed universal authority, although its mandate came from Islam. Osman I, its founder, had built a powerful state in Asia Minor by his death in 1326. His successors expanded their lands at the expense of the Byzantine Empire, completing the conquest when Constantinople was taken in 1453. By 1526 the Ottoman Turks controlled the Middle East, the Balkans, and Hungary.

Elective and Joint Monarchies. Imperial claims to universal rule infuriated kings who asserted their own sovereign power. There were several elective monarchies—Poland-Lithuania, Bohemia, and Hungary—in eastern Europe, where the rulers were chosen by the nobility. There were joint monarchies, such as Poland-Lithuania, in which two or more realms with separate governments had the same ruler. The Union of Kalmar (1397) created a joint monarchy for Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The union endured until 1523, when Sweden seceded. The most-powerful joint monarchy came from the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469. Their realms remained two separate states until 1592, when their great-grandson Philip II united the two kingdoms with a central administration. Spain thus became a national kingdom, where the borders of the realm largely coincided with a dominant ethnic group from which came the ruler. France, England, Scotland, and Portugal were among the other national kingdoms in which hereditary succession determined the right to the throne.

City-States and Confederacies. Northern Italy was the home of city-state republics, including Venice, one of the major powers of Europe. Their form of government was the commune, in which the members of the merchant and artisan guilds had political rights. The number of city-states had been as large as eighty in 1350, but by that time the largest cities were rapidly expanding, taking over what had been independent cities. The best example was Venice, which built a large state on the Italian mainland. Milan and Florence also expanded, and both eventually became duchies. The commune was the form of urban government across Europe, but most of the cities had to answer to a royal authority. The exception was a group of mostly northern German cities that formed the Hanseatic League. It was organized in 1356 to control trade in the North and Baltic Seas. Until 1500 it was a major economic and political power in northern Europe, but the growing power of neighboring kings and competition from Dutch traders caused its decline. There were also two unique states in Europe. The pope was the ruler of lands that stretched across central Italy, but his authority over the Papal States was often limited. The Swiss Confederation was a loosely affiliated group of cantons. It was formed in 1291 when three cantons joined to oppose the outside claims to authority over them. By 1500 the confederation had reached largely the borders of modern Switzerland. In most respects the thirteen cantons were independent republics, but they did cooperate during wartime.

Administration. Government administration in 1350 was marked by amateurism; many officials had no formal training for their positions. Clergymen often became officials because they could read and write. Another feature was the small number of officials. The Italian city-states set the standard for effective administration. Their wealth enabled them to finance large bodies of professional officials, with the Venetian diplomatic service being the best example. By 1431 Venice was dispatching diplomats across Europe.

Government Officials. The other Italian cities retained elements of their earlier communes as did the cities of northern Europe. In the Holy Roman Empire the emperor appointed the imperial chancellor, the chief administrative officer. When matters concerning the entire empire needed

to be decided, the Imperial Diet met. Its usual function was approving taxes for an imperial army. The growth of royal administration was a key characteristic in the national monarchies of the late Middle Ages. The principle of royal government was that the king embodied in himself all of the powers of government and handed out a share of it to others for the well-ordered governance of the realm. The English and French governments were highly similar. The chancellor was the chief officer of the realm under the king. He kept the great seal that was used on royal decrees, and he supervised the systems of justice and taxation. War was the major reason why kings raised taxes. In peacetime they were expected to live off their properties and feudal dues. In 1362 Edward III promised the English Parliament that the monarchy would not impose a new tax without its consent. With its two houses (Lords and Commons), Parliament avoided the problem of the bitter division between nobles and commoners found in the Estates General in France with its three estates (clergy, nobles, and commoners). The Estates General never gained a major role, because the French kings found that it was not helpful. Similar institutions were found in nearly every medieval realm. The Ottoman Empire's administration was far different. In a way that was never true in Europe, the sultan combined in himself supreme authority of both state and religion. The millions of Christians and Jews in the empire were allowed to govern themselves as long as they paid taxes. The sultans created an impressive administration for their vast empire that lasted into the modern era. The Spanish and Portuguese also were successful in building an effective administration for the overseas empires that they won after 1492.

Changes in Warfare. In 1350 the heavily armored knight still dominated the battlefields of Europe with his couched lance and broad sword. Against commoner foot soldiers, knights had held an enormous advantage for centuries, but by 1350 some infantry weapons were in use that reduced knightly superiority. Crossbow, longbow, and pike, when used correctly, were effective weapons against charging cavalry. In the long term the most-important new weapons were those using gunpowder, a Chinese invention that was carried westward by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. The first reliable mention of gunpowder weaponry in Europe is dated to 1326. Early gunpowder weapons were ineffective in battle, but with improvements they soon became formidable.

Gunpowder Weapons. Several innovations made effective handguns possible. Corned powder and the match appeared about 1420, and the matchlock, by 1460; together they created the arquebus. As a smoothbore weapon it was inaccurate, and it took over a minute to reload. The Spanish musket, a heavier firearm that used a larger ball, appeared about 1520. Its weight required the use of a fork for resting the barrel. Another new weapon was the pistol, which used the wheel lock mechanism. Its expense restricted its use to the nobles.

English Victories. Shortly before the Renaissance infantry had been victorious over armies of knights in two major battles—Laupen (1339) and Crécy (1346). A knight's proper opponent was another knight, not poorly armed and untrained infantrymen. Knightly disdain for fighting commoners was a major reason for the English victories in the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), as the French knights largely ignored the commoner archers in order to battle the English knights. In a war with the Scots, the English developed the combination of longbow archers and dismounted knights that proved so effective against the French. During their conflict against the French, the English commanders were victorious when they chose the terrain for the battle—a hilltop where they placed their forces to wait for the French attack. What defeats the English suffered occurred when they could not dictate the terrain and battle tactics, such as at Orléans (1429), where they fought French forces led by Joan of Arc. In their last battles in the war the French effectively used small cannon against the English.

Swiss Innovations. For all of the victories won by English tactics, the Swiss system of pike and halberd proved more revolutionary. In the fourteenth century the Swiss defeated Austrian knightly armies and established their style of fighting. Their tactics were successful in the era before 1515, but their style of warfare became obsolete in the face of improved gunpowder weapons. The first army successfully to use them was Jan Zizka's forces during the Hussite revolt that broke out in Bohemia in 1415. Zizka's use of war wagons gave his untrained soldiers a stable platform from which to fire their gunpowder weapons against their mounted foes. By the time of the French invasions of Italy in 1494, both cannon and firearms had been improved sufficiently so that they could be used as effective weapons in the field. The Spanish captain Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba introduced the combination of arquebus and pike. The slow reloading time and inaccuracy of the arquebus required pikemen to protect the handgunners as they reloaded. The infantry formation in which pikemen and handgunners provided mutual support became known as the Spanish Square. It was the dominant formation in European combat for the next century. As for the Turks, they continued to depend on a combination of light and heavy cavalry and infantry for victory until 1600.

Naval Warfare. Gunpowder also changed the nature of war at sea. In the fifteenth century, cannon and firearms began to replace catapults and bows onboard ship. Gun ports allowed the heavy guns to be placed lower on the ship and increased its stability. By 1540 the galleon, with up to forty heavy guns firing through gun ports, could project naval power far from its home waters. In the Mediterranean, the long naval war between Christians and Muslims reached its climax in the sixteenth century. The greatest battle in the history of galleys was the Battle of Lepanto (1571) off the Greek coast. The Christian fleet at Lepanto included several much larger galleasses, whose firepower played a major role in their victory. It led to a great increase

in the size of galleys, which, however, made them slower and more vulnerable to the sailing ships from the Atlantic making excursions into the Mediterranean by 1600. The major conflict between Atlantic fleets involved the Spanish Armada. The failure of the Armada in 1588 was not the end of Spanish naval power, since Philip II rebuilt his fleet, but the episode convinced the English monarchy that it should build a powerful royal navy.

Fortifications. By 1350 the medieval fortification had reached its apex and changed little for more than a century, until the development of gunpowder artillery began to have an impact. The castle primarily served as the residence of a powerful lord. Typically, it had high stone walls with round towers surrounded by a ditch and a variety of other structures designed to aid the defenders in holding off attackers. The walls of towns were constructed little differently except for their far greater length. In 1350 a well-built castle or walled town defended by a small garrison of resolute men was capable of withstanding a siege even when it was the king's army that was besieging it. Over the next century the development of gunpowder artillery into effective siege weapons turned the advantage to the attackers. By 1453 the French had established the first effective royal artillery train. The development of the mobile gun carriage allowed heavy guns to be transported at about the same speed as the rest of the army. The major success of cannon in the fifteenth century was the successful siege of Constantinople (1453) by the Ottoman Turks. The superbly fortified city fell after a siege of a month. The crucial development in the late fifteenth century was the casting of bronze muzzle-loaders. Such cannon had a major role during the French invasions of Italy beginning in 1494. In a few days the French took Italian fortifications that the Italians expected would take them all summer to capture.

Italian Trace. The Italians, seeking ways to withstand the French artillery, developed the Italian trace. The key innovation was the bastion, which projected far forward of the wall to provide better flanking fire. The bastion was designed so guns at the flanks of a bastion could sweep every foot of the adjoining wall and the face of the neighboring bastion. As long as the architect's calculations were correct, the bastions could provide cover from fire all the way around the wall. By 1570 the offense again was catching up to the defense. Improvements in the casting of iron led to better iron cannons. Iron being cheap, the new method led to a vast increase in the number of guns that could do severe damage to fortifications. Military architects responded by designing ways to push the besiegers' heavy guns further from the walls by using outworks, which were developed extensively during the Dutch Revolt against Spain in the 1570s. The Europeans used the Italian trace successfully in their occupation of large parts of the world in the sixteenth century. The failure of the Ottoman Turks to keep up with European fortification design and siege craft was a factor in the decline of that empire's power in the late sixteenth century.

Rise of Monarchies. These military developments effectively ended the role of petty rulers in most parts of Europe. In 1350 a handful of resolute warriors could withstand sieges from even the king's army; hence, knights in Medieval Europe could openly defy their king. By the fifteenth century, developments in gunpowder artillery had reversed this advantage and kings won great advantages over the local knights. Monarchs strengthened their control and expanded their kingdoms at the expense of the petty rulers. The centralizing monarchs created more effective bureaucracies in their efforts to consolidate power.

Legal Codes. The monarchy also began to replace local customary laws with written codes based on Roman law. Roman law was a revival of a code from the ancient Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was ruled for more than six hundred years by emperors, and thus Roman law was a legal tradition favorable to monarchical rule. Kings were eager to employ a legal system that placed them at the focal point of the law. The eleventh-century revival of emperor Justinian's Body of the Civil Law began a revival of Roman law in Europe. Roman law evolved into a field requiring extensive university training. Law departments at the universities were divided into the study of Roman law and of a related law code, known as canon law. Roman law covered issues falling under the government's jurisdiction and canon law covered legal issues within the Church's jurisdiction, yet the two shared several procedural elements that had a profound influence upon the European legal tradition.

Evolution of the Law. The term *canon* was used by the early Christian Church to signify formal decisions of church legislation. This legislative process evolved into a system of ecclesiastical or church law that regulated the Church and issues of belief. Canon law was distinct from the customary laws of northern Europe and the written or Roman law of southern Europe. The revival of Justinian's Body of the Civil Law and the twelfth-century appearance of Gratian of Bologna's *Decretum*, or *Concordance of Discordant Canons*, set the stage for a Renaissance revival of Roman and canon law. Both systems evolved into highly specialized university disciplines. Moreover, both were employed across Christian Europe with the exception of England, Wales, and Ireland, where a system of case law was deeply entrenched. The Reformation split the legal profession because Protestant reformers broke with the Roman Catholic Church and thereby rejected the Church's system of canon law. Protestants expanded Roman law and gave it a role over marriage, divorce, and other areas that had previously fallen under canon law. Canon law declined in the sixteenth century, but many aspects of it remained because they had been assimilated into Roman law, such as the traditions of the Inquisition. By the end of the fifteenth century, the state could withhold from the accused the names and testimony of the witnesses. Courts began to function in secret and turned to trials as a public ceremony at the end of a secretive inquisition. Punishment and execution evolved into a public spectacle that legitimized the

court by demonstrating the populace's consent to a sentence that they could no longer control.

Crime and Punishment. Centralization of power in the hands of a few monarchs and the imposition of Roman law codes contributed to a dramatic shift in the treatment and punishment of criminals in Renaissance and Reformation Europe. Rulers redefined crimes as attacks on the state and thereby created a new role for the courts. When the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 eliminated ordeals, or the physical testing of oaths, rulers turned to inquisitorial trial procedures that combined elements of Roman and canon law. Church inquisitorial tribunals aimed at finding and stopping heresy. In the opinion of church and government authorities, heresy threatened all of society and thus justified drastic measures. Rather than wait for accusations, Inquisition courts took the initiative of starting hearings and collecting evidence. Potential heretics were presumed guilty until proven innocent. The accused did not know what the exact charges were and could not review evidence being used against them. Heresy was difficult to prove and Inquisitors frequently turned to torture as a means to obtain confessions. Common forms of torture included stretching body limbs with a rope or on a rack, water or fire torment, and sleep deprivation.

State Models. Inquisitorial techniques became models for the state and torture became a common method of extracting confessions. Officials interrogated and tortured suspected criminals without allowing recourse to a defense attorney. Punishments could range from fines and disgrace to mutilations and death. Executions by burning, drowning, and burying alive were common because they allegedly purified the community. After 1600, hanging and beheading became more common. The church sentenced heretics in a public ceremony, known as an auto de fe, and then turned them over to the state for public punishment. The condemned were usually burned at the stake in the sixteenth century. The actual burning took place on feast days and in public squares to insure a large audience of leading officials and common people. The judicial system punished rather than rehabilitated, so punishments were usually public affairs.

Prisons. Precursors to the modern prison system were built in the late sixteenth century, but they were not used for criminals. City governments constructed these early houses of correction for the able-bodied poor. Workhouses, such as Bridewell in England, attempted to rehabilitate idle people by housing them in an environment where they were forced to work. By 1600 the judicial system remained punitive but notions of rehabilitation were evident in the emerging prison system.

TOPICS IN POLITICS, LAW, AND THE MILITARY

ADMINISTRATION: FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Universal Emperor. The monarchy, in which one man had absolute authority received from God, was the accepted type of government during the Middle Ages. The ideal was the universal empire, in which all the peoples and kings of the world were subject to one emperor, following the example of the Roman Empire. It was based on the concept that all of humanity properly should have just one ruler. The divine sovereignty of one God over the world and one pope over the Church were models of the authority of the universal emperor.

Holy Roman Empire. The reality of government in Europe was far different, but there was an institution called the Holy Roman Empire, whose emperors occasionally voiced claim to authority over all of Christendom as God's

viceroy on Earth. What power the emperor had was in fact limited and in steady decline. The concept of the Holy Roman Empire began with Charlemagne's coronation in 800. It took on its medieval form when the Pope crowned the German king Otto I emperor in 962. (Otto I had wanted the title in order to affirm his authority over northern Italy.) Thereafter until 1648, the Holy Roman Empire theoretically included Italy north of Rome, Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, Germany, the Low Countries (present-day Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg), and eastern France. Imperial authority over Switzerland and northern Italy was nonexistent after 1350, but the emperors maintained the pretense that they had sovereignty. In 1519, for example, Emperor Charles V declared war on French king Francis I, because Francis had taken over Milan without Charles's approval. By 1350 the empire was being called

PROTEST OF THE PEASANTRY

In 1525 the peasants in Germany revolted in response to changes invoked by the feudal lords that restricted traditional social and economic freedoms. In response to these changes, the peasants made the following demands.

1. It is our humble petition and desire . . . that in the future . . . each community should choose and appoint a pastor, and that we should have the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly. . . .
2. We are ready and willing to pay the fair tithe of grain. . . . The small tithes [of cattle], whether [to] ecclesiastical or lay lords, we will not pay at all, for the Lord God created cattle for the free use of man. . . .
3. We . . . take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the Gospel that we are serfs.
4. It has been the custom heretofore that no poor man should be allowed to catch venison or wildfowl or fish in flowing water, which seems to us quite unseemly and unbrotherly as well as selfish and not agreeable to the Word of God. . . .
5. We are aggrieved in the matter of woodcutting, for the noblemen have appropriated all the woods to themselves. . . .
6. In regard to the excessive services demanded of us which are increased from day to day, we ask that this matter be properly looked into so that we shall not continue to be oppressed in this way. . . .
7. We will not hereafter allow ourselves to be further oppressed by our lords, but will let them demand only what is just and proper according to the word of the agreement between the lord and the peasant. The lord should no longer try to force more services or other dues from the peasant without payment. . . .
8. We are greatly burdened because our holdings cannot support the rent exacted from them. . . . We ask that the lords may appoint persons of honor to inspect these holdings and fix a rent in accordance with justice. . . .
9. We are burdened with a great evil in the constant making of new laws. . . . In our opinion we should be judged according to the old written law. . . .
10. We are aggrieved by the appropriation . . . of meadows and fields which at one time belonged to a community as a whole. These we will take again into our own hands. . . .
11. We will entirely abolish the due called Todfall [that is, heriot or death tax, by which the lord received the best horse, cow, or garment of a family upon the death of a serf] and will no longer endure it, nor allow widows and orphans to be thus shamefully robbed against God's will, and in violation of justice and right. . . .
12. It is our conclusion and final resolution, that if any one or more of the articles here set forth should not be in agreement with the Word of God, as we think they are, such article we will willingly retract.

Source: Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage*, sixth edition (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998): p. 380.

the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, recognizing the fact that it largely consisted of Germany. Yet, the Golden Bull of 1356, which established the method of the emperor's election, called for the selection of someone who spoke Italian and Slavic as well as German.

Principalities and Free Cities. The sense of the term *emperor* as it was used in the Middle Ages included the expectation that there would be kings under his authority. The Holy Roman Empire included the king of Bohemia as well as various prince-bishops, dukes, and counts. Its territory was divided into three types of governmental units: church principalities, where the local bishop or archbishop served as the ruler as well as the church leader (for example, the archbishops of Cologne and Mainz); lay principalities, where rulers with a wide range of titles had power (for example, the duke of Saxony and the margrave of Branden-

burg); and sixty-five Free Imperial Cities, where the city councils exercised complete authority within the city walls (for example, Augsburg and Nuremberg). The church princes usually came from the powerful noble families, often for several generations in succession. There were in all about three hundred territorial divisions, including those outside of Germany. Each had local autonomy to control its own affairs.

Elected Emperor. The emperor was elected, although until the sixteenth century he could not use the title of emperor until the pope had crowned him. The Golden Bull of 1356 set the number of electors at four territorial princes and three archbishop-princes. With the principle of hereditary succession missing, the emperors were chosen from several families until 1438, when Albert II, from the Habsburg family and Duke of Austria, was elected, and the title

stayed in that family. Maximilian I's marriage to Mary of Burgundy (1477) was the first in a series of marriages that passed the Habsburg and Burgundian inheritances and the Spanish kingdoms to his grandson, Charles. When Maximilian died in 1519, there was the first serious competition for the election in two centuries. Henry VIII and Francis I invested heavily in bribing the electors as did Charles, who had the advantages of having more money and being regarded as German. Charles V arranged in 1530 for the election of his brother Ferdinand as his successor, since his son Philip was then three years old. When the Reformation began, Charles could not prevent the division of the empire into Catholic and Lutheran lands. He was forced to accept the Peace of Augsburg (1555) by which the local rulers had the right to determine the religion of their lands. Worn out by his wars, Charles abdicated his titles, and the imperial title passed to his brother. While Philip received most of Charles's hereditary lands including Spain, Ferdinand was given the duchy of Austria to give him with a power base from which to rule as emperor. The Austrian Habsburgs were the emperors for the duration of the empire.

Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire also claimed universal authority, although its mandate was based on being an Islamic state. Its name came from Osman I, the founder of the ruling dynasty. He was a Turkish warlord who succeeded in building a powerful state in northern Asia Minor before he died in 1326. Ottoman expansion depended greatly on the tradition that a new sultan had to prove himself worthy of rule by making a major conquest early in his reign. The Ottoman sultan was first of all the commander of the Turkish army. The dynasty had risen to power through military conquest and continued to hold it through the loyalty of the fighting men, who were more loyal than most European forces were to their rulers. The fighting men were amply rewarded with pay, lands, and plunder, but they were obliged to earn their rewards by conquest, which was another reason for the constant expansion of the Ottoman Empire until the late sixteenth century. When the expansion of the empire ceased, their loyalty declined as well. One requirement for soldiers was that they be Muslim; non-Muslim subjects who wished to join the army had to convert.

Eliminating Rivals. Osman's successors expanded their lands largely at the expense of the Byzantine Empire, conquering most of it before Sultan Mehmed II took Constantinople in 1453. Selim I conquered Egypt and the Middle East between 1514 and 1520. By becoming ruler of Arabia the sultan became the protector of the Muslim holy places and the leader of Islam. When his only son Süleyman I succeeded him in 1520, the Ottoman Turks controlled the Mediterranean coastline from Albania to Libya. In 1526 Süleyman conquered most of Hungary after winning the Battle of Mohács. Although he failed to take Vienna (1529) and the island of Malta (1565) after long sieges, he was one of the great rulers of the sixteenth century. At his death in 1566, the absence of a clear law of succession for



Ballot pouches used by Florentine officials during municipal elections (from George Constable, *Voyages of Discovery*, 1989)

the Ottoman sultanate began to create problems as Süleyman designated the young son of his favorite wife as his heir instead of one of his more mature and capable sons. (The sultans practiced polygamy on a large scale.) The practice of killing all of the new sultan's brothers and half brothers in order to eliminate any rivals to the throne appeared at this point, which increased the stakes in the competition for the succession. Selim II began a series of weak sultans, but he did conquer Cyprus from Venice (1571), the last significant Ottoman conquest.

Elective Monarchy. Both Christian and Islamic empires claimed universal sovereignty, but such claims were refuted by the presence in Europe of kings who asserted their own sovereign power. The fondest boast of the king of France, for example, was that he was "emperor in his own realm." The principle of elective monarchy functioned in eastern Europe, where the rulers of Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, Lithuania, and several smaller political units were chosen by the nobility. There was little sense that the man elected king had to be a native. In Bohemia, the election in 1363 of Wenceslas II from a German family was one cause of the Hussite Revolt. Bohemia passed permanently under Habsburg control in 1526, when Ferdinand I, brother of Charles V, was chosen as king after Louis II of Hungary, who also had been elected king of Bohemia in 1516, was killed at Mohács. Ferdinand gained the elective throne of Hungary at the same time. The Habsburgs kept the crowns of both Bohemia and Hungary from then on, although in theory they remained elective long after 1600.

Poland-Lithuania. The best known example of an elective monarchy was Poland-Lithuania. The Polish monarchy had been hereditary until 1386, when Duke Jagiello of Lithuania married Polish queen Jadwiga and was elected king of Poland. The hereditary Lithuanian throne then became elective also. The nobles of the joint monarchy chose members of the Jagellonian family as rulers for the



Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good Government*, 1337–1339, fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Italy

next two centuries. When Sigismund II, the last male in the dynasty, died in 1572, the nobles turned to the French prince Henri of Valois, who dashed back to France to claim the French throne in 1574 when his brother died. The Poles then elected a Hungarian (Stephen Báthory) in 1576 and a Swede (Sigismund III) in 1587 as kings. These elective monarchies had two major problems. One was that the successful candidates usually had to make concessions to the nobles to get elected. The other was that the lack of continuity prevented the kings from building up royal power and passing it on their own heirs, a defect that became obvious in Poland-Lithuania after the Jagellonian dynasty ended and the monarchy slipped badly in both international power and internal authority.

Joint Monarchs. Poland-Lithuania was also an example of the joint monarchy, in which rulers from one ethnic background were accepted peaceably through marriage or election as monarchs in another realm. The Union of Kalmar (1397) created a joint monarchy for the three realms of Denmark, Sweden, which controlled Finland, and Norway, which ruled Iceland; the Danish prince Erik was elected king. His male descendents were to serve as king of the three realms; if his family died out, the kingdoms in the union were free to choose their own kings. The system never worked all that smoothly, but despite short periods of unrest, the union endured until 1523, when Swedish opposition to their Danish king Christian II because of heavy taxation and mistreatment of Swedish nobles erupted into violent rebellion. In short order the Swedes elected Gustavus I as king, who defeated Christian and established both Swedish autonomy and his family as the ruling dynasty. Norway remained part of the union with Denmark

because the Danes ousted Christian and enthroned his uncle Frederick I as king later in 1523.

Aragon and Castile. The most important joint monarchy came out of the marriage of Prince Ferdinand of Aragon and Princess Isabella of Castile in 1469. Soon both had become rulers of their realms and worked together to strengthen them. When Isabella died in 1504, Ferdinand II secured control of Castile in the name of his insane daughter Joanna, who had married Philip of Habsburg, Emperor Maximilian I's son. When Ferdinand died in 1516, the Spanish realms passed to his grandson Charles of Habsburg, who ruled there as Charles I but is better known as Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Under him Aragon and Castile remained two separate states with their own governments and officials. In 1592 Charles's son Philip II united the two kingdoms after a failed revolt in Aragon, using the Castilian government largely created by Isabella as the central administration for unified Spain.

National Kingdoms. Spain thus joined the small number of states for the era 1350–1600 that were national kingdoms, where the borders of the realm largely coincided with the dominant ethnic group and it was expected that the ruler would be a member of that group. Although modern people usually identify medieval government with that kind of monarchy, it probably is because France and England, along with Scotland and Portugal, were among the few national kingdoms in which blood-right determined the royal succession.

France. In one key respect France was most adamant about its status as a national kingdom, because its Salic law, which governed succession to the French throne, was invented before the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) to keep England's Edward III off the throne. It required that the throne pass from father to oldest son or, in default of a

son, to a male who could trace his ancestry in the direct male line to a royal ancestor common to him and the dead king. The law made it impossible for a woman or a foreign prince to gain the crown. It was a major factor in the relative stability of the French monarchy. Even in the anarchy of the French Wars of Religion, it ensured the succession of Henri of Bourbon to the French throne in 1589 after the assassination of Henri III despite being a distant cousin, although it is true that he had to convert to Catholicism to secure the crown. French writers pointed to the turbulent history of the English monarchy to emphasize the value of the Salic law.

England. During the century before Henry Tudor made good his claim to the crown in 1485, England experienced a bloody civil conflict called the War of the Roses (1455–1485) over the right to the throne. Even the Tudor dynasty came close to disaster when Mary I married Philip of Spain. Had they had a child, who would have inherited the crown, he or she would have been more Spanish than English, since Mary was half Spanish herself. Her half sister Elizabeth I avoided any such problem by not marrying, but that meant she had no children. When she died in 1603, James VI of Scotland, the grandson of Henry VIII's sister Margaret, became King James I. England and Scotland thus became a joint monarchy.

Exceptions. Scotland was a hereditary national monarchy, but its history demonstrated another problem with succession by blood-right. Five Scots rulers in a row were minors at the time of succession, including Mary, Queen of Scots, who was only a week old when her father died in 1542. That predicament disrupted the continuity of building royal power, and the Scots monarchy remained weak in respect to controlling its realm. In Portugal the lack of a law like the Salic law allowed Philip II of Spain to claim the throne of Portugal through his Portuguese mother, when the last male in the ruling dynasty (Cardinal Henry of the House of Avis) died in 1580. The union between Spain and Portugal was a joint monarchy, as Portugal kept its own government and officials. Even that was not enough to overcome a separate Portuguese identity, since they revolted in 1640 and regained their independence.

Small Independent Realms. As of 1350 there were many smaller principalities that were independent, in fact, if not always in legal status. Among them were the Kingdom of Navarre located in the Pyrennes between Spain and France, Muslim-ruled Granada in southern Spain, and several realms in the Balkans such as Serbia, which was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. Only a few avoided being absorbed into their larger neighbors by 1500. One that did was the Duchy of Savoy, tucked between France and Italy in the southern Alps. Its dukes on occasion emerged as significant players in international politics. The most important of these states was the Kingdom of Naples, which included Italy south of Rome and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Medieval politics had resulted in the royal families of Aragon and France having claims to its throne. After 1350 the Aragonese

dynasty had the upper hand, but Charles VIII resurrected the old French claim when he led the first French invasion of Italy (1494). Ferdinand of Aragon responded to Charles's ousting of his cousin from Naples by sending forces to Italy. When the Spanish had driven the French out of the Kingdom of Naples, Ferdinand claimed it for himself instead of returning his relative to power. The Spanish monarchy ruled Naples for the next two centuries and through its position there dominated all of Italy.

Italian City-States. Northern Italy in the era 1350–1600 was the home of city-state republics, including Venice, which was one of the major powers of Europe. Theoretically part of the Holy Roman Empire, the Italian city-states had been independent since their victory over the emperor in 1176. Their form of government was the commune, in which those accepted as citizens, usually the members of the merchant and artisan guilds, had the right to participate in the meetings that determined policy and to be elected to public office. Participation in the communes ranged widely: from Venice, where the small number of elite families with power remained unchanged for centuries, to Florence, where over 10 percent of the adult males had some political rights. The number of independent republics had been large, perhaps as many as eighty in 1350. The city-states had always controlled the countryside and villages around them. None had ever been restricted to only the space within their walls, as was true for many cities outside of Italy, but by 1350 the territorial extent of the larger cities was rapidly expanding, taking over what had been independent cities. The best example was Venice, which built a large state on the Italian mainland that included Padua, with its esteemed university. As the trade center of Europe, Venice had also had extensive holdings in the eastern Mediterranean, including Crete and Cyprus. The Ottoman Turks, however, steadily captured the Venetian positions after the fall of Constantinople. Milan expanded its territory in the Po valley, to the point that it became a duchy in 1416. Florence also became a territorial power by conquering its neighbors, especially Pisa, which fell to Florence after a bitter siege in 1406.

Condottieri. The many wars that the expansion of the city-states touched off created a problem for the merchants and artisans who governed them. They were not eager to do their own military service, especially if it involved going out in the field for a long campaign; yet, they did not trust their own lower classes enough to arm them. Many cities had seen lower-class uprisings, of which the Ciompi Revolt in Florence in 1378 is the best known. They hired mercenary captains, called condottieri, to fight their wars for them. The captains often had the only armed force in a city-state and took advantage of the situation by seizing power, thereby becoming tyrants, a word used for someone who had taken control illegally. The principal example of a condottieri-turned-tyrant was Francesco Sforza, who declared himself duke of Milan in 1450. The jockeying for power among his descendents was one factor in bringing about the French invasions of Italy, as the French royal



The Holy Roman Empire (1510). The Imperial Eagle carries the coats of arms of member nations on its wings (woodcut by Hans Burgkmair).

family also had a claim to Milan. Charles V intervened in 1519 after Francis I had himself proclaimed duke of Milan, and Milan passed under Habsburg control after the imperial victory at Pavia (1525).

The Medici. Florence had a different kind of tyrant. A local family, the Medici, used its wealth and influence to dominate the city from behind the scenes. In 1531 Tuscany, Florence's region, was declared a duchy with a Medici as its duke. The only major city-state that retained its old form of government was Venice, which changed little before 1600.

Hanseatic League. The commune was the form of local urban governance across medieval Europe, but most of them also had to answer to the authority of king, duke, or bishop. The exception was a group of mostly northern German cities that formed the Hanseatic League, or Hansa. It was organized in 1356 to control trade along the coastlines of the North and Baltic Seas. At its height it numbered more than seventy cities, of which Bremen, Cologne, Hamburg, and Lubeck were the leaders; Lubeck was the center of the League where the assembly of members usually met once a year. It dominated trade in other cities that stretched from London to Novgorod in Russia. The League won a war against Denmark (1369–1370) to secure duty-free trade throughout Danish waters. For a century after, it was a major economic and political power in northern Europe, and its members were independent states, regardless of what larger political units might have

claimed sovereignty over them. After 1500 the growing power of the Scandinavian kings and increasing competition from Dutch traders caused the League's decline, and by 1550 it had all but disappeared as a political power.

Papal States. There were also two unique states in Europe: the Papal States and the Swiss Confederation. The pope was the ruler of a group of territorial units that stretched from the coastline southwest of Rome across Italy to the Adriatic coast north of Bologna. Rome itself was administered separately from the rest of them. Since popes were elected, this monarchy was not hereditary; but in theory the pope was absolute ruler of these lands, although his authority over them was often limited, as it was during the period he resided in Avignon (1304–1377). A few popes tried to create a hereditary principality for their heirs out of the Papal States, and a major reason for Alexander VI's notoriety was that he came closest to achieving it for his son Cesare Borgia. His death in 1503 before Cesare had gained complete control and the subsequent election of Julius II prevented the dividing up of the Papal States. Julius, "the Warrior Pope," put great effort into regaining control over them, and at his death (1513) they were tightly under papal control.

Swiss Confederation. The Swiss Confederation was far different, although it too was a loosely affiliated group of political units. The Confederation was formed in 1291 when three cantons in central Switzerland came together

to oppose the claims of the duke of Austria to authority over them. Their victory in the ensuing war persuaded other Swiss cantons and cities to join them, and by 1500 the Confederation had reached largely the borders of modern Switzerland. It can be described as an army without a state. It lacked a national leader or legislature and had no capital or common coinage. In most respects the thirteen cantons were independent republics. The only thing that the Swiss did in common was to wage war. When word came of an invasion (the Swiss rarely fought outside of their own borders), the fighting men of the cantons swiftly came together, and an assembly of the canton captains elected one of their own as commander and set the strategy for the conflict. It says a great deal about the nature of both government and warfare in the era 1350–1600 that for most of that period the Swiss army was probably the best in Europe.

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ADMINISTRATION: OFFICES AND INSTITUTIONS

Amateurism. Government administration in the era 1350–1600 was marked by amateurism. A large portion of government officials had no formal training for their positions. If they were nobles, it was expected that they were qualified by birth to undertake the business of government without any professional training or experience. It was marked also by clericalism; the word *clerk* came from the fact that the medieval clerks were clerics. Since they could read and write and calculate, clergymen often became officials, although that practice declined dramatically after 1517 in those lands that became Protestant. A third feature of administration was its small size. The number of officials and bureaucrats was amazingly small, even taking into consideration the smaller size of states and the population in that era. Around 1500 the French monarchy, which had the largest bureaucracy, had eight thousand to twelve thousand officials, about one per twelve thousand to sixteen thousand persons.

Italian City-States. The powerful Italian city-states were models of effective administration. Their wealth enabled them to finance large bodies of officials, who could

be drawn from the bourgeois families with an interest in educating their sons in the skills necessary for administration. The ability to write the important documents in classical Latin became ever more highly valued as the Renaissance progressed, and the desire of cities to have famous humanists on the payroll helped to stimulate the growth of humanism. The spread of Roman law in Italy also stimulated the growth of bureaucracies, since the codes of Roman law took for granted the existence of officials in the extensive Roman bureaucracy and described their functions and responsibilities.

Venice. The increasing amount of record keeping demonstrated bureaucratic instincts of Italian urban officials. Venice set the standard in that respect, as it did in most aspects of administration, but it should be noted that the Church and its institutions had long been efficient record keepers. The Venetian archives are a treasure trove of information. In 1484 the Florentine chancellor ordered the recopying of the important records from its archives to be kept in a separate place should the originals be destroyed by fire. One reason for increased record keeping was the growing specialization of the officials; a small group of men was no longer in control of the affairs of government and

RULE BY FEAR

The sixteenth-century Italian political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli believed that a successful ruler must instill fear in his subjects. The following selection is from his *Il principe* (The Prince, 1513).

Here the question arises; whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved. The answer is that it would be desirable to be both but, since that is difficult, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved, if one must choose. For on men in general this observation may be made: they are ungrateful, fickle, and deceitful, eager to avoid dangers, and avid for gain, and while you are useful to them they are all with you, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons so long as danger is remote, as we noted above, but when it approaches they turn on you. Any prince, trusting only in their words and having no other preparations made, will fall to his ruin, for friendships that are bought at a price and not by greatness and nobility of soul are paid for indeed, but they are not owned and cannot be called upon in time of need. Men have less hesitation in offending a man who is loved than one who is feared, for love is held by a bond of obligation which, as men are wicked, is broken whenever personal advantage suggests it, but fear is accompanied by the dread of punishment which never relaxes.

Source: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513), translated and edited by Thomas G. Bergin (New York: Appleton-Century, 1947), p. 48.

spective, the Habsburgs were attempting to encircle France and limit its power. The French went so far as to make alliances with the non-Christian Turks who were threatening Habsburg lands. Henry VIII and Francis I were at war with each other during most of their reigns. The king of England and the papacy used this rivalry to bolster their own power by supporting first one and then the other side of the conflict.

Luther and the Protestants. Charles was a deeply religious man who sought above all to protect the Roman Catholic faith. He supported the Inquisition in Spain and attempted to introduce it into his other territories. When he went to Spain in 1522 he apparently believed that his condemnation of Luther would stifle the spread of the reformer's teachings. Charles returned to the Holy Roman Empire seven years later, but he was greeted with the Augsburg Confession (1530), which clarified Lutheran beliefs and solidified a Protestant opposition to his policies—manifested in the newly formed Schmalkaldic League. Moreover, he had missed the Knight's Revolt of 1523 and Peasants' War of 1525, two defining moments in the history of Germany. Further hampering his anti-Protestant wishes, war with Francis I kept him from Germany from 1532 until 1541, by which time Protestantism was a formidable force. Conflicts between Protestants and supporters of Charles clashed for another decade until the league of German princes pushed his troops from Germany in 1552. Later that year the Treaty of Passau attempted to establish a religious division of the Holy Roman Empire, based on a principle whereby the local prince could determine the religion in his territory. This treaty led to the Peace of Augsburg on 25 September 1555, which divided his lands into Catholic or Protestant. Charles found this agreement unacceptable and considered it a personal failure. He began to withdraw from politics immediately thereafter.

Medieval View of Empire. Before Charles had reached the age of twenty-one, he had obtained a lifetime of experience in diplomacy in the Spanish unrest and the religious conflict in the Holy Roman Empire. Charles's youthful reliance on his Burgundian advisers almost cost him control of Spain, and his early experiences with Luther undoubtedly influenced his lifelong efforts to maintain Catholicism. Charles left several treatises on statecraft and a memoir of the first fifty-one years of his life. In 1532 he issued the *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina*, an imperial criminal code that safeguarded the rights of the innocent. The *Carolina* standardized criminal procedures and strengthened the role of central government. His *New Laws* attempted to control the Spanish colonies and protect his subjects, particularly native populations, abroad. Despite these two law codes, Charles's views were more medieval than modern. For instance, Charles challenged Francis I to personal combat to determine control of Burgundy and Milan, and he offered Luther a promise of safe-conduct to and from Worms (Emperor Sigismund did not honor a similar promise to Jan Hus at the Council of Con-

stance in 1415). His medieval mind-set was broader than mere chivalry, however, as he believed that world peace could be maintained only through a strong emperor. Charles may not have wanted a universal monarchy—he certainly did not view Spanish colonies on the same terms as his European lands—but he wanted a strong Holy Roman Empire that was based on Roman Catholicism. Humiliated and disgusted that he had not been able to maintain the Catholicism in his empire, he refused to accept the legal recognition of Protestantism and opted instead to abdicate.

Last Years. In 1555 Charles turned the Netherlands over to his son Philip and the next year he abdicated to Philip the kingdom of Spain, his Italian lands, and the colonies. Philip proceeded to have a glorious reign as Philip II of Spain. Charles retired to a country home near a remote Hieronymite monastery at San Jerónimo de Yuste. There he continued to monitor political developments, went fishing, and pursued his religious devotion until his death two years later.

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ELIZABETH I

1533–1603

QUEEN OF ENGLAND



The Good Queen. Elizabeth I, known as the Virgin Queen or Good Queen Bess, was the reigning monarch of England from 1558 to 1603. A shrewd, calculating, manipulative woman, she instilled deep loyalty in her subjects with her grave majestic poise. She preserved the English nation against internal as well as external threats, and during her forty-five-year reign the island kingdom emerged as a world power. It is because of her influence that the latter half of the sixteenth century in England is known as the Elizabethan Age.

Early Years. Elizabeth was born on 7 September 1533, the daughter of Tudor king Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Because Henry VIII had defied the Pope and married Boleyn in the hope of producing a male heir to the throne, he was bitterly disappointed in the birth of a second daughter. Before Elizabeth was three, the king had her mother beheaded and their marriage declared invalid. Although now considered an illegitimate child,

Elizabeth was still third in line to the throne (after her half brother Edward and half sister Mary). She received tutoring from leading Renaissance scholars who noted the child's intellect and seriousness. The humanist Roger Ascham wrote: "Her mind has no womanly weakness, her perseverance is equal to that of a man, and her memory long keeps what it quickly picks up." In time she became fluent in Greek, Latin, French, and Italian.

Court Intrigue. Upon his father's death in 1547, Edward VI became king of England; when he died in 1553, Elizabeth's older sister assumed the throne. Mary Tudor, wife of Philip II of Spain and a devout Catholic, did not endear herself to her Protestant subjects. Consequently, many nobles as well as commoners saw Elizabeth as their savior. As for the queen's sister, she professed her own Catholicism in order to avoid suspicion, but in 1554 she was arrested for plotting to overthrow the government and narrowly escaped execution.

Accession. On 17 November 1558 Mary died and Elizabeth became queen of England. One observer of her coronation procession into London noted: "If ever any person had either the gift or the style to win the hearts of people, it was this Queen, and if ever she did express the same it was at that present, in coupling mildness with majesty as she did, and in stately stooping to the meanest sort." Elizabeth quickly surrounded herself with experienced and loyal advisers, including William Cecil (afterward Lord Burghley) who served the queen for forty years as secretary of state and lord treasurer. She followed a policy of avoiding conflict with Parliament and curtailing state expenditures, although she did see the need for a strong navy.

A Woman's World. During her years as monarch, Elizabeth refused to compromise her power by taking a husband, although arranged marriages to various foreign as well as English noblemen were proposed to her at times. Nonetheless, some evidence suggests that she did develop romantic attachments to two men, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. The notion of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen wedded to her kingdom gradually developed. The powerful personal image she engineered was one of female authority and regal magnificence combined with extravagant dress and rich jewels.

Religious Issues. Under Elizabeth, England was restored to Protestantism. In 1559 Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, which revived the statutes of Henry VIII proscribing Catholicism and declared the queen supreme governor of the Church. Some Catholic aristocrats protested these measures, and in 1569 Elizabeth brutally suppressed a rebellion in northern England. Two years later informers uncovered the Ridolfi Plot, an international conspiracy against her life. Possible links to Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister Margaret and the nearest heir to the throne, soon surfaced. (Mary had been driven from Scotland in 1568 and had taken refuge in England.) English Protestants reviled the Catholic Mary and saw her as a serious threat, especially since Elizabeth had not produced a male heir.

Eliminating Mary. In 1580 Pope Gregory XIII proclaimed that there was no sin in killing the heretic Elizabeth, who had been excommunicated by Pope Pius V ten years earlier. Tensions with the Papacy increased after the English sent a small military expedition to assist Dutch Protestant rebels. When the Babington Plot against the queen was uncovered in 1586, secret correspondence in Mary's handwriting was intercepted. In February 1587 Elizabeth caved into the outcry against the Queen of Scots as a menace to the realm and had Mary beheaded.

Diplomacy. An astute observer of international affairs, Elizabeth played a diplomatic game with England's two chief rivals, France and Spain. However, persecution of Mary's adherents at home and a foreign policy of strengthening Protestant allies abroad ensured the wrath of the Roman Catholic nations, especially Spain. Privateers led by Sir Francis Drake and others raided Spanish shipping and ports, and by the mid 1580s it became clear that war was inevitable between the two countries. When Philip II launched the ill-fated Spanish Armada in 1588, the English navy quickly defeated it.

Successor. In her last years Elizabeth suffered much from ill health. Her principal counselor, Sir Robert Cecil, the son of Lord Burghley, secretly corresponded with the likeliest claimant to the throne, James VI of Scotland. Elizabeth supposedly indicated James VI as her successor before dying quietly on 24 March 1603.

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GONZALO FERNÁNDEZ DE CÓRDOBA

1453-1515

GENERAL



Military Genius. Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba was born on 1 September 1453 in Montilla, a city in the province of Córdoba, Spain, into a noble family with a long tradition of military service to the Castilian monarchy. Fernández de Córdoba rose in the favor of Queen Isabella for his service during the civil war and the Portuguese invasion that complicated her succession as queen of Castile in 1474. He was a combatant in the ten-year war