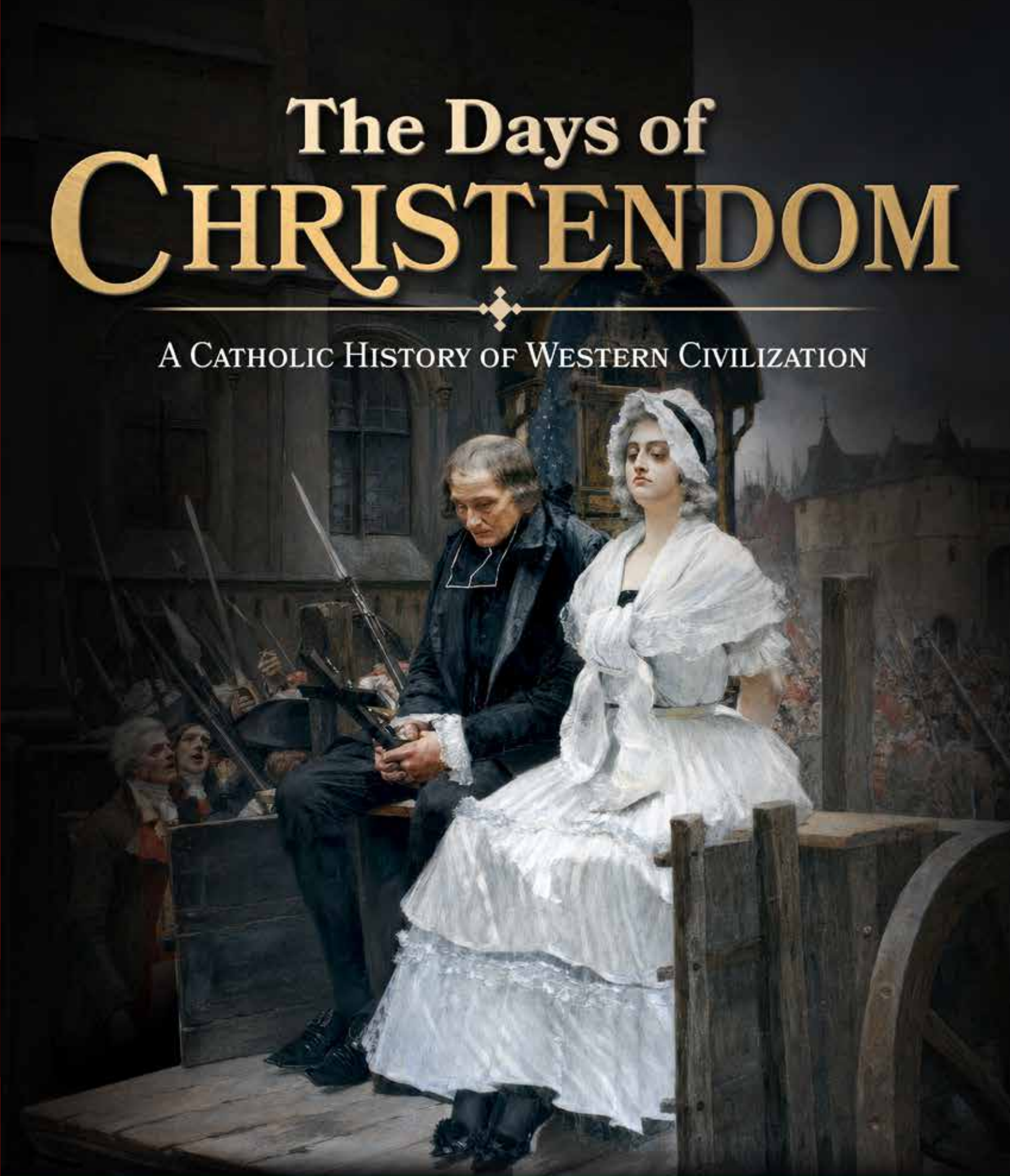


The Days of CHRISTENDOM

A CATHOLIC HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION



VOLUME II: CHRISTENDOM AT DUSK
THE AGE OF DISCOVERY TO MODERN TIMES

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CHAPTER 20 The Fate of France (1547-1610)



Henri IV Enters Paris 1594 by Baron François Gérard. The painting depicts King Henry IV of France entering Paris on March 22, 1594, after converting to Catholicism. This event marked the end of the French Wars of Religion and the beginning of a more unified France under the Bourbon dynasty. The painting shows Henry IV on horseback, accompanied by key figures like the Duke of Brissac and the Duke of Montmorency. The Pont Neuf bridge, a major Parisian landmark, is visible in the background.

The Eldest Daughter of the Church

Because the Franks had been the first barbarian tribe to accept Catholicism, their nation, France, has always claimed the title “Eldest Daughter of the Church.” For most of their history, the French people have embraced this title with love and respect. However, for John Calvin and his followers in France, nothing would have given them more pleasure than to see the Church’s eldest daughter abandon her ancient Faith and embrace Calvinism.

Unlike in England, the French monarchy was dedicated to defending the Faith, at least in France. Many of the leading members of French society were also faithful Catholics who would not surrender to Calvinism. The fate of France would ultimately be decided on the battlefield.

Henry II

Following the Battle of Pavia in 1525, French King Francis I signed the Treaty of Madrid with Emperor Charles V. Because Charles did not trust Francis, he demanded Francis provide his two oldest sons, Francis, age eight, and Henry, age six, as hostages before he released Francis I. Francis agreed. The two young princes spent the next four years as royal hostages in Spain, where they were (inexcusably) treated badly. This harsh treatment caused both boys, but especially Henry, to develop a hatred for Spain, Charles V, and his family. It also may have contributed to the early death of Prince Francis.

In 1533, Prince Henry married **Catherine de Medici**, a member of Florence’s wealthy banking family, when both were fourteen years old. It would prove to be one of history’s most important marriages. Three years later, Henry’s older brother Francis died from tuberculosis, perhaps caused by his confinement in Spain. When King Francis I died in March 1547, Henry II became King of France.

As King, Henry II continued the policies of his father. His foreign policy was aimed at harassing Charles V and his family. To that end, he declared war on Charles in 1551 to gain control of the Italian lands his father had lost. He also allied with the Protestants in Germany and the Turks in the East. Even after Charles abdicated his thrones in 1556, Henry continued fighting Philip II and Charles' brother, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. After Philip married Mary Tudor, England joined the conflict on the Spanish side. Henry achieved one of his few victories when he captured Calais in January 1558. By 1559, Henry, tired of the war, signed peace treaties with his enemies. To seal the treaty, Philip II married Henry's daughter Elizabeth of Valois. Despite the political nature of the marriage, the two loved each other. Philip was heartbroken when Elizabeth died in October 1568 during childbirth.

Domestically, Henry opposed the French Calvinists, called **Huguenots**, with all the resources at his disposal. Although Henry worked with them in Germany, he realized that they were heretics and revolutionaries determined to destroy French society. In June 1540, Francis I had issued the **Edict of Fontainebleau** after anti-Catholic literature had appeared in several of France's major cities. The Edict of Fontainebleau declared that promoting Protestantism was a treasonous act which could be punished with death. In June 1551, Henry II issued the Edict of Chateaubriant. Four years earlier, Henry had taken steps to stop the spread of Calvinism in France but they had failed. He issued the new Edict, which contained stricter regulations, hoping to stop Calvinism. Many of the new regulations dealt with printing and obtaining ecclesiastical permission before publishing religious books. During his reign, Henry issued two more religious Edicts, the Edict of Compiègne in 1557 and the Edict of Ecouen in 1559. While Henry would have preferred that the Huguenots return to the Church, he ordered his officers and judges to exile or execute them if they did not. Henry was determined to suppress the Huguenots



Elizabeth of Valois, Philip II's third wife, at the age of 18

before they became so powerful that they became a threat to the government and society of France.

On June 30, 1559, Henry held a tournament to celebrate the peace treaty he had made with Philip II, and his daughter Elizabeth's marriage to him. Henry, forty years old and an avid sportsman, participated in a joust. Although jousts were dangerous, few knights were ever seriously injured. Tragically, Henry suffered a critical wound when a shard from his opponent's broken lance pierced his eye. Henry's wound became infected. The infection turned deadly and killed him on July 10, 1559.

Francis II and the Loss of Scotland

Following the death of Henry II, his fifteen-year-old son, **Francis II**, became King of France. Henry had had high hopes for Francis as he married him to Mary, Queen of Scots, anticipating that one day



The Duke of Guise at the Siege of Calais by François-Édouard Picot

he would be King of France, Scotland, and, possibly, England. However, Francis, a sickly individual, died in December 1560. His short reign saw an increase in the influence of the **Guise** family, and the loss of Scotland to the Protestants.

The Guise family played a prominent role during the reign of Henry II. Because of Francis II's youth, he relied upon their counsel even more than his father had. The leading members of the family were **Duke Francis of Guise** and his younger brother **Cardinal Charles of Guise**. Both men were dedicated to the Catholic Church and the nation of France. Francis was an outstanding general who was most well-known for capturing Calais in January 1558. Charles had been made Archbishop of Reims in 1538, a Cardinal in 1547, and attended the Council of Trent. As Archbishop of Reims, he advised both Francis I and Henry II to issue their Edicts against the Huguenots.

Their sister was Marie of Guise, making them Mary, Queen of Scots' uncles.

During 1559, French troops defeated the Protestants in Scotland and drove them from Edinburgh. However, France lacked the resources to fight the Huguenots and the Scots' Protestants, something that William Cecil knew. In February 1560, England and the Lords of the Congregation signed a treaty by which they agreed to drive the French from Scotland. A massive English army was sent to Scotland to force out the French. The Duke of Guise, realizing that he could not fight the Huguenots in France and the English in Scotland, recommended that King Francis seek a diplomatic solution in Scotland. Francis attempted to negotiate with John Knox and the Lords of the Congregation, but the effort proved futile. On June 11, Marie of Guise, acting as regent for her daughter, died. In

July, France and England signed the Treaty of Edinburgh under which the French agreed to remove their troops from Scotland which would be under the protection of England. A few days later, John Knox held a service of thanksgiving, celebrating the Protestants' victory.¹

During the first months of 1560, Calvinist revolutionaries conspired to take Francis II hostage and arrest, and probably kill, the Guises. The Guises learned of the plot which they foiled by the middle of March. However, the plot was large and widespread. Cardinal Guise estimated that there may have been as many as 200,000 Calvinists in France, a little over one percent of the population.

Catherine de Medici

On December 5, 1560, Francis II died, a few weeks before his seventeenth birthday. His successor was his ten-year-old brother Charles. Because of Charles' age, his mother, Catherine de Medici, became regent of France. Catherine possessed many good qualities. She was a devout Catholic who was devoted to her children. However, because she married a prince not expected to rule, she never anticipated becoming Queen of France, nor ruling a nation herself. She came to power during one of the greatest crises in history, as France faced the ever-growing possibility of religious civil war. Despite her best intentions, Catherine made many poor decisions. She failed to rely upon the advice of the Guise brothers, who lost authority in France. Also, she sought to make peace with the Calvinist revolutionaries. Tragically, like so many after her, she failed to understand that revolutionaries only "make peace" after they have utterly defeated their enemies. Catherine took her first and most foolish step towards "peace" when she ordered the release of all Calvinist prisoners in late January 1561.

Throughout 1561, the situation in France became more dangerous.

Calvinists began rioting. Many French leaders converted to the new religion. In August, Mary Stuart made the fatal decision to travel to Scotland to regain her throne. Although William Cecil and John Knox opposed her, she reigned until 1567. In September, Catherine convened a theological conference at Poissy to which she invited several Calvinists. **Theodore Beza**, Calvin's most trusted lieutenant, came from Geneva to speak for the Calvinists. At Poissy, Beza openly denied the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Despite her desire for peace, this statement shocked Catherine. In mid-December, Beza led a Calvinist service in Paris attended by more than 6,000 people.

While Catherine was trying to appease the Calvinists, both the Duke and Cardinal of Guise



Catherine de Medici by François Clouet. The portrait was painted on wood, which accounts for the cracks, around 1560. Following the death of her husband, Henry II, in 1559, Catherine wore black to mourn him for the rest of her life.

¹ The Duke of Guise asked Philip II for help in Scotland; however, in May 1560, the Turks dealt the Spanish fleet a crushing blow at the Battle of Djerba (May 9-14). Because the Spanish lost 60 ships and more than 20,000 soldiers and sailors, Philip felt he could not assist the Catholics in Scotland. The Battle of Djerba is considered the high point of Muslim naval power in the Mediterranean. It also highlights the importance of the Christian victory at Lepanto a decade later.

Chapter 20 Review

Answer each question with a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

1. Why has France long claimed the title “Eldest Daughter of the Church”?
2. How did the French monarchy’s stance on Calvinism differ from that of England’s monarchy?
3. What name was given to the French Calvinists?
4. What caused the death of King Henry II in 1559?
5. During Francis II’s short reign, which country was lost to the Protestants?
6. Who became regent of France for her ten-year-old son, Charles IX?
7. What crucial truth about the Calvinist revolutionaries did Catherine de Medici fail to grasp?
8. Which 1562 event is considered the spark that ignited the first of France’s religious wars?
9. Who was the leading Calvinist military commander during the wars of religion?
10. Which 1570 peace ended the third war of religion by granting Calvinists freedom of worship and control of four fortified towns?
11. What massacre of Calvinists erupted in Paris after the attempted assassination of Coligny in August 1572?
12. Who were the three Henrys of the “War of the Three Henrys”?
13. What three goals did the second Catholic League make public in March 1585?
14. What were the two main provisions of the Treaty of Nemours (July 1585)?
15. How did King Henry III die in 1589?
16. Which decisive 1590 battle did Henry IV win, rallying his troops with “Follow my white plume!”?
17. In 1593, what religious step did Henry IV take that finally won France over to accept him as king?
18. What was the significance of the Edict of Nantes (1598)?
19. Who assassinated King Henry IV in 1610?

CHAPTER 26 The Revolution Against Christendom (1775-1795)



The People Returning Victorious from the Bastille by Paul Delaroche. Delaroche created this painting as a commission to celebrate the “heroes” who stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789. Dressed in rags, they are wounded but triumphant. They arrive outside the Hôtel de Ville (town hall) with the trophies they have taken from the Bastille. The man being carried on the shoulders of his companions is Jacob Job Elie, who led the attack on the Bastille and is believed to be the first person to enter. He waves a sword and holds the fortress’ keys and a letter signed by the Bastille’s governor, who the “heroes” had earlier murdered. He also wears a laurel wreath, the symbol of victory. Among the trophies are stolen silverware, documents, and flags. While the storming of the Bastille is often romanticized as a symbol of liberation, it preceded mob violence, execution, and destruction. Tragically, the murderous invasion of the Bastille is celebrated as the French Independence Day.

France in Peril

Louis XVI inherited the strongest nation in the world from his grandfather. Although Louis XV made some foolish decisions which cost France land overseas, in 1774, France remained Europe’s leader, militarily, economically, and culturally. Louis XVI was a weaker king than his predecessors, but probably a better Catholic.



Portrait of Louis XVI (cropped) by Antoine-François Callet

However, his indecisiveness and his desire to be loved by his subjects, caused tragic consequences for him, his family, France, and the world.

Once the American War of Independence started in 1775, France began supporting the English colonies as part of her policy to weaken Britain. In 1778, France signed a formal treaty of alliance with the colonies and provided soldiers and money to aid in the war. Although England and the United States wished to end the war after the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781, the French delayed the peace treaty for many months hoping to capture England's colonies in India and the West Indies. Other than humiliating Britain, France gained nothing from the war but incurred a massive debt which, by war's end, placed France on the brink of bankruptcy.

Despite Louis' best efforts to reduce the debt, he and his finance ministers were largely unsuccessful. In February 1787, Louis summoned the "Assembly of Notables," leading nobles, to Versailles to consult with him on the debt. The Assembly, which had not convened in more than 150 years, functioned as the king's council. Louis explained both France's financial situation and the reforms needed to balance the budget. Attempts at reform had been stymied by France's *parlements* (courts) which had barred the

enactment of new tax laws. Louis hoped the Assembly could pressure the *parlements* to accept the new laws. Unfortunately, because the nobility paid no taxes, the Notables were unwilling to aid in the debt crisis as it meant them paying taxes; so, Louis dismissed them on May 25. Opposed by the Notables and the *parlements*, and seeing no other choice, on the advice of his finance minister, **Jacques Necker**, in May 1788, Louis announced that he would convene the **Estates-General**, hoping it would agree to tax reform.

The Estates-General was the French national assembly. It first met in April 1302. It discussed national affairs usually involving the royal succession, economic concerns, or taxation. The Estates-General consisted of three groups, or *Estates*. In recognition of their importance, and the esteem in which the people held them, the First Estate consisted of the entire clergy, both priests and bishops. The Second Estate consisted of France's nobility. The Third Estate was everyone else, that is, the common people. Of the twelve hundred deputies elected to the Estates-General, over half came from the Third Estate. Due to the nature of the French monarchy, as shaped by Cardinal Richelieu, the Estates-General had not met since 1614.

Each of the Estates elected its own deputies. The local assemblies that selected the deputies drew up *cahiers*, or grievance lists, which the deputies took with them to Paris. The *cahiers* denounced absolute royal power, infringements on personal liberty, and unjust taxation. However, no complaint was made against the monarchy or the Church. The Estates-General assembled on May 5, 1789, at the royal palace of Versailles about twelve miles from Paris.

Almost immediately, the Third Estate began demanding that fundamental changes be made to the government. They proposed to form a single assembly of the three-branch Estates-General. King Louis, the nobles, and most of the clergy opposed this idea. The meetings devolved into noisy debates as the Third Estate continued its demands.

Attempting to gain control of the situation, King Louis had the doors to the Hall where the Estates-General had been meeting locked. The deputies of the Third Estate, along with their supporters in the First and Second Estates moved to a nearby tennis court, where they continued to meet. On June 20, 1789, they took the "**Tennis Court Oath**" by which they swore not to stop meeting until France had a *new*

and *written* constitution. They declared themselves a **National Assembly** which they said represented all the people of France. Although Louis had the soldiers to crush the National Assembly, he hesitated. After more of the nobles and clergy joined the Third Estate in the National Assembly, he consented to its existence.

Meanwhile, revolutionary agitators were active among the people of Paris. On July 11, Louis fired Jacques Necker as Finance Minister. Necker's dismissal caused violent mobs to form in the streets of Paris. Over the next two days, the mobs looted and burned. The agitators claimed that the **Bastille** – Paris' fortress prison – was full of innocent prisoners being held for their political beliefs. Actually, the Bastille contained only seven prisoners: four forgers, one felon, and two insane men! On the morning of July 14, the mob gathered before the prison and stormed the Bastille. They murdered the soldiers in the garrison and the Mayor of Paris. This grisly event marked the “triumph” of the Parisians over the authorities. **It was the beginning of the French Revolution.**

What is a “Revolution?”

A Revolution is the destruction and uprooting of the basic foundations of human society. Unlike the American War for Independence, which sought to change the government, the French Revolution and the Communist Revolution in Russia in 1917, sought not only to change the existing society, but to abolish it. As Lenin, the greatest revolutionary in history freely admitted, their goal was the destruction of everything that existed so that the revolutionaries could build their new world on the ruins of the old. Thus, changing the government was only part of the goal.

The great enemy of the Revolution is the Catholic Church. This is because Revolution puts Man in the



The Tennis Court Oath by Jacques-Louis David. David depicts the dramatic scene when members of the Third Estate gathered in a Versailles tennis court and swore not to disband until they had drafted a new constitution for France. David, who supported the Revolution, shows the figures in various states of fervor. The painting was meant to symbolize unity and zeal, with the wind blowing through the windows representing the winds of change sweeping through France. David meticulously sketched the faces of each deputy to ensure historical accuracy. The scene stands in sharp contrast to both the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

place of God. As such, Revolutionaries believe that anything that helps the Revolution succeed is justified. That is why all Revolutions lead to Terrorism. Once a revolution begins, unless it is destroyed quickly, a reign of terror is inevitable.

The French Revolution, An Inquiry

Based on the historical evidence, the French Revolution should not have happened. In July 1789, France had problems, mainly financial, but none so severe as to lead to a violent revolution. Before the Revolution, France had been at peace for six years and all of the fighting during the American War of Independence occurred outside of France. France was not experiencing any kind of famine or pestilence; although, *fear of famine* was more prevalent during the spring of 1775, because of a grain shortage, than usual. [Bread provided about half the sustenance for poor families.] Like most of Europe at the time, France did not have an over-abundance of food, but people had enough to eat and were not starving.

The ideas of the Enlightenment, while popular among the nobility, had not impacted the common people who were not clamoring for a change in religion. Unlike Voltaire and his cronies, they loved the Catholic Church. If they were angry about anything,

it was the suppression of the Jesuits and Louis XV's banishment of nearly 4,000 of them from France.

There was also no large political group calling for the overthrow of the government, because there was no systemic oppression of the people. Louis XVI had implemented reforms. He reduced spending at Versailles to help reduce the national debt. He removed government price controls on grain to increase the grain supply and decrease the price of bread, a staple food for the French people. In November 1787, he issued an edict granting religious toleration to the Huguenots living in France. Finally, Louis reformed some of the laws dealing with taxation of the peasants. If Louis can be criticized for his governance, it was for his failure to do *enough* in this moment of crisis. Arguably, Louis and his ministers were not doing their jobs very well, e.g., their inability to resolve the financial crisis. Often his policies were not bad, just badly implemented.

The event most similar to the French Revolution is the Communist Revolution in Russia in 1917. However, Russia was in the midst of one of history's most destructive wars. Russians were starving and dying by the tens of thousands. The Communists, the group calling for revolution, promised to end the war and the suffering. They seemed like a better alternative to the Russian government.

The violence and hatred that so many people expressed towards the Church is shocking given the conditions in 18th century France. First, the population of France was about ninety-five percent Catholic, the rest were Huguenots. Second, the Church provided all primary and secondary education in France. Almost all French people received a Catholic education. Third, the Church ran the nation's charitable organizations, e.g., the hospitals and orphanages. It cared for the sick and the poor. In almost every aspect of daily life, the Catholic Church was the leading influence on the people of France who loved the Church.

Furthermore, the priests and bishops of France were not leading corrupt and decadent lives at the expense of their parishioners. Most French clerics led lives characterized by self-denial and a deep devotion to the Faith and their parishioners. The greatest evidence for this can be seen in the heroic virtue these clerics displayed in the face of the mass martyrdom that they faced at the hands of the Revolutionaries.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man

Before the storming of the Bastille, the National Assembly had sought, mostly through peaceful means, to enact political and economic reforms. Many deputies wished to create a constitutional monarchy along the lines of that which existed in England, where the Assembly would function as France's *Parliament*, its legislative body. However, after the storming of the Bastille, everything changed. The Assembly seized power and became the *de facto* government of France. It also no longer acted peacefully.

In August 1789, the Assembly adopted the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. The document was originally written by the Marquis de Lafayette, the hero of the American War of Independence, in consultation with Thomas Jefferson, who was in France at the time acting as America's ambassador. It was based in great part on the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his notion of the General Will, as well as other Enlightenment



Portrait of Thomas Jefferson by Mather Brown. The portrait was painted in 1786 while Jefferson was serving as ambassador to France. The portrait is notable for its attention to detail, particularly the depiction of his powdered hair and stylish clothing. The classical statue in the background refers to Jefferson's intellectual and philosophical leanings. John and Abigail Adams, Jefferson's close friends, commissioned the painting.

Chapter 26 Review

Answer each question with a word, a phrase, or a sentence.

1. What was France's financial condition by the end of the American War of Independence?
2. Why did Louis XVI summon the Assembly of Notables in February 1787?
3. Which group made up the Third Estate at the Estates-General?
4. What did the deputies swear in the Tennis Court Oath?
5. How many prisoners did the Bastille actually hold when it was stormed?
6. What distinguishes a Revolution from a war of independence?
7. What is the great enemy of every Revolution?
8. What was France's condition in the period just before the Revolution?
9. About what percentage of France's population was Catholic at the time of the Revolution?
10. Who originally wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen?
11. What did the National Assembly do with the Catholic Church's property in November 1789?
12. What set off the women's march on Versailles on October 5, 1789?
13. How did the Flight to Varennes end for the royal family?
14. What was the name of the revolutionary group that met daily to control the National Assembly?
15. What was the Declaration of Pillnitz?
16. What did the Constitution of 1791 provide concerning King Louis?
17. What happened to the Swiss Guards defending the Tuileries Palace on August 10, 1792?
18. What did Danton do on September 2, 1792, that helped set off the September Massacres?
19. How did Saint-Just justify executing King Louis XVI?
20. What did Great Britain do when news of Louis XVI's execution reached London?
21. What did the Law of Suspects of September 17, 1793, order done to all "suspect persons" still at liberty in France?
22. What did the revolutionaries rename Notre Dame Cathedral in 1793?