The Globalization of Christianity

Strayer: Ways of the World
Chapter 16
In 1500, Christianity was mostly limited to Europe.

- small communities in Egypt, Ethiopia, southern India, and Central Asia
- serious divisions within Christianity (Roman Catholic vs. Eastern Orthodox)
In 1500, Christianity was mostly limited to Europe.

- on the defensive against Islam
  - loss of the Holy Land by 1300
  - fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453
  - Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529
Western Christendom
Fragmented: The Protestant Reformation
Protestant Reformation began in 1517

- Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses, asking for debate about ecclesiastical abuses.
- Luther was one of many who criticized the Roman Catholic Church.
- Luther’s protest was more deeply grounded in theological difference.
Protestant Reformation began in 1517

- put forth a new understanding of salvation as coming through faith alone rather than through good works, with the Bible, not Church teaching, as the source of religious authority
- questioned the special role of the clerical hierarchy (including the pope)
Luther’s ideas provoked a massive schism in Catholic Christendom

- fed on political, economic, and social tension, not just religious differences
- some monarchs used Luther to justify independence from the papacy
Luther’s ideas provoked a massive schism in Catholic Christendom

- gave a new religious legitimacy to the middle class
- commoners were attracted to the new religious ideas as a tool for protest against the whole social order
many women were attracted to Protestantism, but the Reformation didn’t give them a greater role in church or society

- Protestants ended veneration of Mary and other female saints
- Protestants closed convents, which had given some women an alternative to marriage
many women were attracted to Protestantism, but the Reformation didn’t give them a greater role in church or society

- only Quakers among the Protestants gave women an official role in their churches
- some increase in the education of women, because of emphasis on Bible reading
Spread of Protestantism

- the recently invented printing press helped Reformation thought spread rapidly
- as the Reformation spread, it splintered into an array of competing Protestant churches
- religious difference made Europe’s fractured political system even more volatile
  - 1562–1598: French Wars of Religion (Catholics vs. Huguenots)
  - 1618–1648: the Thirty Years’ War
Protestant Reformation provoked a Catholic Counter-Reformation

- Council of Trent (1545–1563) clarified Catholic doctrines and practices
- Corrected the abuses and corruption that the Protestants had protested
- Emphasis on education and supervision of priests
Protestant Reformation provoked a Catholic Counter-Reformation

- crackdown on dissidents
- new attention given to individual spirituality and piety
- new religious orders (e.g., the Society of Jesus [Jesuits]) were committed to renewal and expansion
the Reformation encouraged skepticism toward authority and tradition

- fostered religious individualism
- in the following centuries, the Protestant habit of independent thinking led to skepticism about all revealed religion
Christianity Outward Bound

- Christianity motivated and benefited from European expansion
  - Spaniards and Portuguese saw overseas expansion as a continuation of crusading tradition
  - explorers combined religious and material interests
Christianity Outward Bound

- Imperialism made the globalization of Christianity possible
  - Settlers and traders brought their religion with them
  - Missionaries, mostly Catholic, actively spread Christianity
  - Missionaries were most successful in Spanish America and the Philippines
Conversion and Adaptation in Spanish America

- process of population collapse, conquest, and resettlement made Native Americans receptive to the conquering religion

- Europeans claimed exclusive religious truth, tried to destroy traditional religions instead of accommodating them
  - occasional campaigns of destruction against the old religions
  - some overt resistance movements (e.g., Taki Onqoy in central Peru)
Conversion and Adaptation in Spanish America

- blending of two religious traditions was more common
  - local gods (*huacas*) remained influential
  - immigrant Christianity took on patterns of pre-Christian life
  - Christian saints took on functions of precolonial gods
  - leader of the church staff (*fiscal*) was a prestigious native who carried on the role of earlier religious specialists
  - many rituals survived, often with some Christian influence
An Asian Comparison: China and the Jesuits

- Christianity reached China during the powerful, prosperous Ming and Qing dynasties
  - called for a different missionary strategy; needed government permission for operation
  - Jesuits especially targeted the official Chinese elite
An Asian Comparison: China and the Jesuits

- no mass conversion in China
  - some scholars and officials converted
  - Jesuits were appreciated for mathematical, astronomical, technological, and cartographical skills
  - missionary efforts gained 200,000–300,000 converts in 250 years
An Asian Comparison: China and the Jesuits

- missionaries didn’t offer much that the Chinese needed
  - Christianity was clearly an all-or-nothing religion that would call for rejection of much Chinese culture
  - early eighteenth century: papacy and other missionary orders opposed Jesuit accommodation policy