William Tyler | Renaissance and Reformation

– And welcome to everyone who's tuning in today. I'm in a very wet Britain today. It's been pouring for about three days. The electricity's been flickering, but I've got some lamps, battery operated lamps in case the lights go. And if the iPad goes, fortunately my iPad is Russian and will also work on candles. So I've got a candle ready to put into the candle slot at the side. So there we are, we're going. Now, today... Oh, before I begin, for some reason or other, my blog, which I used to send you all via Lockdown, got lost, and it wasn't put on your sheets of paper. If you want to read the blog, it's simply very easy to get to. You can look it up under talkhistorian.com. Talkhistorian.com will give you my blog. But I don't really need it because I'm going to outline at the beginning what I'm going to say today. And I want to begin by saying that today sees us in 16th century France, the France of the 1500s, a France caught up in two great European movements, firstly the Renaissance arriving from Italy and secondly the Protestant Reformation arriving from Germany and then from inside France itself. These are two huge movements that swept across Europe and affected all future history. Cecil Jenkins, in his book on France, on his chapter covering this period, begins by saying, "The 16th century was a turning point for France, which marks a significant shift towards modernity. The whole continuum of mediaeval Christendom, with its belief in its own centrality, was shaken." And that's true. This is really a moment, you can say, not just in France but across Western Europe, where the modern age began. Historians always like to talk about ages beginning and ending. It's never foolproof. But this is a moment in the 16th century where things did change in Europe, and they change principally because of these two movements, the Renaissance, which entered France from Italy, and the Protestant Reformation, which entered France from Germany. These two events are important in themselves, but other issues too led Jenkins to say what I've just read, that this is a moment of change.

Some modern French historians believe that this century set the tone for the rest of the Bourbon monarchy. The House of Bourbon began ruling in France under King Henry IV, or Henri Quatre, in 1589 and ended with the Revolution of 1789. So we shall end today with Henry IV ascending the throne, and next week we shall look at that Bourbon monarchy up to just before the Revolution of 1789. These 200 years then, from 1589 to 1789, very easy to remember, because it's '89 in both years. And we all remember 1789, so you could remember 1589 without difficulty. 1589 to 1789 are Henry IV to Louis XVI of the House of Bourbon. During these 200 years, France reached a peak of power, political power within Europe and cultural power within Europe. And then came the crash of 1789. These are 200 years of political and cultural power. For within them, which we shall look at next week, is the reign of King Louis XIV, the Sun King, the absolute epitome of

French power and French culture. Other modern French historians go further than this and they see the France of the 16th century as influencing the France of the 21st century. So that's interesting. They see it as influencing all of French history, As Jenkins said in that quotation I read at the beginning, it is a turning point from the mediaeval to the modern. The modern doesn't start in the 20th century, even the 19th century. It starts here, and it's ideas that begin to circulate. So I've established, I hope, the centrality of the 16th century to French history. So let's plunge in with our first topic, with the first great movement that is to hit France. And that, of course, is the Renaissance, or, giving it its other terminology in English, the New Learning. And that's interesting because it is about learning. It's about thinking. It's about ideas as much as anything. It began in Italy, and it came to France and eventually came to England. And interestingly, in England, it arrived from Italy first, bypassing France, and only later was it the French Renaissance that hit us. So France gains this Renaissance of new learning.

So what did it affect? It affected painting. Painting leaves the mediaeval style and enters a modern style. It leads to new forms of architecture. Gone are the mediaeval Gothic, and in its place those beautiful Renaissance palaces. It moved from writing, writing, when the writers are influenced by the classical authors that they are rediscovering. And so the writing becomes a less Christian and more humanist, you might say, with the not emphasis on God, but the emphasis on human beings, and onto science as well, science and technology. Now, you can all argue, and some of you will be extraordinarily interested in art of one form or another. And I'm sure, in the Lockdown lectures on art, you will be told this is the great achievement, and so it was. But for me, as a historian looking at it in general, for me it's the technological advance of the printing press that made all the difference. Why? Because it spread ideas. It spread ideas. And you could read those ideas. Well, the literate in the Western Europe could read those ideas, 'cause they could actually go and buy a book. Not a manuscript, a actual printed book. And like we do today, we pass it to our friends. "This is a really good book." And the books weren't only about religion. They are on all sorts of topics. In fact, there's a growth of books on pornography. What a surprise. But there are books on every subject under the sun. The printing press was invented by a German, Johannes Gutenberg, and he invented it in the city of Strasbourg. Strasbourg at the time was part of the Holy Roman Empire, and therefore German. Strasbourg today is French. But it isn't until the end of the century that Strasbourg for the first time became French. And then in the history of the 19th and 20th century, it moves from being French to being German, to being French, to be German, et cetera. And it landed up finally in 1945 being French. But it's very much a city, I'm sure lots of people have been there, it's a very beautiful city, incidentally. The centre of it is magnificently mediaeval. It has some beautiful Vauban Fortress, the greatest fortress builder Europe ever

saw, but it also has a very nice 18th and 19th century part which leads you up to the Council of Europe, the Conseil de l'Europe, which is not the European Union, it's the Council of Europe, and Canada belongs to the Council of Europe, incidentally. All Canadians listening will know that. But also, it is where the European Union meets when it doesn't meet in Brussels. It meets in Strasbourg. So Strasbourg's a very international city, and it was there that Gutenberg invented the printing process. When was the year? 1440. By the 16th century, the printing press ruled supreme across Europe. He perfected it by 1450. By 1470 it's in countries like France and England. By the end of the century, it's, I can't say mass producing books, but as compared to the Middle Ages, yes it is. It is mass producing books. It's an extraordinary development. In France, the first printing press was perhaps not surprisingly bought, it was actually built in the University of the Sorbonne in Paris by German technicians. It was set up, and the university used it to print cheap textbooks for students. I mean, there were no textbooks before, there weren't books. It's like students today who use the internet. When I was at university, there was no internet. We couldn't download essays written by somebody else. We just had to slog through books. And the difference the internet made, my son was at university at the University of Liverpool in Britain when the internet first came in. And he did his part of his degree in archaeology with a project which he did entirely on the internet, which was the first one the university had received. And he's about 46, so that's just about 1/4 of a century ago. And amazing, isn't it, that life has changed so much. And I say that simply to emphasise the impact that the printing press had in France and elsewhere. By the end of the 1480s, there were large numbers of printing presses in Paris and Dijon and other places too. Printers tended to gather not just in one city, but in one part of the city. So around the Sorbonne was printing presses in the 15th century. You can't, you just cannot, as a historian, ever underrate and underestimate the impact that the printing presses had. If only we'd had television then and we could put on a television show and news and saying this marvellous thing has happened in Paris and it's going to change the world, and it did change the world. Many historians would argue it enabled the Protestant Reformation to take place. The Protestant view of Christianity, as compared to the Catholic. The Catholic view was the priest told you what to do, everything, and the answers and so on. Protestantism said, you must reach God as an individual. And for Protestantism, individuals had to read the Bible. That's why literacy increased in the 16th century. We think in England, for example, that literacy levels, and the same as true of France, reached quite a peak by the end of the 16th century, then declined until there was a rapid rise in the 18th century with women in large numbers learning to read. So literacy is a byproduct of the printing press, because the Protestant said, "You must read your Bible and read it daily." When I was responsible for adult literacy in the English county of Warwickshire in the long distant past, I had a request from a church, could I please teach them to read because they

needed to read the Bible in church, and could I use the Gospel of St. John as the text?

Now, we'd all been on endless courses nationally to be told that we must teach literacy through motorcycle manuals and things like that. And here was a church asking, could we use the Gospel of St. John? It was a fantastic moment. They were a Black evangelical church, and most of their members were illiterate and they wanted to be able to read the Bible because that was central to their faith. And so we taught them by using the Gospel of St. John. I have to say it wasn't easiest gospel to use, but that's what they chose to have, and we taught them to read. And that must have been exactly what happened in 16th century France and across Europe. So it's really important. Moreover, the ideas of the Protestant Reformers, like Jean Calvin, for example, in France, were circulated in books and in pamphlets and indeed in printed sermons. You could get the information in a way that you simply couldn't in the past. If a clergyman preached a sermon, it was only those actually in the church that could hear it and that was the end of it. But now with printing, it could be distributed far and wide, and not only in your own country, but in other countries too. Not only did printing help religion, but it also helped scientists. And Copernicus begins to publish. He published "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres," and the Catholic Church condemned it because it didn't fit in with Catholic theology of the sun in the centre of the universe. But once they started publishing, and remember, these scientists published in Latin. So whether you lived in what is today the Czech Republic or you lived in what is today Germany or in France or in England, you could read the same text because it's in Latin and Latin was the universal language, in the same way today that many academic journals on the internet are published in English because it's a common language. So then it was Latin. This spreads the ideas. This is a quotation which is specific to France. "The French Revolution tore France to bits, and out of the rubble something new was built, the French nation. The printing press was the crucial instrument in this process. Without the printing press, the French Revolution was impossible and unthinkable." Now, if you were doing a postgraduate course with me I will give you that as a quotation and ask you to write 5,000 words on it, because it's debatable. But what is important about it is that many people think, and you can make a case for it. If we had a debate and we voted, half of you might say, "Yes, definitely. Without the printing press, how could the French Revolution have happened?" Whereas others of you say, "Well, it would've happened anyhow. It didn't need the printing press." But the printing press is central to all sorts of developments. Literacy, as you see, it's not just religious works, it's political works. There's a new book being published by a favourite author of mine, Simon Sebag Montefiore. It's a massive book. It's a history of the world. He writes so beautifully, you can forgive him for missing out important people or important events. I just love the way he writes. He says this about the Renaissance. He takes us back to last week. "The Black

Death inspired a new sense of God's higher power, but also an appreciation of the value of humanity, God's greatest creation. Petrarch, looking back at the light of classical culture, called the intervening years the Dark Ages. He was heralding a new lightness, the celebration of learning and beauty, including that of the human body. That was the Renaissance." Yes, it was. I can't, I wish I could somehow get over to everyone what an important event it was.

Now, don't tell me that your family would've been peasants and wouldn't have understood what was going on. Okay, I understand that. But if you were a peasant in a French Protestant area, you would've understood. To start with, the sermon would've been in your own language, the Bible would've been in your own language, the priest would've taught you to read, or many of you, and you would've been able to read. You'd been able to read Renaissance, and maybe even if you were in a Catholic area, your great lord built a palace, a chateau on the Loire. You couldn't fail to know it was going on. But for the elite in society, the 20% or so at the top of society, this was a huge moment of change. We look back on the 1960s and say, well, what a moment of change that was in French history and other countries' histories. But it was nothing, nothing compared to the Renaissance! The Renaissance has printing. Now, what is interesting to me as a historian is how is the internet going to affect our society? We are seeing indications of how the internet affects things like politics, how it affects global issues, how ordinary people over questions like the environment can come together over the internet. And I can speak to you all over the internet, which was unthinkable when I first began working in adult education in the 1960s. I couldn't have believed it would happen. So we don't know where the internet is going to take us. But if we take printing as an example, it is certainly going to take us into sort of some surprising new places, and I'm very excited to see. I'm going to have to live to 120, because I'm determined to find out what happens. The French monarch who did more to spread the Renaissance in France than anybody else was Francois I, or Francis I, who reigned in France from 1515 to 1567. Now, as a young man, he was the first Renaissance prince, the first prince to be educated in the ideas of the Renaissance, that is to say the ideas of the Italian Renaissance. Some of his tutors were very much involved with the Renaissance, were humanists. No longer is it Catholic clergy teaching the heir to the French throne. It's new ideas. And we know for example that he was taught arithmetic, geography, grammar, history, reading, spelling, writing, and became proficient in Hebrew. Hebrew not because of interest in Judaism, but Hebrew to be able to read the Christian Old Testament in its original, Greek, so he could read the New Testament of the Christian Bible in its original, Hebrew, Greek, Italian, Latin, and Spanish. He learnt to dance and he enjoyed music. Music is one of those arts that took off in the Renaissance, as did, in fact, dancing. Dancing. He began to play real tennis and wrestling. Sport becomes a big thing in the Renaissance period. He did archery, horseback riding, hunting, jousting. This was a man for all seasons.

He is the first Renaissance prince in France. As a young man, as an adult, he read philosophy and he read theology and he read literature, poetry, and science, and was interested in art.

Now, that is what we still refer to today as a Renaissance man or a Renaissance woman, someone who has a wide breadth. Except today, of course, none of us can hope to cover all of those academic subjects. But in the early 16th century, given you had A, time, and B, tutors, as Francis did, you could hope to cover a huge bulk of the known knowledge. He was pushed into this. All the men listening will know, and all the women will know, that young boys have to be pushed to do their homework, pushed to do well at school. And his mother was a lady called Louise of Savoy. And Louise of Savoy, of course, was Italian. So she came having all these ideas of the Italian Renaissance and was determined to make her son the Renaissance prince. By the time he became king in 1515, the Renaissance had actually reached France from Italy, and he became an enthusiastic patron of the arts. For example, he patronised Leonardo da Vinci, who spent the last years of his life, not in Italy, but in France. And as a patron of the arts, he was unparalleled. He poured vast amounts of money into the building of these great palaces. For example, he changed the Louvre in Paris from being a mediaeval fortress to the very latest Renaissance palace. He built one of the most beautiful building, well, buildings are very subjective to me, one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe, and that is the Chateau of Fontainebleau. That was built by Francis. He was some man, and it was he who pushed the adoption of all these arts and sciences in France. And I mean, I think that's an extraordinary thing for a person to have done. I think I've thrown my piece of paper that I need on the floor. I got it back. There's one final thing I want to read about the function and the ideas of the Renaissance and the printing press. And this is again from Cecil Jenkins' book on the history of France. "Printing had begun in France by 1470 and there were already a score of printers in France by 1500. Between then and the end of the century," 1600, so the 16th century, which we're talking about, "25,000 books will be printed in Paris, 15,000 in Dijon, while there were other printing shops elsewhere. This meant not only that works were now accessible to a broader audience, but that the opportunity had been created for the circulation of printed propaganda tracts and solicitous, and seditious, sorry, and seditious lampoons." You could make fun of the government. We all have politicians portrayed, sometimes quite viciously, in the cartoons in our daily press. This is possible from the printing press. The medium itself conveyed the message that there could now be a greater exchange of ideas in society. So that's really the important thing that I wanted to say. Then I wanted to move on, if I may, from that to the question of religion. Because the next part of the story is the coming of Protestantism to France. Protestantism comes to France by a man called Jean Calvin, but Protestantism itself began in Germany in October 1517. In October 1517, a Catholic monk by the name of Martin Luther lit the touch paper that spread Protestantism eventually around

the world. What did he do? He posted up, so the story goes, on the church door at Wittenberg his Ninety-five Theses, which called upon the Roman Church, the Catholic Church, to abandon indulgences. Now, let me explain. If you are terribly sinful, well, the Catholic Church believes we're all terribly sinful. So I'm terribly sinful and I think, gosh, I'm not going to go to heaven because I've done all these dreadful things. So what can I do about it? So I ask the priest at confession, "Father, I've sinned terribly. I know I'm not going to go to heaven and I'm now quite old and I'm worried about it." "No worry at all, my son. Let me know what your," they always wanted to know the details, particularly if they were sexual details, the priests. So I have to tell them all my horror stories. And the priest says, "Don't worry." He would've got a calculator, or the 16th century equivalent of a calculator. "Oh, and how many women? Really? Ah, well that will be 5,000 gold crowns to the church." I have to pay money to the church to have my sins forgiven so I shall go to heaven. And Luther said this is dreadful. This is just a money racket run by the Catholic Church and it must stop. Well, that ignited a lot of feeling. Now, it is true that before this in Europe there had been murmurings against the Catholic Church, Jan Hus in Central Europe, John Wycliffe in England. There had been people already making comments about the Catholic Church, but now the comments are able to be published. Luther, and Calvin later, are able to publish their sermons, they're able to publish their books. And so the ideas, it's ideas that are the great weapon of humanity. Ideas flooded across Germany, and they don't stop at the German/French border, over the border they go. Everything now is in a melting pot in terms of religion, a challenge to the hegemony of the Catholic Church in Western Europe. Simon Sebag Montefiore, I love saying his name. I wish I had a name which was as posh as that. He says this: "Luther didn't depend on merely putting up notices on church doors. He deployed the new medium of print. Ultimately, 3.1 million copies were published of his Ninety-five Theses." 3.1 million! It's the power of the internet today. It was the power of printing then. It's absolutely unbelievable. 3.1 million copies of Luther's Theses spread across Europe. So you can guarantee that more than 3.1 million people read them. What you do, multiply by three at least, at least. This is like our Zoom. I know how many machines are on, but some of you watch with other members of the family. So you can add numbers for how many people are listening tonight, or tonight here in Britain. And so printed works are even more, because it doesn't have to be in the moment. You can pass on the book next week. You can tell your friend, "I'll bring it to church next week, you can have it next Sunday," and then it's passed round the congregation. Goodness knows how many people read Luther.

Now, one story I like from Luther is this. I didn't actually know this story before I read it in Montefiore's book, Montefiore is a past master of having wonderful little stories. This is a gem. "As Luther's teaching spread, 27 nuns in a nearby Cistercian monastery wanted to join his Protestant movement. Luther, now age 41, arranged for them to

be smuggled out in herring barrels, and, presumably once they had been cleaned of fishiness, found himself attracted to one of them. He couldn't marry as a monk. He wrote, 'Not that I am insensible to my flesh or sex, for I am neither wood nor stone, but because I daily expect the death of a heretic.'" He thought he was going to die at the hands of the church, in other words. So he didn't think about, so he says, he didn't think about sex. "'Now, suddenly I was occupied with far different thoughts. The Lord has plunged me into marriage.'" At that point we're sort of on Luther's side really, except that there was a huge age gap, so that raises interesting question. But then he goes on to say, which we could not say today, or want to say. "Luther argued that, quote, 'A woman has no control of herself. God has made her body to be with a man, to bear children.' So she was welcome to enjoy sex, and they were blessed with six children." So we have this extraordinary thing that he married at the age of 41 a 26-year-old nun who was desperate for sex. But it appears he was, they had six children. "But Luther said," Montefiore, must have been exhausting. "'Dear husband, "You're too rude," Catherine once said.' Yet the nun in the fish barrel was decisive. Luther decreed that Protestant priests could marry." And that of course made a massive difference socially to communities, Protestant communities across Europe. 'Cause not only did you get the priest, but you also got the priest's wife. Catholic priests were not married, but they may have had a, what shall we say, an understanding with their housekeeper, but they were not allowed to marry, and Protestant priests were. And whether Montefiore is correct in saying that this is because Luther and his 21-year-old wife, for 20 years difference between them, enjoyed sex, I'm not sure. But certainly when Luther said that they could marry, then it would have a major effect.

But it isn't Luther and Lutheranism that dominates France, it's Jean Calvin and Calvinism. Jean Calvin was born in France in Picardy in 1509 and he died in 1564, but most of his work was done in French-speaking Switzerland. He broke with the Catholic Church. He'd been brought up a good Catholic boy, his dad was a big figure in the local Catholic community. But around 1530, so that's about a decade or so after Luther, he simply abandoned Catholicism. Why? Because he didn't like the fact that Catholics in France were attacking good Protestants, and he wanted to learn about Protestants. And he went to Basel in Switzerland and published a book, again, a book called "Institutes." He revised it three times during his life. And then he began preaching in Geneva. And he also finally a minister in three churches in sequence in Strasbourg. Why? Because Strasbourg had a lot of French Protestant refugees who'd gone there because in the Holy Roman Empire there was an understanding of freedom of worship. And so a lot of French who had converted to Protestantism came to Strasbourg, and there Calvin preached to them. Did Calvin have a wife? No, he didn't. And this is what Calvin said, quote: "I who had the air of being so hostile to celibacy, I'm still not married and do not know whether I ever will be. If I take a wife, it will be because, being

better free from numerous worries, I can devote myself to the Lord." In other words, I'm not going to marry for sex, which I think is what Luther did. Said, "If I marry," he never did. "If I marry, I shall marry so that my wife can do all those jobs which I find so annoying." Ironing his shirts, perhaps, I don't know. Making it up. She will take charge of the house and I can just do God's work. Extraordinary, isn't it, to us to think that. But he never did marry. Now, many of you will be asking, what did these rebel rousing Protestant leaders like Luther and Calvin, what was their attitude towards Jews? Well, Luther's attitude is, in many ways, Luther is an unpleasant person, I think, as an individual. Actually, to be perfectly honest, I wouldn't like to have met either of them. I think Luther would've been too overbearing and Calvin would've been just too religious for my taste. And I had enough of Calvinism when I was at school in my evangelical public school here in England. But this is what Simon Sebag Montefiore writes about Luther's attitude. "A vicious and visceral polemicist, Luther was fixated on sex," well, we've mentioned that, "and faeces. He later denounced the Pope as a transsexual sodomite, his orders sealed with the devil's own faeces, written with anus papal farts." I don't think that would actually get through many censors today. "He unleashed savage diatribes against Jews. He said, quote, 'We're wrong if we don't kill them. They are devil's people, poisonous worms, full of the devil's faeces,'" there we go again, "'which they wallow in like swine. They're synagogue, an incorrigible whore, an evil slut.'" He's back to sex again. He does seem obsessed. But note, the antisemitism is also anti-Catholicism, both. It's not endearing, is Luther. Calvin, well, some people have argued that Calvin was the least anti-Semitic of these early Protestant preachers. Well, certainly he was less anti-Semitic than Luther. But, Calvin had different and complicated attitudes. Calvin's views towards biblical Jews in the Christian Old Testament, in the Torah, and his attitude towards living Jews in France and Switzerland in the 16th century was entirely different. Calvin did not distinguish theologically between God's covenant with Israel to Jews and the new covenant with God through Christ for Christians. He said it's the same thing. The old and new covenants are the same. The problem is that Jews won't accept the new covenant. So his anti-Semitism is actually based on, we could say dubious, more than dubious, but he's based on a theological argument, whereas Luther's is, as Sebag Montefiore says, visceral. He doesn't like Catholics, he doesn't like Jews, and he uses this extraordinary language of faeces and sex to denounce both. In France, the Protestants are called Huguenots, and we know that in England because many of them are to come to England in the reign of Louis XIV as refugees. The word itself is partly Flemish and partly German. So it's come from the Lutherean area north of France. And together, they put two words together which I'm going to make no attempt to pronounce. The Flemish is absolutely impossible and I don't speak German. What they mean, when the French put these two words together and came up with the word Huguenot, the word Huguenot simply means Confederates bound together by oath. So these early Protestant churches, you took

an oath. Now, I said I went to an evangelical public school in England and you were expected, it wasn't called an oath, but a declaration of faith. And it was written on a little card. I vow to God to do A, B, C, and D. And this was a very similar thing, so that's what it means. It's simply a group of people of one faith who make a promise to the congregation and God, and so the word Huguenot. The Huguenots were as successful as the Lutherans in one respect, they managed to penetrate the high aristocracy of France. This was not a people's movement.

Now, there've been many movements in Christianity since, like Methodism, which reached down to those that the church just ignored, the working classes of the Industrial Revolution, but not here. Protestantism reached up and down, and it reached to the very top of society, the very top of society. Now, in France when Calvinism, which is, Lutheranism is not as fundamentalist as Calvinism. Calvinism took root, for those of you who know Britain, took root in Scotland, and the Church of Scotland is Calvinist. So it has strong views, for example, on how you behave on a Sunday. It has strong views, and very strong views, on morality. Lutheranism is more laid back. The Church of England, the Anglican Communion, is more laid back than that, because it was a political compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. Now, there is no religious, there is no religious coming together in France, as there was here in England, of Protestantism and Catholicism. And if you want to mention one thing that divides the two countries today, France and Britain, or historically, it's that we had a state religion, which was a political compromise between Catholicism and Anglicanism. The French never reached a political compromise. The Catholics exterminated Protestantism in the reign of Louis XIV. Protestants were banned from France in Louis' reign. Thus, when the Revolution comes, the choice isn't between Catholicism and Protestantism, the choice becomes one, and subsequently has been in France since the Revolution, a question of Catholicism or secularism. And France is a secular state, and that doesn't apply to Britain or to England. So that's an interesting, for me, an interesting difference. Now, as Protestantism took off in France, the ruling House of Valois was really sinking into mud. One of the problems of monarchies, as you know, is that you can't guarantee that the person who becomes the monarch is stable, normal, and a good leader. In countries which have a democratically elected president, there is always the hope that the president is exactly one of those, normal. I will leave you to think that through. But the problem with monarchy is clear, and the House of Valois hit upon it, at which king after king became really poorer in quality than you could possibly believe. In his book on the history of France, Jeremy Black writes this: "France began to have a crisis of order and a crisis within civil society, which led, because of Protestantism and Catholicism being both in the country, led to the French Wars of Religion. These wars were characterised by a collapse of royal authority, by social strife, and by the horror of civil war. Open conflict broke out in 1560. However, rather than a continuous period of warfare, let alone

high-tempo campaigning, there was a series of distinct wars separated by agreements and periods of peace that reflected a widespread desire for settlement, but set against the background of persistent differences, Protestant, Catholic, and a high level of civil violence, so that years of peace were in reality uneasy armed truces." So in 1560 it boils over. It's like the pot on the stove. It boils over in 1560 into religious war. The king can't control the situation, they're weak Valois kings. Protestantism and Catholicism are head to head. Who is going to control France? "On the 1st of March, 1562," says Black, "at Vassy "while travelling with large numbers of supporters, the Duke of Guise," who's the leader of the Catholic Party, "the Duke of Guise became involved in a dispute with a Huguenot religious congregation, which led to him ordering the massacre of that Protestant congregation. In response, the Huguenot leader, the Prince of Conde," I said they reached right up in society, "seized Orleans. The two sides fought.

When Conde's advance on Paris was blocked," 'cause Paris is the key, like London is the key here. You've got to take Paris if you want to rule. So the Catholics had Paris and they held on to Paris by making sure the Protestants couldn't enter it. "Heavy casualties, not least the deaths and captures among the commanders, and the assassination of the Duke of Guise in the following February led to a peace in March 1563." So they are looking for peace, but this is about political power as well as about religion. The Dukes of Guise are Catholics. They want to seize the throne. The opponents, the Protestants, had the Prince of Conde, and then they looked for other leaders. So there were two parties, a Protestant party and a Catholic party. The Valois kings are simply dying out. Henry III, the last king, his elder brother was dead, his younger brother dies, and he is homosexual, and is, well, unlikely is putting it mildly, he was not thought capable of having a child. So the House of Valois is dying out. So now you've got Catholic supporting a Catholic successor, Protestant supporting a Protestant successor, and the Protestants and Catholics leading their parties want power for themselves, and the people pushing them want power as their followers. It's like a government in all our countries today, in America, you know, know the president well before he's elected and he'll get office. Same in Britain, same in Canada, Australia, Asia, wherever. And here, that is exactly what's happening. This civil war is fought across the country, it's religious, which adds a nasty twist to the tale, because we think the other party is heretic. But behind it all are these aristocrats pulling the strings, because, "I want to be king of France." Wow. And then a dreadful thing happens. There is a terrible massacre on Saint Bartholomew's Day. It happened like this. In 1560, the Huguenot leader was a man called Admiral de Coligny. He's the Protestant. He gained a place on the Royal Council, because the Catholics thought if we bring him onto the council, that will sort it out, we can have peace. But then he began manipulating people, and the Catholics said, "Look, we can't put up with this." And the Duke of Guise thought, "I'm going to have to get rid of him, I'm going to have

to kill him. He's going to have to be assassinated." The attempt on Admiral de Coligny, the Protestant leader's life, failed. Frightened of a military reaction, the Crown acted, and this is where it got very nasty indeed. And Black writes, "The king, Charles IX, and his council seemed to have decided to murder de Coligny and other Huguenot leaders. The Saint Bartholomew's Day killing of leading Protestants, notably the Admiral himself, on the night of the 24th of August, a lurid event by any standards, was followed by a widespread massacre of Paris' Huguenots by the Catholic populace. Carried out by civilians, the slaughter reflected the total breakdown of civic relations, with neighbours killing neighbours at close quarters. The slaughter was replicated in many other French cities. And what did the Pope do? He struck a commemorative medal to celebrate the massacre." It led to further fighting. The Huguenots set up a major base at La Rochelle, the Catholics still hold Paris. The fragile peace was negotiated in 1573. It didn't last long, and the war continued into the 1580s. When Henry III's younger brother, the Duke of Anjou, died without an heir, it leaves the homosexual Henry III on the throne with no prospect, did anybody think, of him producing an heir.

And so we have what's called the War of the Three Henrys. We have Henry of Navarre, a Protestant, and Henry of Guise, a Catholic, and Henry the king. The king was removed in 1589 when he was assassinated by Jacques Clement, which left Henry of Guise and Henry of Navarre. Now, Henry of Navarre had begun life as a Catholic, but in order to become king of Navarre he changed to Protestantism. Now he's fighting for the throne of France. And Jenkins writes this: "Henry of Navarre decided to cut the Gordian Knot by formally reconverting to Catholicism, with the legendary comment, 'Paris is worth a mass.'" In other words, he's not religious at all. He's gone from Catholicism to Protestantism and back to Catholicism. He wants power. Paris is worth a mass, the crown is worth me changing back to Catholicism. Wow. It doesn't get more expedient than that in politics. "While that lost him many Protestant supporters, he gradually took over France through a judicious combination of military force, negotiations, and large bribes. And, in the Edict of Nantes in 1589, he gave quite a large measure of freedom to French Huguenots." He is the first Bourbon king of France. By his decision to become Catholic, the Bourbon monarchy, up to the Revolution of 1799, was Catholic by his expedient decision." And Jenkins says, "If it was a somewhat artificial solution to the Wars of Religion and the conflict in France, it brought an exhausted country a measure of peace." And it's Henry Quatre, Henry IV, the who lays the foundation for the Bourbon monarchy, that is, the regius apex with Louis XIV, the Sun King. I'm just going to read you one last piece, and this is from Jeremy Black, and it goes like this. "In response to the chaos of the civil war and the spread of resistance across France," civil resistance, peasants resisting, "Bodin, in his book 'Republique,' published in 1576, pressed the need for an undivided sovereignty." An undivided sovereignty, not people like Guise and Coligny fighting for power in the court, but he wants an

undivided sovereignty. That is what Henry Quatre gave, that is what the Bourbons gave. And they developed the idea of the divine right of kings. We are appointed by God. How dare you say I'm wrong, because God is telling me what is right, and he doesn't tell you. And that of course saved France here, when in 1589, in 1589 when Henry becomes king. But it does for the monarchy in 1789 when the Revolution comes. But it was autocracy that allowed Louis XIV to be whom he was and France to reach the heights of political and cultural dominance within Europe. That's a suitable place, I think, when next week I'll talk about the House of Bourbon up to just before the Revolution of 1789. I'm sure there must be lots of questions.

Q & A and Comments

Somebody asked a question right at the beginning. Someone has answered, Joy says, "Somewhat belatedly, I want to recommend 'The Convert,' a novel by Stefan Hertmans, which provides lots of information about Jews, crusaders, and transport in mediaeval France." Splendid. Jennifer.

Oh no, thank you, she's just being very nice. Yes, Eileen, you're right. The printing press was invented in China earlier. I didn't say that because I didn't want, basically I didn't want to complicate the story further. But you are right, it was, but that invention didn't affect Western Europe, didn't affect France or anybody else in Europe. And it wasn't simply copied, this was a new invention by Gutenberg. So it's best to stick with the European history to understand its impact.

"Of course, Jews could read, although they were in Hebrew and they would study together in seminaries." Yes, Jews and Protestants share lots of things in common, not least the desire and the need to read religious texts for themselves, absolutely.

Q: "Did literacy and individualism of the time parallel to today's social media effects in any way?"

A: Well, that's the question, you see, Romain, I can't answer it really. I think we're in the middle of this, and we will have to see. There is concern by educators with children that they're becoming less literate in an old fashioned sense and we're moving towards the skills of the internet. And individualism, well, yes, but it also gives the opportunities for people to use it to grab you into whatever thing that they're selling, whether it be religion, politics, or whatever. I'm being really not helpful. The truth is, Romain, I can't answer the question. I think the question is the right question and we shall have to wait for the answers in due course. I'm just going to have a sip of water.

Shelly says, "American Revolution before French Revolution also needed

printing press." Yes, it did, absolutely. Not least because America is such a large country, even of the Thirteen Colonies, and it was very difficult, it was very difficult to get messages around. I just read a book called the "Act of Oblivion" by Robert Harris. It's a fictional account of two of the regicides of Charles I who sought sanctuary in America. Now, we don't know what happened to them, but Harris writes a book based upon the facts we do know. It's an outstandingly good book, and it is made very clear there how difficult it was even with writing and books to get messages around these very distant, sparsely occupied villages of British America in the 17th century.

Q: "Is it not weird the printing press spread religion whereas the internet is destroying religion?"

A: Well, the printing press destroyed Catholicism in many places, and the alternative to Catholicism was Protestantism. Today the alternative to religion is secularism. So you could argue that it's much the same sort of process in different time. "Elizabeth I could read Latin and Greek and had wide knowledge." Yes, she could, Angela. She of course is later in date than Francis I, and she also spoke other languages. There's an interesting account of her late in her reign when she's in her late 60s, which equates to being in that your late 80s today. And she had to receive the Venetian ambassador, and they spoke in Latin because that was the common language, and he was trying to show off his Latin. And he recorded the account, and she answered him in perfect Latin and smiled at him and said, "Oh, I'm so pleased I haven't forgotten my old Latin," but she knew darn well what she was doing. He could only comment that he found looking at her withered breasts rather upsetting, because she wore low-cut dresses even at that age and it was a bit of a, not something you'd want to get close to. Well, at least he thought so.

Francois has answered a question, I didn't answer that question, I'm sorry. "Strasbourg, Metz are two different cities." Absolutely, Strasbourg is Strasbourg.

Q: "When do newspapers start take shape?"

A: Later. We have news sheets in the 16th and 17th centuries. We begin to have newspapers at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. But at this time you do get news sheets. So you could have received a new sheet from Paris, and the priest or the vicar or whoever would read it out in church.

"The internet allows us to re-inhabit the agora." Oh, Sandy, that's terribly, the agora is the Greek for marketplace. That's a, I like that. "The internet allows us to re-inhabit the agora," I shall remember that, Sandy, it's excellent, "face to face, but loses the many written letters from," oh, sorry, "and loses the many written letters from ordinary folks." Where are we? "From ordinary folk which

created a window to the past. Texts are written on water." You know, there is a problem about texts, a problem for historians, because where will we find the evidence? Because people, well, we know when politicians or businessmen are investigated, businesswomen, they delete the text so you can't actually find the texts. Now, I know there's also shredding of papers and we've seen that in recent years, but no, there is a problem about not keeping written records. I mean, one of the problems, Sandy, to answer the question very seriously, is there is a danger that younger people will read books less, rely on the internet more. I don't bother about the silly things on the internet. There are silly books you can read. You can have pornography in magazines from shops as well as on the internet. It's just a question of knowing how to use it. We all know how to use books and magazines. We're going to learn, and the children will learn quicker than us, to sniff out the things that are wrong. But what is a problem is a lack of depth in terms of history. And we do have to teach history more and better in our schools. I just read an account in today's "Times of London" which said that a large proportion of young people under the age of 18 think that Churchill was a bad person. Now, they say this is because they are taught in school, the things about Churchill they're taught are the Bengal famine, which actually is more complicated than he was in the wrong, and various statements he made which are racist. But then those are the statements anyone would've made in the 1920s. You have to be very careful, and I think some teachers are too woke. You may well disagree.

"Hussites had been already against indulgences. Many Hussite women were apparently able to read," says iPad B. Absolutely right. Yes, the Hussites are a very interesting group indeed. It's really though, Protestantism only becomes an international faith and a major threat to Catholicism and a major rival of Catholicism from Luther, that's when it all actually kicks off. But as I said, there's the Hussites, there's Wycliffe, and there are others who have said all sorts of things in previous.

Yes, yes, Hindi. Francis I was a patron of Leonardo, and I said he died in. Now, I didn't know this painting. I haven't seen it. Almost certainly you will have remembered correctly, I guess, but I can't be sure.

Yes, you are right, Ed, the Catholic Church wanted money for building Rome. Also, of course, they used to collect Peter's Pence from congregations, Catholic congregations around the world. England was always being bloody minded and didn't pay.

Yes, "I was taught," Arlene, that's a really important point, I've slipped on a bit. "I was taught that Luther hated the Jews after they refused to convert to his teachings." Yes, that's true. And Calvin, remember I said, thought that the Jews were in the wrong because they didn't accept that the old covenant had become the new covenant. And I

love that! "I think Luther suffered from constipation." Well that maybe, that can have all sorts of social consequences!

"I recommend Simon Sebag Montefiore, magisterial in 'The Court of the Red Tsar' for an incredible look at the Politburo under Stalin." I think all of Montefiore's books are good, but I haven't read his book on Jerusalem mainly because a lot of people told me that they felt it wasn't very good. Yeah, I knew somebody would answer the question. I didn't need to answer the factual question. Bless you, Ed and Ed.

Q: Shelly, "How many of the," I can't answer this. "How many of the aristocracy that became Protestant did so for power or economic reasons as opposed to theological?"

A: Not I think for economic, but certainly for political power, but not economic. The main Huguenots, by the time we reach Louis XIV, our very skilled craftsmen, craftsmen in gold and silver. And when they came to England, they made lots of gold, lots of silver jewellery. They also made lots of very beautiful gates for large houses. They also brought lace here and a big lace making. And apparently ladies in London wanted French hairdressers. The Huguenots were hairdressers. There used to be a person on television when I was very young called Mr Teasy-Weasy who was a hairdresser. And these were Teasy-Weasys of the 17th century in London. And no lady, I mean, "My dear, haven't you been to monsieur Blanc? I mean, he's really, oh, you still don't go to Mr. Tyler, do you? Really, monsieur Blanc is where you should go to have your hair done." And it became quite in thing. Oh, and they were hat makers as well. Ladies liked French hats.

It is Calvin. It'll be my pronunciation, Ruth. Yes, it's Jean, J-E-A-N, Calvin, C-A-L-V-I-N. If you thought I said Colvin, I'm sorry, it's my pronunciation.

Marion, oh, I'm glad.

Q: "Is it during this period that Huguenots sent French refugees to England?"

A: No, it's in the reign of Louis XIV. Henry IV introduced the Edict of Nantes, which gave them lots of rights. And what Louis XIV did was introduced the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They always had complicated names. I never worked it out at school. The Edict of Nantes gives them rights in Henry IV's reign, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes takes their rights away, and that's where many of them came here. Where did the name Bourbon come from? Not from a sweet, I can tell you that. I don't know the origin of the surname. It was simply the surname of the family.

Q: "Isn't Navarre in Spain?"

A: Ah, it's different at this period. It stretches across the Pyrenees border. Navarre is both French and Spanish. At this point we're talking about the French part of Navarre.

Q: "How does baptism arrive?"

A: Well, Catholics have baptism, they have infant baptism. So does the Church of England. But the Protestant churches largely required adult baptism. That is to say, they wanted the adult to know what they were promising and not have godparents promising on behalf of an infant in arms. And so there is a difference. There's lovely stories of very, where I used to live, there was a lovely story from the 19th century of a very fundamentalist Baptist church, and they baptised adults in a pond outside a village. And the non-Baptist children, little boys used to turn up because when they went into the water, the costumes of the ladies being baptised rose high, and I won't say any more.

Q: "When did the divine rights of kings become accepted in England?"

A: Really in the reign of Charles I. That's when it takes off, and it's dead in the water by 1688. Sorry. It's only about a 50-year period in England. We got rid of it quickly. The French don't. And had we not got it, we would've had some sort of revolution as they did.

Howard says, oh, sorry, Howard. Oh, 25 degrees Celsius in Whitehorse. Howard, I'm sorry to be so ignorant, I'm not sure where Whitehorse is. Is it the States or is it Canada? I assume it's one of the two, and I don't really want to know it's 25 Celsius. Or is it Australia possibly? No, no, no. Louis XIV is way down the line, Edward, and that's exactly what I'm going to tell the story next week. So make sure you look at my blog or on what Lockdown sends out, 'cause I'll put all the kings and their dates on it.

Yes, Irene, you're right. It's the revocation of the Edict of Nantes that brought them enriching our silver and lace culture. Absolutely. Interestingly, I don't suppose, if there are any Australians listening, they'll be interested.

The googly in cricket was invented by a Huguenot descendant, Bosanquet, who invented the googly, was Bosanquet originally, was a French Huguenot. He's also the same family as the man who used to read the news in Britain.

Q: "Will social media be as disruptive and inflammatory to societies as was the printing press?"

A: My fear is it will, but I don't know. I know no more than anybody else. It's not a question I can answer.

Oh, Adrianne, thank you. "Hear hear about the 'Act of Oblivion.'

Excellent book." It would be extremely interesting, I'm interested in the whole story of what happened to the regicides and the Puritans in England after the restoration of monarchy. But this book, because it's in America, set in America, is particularly interesting, I think, to Americans. It is fiction but it's based on fact. There are books of fact which will be in America, as they are in Britain, covering these two men who were regicides who went to America. We don't know what happened to them. There we assume they died. Well, they must have died, they didn't come back, but we don't know really what happened to them.

Q: "Did Huguenots move to Canada and New Orleans in the US, and do they practise Roman-Dutch law?"

A: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. The Roman-Dutch law is Boer, it's Dutch. It's nothing to do with the French. And Huguenots moving to Canada. No, I don't think so. I stand to be corrected. But I think you'll find that it's Catholics in Quebec and it's Catholics in New Orleans.

Which Montefiore? It's a new book, Ava. Let me just put it in front of you. It's a huge tome and it's simply called "World." W-O-R-L-D, "World." And wherever you are living, you should be able to get hold of it. It is very expensive. And I'm grateful to Linda, who's listening tonight, who gave it to me as an early birthday present. It was the most magnificent present. And you could see I got involved with it straight away. It's not a book you can read from cover to cover, but it's a book you can look up at the index. And I promise you, once you start reading, it's one of those books you can't put down. On the other hand, it's so hefty you can't read it in bed, so you have to be sat up to read it.

Where am I? I think I've, I've got to, can I do two more? I've got so many questions. I've got to go down a bit. I can't remember where I've got to.

"There's a building in London," says Irene, "near where I went to school which was a Huguenot church, then synagogue, now a mosque," and that's absolutely right. It in Brook Lane on the corner. And if you go, it's today a mosque. And if you've go a Friday, you can see the men and women going in through separate doors. But if you look down the side of it, you can see some Huguenot there. There's nothing that suggested it was a synagogue, but it was, but it was Huguenot before. Yeah, it's very interesting. And why? Why was it a Huguenot then a synagogue and a mosque? Because that part of London, to those of you who don't know London, that part of London, just east of the City of London, is an area in which immigrants went. The first immigrants were Huguenots, then they move out when they make it. The second were Jews. When they made it, they moved out. And now it has a mosque because it's Muslims who live there.

Yes, you are right, Monica. There is lots of stories about Luther. I didn't go into Luther's story in any detail because I only used it to illustrate the beginning of Protestantism because it's Calvin who's important in France.

Papyrus writings, that's the point, Barbara, they're writings, they're not printing. Yes, Henry VII was well educated. Yes, there was a lot of showing off in the Field of Cloth of Gold. All the ladies who know about the Cloth and Gold say it's little boys strutting their stuff.

Q: "Is it true that the French Renaissance – "

A: Yes, it did. Give or take, yes, it did. Most historians would say yes. "About 200 years came to South Africa in the late 1600s, made an enormous contribution to development the Cape wine industry."

Right, right. That, yeah. Not Roman-Dutch law. The Roman-Dutch law is the Dutch Boers in South Africa, not the any small numbers of Huguenots and certainly not the British.

Oh, Hindi's answered the question about the chateau. "I think the painting is in the home of da Vinci, not in the chateau. The home is an amazing place to visit. We were there many years ago and it was very memorable." I haven't been, and I must do.

Yeah, Peter, absolutely right. Barbara, yes. I don't know sometimes why I bother, you know everything, all of you. Oh, thank you, Howard. It's in Canada. I thought it must be Canada. And then I thought, really? That's an enormously high temperature, isn't it? Oh, -25 today. Oh, I thought you meant plus. Oh minus, oh, you are welcome to that. Ah, Joe, thank you very much.

"Huguenots did move to the US. Some settled in New Rochelle in New York." Where will you see that? Why New Rochelle? Because they came from La Rochelle, which was the centre of Huguenot worship, if you like. More and more. Daniel, people are adding such interesting things. "Kate Mosse," not a person I read, I tried to read one of her books once and couldn't get on with it, "has written historical fiction covering the period of religious struggles in France between Catholics and Protestants."

Eva, thank you. I think I'm getting sort of repetition to things. I think that probably brings us to a close for today. I hope you enjoyed it. There seem to be a lot of comments which got you thinking and have educated me, so that's always a bonus. Next week, it's the House of Bourbon from 1589 to just before 1789. I'll see how far I get. I haven't worked it out yet. I never work these things out in advance. I like to do it, live on the edge, as they say. And I throw all my lecture notes away and then I start again. So I'll see you next week.