

## THE PROBLEMS OF THE PERIOD

Europe. The one point which we have carefully to note is this, viz., that in the Low Countries, as in France, neither Catholic nor Calvinist could achieve a complete victory. In both regions a division and a separation had to be made. In the Netherlands, however, it was a more permanent, more satisfactory, and more hopeful division than that instituted by the Edict of Nantes. It was, that is to say, not a mere perpetuation of a stalemate, with the combatants all intermingled and intolerant; it was a territorial and, to some extent, a linguistic and even racial division, clear-cut and definable, rational and durable. The ten Belgian provinces were retained by Catholicism and Spain; the seven Dutch provinces secured independence as a federal and Calvinistic republic. The Spaniards were slow, however, to recognise and acknowledge the *fait accompli*: not till 1609 did they nominally bring hostilities to an end; not till 1648, amid the general pacification of Westphalia, did they formally abandon their claim to sovereignty over the Dutch.

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The Peace of Westphalia, contemporaneously with which the independence of the United Provinces was recognised, was primarily the means by which the third and most terrible of all the great Wars of Religion was terminated, viz., the Thirty Years War in Germany. Germany was not a unitary state like France, nor a federation of provinces like the United Netherlands; it was the ragged remnant of the mediæval Holy Roman Empire, a congeries of principalities, dukedoms, counties, baronies, free cities, and what not—some three hundred and fifty items in all—held loosely together by the bonds of a nominal allegiance to the elected Emperor, and by a shadowy recognition of the authority of an Imperial Diet. We have seen how Lutheranism disintegrated this already nebulous mass, and we have noted how the Treaty of Augsburg (1555) aggravated this disintegration by recognising the curious principle *Cujus regio ejus religio*, that is to say, the principle that each prince should be free to choose between Catholicism and Lutheranism, and, having chosen, should be free to compel all his subjects to conform to his creed. The Treaty of Augsburg