

Wars of Religion DBQ

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1-11. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Your teacher may provide additional instructions and advice to use when answering the question below.

Prompt: Analyze the various attitudes and reactions regarding religious warfare during the spread of the Protestant Reformation.

Historical Background: As a result of the Protestant Reformation, there were a number of religious conflicts that shattered the ideal of western Christian unity.

Document 1

Source: Thomas Müntzer, radical preacher and theologian, Sermon to the princes, 1524 (during the German Peasant revolt).

[God] will make it easy for your hand to strike and will also preserve you. But in the meantime you must suffer a great cross and tribulation [anfechtung], so that the fear of God may be made clear to you. That cannot happen without suffering, but it will not cost you more than the dangers risked for God's sake and adversaries' useless chit-chat.

Document 2

Source: Chancellor Michel de l'Hospital, served the Catholic Catherine de Medici as chancellor (1560-1568) during the reigns of the young Francis II and Charles IX.

The true method of breaking up the leagues of the Huguenots is to remove the necessity for forming them. This must be done by treating the Huguenots no longer as enemies, but as friends. For, if we examine carefully into the matter, we shall find hitherto they have been dealt with as rebels; and this has compelled them to resort to all means of self-preservation.

Document 3

Source: Pope Pius V (r. 1566-72), a letter to the ultra-Catholic Guise family of France.

England remaining thus oppressed by the heretics, it is to be feared that there will be constant correspondence between them and the rebels and heretics of France and other neighboring countries, whereby heresies and rebellions will be propagated in all the surrounding states...[Therefore] His Holiness will not fail to support the Queen of Scotland's claims to the succession to the throne of England by all such means as shall be deemed necessary to the end that the Catholic religion may be re-established in that kingdom.

Document 4

Source: Filippo Cavriana of Mantua, physician to Catherine de Medicis, relaying the reaction of one of the king's advisors to the king regarding the upcoming massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572.

“Sire,” he answered, “this is a very serious affair and one of great importance; it could again start a civil war that would be more vindictive than ever.” Then, pressed by the king, who represented the danger as immediate, he ended, with much hesitation and many twists and turns, but concluding that, if all they said was true, one must carry out the will of the king and queen and put the Huguenots to death. But even as he spoke he could not restrain his groans and tears.

Document 5

Source: Francois Dubois, *Saint Bartholomew's Night, August 24, 1572*.



Source credit: G. Dagli Orti/De Agostini/Getty Images

Document 6

Source: Elizabeth I, a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham, resident of the French embassy in Paris, referencing the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, Dec. 1572.

We are sorry to hear, first, the great slaughter made in France of noblemen and gentlemen, unconvicted and untried, so suddenly (as it is said at his [the king's] commandment), did seem with us so much to touch the honor of our good brother as we could not but with lamentation and with tears of our heart hear it of a prince so well allied unto us.

Document 7

Source: William of Orange, Protestant leader of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish, 1572.

For it is greatly to be feared that if you do not take advantage of this favorable situation, when our common enemy suffers from a shortage of troops, with many sick, and a shortage of ships and supplies, and when we already hold so many waterways that the enemy finds it difficult to move about, then God will never again grant such an opportunity. For you will have shamefully and evilly scorned and wasted the means which He [God] sends to you so that you can now readily attain the freedom of His word and your consciences and of your fatherland, your lives, wives, children, and the restoration of those privileges, rights, and good, which you lost so shamefully and scandalously (all in the true service of the King).

Document 8

Source: A letter from Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Holy Roman Empire's ambassador to France, 1575, regarding the French wars of religion.

Ever since the commencement of the civil wars which are distracting the country, there has been a terrible change for the worse. So complete is the alteration, that those who knew France before would not recognize her again. Everywhere are to be seen shattered buildings, fallen churches, and towns in ruins; while the traveler gazes horror-stricken on spots which have but lately been the scenes of murderous deeds and inhuman cruelties.

Document 9

Source: The Dutch Declaration of Independence, 1581.

Now thus it was that the king of Spain after the demise of the emperor, his father, Charles the Fifth, of the glorious memory (of whom he received all these provinces), forgetting the services done by the subjects of these countries, both to his father and himself, by whose valor he got so glorious and memorable victories over his enemies that his name and power became famous and dreaded over all the world, forgetting also the advice of his said imperial majesty, made to him before to the contrary, did rather hearken to the counsel of those Spaniards about him, who had conceived a secret hatred to this land and to its liberty, because they could not enjoy posts of honor and high employments here under the states as in Naples, Sicily, Milan and the Indies, and other countries under the king's dominion. Thus allured by the riches of the said provinces, wherewith many of them were well acquainted, the said counselors, we say, or the principal of them, frequently remonstrated to the king that it was more for his Majesty's reputation and grandeur to subdue the Low Countries a second time, and to make himself absolute (by which they mean to tyrannize at pleasure), than to govern according to the restrictions he had accepted, and at his admission sworn to observe. From that time forward the king of Spain, following these evil counselors, sought by all means possible to reduce this country (stripping them of their ancient privileges) to slavery, under the government of Spaniards having first, under the mask of religion, endeavored to settle new bishops in the largest and principal cities, endowing and incorporating them with the richest abbeys, assigning to each bishop nine canons to assist him as counselors, three whereof should superintend the inquisition.

Document 10

Source: Lord William Cecil, one of Queen Elizabeth I's leading advisors, in a memorandum *The Perils Growing upon the Overthrow of the Prince of Condé's Cause* late 16th century.

The whole regiment of the crown of France shall be in the hands of the Guisans; and to maintain their faction they will pleasure the King of Spain* in all that they may. Hereupon shall follow a plot betwixt them two, to advance their own private causes; the King of Spain to unble the House of Navarre forever from claiming the kingdom of Navarre; the House of Guise to promote their niece, the Queen of Scots, to the crown of England.

*Philip II

Document 11

Source: Journal of a field preacher who served in the Dutch army against the Spanish, 1645.

In the churchyard of this village we found, in the middle of the night, countless women and children from this and surrounding villages. These women and children were weeping bitterly; it was a sorry spectacle to behold, and a pitiful sound to hear. We tried to persuade them to take shelter in our church . . . but they refused to enter the church, fearing (they said), that the French would come and burn the church with them inside of it.

Then the women learned that I was a preacher . . . They believed me, and proceeded like lambs to the church, beseeching their guards to let no one in the church while they were there . . . I cannot express how I felt when those women pleaded with me and surrounded me., wetting my hands with their kisses and sobs. My heart broke, tears streamed down my face to see all this sorrow and to hear the pitiful wailings of these helpless women and young children.