

#11 The Age of the Absolute Monarchs

AKS:

examine the intellectual, political, social and economic factors which changed the world view of Europeans (GPS) (SSWH_G2007-42)

Indicators of Achievement:

42a - explain the scientific contributions of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton and how these ideas changed the European world view, 42b - examine absolutism through a comparison of the reigns of Louis XIV, Tsar Peter the Great, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, 42c - identify the major ideas of the Enlightenment from the writings of Locke, Voltaire, and Rousseau and their relationship to politics and society

God establishes kings as his ministers, and reigns through them over the peoples. . . . All power comes from God. The Prince, adds Saint Paul, "is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; . . . for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." So princes act as ministers of God and his lieutenants on earth. It is through them that He rules His empire. This is why . . . the royal throne is not the throne of a man, but the throne of God Himself. . . .

Saint Paul, after having said that the prince is the minister of God, concludes thus: "Wherefore Ye must needs be in subjection [submission]. . . ." And again, "servants, obey in all things your temporal [earthly] masters and whatsoever Ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not as unto men." . . . Saint Peter says, "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well." . . .

In order to render this idea odious [contemptible] and unbearable, many pretend to confuse absolute government with arbitrary government. But there are no two more dissimilar things. . . . The prince need render no account to anyone for the orders he gives. "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment and that in regard to the oath of God. . . . Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What dost thou?" Without this absolute authority the king can do no good, nor punish evil; his power must be such that no one can hope to escape it.

Men must therefore obey princes as they obey justice itself, without which there can be no order or purpose in things. They are Gods, and share in a fashion the divine independence. . . . There is only God who can judge their judgements and their persons.

—Bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Treatise on Politics*

*How does Bossuet think people should act toward their monarch? Why?
To whom does Bossuet believe monarchs are responsible*



“L’etat c’est moi!” - Louis XIV

Many historians think Louis XIV is the perfect example of an absolute monarch. Do you agree or not? Why or why not?



How might different classes of French people have reacted to the opulence of Versailles?

Prussia & the Austrian Empire: 1721-72



Which step taken by the Austrian Hapsburgs to become absolute rulers was most important?

What tactics might a ruler use to establish stability in a territory with an extremely diverse population?



Peter the Great (r. 1682-1725)



How was Peter the Great an example of an absolute monarch?

Absolute Monarchs of Europe

Long-Term Causes

- ✓ Decline of feudalism
- ✓ Rise of cities and support of middle class
- ✓ Growth of national kingdoms
- ✓ Loss of Church authority

Immediate Causes

- ✓ Religious and territorial conflicts
- ✓ Buildup of armies
- ✓ Need for increased taxes
- ✓ Revolts by peasants or nobles

EUROPEAN MONARCHS CLAIM DIVINE RIGHT TO RULE ABSOLUTELY



Immediate Effects

- ✓ Regulation of religion and society
- ✓ Larger courts
- ✓ Huge building projects
- ✓ New government bureaucracies appointed by the government
- ✓ Loss of power by nobility and legislatures

Long-Term Effect

- ✓ Revolution in France
- ✓ Western European influence on Russia
- ✓ English political reforms that influence U.S. democracy