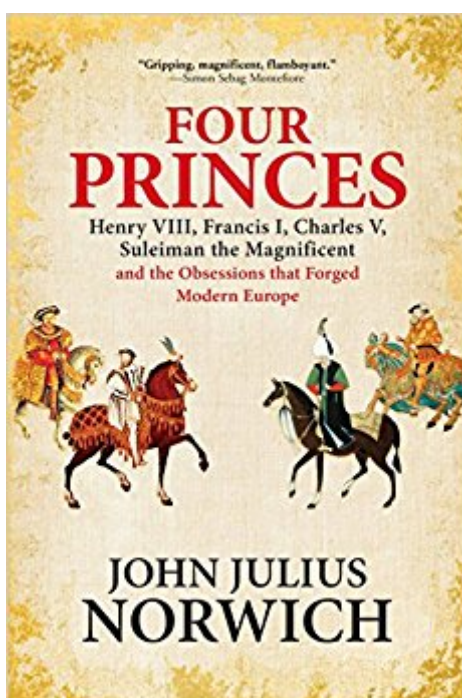


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Four Princes: Henry VIII, Francis I, Charles V, Suleiman The Magnificent And The Obsessions That Forged Modern Europe



Synopsis

John Julius Norwich is acclaimed for his distinctive ability to weave together a fascinating narrative through vivid detail, colorful anecdotes, and captivating characters. Here, he has crafted a bold tapestry of Europe and the Middle East in the early sixteenth century, when four legendary rulers towered over the era. Francis I of France was the personification of the Renaissance, and a highly influential patron of the arts and education. Henry VIII, who was not expected to inherit the throne but embraced the role with gusto, broke with the Roman Catholic Church and appointed himself head of the Church of England. Charles V was the most powerful industrious man of the time, and was unanimously elected Holy Roman Emperor. Suleiman the Magnificent who stood apart as a Muslim brought the Ottoman Empire to its apogee of political, military, and economic power. Against the vibrant background of the Renaissance, these four men collectively shaped the culture, religion, and politics of their respective domains. With remarkable erudition, John Julius Norwich delves into this entertaining and layered history, indelibly depicting four dynamic characters and how their incredible achievements and obsessions with one another changed European history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for FOUR PRINCES "In prolific historian Norwich's well-articulated appraisal, these four giant figures can, and should be, perceived as a single phenomenon that deeply imprinted sixteenth-century Europe. Through Norwich's

perceptive eyes, we see that the four monarchs certainly did not exist in a vacuum, that each one was not a completely separate entity . . . A superb group portrait. [Booklist](#)
“Norwich’s long career as a historian has given him a definite assurance of style, which allows him to present historical detail in a thoroughly engaging manner without sacrificing clarity. An entertaining history covering the highlights of four of the most significant rulers of the 16th century. [Library Journal](#)
“A fascinating quadruple biography of four of the greatest monarchs of the Renaissance by this true master of narrative history.
Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *The Romanovs* and *Jerusalem: The Biography*
“As we have come to expect from John Julius Norwich, *Four Princes* is filled with surprising details about these familiar figures, as well as revealing insights into the seminal events of this rich period. But the great value of the book is putting Suleiman the Magnificent on an equal plain with Henry VIII, Francis I, and Charles V, and thereby, providing an expanded view of Europe during this turbulent era, a better understanding of the clashes between their empires, and the personal aspirations and foibles of these giants that shaped the continent’s history.
James Reston, Jr., author of *Defenders of the Faith: Charles V, Suleiman the Magnificent, and the Battle for Europe, 1520-1536*
“With characteristic deftness of touch, Norwich brings each character vividly to life and skillfully weaves their stories together . . . a genuinely inspired idea for a book, and Norwich executes it with typical aplomb.
Tracy Borman, *BBC History Magazine*
“Wonderful . . . This was indeed a glorious age and Norwich has made a brilliant decision to study four idiosyncratic rulers as an interacting quartet . . . A lively and charming book.” [Times \(UK\)](#)

John Julius Norwich is the author of many publications, including *A History of Venice* and *Byzantium*, as well as the *New York Times* bestseller *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy* and most recently, *Sicily: An Island at the Crossroads of History*.

Finally, a book that ties the Happenings of Europe with England. All too often, Henry the VIII’s accomplishments are overshadowed by his many wives and affairs. We all know those stories, but there was so much more going on in Europe. Norwich, Ties it all together in a rich history that reads like a novel. Richly detailed, he takes these four Princes and talks about how their politics, policies and interactions shaped Europe.

Brings the whole era together. A great book!

Another well-researched book by John Julius Norwich, whose works are always a great pleasure to read.

An Excellent easy read story like History book that drags you to the last word. i enjoyed reading alot.

Being of Turkish origin and knowing Ottoman history I found the way the author describes the characteristics of Suleyman the Magnificent, not only his warfare, but his personality, his dedication to arts, his beautiful divan and other poetry very clearly described. At the time the Ottoman Empire was the greatest state that existed. The war scenes in the European continent, The siege of Vienna, the Mohacs battle, the occupation of Belgrade, the great siege of Malta are clearly explained. Certainly they forged and altered Europe. Regarding the other three princes -- Francis I, Henry VIII, Charles V-- the explanation of their characteristics, personalities, dealings with one another were fascinating to me. It may not have been so to the professor who reviewed the book in May 7 Book Review section of the New York Times. But I am sure many people interested in other aspects of history will find the book very good.

I received a free E Arc from Netgalley of this book. It's been a long time since I read a non-fiction history book that wasn't set in the Anglo-Saxon/Viking period, but the Tudor period - or rather Elizabeth I was my first great history crush and I was fascinated by the idea of this accounting of the first half of the sixteenth century. History books too often focus on one person, one event or one series of events, it's high time that 'history' looked at the wider reach of events and this is exactly what the author tries to do. There can be few who know nothing about the reign of Henry VIII and his two 'frenemies' Charles V and Francis I of France, but by offering an account of the interactions of these three men, and adding Suleiman the Magnificent into the mix, a far richer landscape of Europe at this time is revealed. It was a time of great change, and all four of these men strove for something different, but all of them wanted, perhaps, to earn the biggest reputation for themselves, and they all seemed determined to bankrupt themselves in order to do so. The author treats each king in a similar way; he might not agree with their actions but he can at least offer an explanation for their actions, and, with not a little humour, he's able to find their achilles heel - for Suleiman it seems to have been the weather, for Charles V his unambitious son, the later Philip II, for Francis I his hatred of Charles V and we all know about Henry VIII and his need for a son and heir. And yet these men all dealt with far greater issues as well and I couldn't help feeling a little sorry for Charles

V who seemed to face some sort of disaster from everywhere simultaneously. I would have liked more information about Suleiman as I know so little about him, but the purpose of the book precludes that - indeed I think some understanding of the period is needed beforehand in order to appreciate all that the author has to offer. Overall, this is a very readable account of the time period - the Papacy looms large, as to be expected, as do some of Suleiman's piratical allies, but each king is given his own space and time and I thoroughly enjoyed the writing and would recommend it to anyone who enjoys reading history books.

I received an ARC of this book from Netgalley for free in exchange for an honest review. I was very excited about this book. It matches closely with my academic interests. I knew that this was a popular history, so it wouldn't be completely academic. Nonetheless, my expectations were a bit too high. The scope of the subject is huge for a 300 page book. The chapters focusing on Francis and Suleiman were my favorites. Unfortunately, they were also the skimpiest. The author spent far more, and far too much time on Henry VIII and Charles V. Despite this, *Four Princes* is a good introduction to European politics in the early to mid 16th century. It is also an engaging read for the casual historian.

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