

French Protestant Movement

Reign of Francis I of France

- Initial word and writings of Martin Luther began to circulate in Paris in 1518
- Tolerated since the writings were against abuses in the Church
- Theological differences were less clear
- Affair of the Placards in 1534 – marked the beginning of the crackdown on Protestants
 - Increasingly severe public punishments
 - 1535 Catholic bishops condemned “Lutherans” but these folks were actually followers of Zwingli

Henry II of France

- Son of Francis I – true believer that protestants were heretics
- Edict of Châteaubriant (1551)
 - Censorship of books
 - Civil penalties for protestants
 - Confiscation of property – 1/3 to informers
 - Punishment for corresponding with Geneva protestants
- 1555- Peace of Augsburg - *cuius regio eius religio*
- Edict of Compiègne (1557)
 - Added the death penalty to preaching or participation in illegal gatherings
- Henry II accidentally dies in 1559 (jousting tournament) – 15 year old successor, Frances II, too weak to manage what follows. Frances II married Mary, Queen of Scots. By the way, his mother was Catherine d’Medici. He dies in 1560
- His two succeeding brothers are no better suited for the times and tasks
- **Calvinism comes to France**
- While missionaries were being sent from Geneva into France, the biggest change was the conversion of Louis Bourbon, Prince of Condé. Bourbon would become a major figure among the Huguenots of France. In 1560, Jeanne d'Albret, Queen regnant of Navarre, converted to Calvinism. She later married Antoine de Bourbon, and their son Henry of Navarre would be a leader among the Huguenots.

Catherine of Medici

Independence of the throne – forced her to align with Bourbons, Calvinist house.

Colloquy of Poissy and the Edict of Saint-Germain: In July of 1561, the Parliament passed and the Regent signed the July Edict which recognised Roman Catholicism as the state religion but forbade any and all "injuries or injustices" against the citizens of France on the basis of religion.

Huguenots to avoid their rebelling. It allowed them to worship publicly outside of towns and privately inside them

Window dressing on a political cauldron with religious stew – it was bound to boil over. It just needed a spark

The French Wars of Religion (1562–98) is the name of a period of civil infighting and military operations, primarily fought between French Catholics and Protestants (Huguenots). The conflict involved factional disputes between the aristocratic houses of France, such as the House of Bourbon and House of Guise (Lorraine), and both sides received assistance from foreign sources.

The **Edict of Nantes**, issued on 13 April 1598, by Henry IV of France, granted the Calvinist Protestants of France (also known as Huguenots) substantial rights in a nation still considered

essentially Catholic. In the Edict, Henry aimed primarily to promote civil unity. He also aimed to unify the throne of France. After several military campaigns, he converted to Catholicism, and was finally accepted as king. He then set about to address the divisions within France.

The Edict separated civil from religious unity, treated some Protestants for the first time as more than mere schismatics and heretics, and opened a path for secularism and tolerance. In offering general freedom of conscience to individuals, the Edict offered many specific concessions to the Protestants, such as amnesty and the reinstatement of their civil rights, including the right to work in any field or for the State and to bring grievances directly to the king. It marked the end of the religious wars that had afflicted France during the second half of the 16th century.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)

By the **Edict of Fontainebleau**, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes and ordered the destruction of Huguenot churches, as well as the closing of Protestant schools. This policy made official the persecution already enforced since the *dragonnades* created in 1681 by the king in order to intimidate Huguenots into converting to Catholicism. As a result of the officially sanctioned persecution by the dragoons who were billeted upon prominent Huguenots, a large number of Protestants — estimates range from 210,000 to 900,000 — left France over the next two decades. They sought asylum in England, the United Provinces, Sweden, Switzerland, Brandenburg-Prussia, Denmark, Protestant states of the Holy Roman Empire, the Cape Colony in Africa, and North America. They left without money, but took with them many skills. In the host nations they established small businesses and their new ideas revitalized indigenous industries. On 17 January 1686, Louis XIV himself claimed that out of a Huguenot population of 800,000 to 900,000, only 1,000 to 1,500 had remained in France.

The exodus of Huguenots from France created a brain drain, as many Huguenots had occupied important places in society. The kingdom did not fully recover for years. The French crown's refusal to allow non-Catholics to settle in New France may help to explain that colony's slow rate of population growth compared to that of the neighboring British colonies, which opened settlement to religious dissenters. By the time of the French and Indian War (the North American front of the Seven Years' War), a sizable population of Huguenot descent lived in the British colonies, and many participated in the British defeat of New France in 1759-60.

They also settled in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, plus part of northern France, and Flanders. In the Union of Utrecht of 20 January 1579, Holland and Zeeland were granted the right to accept only one religion (in practice, Calvinism). Every other province had the freedom to regulate the religious question as it wished, although the Union stated every person should be free in the choice of personal religion and that no person should be prosecuted based on religious choice.