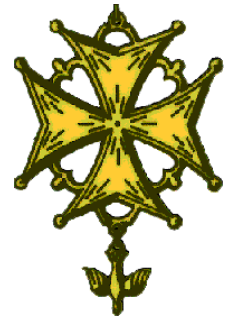


# THE HUGUENOTS

*From the Reformation to the Revolution (1523-1789)*



## ***I. KINGS OF FRANCE***

### **Francis I (1515-1547)**

- Promoted the Renaissance in France
- He was king when the Reformation broke in France
- His sister, Margerite de Navarre, was the most influence lady at the time after her mother, and a protector of the Protestants (including Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples).
- He reacted against the Protestants after la Nuit des Placards.



### **Henry II (1547-1559)**



- A firm opponent of the Protestants.
- During his reign, he established the *chambre ardente* – (the “burning court”) to deal with heresy.
- The King issued the Edict of Châteaubriand on June 27, 1551, to rally forces to fight heresy.
- He introduced the Inquisition in France in 1557.
- He died in 1558 in a jousting tournament, as the lance of his opponent shattered and a piece went through his eye.

### Francis II (1159-1560)

- Son of Catherine of Médicis
- He became king at 15 and died at 16.



### Charles IX (1560-1574)



- He was ten years old when he ascended to the throne (but power was only given at 14).
  - His mother Catherine de Médicis was the true ruler at the time.
  - He ruled during the three civil wars of the 1560s and gave orders for the massacre of the St Bartholomew.
  - His last words were, “Let the memory of that accursed day be blotted out forever.”
- He died two years after the massacre with blood oozing out of the pores of his body.

### Henry III (1574-1589)

- First elected king of Poland and Duke of Lithuania.
- Married a cousin of the Guise brothers.
- In 1575 the crown began new military operations against the Huguenots. But the Huguenots resisted well. These conflicts were more political than religious.
- The Edict of Beaulieu, called the Peace of Monsieur, was promulgated in May 1576.
- He was stabbed in the abdomen by a monk who pretended having letters for him on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1589.



### Henry IV (1589-1610)

- He had an attractive personality. He was a brave and courageous soldier and was known for his kindness and mercy. He was a hero for both Protestants and Catholics.
- King of Navarre and Huguenot at first.
- He converted to Catholicism after he inherited the crown. He is famous for saying, “Paris is worth a mass”
- He was crowned in February 1594 and went to Paris in March after he publicly renounced heresy on July 25-26.
- He penned the Edict of Nantes in 1598.
- He was stabbed on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1610 by an assassin.



### Louis XIII (1610-1643)



- He was 9 years old when the king was murdered.
  - Marie de Médicis became regent for her son.
  - Richelieu became cardinal in 1622 and was admitted to the royal council in 1624. Richelieu served then as bishop, prime minister and commander-in-chief.
  - During his reign Richelieu took La Rochelle (1628). It eventually led to the Edict of Grace of 1629 which granted freedom for Protestants for their military submission. It made Huguenots lose their military power.
- It was during his reign that Protestants enjoyed the most peace.

### Louis XIV (1643-1715)

- He was 5 years old when he became king. He was the son of Anne of Austria
- Mazarin had him undergo a very rigorous education.
- In Saint Petersburg under a glass case was seen a piece of paper where he practiced writing as a child. On the piece of paper was written, “The kings do everything that they want.”



- At age 22 after the cardinal-minister Mazarin died, he declared to his government that he would be personally in charge of all important affairs.
- He became known as the “Sun King”
- Louis XIV considered himself a “Vice-god” and was also on good terms with the pope who called him “The Eldest Son of the Church.” Louis the XIV was a successor of Richelieu and Mazarin’s crushing mentalities, which took power by putting down all other powers. He was proud, ambitious, fond of power and believed himself to be the greatest of men. He is known for the saying ‘L’état c’est moi.’ (“The state, I am”). He went to war against Spain, then Flanders, Holland, and Germany which were financed by increasing taxes on the subjects of France.
- When Louis XIV became king, Protestants delegates came to congratulate him, but he refused to receive them. Orders were sent shortly after that Protestantism must cease to exist and that Huguenots should submit to the king and adhere to his religion.
- In 1666 the queen mother died, and her last request was to her son, that he should exterminate heresy in his kingdom.
- He became sick and was highly influenced by Madame de Maintenon during that time to act against the Huguenots. La Chaise (the king’s confessor) and Louvois (the king’s minister) were also very influential in the king’s actions against the Huguenots.
- He revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

## ***II. FRENCH REFORMERS***

### **Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples (mid 1450s-1536)**



- One of the greatest humanists of the time in France. He was under the protection of Francis I.
- He was prominent in Greek and was a classical and Biblical scholar influenced by neo-Platonic mysticism
- His work in Biblical studies based upon Hebrew and Greek originals includes commentaries on Paul’s letters in 1512 (hinting on justification by faith and believed to have been influential to Luther), a commentary on the gospels

in 1522, and translations into French of the New Testament in 1523, of the Psalms in 1524 and of the Old Testament in 1528.

- He was a gentle, retiring, and timid, yet devoted man.
- He laid a foundation for the Reformation in France.

### **Guillaume Farel (1489-1565)**



- Student of Lefèvre.
  - First a professor and then a regent at the Collège Cardinal LeMoine in Paris
  - Around 1520 he became a firm advocate of the Reformation
  - He was a leader of the Reformation in France for the next fifteen years
  - He traveled in France and made contact with Waldensians.
- He settled in Geneva and convinced Calvin to stay in 1536.

### **Martin Bucer (1491-1551)**

- Very influential figure
- Renounced Catholicism in the 1520s
- He dedicated himself to Christian reform
- Influenced by Erasmus and Luther
- Settled in Strasbourg
- He invited Calvin to lead a French refugee congregation in Strasbourg in 1538.
- He tried to conciliate the two Protestant movements of Germany and Switzerland but lost credibility on both sides and then moved to England with Cramner.



### Guillaume Briçonnet (c. 1472-1534)

- Bishop of Meaux
- His father had served as a counselor to Charles VIII and after his wife's death had become a cardinal
- He served as a king's official to Rome.
- He wrote many devotional tracks, preached moving sermons and had a faithful ministry of visitation.
- Briçonnet's reputation brought many reforming Christians around him where they formed a group called the "Evangelicals of Meaux."
- Lefèvre d'Étaples and Farel participated in the movement.
- He formally condemned Lutheranism and died a Catholic, even though he was summoned before the Parlement of Paris twice for accusations on heresy. He was more a humanist than a Protestant.

### Jean Calvin (1509-1564)



- Born in Noyon, France, on July 10<sup>th</sup> 1509.
- Fled France in 1534.
- Published the first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in March 1536.
- He ministered in Geneva from 1536-1537 and from 1541-1564, spending some years in Starsbourg in-between.
- In 1559, he started a school in Geneva (which eventually became Calvin College and the University of Geneva). The first rector was Theodore Beza. This school became one of Calvin's most far-reaching undertaking. From 1563-1572 the Geneva Company of Pastors sent 28 missionaries to France.
- Calvin's thought had a immeasurable impact on shaping the Reformation in France. Some attribute the civil wars and the success of Henry IV partly to him.

### **III. STRUGGLES AND PERSECUTIONS OF THE HUGUENOTS**

#### **The Huguenots** (picture from *Cross and Crown*)

- “Il ne faut pas s’attendre de jouir d’un entier repos; l’église sera toujours persécutée sur la terre, et elle ne sera exempte des afflictions, que lorsqu’elle sera recueillie là haut au ciel.” (G. and J. Daval, *Histoire de la réforme à Dieppe 1557-1657*).

*“One should not expect to enjoy a single day of rest; the church will always be persecuted on earth, and it will only be exempt of afflictions when it will be taken above in heaven.”*



- The origin of the word Huguenot is obscure. Some suppose that the term is derived from the word *Huguon*, a word used in Touraine to identify someone walking at night in the streets (since the Protestants met at night, like the first Christians). Some believe it comes from the German word *Eidgenossen*, confederates, as it was mispronounced by French people, and was a name given to the citizens of Geneva who entered into an alliance with the Swiss cantons against Charles III. The confederates were called *Eignots*, thus Huguenots. A third possibility is that it comes from *Hugues*, the name of a follower of Calvin from Geneva.
- After 1600 most Protestants belonged to the middle-class
- A census affirmed 2 million Huguenots at the time of the dragonnades
- Followers of Calvin: Puritans in England, Presbyterians in Scotland, Walloons in Holland and Huguenots in France.
- 8 academies were created in France for the intellectual elite and their future pastors. They were all closed by 1685.
  - Nîmes (1562)
  - Orthez (1566)
  - Orange (1573)
  - Montpellier (1596)
  - Saumur and Montauban (1598)
  - Sedan (1602)
  - Die (1604)
- In 1561, the Cardinal of Sainte-Croix wrote to the Pope, “The Kingdom is already half Huguenot.”

## **Reform at Meaux**

- Jean Vallière was the first Lutheran burnt in Paris in 1523
- The Reformation started in France in Meaux through the influence of Flemish merchants
- When bishop Briçonnet took charge of his diocese, he invited Lefèvre and Farel to preach. People flocked to the church. Free copies of the Gospel were given to the poor.
- Lefèvre d'Étaples, published a New Testament in French translated from the Greek in 1524 and its copies were burnt in 1525. The Catholic doctors of la Sorbonne explained: "a translation of the Holy Scriptures cannot be tolerated in this very Christianized country."
- The priests of Meaux, seeing their revenues diminished, appealed for help to the Sorbonne, the Faculty of theology of Paris, and the Sorbonne called Parliament. The consequences was that the bishop was heavily fined, which made him shrink out of sight. But disciples continued to preach, and Jean Leclerc was burnt alive in Metz, Jacques Pavent and Louis de Berguin on the Place de Grève in Paris. Farel escaped to Switzerland and printed from there thousands of copies of Lefèvre's New Testatmen.
- Bibles and New Testaments were taken and burnt, even though their number kept increasing. Printers caught were burnt as well.

## **Events Leading to the Civil Wars**

- La Nuit des Placards
  - 17-18 October 1534.
  - Posters were placed condemning the mass, the clergy, and Roman Catholic doctrine.
  - They were placed in Paris, and in many cities of the Loire Valley, including Orléans, Blois and Amboise.
  - It was not only very audacious and provocative, but the language was also harsh.
  - It created a new wave of persecution
- La Sorbonne obtained from the king an ordinance, promulgated on Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 1535 for the suppression of printing. But it was too late, for it was too spread.
- The first Huguenot church was established in Paris in 1555, and almost right afterwards 15 other churches appeared, the largest being in Meaux, Poitiers and Angers.



- The movement grew quickly and by 1559 a great number of the nobility was Protestant. During that year the king Henry II died and some Protestants tried to kidnap the young king Francis II to draw him away from the influence of the fanatics Catholics who were counseling the king, the Guise brothers. The plan failed and the Guise took their revenge in bloody executions. Protestants throughout the country revolted and seized some Catholic churches to celebrate their service.
- Many Huguenots came back to France after the death of Henry II, hardening the Catholic opinion.
- In 1559 a secret national synod was held in Paris. It represented 50 churches and penned a confession of faith and a form of discipline for the Reformed church of France.
- In February 1560 the court was moved from Blois to the château d'Amboise. A group of Huguenots led by La Renaudie tried to storm the castle, but they were defeated. In the following weeks, 1200 to 1500 bodies were hung on iron hooks on the façade of the château.
- A royal edict was published in January 1562 guaranteeing Protestants liberty of worship (6 weeks before Vassy).



### **The Massacre of Vassy and the Three Civil Wars**

- On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1562, 1200 Huguenots attended a meeting in a large barn that served as a church in Vassy. During the meeting, the Duke de Guise with 200 men armed with arquebuses and poniards came in. The pastor, Morel, had just begun his opening prayer when they began to shoot people on the platform. The congregation tried to shut the doors, but the soldiers burst in, attacking unarmed men, women and children. For nearly an hour they fired and stabbed people. 60 people were left dead, 200 were severely wounded (7 more dying of these wounds).
- The Duke was acclaimed through the country by Catholic priests and compared to Moses delivering his people. The Duke then went to Paris with a triumphal entry, followed by 1200 noblemen and gentlemen mounted on horses.
- Many massacres followed up in Paris, Senlis, Amiens, Meaux, Châlons, Troyes, Bar-Sur-Seine, Epernay, Nevers, Mans, Angers, Blois, and many other places. The persecution was high in Provence where people were cruelly tortured. Some historians affirm that the massacre was even worse than the Saint Bartholomew.

- The Prince de Condé was the first to take arms, and he was followed by the Admiral Coligny, after the later was convinced by his spouse. The Huguenots revenged themselves by destroying churches and monasteries.



The Battle of Coutras, 20 October 1587

*(Rothrock's collection)*

- The “first civil war” lasted from spring 1562 to March 1563 and ended with the assassination of the Duke de Guise. Because of the feudal system and the great number of Protestants nobles, they had a challenging army, also supported by some troops from England. However, the war quickly became an ugly disaster as the Catholics from Spain and Italy came, crucifying and impaling the Huguenots from the conquered cities. There was a peace during a few years, but the treaty was poorly made and because of the strong Catholic influence in the court the Protestants had to protest again.
- Thinking themselves strong enough because of the noteworthy number of nobles on their side, the Protestants revolted again by trying to kidnap the king. They failed and a second war took place during six months in 1567-1568.
- Following this the king became furious and tried to seize the leader of the Huguenots, the Admiral Coligny. He also released another edict forbidding the practice of any Protestant service in France and chasing the pastors out of the country. The third war of religions took place from 1568 until 1570. The Protestants, inferior, were overwhelmed. Coligny was left without an army, but after nine months of marching throughout the country he gathered enough men to walk towards Paris. After his victory at Arnay-le-Duc, frightened, the court signed a new treaty for peace which allowed the Protestants to practice their religion in the cities under their control. After the three wars the number of Protestants in France had greatly decreased, but Coligny was at the court.
- The treaty was signed in St, Germain granting freedom of worship for the Protestants, equality before the law, admission in universities and the cities of La Rochelle, Montauban, Cognac and La Charité were given to them.

## The Massacre of St Bartholomew



- In 1534 Ignatius Loyola founded the order of the Jesuits. The group infused in their followers zeal, energy, devotion and unscrupulousness. The movement was recognized by Rome in 1540 and it shortly acquired an almost monopolizing influence in the state. They were the ones who brought up the Inquisition. They were without pity and for them it was to recant or to die.
- Shortly after Philip II acceded to the throne, he set up a branch of the Inquisition in the prosperous land of Flanders. It was followed by hostility and resistance and then civil war. Hundred of thousands of people left the country, bringing with them their wealth and industry.
- In 1571 the counsels of Coligny were opposite to the ones of the Catholic fanatics. As the Belgium people rebelled against Philippe II and the Spanish Catholic governors of the Netherlands, they asked for the help of the king of France. If he accepted, Belgium would be joined to his kingdom. However the fanatic Catholics of the court who were closely linked to Spain refused to accept any victory for the Protestants and decided to murder in a massive organized massacre all the leaders of the Huguenots in Paris and their followers.
- The Council of Trent which had started in 1545 ended in 1563, sixteen years later, bringing a new fervor against Protestants. Shortly after the council was over Catherine de Medicis met with the Duke of Alva, the minister of Philip II of Spain. It is said that Philip inherited two passions from his father: a hatred for the Reformed Church and a jealousy of France. The meeting was made to crush the Protestants.

- The Duke of Alva said to Catherine, “Better a head of salmon than ten thousands heads of frogs.”
- On August 18th 1572, Catherine de Medicis contrived a marriage between her daughter Margaret and Henry of Bearn, king of Navarre, chief of the Huguenots. Henry’s mother and the Admiral Coligny agreed to the marriage, hoping that it would bring peace between the opposing parties. The Protestant nobility came for the wedding, seeing it as an important matter.
- The massacre of Saint Bartholomew was planned during a secret meeting the day after the ceremony. Then on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 300 hundred men of the royal guard burst into the streets of Paris screaming, “For God and the king.”
- The murderers had houses assigned to them and the first one to die was the Admiral Coligny. After the leaders were killed, the massacre extended to the bourgeoisie and then to all the Protestants. Those who were found were slaughtered, including women and children. The massacre extended to the rest of France, after royal letters were sent throughout the country talking about a Huguenot conspiracy that had failed and needed to be punished. The numbers vary on the number of people murdered; in Paris, between 2000 and 4000 were killed, and in the rest of France statistics vary from 5000 to 110 000 (conservative numbers would agree for 3000 deaths in Paris and 20 000 in the rest of France).
- Before leaving the palace, some of the guards murdered the retinue of the King of Navarre and the guests of Charles IX. One by one they were called out of their rooms, and as walked unarmed they were captured and killed before the eyes of their royal host, Henry.
- The houses of the Huguenots, which had been marked down, were broken into and men, women and children were killed by the sword and by guns. The massacre lasted three days. Corpses filled Paris, thousands of dead bodies were thrown in the Seine.
- 1500-1800 were killed in Lyons. 600 were killed in Rouen, and many more in Dieppe and Havre. Historians debate the number of people killed.
- It is said that when Philip heard of the massacre, he laughed for the first and only time in his life.
- The massacre made the Huguenots doubtful of the government and also firmer in their armed resistance.

## From St Bartholomew to Louis XIV

- Following the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the survivors were forced to become Catholics. In Paris, about 5000 people abjured. But the Protestants of the south of France stood firm and organized themselves in ‘a state within the state’. Their chief was Henri de Navarre, who had fled the court in 1576.
- A siege of La Rochelle was undertaken by Charles IX in 1572-1573, but it failed.
- Huguenots throughout France took arms again to defend themselves, which brought the country in anarchy until the succession of Henry IV in 1594.
- In 1576 the Catholic fanatics gathered into a new sect called the ‘league’ and their pledge was the destruction of all the Protestants of France. They were very powerful, and as they were looking for a leader, the king Henri III volunteered. There was a struggle for power during that time between the de Guise and the king, and both parties were assassinated in the years 1588-1589. Paradoxically enough, the heir of the throne became Henri de Navarre, the Huguenot.
- Even though Henri de Navarre, known as Henri IV, became king, he still had to re-conquer his kingdom. He was able to do so, but the opposition of the league was such that he decided to abjure Protestantism to confirm his royalty in 1593.
- Henry’s great contribution was the Edict of Nantes in 1598, giving freedom of conscience and worship throughout France. Pope Clement VIII said on the edict, “A decree which gave liberty of conscience to all was the most accursed that had ever been made.”
- The Edict of Nantes mentioned the 750 congregations of Huguenots, totaling a million persons (20% of the population).
- The King Henry IV was assassinated in 1610, and discord broke off again. Marie de Medicis, the queen regent, was an enemy of Protestants and was strongly influenced by Italians. These Italians were digging in the public treasure, which caused the Parisians to rise in insurrection. This led to a civil war between the court and the country factions, which soon embraced the old religious animosities. There was a massacre of the Huguenots of Bearn, which was followed by other massacres across the country. The Huguenots decided to resist the king forces.
- In 1621 the young king Louis XIII started by attacking and capturing St Jean d’Angely, and then tried to take Montauban but failed. But this did not stop the court, which under the influence of the imposing Cardinal de Richelieu ceased La Rochelle in 1628 after the city held for over a year. Richelieu served then as bishop, prime minister and commander-in-chief.

- Of the 28000 original inhabitants of La Rochelle, only half survived the siege of Richelieu.
- Richelieu continued and overcame all the resisting Huguenots. Within a few years, they had stopped to exist as a military power in France. Richelieu then entered a league with some Protestants leaders against Austria and as a strategic appeal created a new edict. Thus in 1629, the “Edict of Pardon” was issued by Louis XIII giving to Protestants liberty of worship and equality before the law.
- The Huguenots, although they disappeared as a political party, became faithful supporters of the crown, resisting appeals from other rulers to join them in fighting the king of France.
- Not being able to be involved in politics, the Huguenots became highly skilled in various industries. They were active, successful and respected for their morality and integrity of character. “Honest as a Huguenot” became a common proverb in France.
- “It is worthy of note, that while the Huguenots were stigmatized in contemporary Roman Catholic writings, as ‘heretics,’ ‘atheists,’ ‘blasphemers,’ ‘monsters vomited forth of hell,’ and the like, not a word is to be found in them as their morality and integrity of character.” (*Smiles*, 134)

### **Louis XIV and the Persecution of the Huguenots**

- “Forasmuch as our subjects of the pretended reformed religion have given us proofs of their affection and fidelity, with which we are well pleased, be it thereby known, that for these causes they be maintained and secured, and we do now maintain and secure them, in the full and entire enjoyment of the Edict of Nantes.” (*Louis XIV*, 1652).
- The reign of Louis XIV is characterized by the quasi extinction of the Huguenots.
- The Jesuits, a Catholic sect, were the one behind the whole scheme. They were at the time the main religious group of France and the whispers behind the king’s ears. Little by little, piece by piece, the Edict of Nantes would be taken apart. During the years between 1660 and 1685, 309 edicts, orders and declarations were written against the Huguenots. The king would deceitfully trim around the Edict and forbid to the Protestants everything possible, until the majority of them had gone into exile, prison, or died.
- In 1666 the queen mother died, and her last request was to her son, that he should exterminate heresy in his kingdom.

- The bishop of Meaux encouraged him: “Oh kings! Exercise your power boldly, for it is divine – ye are gods!”
- Louis XIV got sick and it was observed that every attack of bile was followed by some new edict of persecution against the Huguenots.
- At first, the clergy tried to use persuasion to win the Huguenots to their cause, defending the Catholic faith and condemning the heresy of Protestantism. Many books were published, but few converts were made. After this, the government tried to seduce people with money, giving grants to any Huguenot converting to Catholicism, but this also did not function efficiently.
- Then a committee was sent throughout the country, formed by teams of two, with one Catholic man and one weak Protestant in charge of asking the tenants of a temple (Huguenot church) the reasons why they used it; if the reasons were not convincing enough, the temple was destroyed.
- The destruction of temples started in 1661, and by 1684 two-thirds of the temples had been closed or destroyed. In 1663, 140 churches were closed or destroyed. 18 more in 1664, 41 in 1665, 16 more in 1666. Hospitals and schools were soon closed, as rules increased and made life impossible for the Protestants. Some laws stated that only one master would be allowed by school, others forbid pastors to stay more than three years in the same place.
- Ties with foreign countries were strongly limited and often forbidden. Emigration was forbidden in 1669. The Huguenots were ruined, hungry and discouraged; many still fled to different countries while the other ones endured faithfully in hope of some deliverance.
- In 1684 a law was stated that at seven years old a Protestant child could embrace Catholicism and the parents would have no power to prevent it, and in many cases they were even obliged to pay for his education. Because of this rule many kids were kidnapped by priests and educated by the Catholic Church while their parents were forced to still support them. In the meantime, Catholics were forbidden to change to the reformed religion; and if they did they were humiliated publicly, banished and their possessions were taken away from them. Babies had to be born only under the work of Catholic midwives and surgeons, who also had to baptize them. Then, since the kids were born in the Catholic faith, they were raised in the Catholic Church until they made their own decision – which was at seven years old.
- In the same time taxes were added on and on upon the back of the Huguenots, while professions were gradually forbidden to them. They were forbidden to borrow money, putting most of the merchants out of business. Shop tenants were then forbidden their privileges, as well as physicians. Meetings had to take place in the presence of Catholics emissaries and limited to one every fifteen days.

- By 1683 life was made impossible to the Protestants. All careers were closed against them, and they had the choice of either abjuring or starving.
- Later they were forbidden any word against the Catholic Church. A law was even released saying that anyone who had heard any word against the Catholic Church from someone in the past twenty years could accuse him before the authorities; a pastor was condemned for preaching on the slavery of the Israelites, the authorities saying that a parallel between Israel and the Huguenots and Egypt and the Catholics was too obvious.
- The Catholic mob also began to brake in to churches, burning Bibles and hymn books.

- The minister of war, not satisfied with the results used by ‘legal’ laws launched troops to ‘convince’ people to change their religion. These little crusades were called the ‘Dragonnades.’ The soldiers would go in a Protestant home and live at their expense until they would abjure. If the family or person would not change their religion by the time the money was gone, they would sell the furniture and even the property. For those not abjuring, they would use means of tortures of the most creative and devilish kinds. Some tortures would consist of putting a funnel filled with wine in someone throat until the fumes of it would make him lose his reason. Some were stripped naked and undignified in many ways; then they would stick them with pins from the top to the bottom. They would beat some, cut others with pen-knives, plucked the nails of some, burn the feet of others and find unimaginable ways to drive people to insanity; they would starve some, hold others awake for 8 or 9 days straight, or make a circle and push people around until they would lose their reason. They would attach parents to posts and starve their children away from their sights for several days, then bring them back to them and tell them to watch their own die.



- A Dragoon leader in Holland was known to say, “Amusez-vous, enfants! Pillez et violez!” (“Enjoy yourself children! Plunder and rape!”)
- “Si quelques uns pour garentir leurs consciences , et pour échapper à la tyrannie de ces enragez; se sauvoient à la fuite on les poursuivoit dans les champs, et dans les bois, on tiroit sur eux comme sur des bêtes sauvages.” (Claude)



*“If some were to keep their conscience pure, and to escape the tyranny of these enraged ones and run away, they were chased down in the fields, in the woods, and people would shoot them like wild beasts.”*

- “The horsemen fastened crosses to the mouth of their musketoons to compel people to kiss them by force, and when they met with any resistance, they thrust their crosses into the face and stomach of their unhappy victims. They spared children as little as persons of more advanced age, and, without the slightest regard of their years, they loaded them with blows with the flat of their swords, or with the butt-end of their musketoons; and such was their violence, that many were made cripples for life. These infamous wretches took a pleasure in maltreating women. They beat them with whips; they struck them on the face with canes in order to disfigure them; they dragged them by their hair in the mud and over stones. Sometimes the soldiers, meeting laborers on the road, or with their carts, drove them to the Roman Catholic churches, pricking them like cattle with their spurs to hasten their unwilling march.” (Elie Benoit, *History of the Edict of Nantes*)
- The Huguenots of Dauphiny resisted the king, which served him as an excuse to order a general slaughter against all heretics.
- Huguenots met in Bordeaux and Dragoons fell on them, slaying hundreds of unarmed people. Pardon was given to those abjuring, the other one were hanged. Massacres followed in Viverrais and Cévennes.
- Noialles promised the king that by November 25<sup>th</sup> there would be no more Huguenot in Languedoc.
- A deal was made between Madame de Maintenon (Louis XIV’s mistress) and the Jesuits that they would arrange her marriage with the king if she would advise the king to revoke the Edict of Nantes.
- The dragonnades and the whispers of Madame de Maintenon worked. In 1685 the king affirmed that the Protestants were such a minority that the Edict of Nantes was not needed anymore. He repelled it and chased all the remaining pastors of the country. It was now a crime to be a protestant in France.
- The act of Revocation was published on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1685.
- 600 000 people had abjured by 1685
- The revocation had for consequence:
  - The demolition of all Protestant temples
  - The prohibition of private worship
  - The banishment of all Protestant pastors within 15 days

- The closing of all Protestant schools
  - The prohibition of parents to instruct their children in the Protestant faith
  - The confiscation of all Protestant refugees who failed to return to France within four months
  - The penalty of the galleys for life to all men, and of imprisonment for life to all women who tried to escape from France
- The pastors who were forced to exile had the interdiction to being anything with them, even their own children.
  - Since emigration was forbidden as the result of the massive exile, the heads of families of those caught trying to escape were sent to the galleys for life. Women were often sent to prison for life as well.

### **From the Revocation of the Edit of Nantes to the “Desert”**

- The condition in the prisons and the galleys were terrifying. Many Huguenots were sent to Dungeons where there was no light at all, very little food (which was also often corrupted), execrable air, cold winters often endured in nakedness, limited or null correspondences and visits (but priests would often come to harass the prisoners with their presence). These factors were often worsened as the deepness of the faith of the martyrs was manifested through the trials. One witness affirms visiting one of these Dungeons and being horrified by the state of the prisoners, one of them having worms bred in his head even before his death.
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- The galleys were moved by fifty oars of fifty feet long by only five men. The efforts of a few minutes were almost unbearable, yet the prisoners were often obliged to endure the pain for hours. They were chained to their bench and whipped when tired. The company included prisoners guilty of the highest crimes, including murders, rapes, and such other things. At first the Huguenots were put in company of the Turk slaves, but later they were obliged to go with the Catholic prisoners and to listen to the mass as it was given to them. Those who refused to take their hats off during that time suffered the ‘bastonnades,’ which were practiced mainly between 1699 and 1702. The beating was done with a rope done over with pitch and tar and dipped in the sea – making it as hard as an iron bar. The prisoner was attached and stripped naked, while a Turk would strike with all his might, making the body rebounds above half a foot from the place it rested.

Strikes would be given until all the skin of the back would be torn off the very ribs. Then the surgeon on board would pour salt and vinegar on the wound after having opened, with a razor, the wounds that were not open enough. They would do this treatment to someone until death would approach then stop. They would then send the prisoner to the doctor to be healed, so that they could inflict the same punishment later. Many died of this, and some endured it four or five times. The conditions on board were also mediocre, food was scarce and vermin was everywhere. Between 1685 and 1707, three quarters of the Huguenots sent to the galleys died while the rest of them were often sent to the Dungeons to put to silence the public testimony of their faith.

- A young boy of 12 years old was sent to the galleys “for accompanying his father and mother to the preaching.” (*Les Forcats pour la Foi*).
- “We arrived one night at a little town, chained, my wife and my children, with fourteen galley-slaves. The priests came to us, offering freedom on condition that we abjured. We had agreed to preserve a profound silence. After them came the women and children of the place, who covered us with mud. I made my little party fall on their knees, and we put up this prayer, in which all the fugitives joined: ‘Gracious God, who seest the wrongs to which we are hourly exposed, give us strength to support them, and to forgive in charity those who wrong us. Strengthen us from good even unto better.’ They had expected to hear complaints and outcries: our words astonished them. We finished our little act of worship by singing the 116<sup>th</sup> psalm. At this, the women began to weep. They washed off the mud with which our children’s faces had been covered, and they sought permission to have us lodged in a barn separate from the other galley-slaves, which was done.” (*Huber’s journal*)
- Persecution continued until the Revolution in 1789, and the Protestants remained weak and hopeless. Many of those who abjured returned to the faith but the leadership was weak. Many pastors, or ‘*prédicants*’ were hanged, and entire assemblies shot. During these years the Church was known as the ‘wilderness’
- The “church of the desert” took its name from Revelation 12:6 “and the woman fled unto the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God.”
- The first synod of the “Desert” was held in 1715 near Nîmes.
- The Edict of Toleration was issued in 1787 by Louis XVI two years before his death.

- The ode of Agrippa d'Aubigné, a refugee in Geneva in the earth 17<sup>th</sup> Century became prophetic:

*Les temples des païens, du Turc, de l'idolâtre,  
Haussent au ciel l'orgueil du marbre et de l'albâtre;  
Et Dieu seul, au désert pauvrement hébergé,  
A bâti tout le monde et n'y est pas logé!*

*Les moineaux ont leurs nids, leurs nids les hirondelles;  
On dresse quelque fuie aux simples colombelles;  
Tout est mis à l'abris par le soin des mortels,  
Et Dieu seul, immortel, n'a logis ni autels.*

*En ces lieux caverneux tes chères assemblées,  
Des ombres de la mort incessamment troubles,  
Ne feront-elles plus résonner tes saints lieux,  
Et ton renom voler des terres dans les cieus?*

The temples of pagans, Turk, and idolater  
Raise to heaven their arrogance of marble and alabaster;  
Yet God alone, poorly sheltered in the desert,  
Has built the whole world and has no lodging there!

The sparrows have their nests, the swallows have theirs too,  
And for the simple doves they place some little lodge;  
All are given shelter by the care of mortal men;  
Yet God alone, immortal, has neither home nor altar.

Will your devoted congregations in these deep caves,  
Continually troubled y the shadows of death,  
Ever again make your holy places resound  
And your name soar from earth to heaven?

(quoted from Roche, Owen).

- The scattering of the Huguenots. If there were about 2 million protestants (10% of French population), then approximately 10% left the country between 1681-1720, so a number of 200,000. Netherlands (50,000-75,000); Switzerland (60,000); England (40,000-50,000); Germany (30,000); Ireland (5,000-10,000) and the rest scattered elsewhere (*Norwood*). Other sources go as high as 600 000 emigrants.
- The martyrs of Toulouse
  - Francis Rochette, a pastor of southern France was arrested for preaching the gospel.
  - Three youth of noble birth, the Gernier brothers (the oldest being 21) set a plan to rescue him but they were betrayed and thrown in jail with him.

- The pastor was hanged and the three youth were beheaded on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1762.
- As they approached the scaffold they sang Psalm 118

“This is the day that the Lord has made;  
We will rejoice and be glad in it.  
God is the Lord who has showed us light  
Bind the sacrifices with cords, even to the horns of the altar”  
“Thou are my God, and I will praise Thee;  
Thou are my God, and I will exalt Thee.  
O, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good;  
For His mercies endure forever.”

- The youngest brother was asked if he wanted to recant after the other ones had been executed. He responded, “Do thy duty” and set his head on the block to be beheaded.

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