

# ***The Reformation in France***

## *Sources*

G. A. Rothrock, *The Huguenots: A Biography of a Minority* (1979)

Janet Glenn Gray, *The French Huguenots: Anatomy of Courage* (1981)

Stephen M. Davis, *The French Huguenots and Wars of Religion* (2021)

Philippe Erlanger, *St. Bartholomew's Night* (1962)

Marvin R. O'Connell, *Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart* (1997)

## I. Rise of the Reformation in France (c. 1500-1550)

### A. Influences

1. Humanism
2. "Gallicanism": Tradition of independence of French church from papacy (cf. "ultramontane": loyalty to the papacy)
3. John Calvin
4. Geneva

### B. French Protestants: Huguenots

1. "French Reformed" (French Presbyterians)
2. Appealed to merchant middle class and nobility
3. "Political Huguenots": More concerned w/ politics than piety

## II. Wars of Religion (c. 1550-1600)

### A. Parties

1. Valois: Royal family
  - a. Catholic but also sought to protect the throne
  - b. Real power: Queen-mother Catherine de Medici
2. Guise Family: Strongly Catholic faction
3. Bourbons
  - a. Protestant family of Navarre
  - b. Henry of Navarre: Eventually becomes next in line to the throne

### B. Onset of the Wars

1. Trigger: Death of King Henry II (1559)
2. Eight wars altogether in 27 years (some very brief)

### C. St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 1572)

1. Key figure: Gaspar de Coligny (admiral of France) → Main Huguenot leader
2. Background of Massacre
  - a. Marriage of Henry of Navarre to sister of the king
  - b. Protestant presence heightened tension in Paris
  - c. Catherine de Medici behind assassination attempt on Coligny
  - d. Fear of Protestant reprisal triggers massacre
3. Aftermath
  - a. Celebrated in Catholic Europe
  - b. Devastated but reenergized the Huguenots

### D. War of the Three Henriess (1584)

1. Valois, Guise, & Bourbon each led by a "Henry"
2. Henry Guise assassinated
3. Henry III (Valois) aligns w/ Protestant forces but is assassinated
4. Henry Bourbon takes throne as Henry IV

- a. Converts to Catholicism: “Paris is well worth a mass.”
  - b. Issues Edict of Nantes (1598)
    - 1) Gives legal toleration to Huguenots
    - 2) “Armed truce”—Huguenots a nation w/in a nation w/ fortified cities and own forces
    - 3) Later undercut by Cardinal Richelieu
    - 4) Finally revoked by Louis XIV
- III. Jansenism: Last Attempt at French Reform
- A. Nature of Jansenism (González, 214-17)
    - 1. 17<sup>th</sup>-century protest against doctrinal/moral laxity
    - 2. Named for Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres (1585-1638), author of *Augustinus*, commentary on Augustine
    - 3. Revival of strict Augustinian views of sin and grace
    - 4. Labeled “Semi-Protestant” and “Catholic Calvinism”
    - 5. Saw life as a continual Lent (O’Connell)
    - 6. Fundamentally anti-Jesuit in viewpoint
  - B. Course of the Controversy
    - 1. Gathered small but loyal and influential following
    - 2. Greatest defender of Jansenism: Blaise Pascal
      - a. *Provincial Letters*: Satire on Jesuit ethics
      - b. *Pensées*: Fragments of great apologetic
    - 3. Condemned by papacy (1653, 1713)