

Introduction these set  
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## **Introduction**

Huguenot church in France emerged from a protestant movement that was based on teachings of John Calvin, a protestant reformer.

This saw many powerful people become Huguenots in France. The France ruling dynasty of the Valois family including Henry II (1547-1559) and the sons King Francis II (1559-1560), King Charles IX (1560-1574) and king Henry III) were all staunch Catholics who sometimes adopted policies to tame the growth of the movement of Huguenots and at the same time tried to limit the growth of nobility in political prowess. The Huguenots quest for religious independence placed them against the kings of France which led to a series of wars; these wars were referred to as ' Wars of Religion' (1562-1598) (Sidney 186). In the early times prior to the late 1500's, in France, everybody in the kingdom was required to follow a given set of religious beliefs that were in accordance to those of the king or the lord of the land. Anyone who did not follow these set of beliefs was either exiled from the community or killed. The Edict of Nantes was a treaty with rights on religion and the freedom to worship that was signed and passed by King Henry IV (1589-1610) of Navarre to the ' commoners' on the 13th of April, 1589 to provide them with religious freedom. King Henry IV was a protestant and he led the French ' commoners' cause when wars on religion were common and The Edict of Nantes marked the end of wars on religion. Before he became King, Henry IV had embraced Protestantism but had to convert to catholic in order to realize the position of king in France since the citizen majority (up to 90%) comprised of the Catholic family (Mark, 399).

## **Henry IV of France**

Henry IV of France was the writer of the Edict of Nantes which brought the civil wars over religion to an end in his kingdom. He lived between 1553 and 1610. He was king of France between 1589 and 1610. He was assassinated by a fanatic in 1610. Due to his great contribution to ending religious wars in France, he is still recognized as one of the greatest leaders of France.

He was a protestant until he was about to be king of France. Since ninety percent of the France population was catholic, he decided to convert to catholic in 1593 in order to satisfy the wishes of the majority and consequently be in a better position to secure the throne and be King of France (Hunt, 547). After his conversion, Henry IV used the phrase, “ Paris is worth a mass” to meant he was willing to sacrifice his religious beliefs so as to save the French kingdom from the wars it was experiencing. He was crowned king of France in 1589 following the death of Henry III and signed the Edict of Nantes in 1598; this brought to an end the wars of religion in France effectively and gave Henry IV an easy time to develop France (Nantais 5)

## **The Edict of Nantes**

Prior to the signing of the Edict of Nantes, Protestants in France were exposed to massacre and massive deaths.

The Catholic French government was assisted by papal and the Spanish troops during the religious and civil wars against the Protestants. Many agreements of peace were reached but they were never followed. At one point for example, Huguenots were guaranteed freedom of public religious

worship, balanced political privileges with the Catholics and security. The king's sister was given for marriage to Henry Navarre as a token of peace. Protestants were as a result invited for a celebration in Paris and were however massacred in the night with a signal from the queen mother. Those Protestants who managed to escape prepared for vengeance and armed themselves for war with the Catholics (Karl 428). After this massacre, Henry of Navarre, who was spared in the massacre and given a chance to change his faith, later became leader of the Huguenots who by this time were very determined to revenge on the Catholics but could not due to their smaller numbers. Navarre was later excommunicated and assassinated by the Dominican Clement in 1589.

This was when Henry IV took the throne and became the King of France. Millions of innocent lives including those of children, women and many men had already been lost in events of war (Nantais 3). Henry IV therefore came up with the Edict of Nantes to bring an end to the religious and civil wars in France by granting the Protestants some rights and freedom of worship that included their security. The Edict of Nantes comprised of four basic parts; The principle text - this comprised of ninety two articles that were mainly based on the various peace treaties that had been signed in the previous wars but had been unsuccessful. Fifty six particular - this mainly covered the rights of the Protestants and their obligations. The rights of protestants were defined here giving them freedom to worship, travel among others.

Brevets on military clauses that granted protestants safety in military places and the king paid for this on a yearly basis and further amount for places of refuge Brevets on pastoral clauses The last two sections, that is, the brevets

were however eliminated from the Edict by Louis XIII in 1629 to mark the end of civil religious wars (Atchley 2). During the introduction of the Edict of Nantes, Henry explained that he felt it was his duty as the king to guarantee the nation civil peace so as to make sure that God “ maybe adored and prayed unto by all our subjects” (Atchley 2). He added that as long as there was an agreement on this, if people decided to be in different religions, it was their choice. Henry did not succeed entirely to introduce religious freedom to France as the Protestants were allowed to worship freely in many but not all parts of the nation as compared to Catholics who would worship anywhere.

The distribution of the catholic religion limited entry of Protestantism into catholic bound parts of France. In the Edict of Nantes various ideas were discussed some of which included the need to ignore prior occurrences like the suppression of the events of war between the Huguenots and the Catholics. Further this meant neither of the sides would at any point in time sue; institute a lawsuit or a case in any court of law or any judicial tribunal. Both parties and subjects to the matter were not allowed, under whatsoever circumstances to be hostile to the other party provoke or attack each other in response or with the intention of revenging for the past events. People were encouraged to live as brothers and sisters by restraining from whatever events that would lead them to arguing, quarrelling, Violence or disputes with one another. Against this people were liable to punishment for disturbing the peace and troubling the quiet public (Atchley III) The Catholic Church was ordained to re-establish in areas it had been interrupted and all other districts of the kingdom and practice freely and peacefully. The clerics

were protected with penalty to anyone who disturbed, caused annoyance or molested them during the celebrating of divine worship. Those who ended up possessing church property belonging to clerics due to war events were required to give the entire possession back.

The reformed religions (Protestants) were forbidden from holding their devotions and prayer meetings in the houses or churches of the catholic clerics. The reformed religion (protestant) was permitted to dwell in all parts of the kingdom as well without being constrained to do anything their conscience is not comfortable with, disturbed, molested or annoyed as long as they conduct themselves within the expectations of the Edict they shall also not be sought out of their dwellings. Both religions were allowed to practice their religion in districts and towns as often as they wish without withstanding any form of contrary judgment (Sydney 185) The religions were forbidden from ministering to public children institutions and were also encouraged to recognize the places they were not allowed to minister from. However both religions were ordained to minister to students of universities, colleges and schools.

Likewise, the sick and poor in hospitals, charitable institutions and infirmaries shall be ministered to freely. Books on matters of the reformed religion were not to be printed and publicly sold except for those towns public exercise of this religion was allowed. Books printed in other towns shall be inspected by officials. Defamatory books, writings and tracts printing and publication were clearly forbidden.

The penalty for not respecting this ruling would be strict on the offenders as contained in the ordinance. For the purpose of reuniting both parties as is the intention of the Edict, anyone who is a member of the reformed (protestant) religion were allowed to hold and practice public positions, duties, offices and honors whatsoever. The courts of parliaments were required to inquire and ascertain the morals, religion, honest behavior and life of those appointed to the offices from either religion. They were required to serve the king faithfully and perform their functions in respect to the ordinances as has been the custom. These appointments were to be made without any form of bias and without discriminating any capable person as required by the unity of the subjects.

The members of the reformed religion were allowed to attend any gatherings, assemblies and public gathering of any of the related offices. Nobody will be prevented from enjoying their freedom and rights based on their religion. Those in the greater security public offices like Lieutenants, ordinary judges, Governors among others were required after the signing of the Edict to swear to are to ensure it is kept. They also were required to make sure each of the subjects that is, the different religions in different towns of the city do swear to follow the Edict's requirements. Courts, of parliaments and those of aids, were ordered not to make any acts that are otherwise to the edict.

Instead the courts were to suspend their business, publish and register the Edict with simplicity and without any form of modification (Sydney187).

Generally the Edict allowed the Protestants to worship publicly in many parts of the kingdom except for Paris. “ The Huguenots acquired civil rights fully

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and a special court within the parliaments was established to arbitrate over disputes arising from the Edict” (Sydney187).

At Mountauban, Saumur, Sedan and Montpellier universities/schools were allowed to be Huguenots as a further one hundred cities were given to Huguenots for an eight year period. In areas where Catholic institutions had been interrupted, “ they were reestablished as extension of Protestants was prohibited in such areas” (Sydney187). With the high recognition of Protestantism, catholic still remained the developed religion of France and every citizen including the protestants were required to recognize the catholic holidays and laws like those regarding to marriage. The freedom of worship in the Edict did not recognize other religions like Islam and Jew. Also it should be noted that even with the freedom of worship, the authorities in France limited the distribution of Protestantism to specific geographic areas. With the assassination of Henry IV in 1606 Marie de Medecis confirmed the Edict within a week.

However only two towns were fortified to practice Protestantism, these were Montauban and La Rochelle. Louis XIV renounced the Edict in October 1685 and Protestantism was then declared illegal with an act commonly referred to as “ revocation of the Edict of Nantes”. This was bound to re-ignite religious civil wars but that was not the case. It led to the movement of most Protestants from France to other nations like The Dutch republic, South Africa, Switzerland, Prussia and Britain. This revocation caused France not only its manpower but also the perception of Louis XIV abroad and in the neighboring protestant regimes who developed hostility towards France.



The edict was not widely accepted by France dwellers its implementation had succeeded and this divided the reform history of France into two: a) Bellicose era and b) The politique era. During the bellicose era, reform and the antireform forces fought each other with great intensity and in the politique era, political compromiser put the interests of the state ahead of the religious interests. Before the introduction of the Edict of Nantes, that is from 1562 to 1598, France experienced almost a continuous war era between the Catholics led Guise family and protestants led by Huguenot Calvinists. The third part was characterized with nobility as the members took neither side of the war but were the warrior class. The war had lasted for virtually forty years and it was divided to about eight distinct civil wars this ended up with assassinations that escalated when both sides resolved to hiring German mercenaries. When Henry IV was about to come to throne, the protestants were delighted to have one of their own as king which however did not last for long as he later converted to catholic. He however wrote the edict that allowed Protestants to worship freely and hold services in their homes Protestants were for the first time viewed better than just being heretics and schematics. It also allowed Protestantism to prevail in some towns though it was barred from some including those surrounding Paris.

The Edict led to pacification of the Protestants who had been rebellious but it was strongly rejected by the catholic law courts. Pope Clement VIII who was the French Catholic Clergy and many of the French Parliaments then resented the Edict bitterly. The aim of the Edict of Nantes has been widely misunderstood as a step towards religious toleration, that was not the case and instead it was a means to end the civil war and violence while at the

same time impose future religious unity in France. This is why the Protestants rights were recognized but very limited in terms of distribution and freedoms (Atchley 4)

## **Conclusion**

The Edict of Nantes led to development of a new perspective of how the church and the state relate.

Previously, it was the business of the state to determine the religious direction of the population. Society believed it was necessary to have a religious conformity for them to realize a stable society. The catholic religion was therefore chosen to be the people's religion in France. However, with the Edict of Nantes it was no longer the state to define the conduct and religious belief of the population (Hunt, 546) King Louis XII's chief minister Cardinal de Richelieu at the peace Ales annulled political clauses from the Edict. Later on there was national compromise was after Henry IV was assassinated by a fanatic then the Edict was revoked by King Louis XIV denying the protestants all liberties they had been granted by the Edict of Nantes and Protestantism was not recognized again.

## **Works Cited**

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