

The Huguenots

The Huguenots were French Protestants most of whom eventually came to follow the teachings of John Calvin, and who, due to religious persecution, were forced to flee France to other countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some remained, practicing their Faith in secret.

The Protestant Reformation began by Martin Luther in Germany about 1517, spread rapidly in France, especially among those having grievances against the established order of government. As Protestantism grew and developed in France it generally abandoned the Lutheran form, and took the shape of Calvinism. The new "Reformed religion" practiced by many members of the French nobility and social middle-class, based on a belief in salvation through individual faith without the need for the intercession of a church hierarchy and on the belief in an individual's right to interpret scriptures for themselves, placed these French Protestants in direct theological conflict with both the Catholic Church and the King of France in the theocratic system which prevailed at that time. Followers of this new Protestantism were soon accused of heresy against the Catholic government and the established religion of France, and a General Edict urging extermination of these heretics (Huguenots) was issued in 1536. Nevertheless, Protestantism continued to spread and grow, and about 1555 the first Huguenot church was founded in a home in Paris based upon the teachings of John Calvin. The number and influence of the French Reformers (Huguenots) continued to increase after this event, leading to an escalation in hostility and conflict between the Catholic Church/State and the Huguenots. Finally, in 1562, some 1200 Huguenots were slain at Vassy, France, thus igniting the French Wars of Religion, which would devastate France for the next thirty-five years.

The Edict of Nantes, signed by Henry IV in April 1598, ended the Wars of Religion, and allowed the Huguenots some religious freedoms, including free exercise of their religion in 20 specified towns of France.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in October 1685 began a new persecution of the Huguenots, and hundreds of thousands of Huguenots fled France to other countries. The Promulgation of the Edict of Toleration in November 1787 partially restored the civil and religious rights of Huguenots in France.

IMPORTANT DATES IN HUGUENOT HISTORY

1533 John Calvin flees Paris

29 January 1536 General Edict urging extermination of heretics (Huguenots)

1536 John Calvin becomes pastor in Geneva

1550s Calvinism comes to France with thousands of converts

25 May 1559 First Synod of the French Reformed Church held in Paris, followed by persecutions and issuance of Edict prohibiting "heretical" worship

1559 Attempt to replace Catholic Guises with Huguenot Conde as regent

1560 Huguenots petition the King and threaten revolt if persecution persists

1 March 1562 Massacre at Vassy begins French religious wars; Conde assassinated 1562 Huguenots sign manifesto saying they were forced to take arms

1 May 1562 Arrival at St. John's River, in Florida, of the first pilgrimage by Huguenots to North America

1564 Death of John Calvin

1565 Huguenot colony massacred at St. John, FL

24 August 1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in which tens of thousands of Huguenots were killed

1585 Huguenots/Protestants expelled from France

13 April 1598 Edict of Nantes by Henry of Navarre which granted religious and civil liberties to the Huguenots promises protection

18 October 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV which was published 22 October 1685, and resulted in persecution of the Huguenots; 400,000 flee France to other countries

28 November 1787 Promulgation of the Edict of Toleration

1. Who were the Huguenots?
 - a. People angry at Martin Luther
 - b. French Protestants
 - c. German Protestants
 - d. Jesuits
2. Who started the Protestant Reformation?
 - a. Martin Luther
 - b. John Calvin
3. The new "Reformed religion" practiced by many members of the French nobility and social middle-class was based on a belief in salvation through what?
 - a. Rituals
 - b. Intercession
 - c. Individual faith
 - d. The pope
4. Followers of this new Protestantism were soon accused of _____ against the Catholic government and the established religion of France.
 - a. Murder
 - b. Theft
 - c. Jealousy
 - d. Heresy
5. In the following sentence, what does the word *extermination* mean? Refer to the entire passage for help.
A General Edict urging extermination of these heretics (Huguenots) was issued in 1536.
 - a. Killing
 - b. Praise
 - c. Excitement
 - d. Anger
6. After the General Edict of 1536, what happened to Protestantism?
 - a. It grew larger.
 - b. It dwindled.
7. When do thousands of converts bring Calvinism to France?
 - a. 1510s
 - b. 1550s
 - c. 1570s
 - d. 15990s
8. When were tens of thousands of Huguenots killed?
 - a. 1562
 - b. 1564
 - c. 1565
 - d. 1572
9. What significant event happened 1585?
 - a. John Calvin died.
 - b. Huguenot colony was massacred.
 - c. Edict of Nantes granted religious liberties to Huguenots.
 - d. Protestants expelled from France.
10. What event started the French Wars of Religion?
 - a. 1200 Huguenots were killed.
 - b. The Pope declared the war.
 - c. The Edict of Nantes was signed.
 - d. Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the church doors.