



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION AFTER THE RELIGIOUS WAR IN FRANCE (16TH CENTURY)

**Aslamkulova Parvina Jamshidovna**

*Master's student of the "World History" department of  
Samarkand State University*

**E-mail:** [aslamkulovaparvina@gmail.com](mailto:aslamkulovaparvina@gmail.com)

## Annotation

The Wars of Religion (French *Guerres de Religion*) or Huguenot Wars were a series of 32-year-old civil wars between Catholics and Protestants (Huguenots) that tore apart the French state during the last kings of the Valois dynasty, the Huguenots being led by Henry of Navarre (Prince of Condé) of the Bourbon dynasty and Catholics were led by Catherine de' Medici, the mother of the French queen, and the powerful Guises. His neighbors tried to influence the course of events in France – Queen Elizabeth Tudor of England supported the Huguenots, and King Philip of Habsburg of Spain supported the Catholics. The wars ended with the accession of the Catholic Henry of Navarre to the French throne and the publication of the Edict of Nantes (1598). This article describes the history of the religious war in France and the social and political relations that followed.

**Key words:** Reformation, France, Catholics, Huguenots, religion, politics, economics and social conditions of life.

## Introduction

The reason for the first war was the Amboise Conspiracy and its brutal suppression by the Guisami. After Francis II came to power, the de facto leadership of the country began to be carried out by the Guise family, led by Duke Francis de Guise and his brother Cardinal Charles of Lorraine, who increased the scale of persecution of the Huguenots by introducing the death penalty for secret religious gatherings. The Calvinist adviser to the Paris Parliament, A. de Boer, was convicted and hanged (1559). Among the highest French aristocracy there was very strong dissatisfaction with the Guises. In 1560, the opposition formed a conspiracy, the leader of which was a certain Périgord nobleman La Renaudie. They wanted to capture the king and arrest the Guises. These events went down in history as the Amboise plot.

Having learned about the coup attempt, the Gizas made concessions: on March 8, 1560, they passed a law prohibiting religious persecution. But soon the Gizas canceled the Edict of March and brutally dealt with the conspirators. Prince Louis of Condé was arrested and sentenced to death. He was saved only by the sudden death of Francis II from illness on December 5, 1560. The essence of the conspiracy itself was that, irritated by the influence of the Guises on the young King Francis II and Queen Mary Stuart (who was from Guise on her mother's side), the Huguenots, led by the Prince of Condé, planned to kidnap the monarch directly from the Amboise castle.



## **Main Part**

The minor King Charles IX of Valois ascended the throne, and actual power was in the hands of his mother Catherine de Medici. The Guises began to lose influence, and Louis Condé was released and brought closer to the court. King Antoine of Navarre was appointed lieutenant general of the French kingdom. Catherine tried to pursue a policy of religious tolerance and reconciliation between all religious denominations (Estates General in Orleans 1560 and Pontoise 1561, dispute in Poissy 1561). In January 1562, the Edict of Saint-Germain (January) was issued, according to which Huguenots could practice their faith outside the city walls or in private city houses. But the Gizas and supporters of the previous government, dissatisfied with the concessions to the Protestants and the growing influence of Condé, formed the so-called “triumvirate” (F. de Guise - Constable Montmorency - Saint-André). The triumvirs began negotiations with Catholic Spain about a joint fight against the Protestants.

On March 1, 1562, the Duke of Guise and his men attacked the Huguenots performing divine services in the town of Vassy in Champagne. Several dozen people were killed and about 100 participants in the meeting were wounded. The triumvirs captured Charles IX and the Queen Mother at Fontainebleau and forced them to revoke the Edict of January. After this, Condé and his associate François d'Andelot took Orleans, turning the city into the capital of the Huguenot resistance. An alliance was concluded with England, where at that time Queen Elizabeth I ruled, who actively supported Protestants throughout Europe, and with German Protestant princes. The triumvirs took Rouen (May-October 1562), preventing the unification of the forces of the English and Huguenots in Normandy; Antoine of Navarre died during these battles. Soon reinforcements from Germany arrived at Condé, the Huguenots approached Paris, but unexpectedly returned back to Normandy. On December 19, 1562, at Dreux, Prince Conde was defeated by Catholics and captured; but the Protestants killed the enemy marshal Saint-André and captured the constable Montmorency.

Admiral Gaspard Coligny, who led the Huguenots, returned to Orleans. François de Guise besieged the city, but unexpectedly for everyone he was killed by the Huguenot Poltro de Mere. Weakened by the loss of their leaders, each of whom (Montmorency and Condé) was captured by the enemy, both parties began to seek peace. Queen Mother Catherine also strived for this, after the death of Francis II she entrusted the management of the state to the moderate chancellor Michel del Hopital. In March 1563, the leaders of the Huguenots and Catholics, through the mediation of the queen, signed the Peace of Amboise, which guaranteed Calvinists freedom of religion in a limited range of regions and possessions. Its conditions mainly confirmed the Edict of Saint-Germain.

The second war began when the Guises, not satisfied with the concessions to the Huguenots, began to prepare an international alliance of Catholic powers. The Huguenots, led by Coligny, responded by allying with Elizabeth of England and the Protestant Count Palatine Wolfgang of Zweibrücken, who brought 14,000 of his subjects to the aid of the Huguenots, beginning a tradition of Palatine intervention in French civil wars that lasted until the end of the century. In September 1567, the Prince of Condé renewed his plan to kidnap the king, this time Charles IX, from Meaux. At the same time, residents of La Rochelle and a number of other cities openly declared themselves Huguenots, and a massacre of Catholic priests took place in Nimes. In November, at the Battle of Saint-Denis, Constable Montmorency died,



possibly at the hands of the Count of Montgomery, who killed King Henry II at a tournament in 1559.

The royal treasury was empty, there was no one to command the army, which forced the king to make peace in Longjumeau (March 1568), which did not resolve a single issue and served only to postpone large-scale hostilities. The armed confrontation resumed with the onset of autumn, when freedom of religion was once again abolished, and a detachment of Dutch Protestants led by William of Orange (the Silent) arrived to help the Huguenots. Catherine de Medici tried to take the initiative into her own hands and returned the Guises to the court, Calvinist preachers were expelled from France, and things were heading towards the arrest of Conde and Coligny. In March 1569, the Prince of Condé was killed in battle at Jarnac, and Admiral Coligny took command of the Protestant forces on behalf of the young princes Condé the Younger and Henry of Navarre. Despite the defeat at Moncontour, he managed to unite with the Count of Montgomery and take possession of Toulouse. In August 1570, the king signed the Peace of Saint-Germain with significant concessions to the Huguenots.

Under the terms of the peace, the king of Navarre was promised the hand of the king's sister is named Margarita de Valois. During the time following the Peace of Saint-Germain, Coligny gained the confidence of the king, which irritated both the Queen Mother and the Guises. The wedding of Henry of Navarre and Margaret of Valois turned into a terrible massacre of Huguenots on the streets of Paris and other cities, which went down in history as St. Bartholomew's Night. Among the victims of the violence was Coligny, on whom Heinrich of Guise took revenge for the murder of his father. A feature of the conflict was the virtual absence of field combat operations and battles. The war came down mainly to two sieges - La Rochelle and Sancerre under the leadership of Duke Henry of Anjou. Attempts to drive the Huguenots out of Sancerre and La Rochelle, however, ended in vain. In 1573, an edict was issued confirming the right of the Huguenots to practice Protestant rites in La Rochelle, Montauban and Nîmes.

The war flared up again after the death of Charles IX and the return to France from Poland of his brother Henry III, who brought himself closer to Guise by marriage to Louise of Lorraine. The new king did not control the regions: Count Palatine Johann Casimir invaded Champagne, Montmorency the Younger was arbitrarily in charge of the southern provinces. Unlike previous conflicts, in addition to ultra-Catholics and Huguenots, this one involved the moderate Catholic party of the dissatisfied, which advocated the establishment of civil peace based on a policy of religious tolerance and made its leader Duke Hercule - François of Alençon, who sought to take the throne bypassing his older brother. In order to stabilize the situation, the king approved the Peace of Monsieur in 1576, which granted the Huguenots freedom of religion outside of Paris.

The lull was extremely short-lived and was used by the Guises to rally the "true believers" under the banner of the Catholic League. The Estates General in Blois were unable to resolve the accumulated contradictions. The advantage in the war was clearly on the side of the Catholics. The army of the Duke of Anjou took La Charite and Issoire (three thousand Huguenots were killed here), the army of the Duke of Mayenne took Rochefort, Maran and Brouage. The fleet of the city of Bordeaux defeated the Laroche Huguenots at sea. But the king was not interested in the complete defeat of the Protestants and initiated peace negotiations



in Poitiers. On them, under pressure from the league, Henry III, at the Treaty of Bergerac in 1577, refused the concessions made to the Huguenots the year before.

A key figure in the Seventh War was the king's brother, François of Anjou, who, with the support of William of Orange, proclaimed himself Count of Flanders and Duke of Brabant and intervened on the side of the former in the revolutionary uprising of Dutch Protestants against the Spanish crown. Meanwhile, the young Prince Henry of Condé took possession of La Fère in Picardy. The fighting officially ended with the peace of Fleux (1580). The death of the Duke of Anjou and the childlessness of Henry III made the head of the Huguenots, Henry of Navarre, who had been excommunicated by the pope, heir to the French throne. Since he had no intention of changing his faith, Henry of Guise, with the support of the Catholic League and Catherine de Medici, began to prepare the ground for the transfer of the throne into his own hands. This led to his break with the king, who intended to keep the crown in the hands of the descendants of Hugh Capet at any cost.

The war of the three Henrys unfolded - Valois, Bourbon and Guise. At Coutras, the royal commander-in-chief Anne de Joyeuse, the favorite of King Henry of Valois, died. In May 1588 ("day of the barricades"), Parisians rebelled against the indecisive king, who was forced to flee the capital. Catherine de' Medici reached a compromise with the league on transferring the throne to the last Catholic among the Bourbons - Cardinal Charles de Bourbon, imprisoned by the king in Blois Castle. After the Guises organized the invasion of Saluzzo by the troops of Duke Charles-Emmanuel of Savoy, at the end of 1588 and the beginning of 1589 a wave of mercenary murders swept through France, the victims of which were the main characters - Heinrich of Guise and his younger brother, Louis of Lorraine, Cardinal de Guise, and King Henry III. The elderly Cardinal de Bourbon, in whom the league saw the new king Charles X, also died, abdicating the throne in favor of Henry of Navarre.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, The Navarre king accepted the French crown under the name of Henry IV, but in the first years of his reign he had to defend his rights to the throne from the remaining Guises - Charles de Guise, Duke of Mayenne, who held Normandy in his hands, and Philippe Emmanuel, Duke of Merceure, who, hiding behind the rights of his wife, tried to restore the sovereignty of Brittany. In March 1590, the new king won an important victory at Ivry, but attempts to take Paris and Rouen were unsuccessful due to the opposition of the Spaniards led by Alessandro Farnese, who, contrary to the Salic order of succession to the throne, tried to place the granddaughter of Henry II on the throne through the female line - Infanta Isabella Clara Evgenia.

By 1598, France was finally united under the scepter of Henry IV. The Spanish crown recognized this through the Treaty of Vervins. In the same year, the famous Edict of Nantes was issued, recognizing freedom of religion and putting an end to religious wars. After the death of Henry IV, the Huguenot uprisings began, culminating in the siege of La Rochelle (1627-1628) by Cardinal Richelieu.

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