



Outline: CHWNE Module 4 Lesson 5: Marguerite of Valois (1) (1553-1615)

Family and Early Years

- Daughter of **Henry II** and **Catherine de Medici**, sister of three Kings of France: **Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III**. Became the wife of **Henry III of Navarre / Henry IV** of France.
- Her sister, **Elizabeth of Valois**, became the third wife of **Philip II of Spain**. Her brother **Francis** married **Mary Queen of Scots**.
- Marguerite was born in **Chateau St. Germain en Laye**, but grew up in **Chateau d'Amboise**. She had a **classical education** and was competent in horsemanship and dance. She also learned French, Greek, Latin, Italian and Spanish (**under tutelage of Diane de Potiers**).
- Between **1564 to 1567**, the 3 years when the **Peace of Amboise** held, her family undertook the '**grand tour of France**', where she became familiar with the political situation and the art of mediation.
- **The Massacre of Wassy** in **1562** triggered the **French Wars of Religion**. **Francis Duke of Guise** was killed in taking Orleans **1563**. Peace came with the **Edict of Amboise** lasting **1564 to 1567**.
- By **1565**, **Catherine** had unsuccessfully attempted to arrange a marriage of convenience for **Marguerite** with princes of various realms. It is said that when she was 15 years old, she and her brother Henry III were very close friends... **until it was discovered that she had a romantic relationship with Henry of Guise whom she was planning to marry**.
- It is said that she was beaten by her brother, and **Henry of Guise** was sent away from the court.

(Could this be part of the rivalry for the throne in forming The Catholic League in opposition to Henry's rule? His son, Charles of Guise became leader of the Catholic League in 1588)



Peace Treaties and Marriage

- **In April 1572**, Marguerite was betrothed to **Henry III of Navarre**. She had made a good impression on **Jeanne d'Albret**, so that Jeanne told Henry of her wit, beauty and good relationship with her mother, Henry III and her younger siblings. Jeanne died in June and Henry ascended the throne as **Henry III of Navarre**.
- **Marguerite's marriage to Henry III of Navarre** was part of the conditions of the peace treaty (**St Germain En Laye**) signed between **Catherine de Medici** and **Jeanne D'Albret**. Restored the freedom of worship for Protestants, allowed them to hold public office again, and to keep some fortified cities.
- **On August 18th**, Henry (Protestant) and Marguerite (Catholic) were married by proxy in Paris. Henry remained outside the Cathedral during the mass. **Francois, the Duke of Alencon** stood in for him.
- **Pope Gregory XIII** refused to grant permission for Henry to be married inside the church. Married by **Cardinal Charles de Bourbon**, uncle of Henry of Navarre

St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

- The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre took place 6 days later. **Henry pretended to convert to Catholicism so his life was spared.**
- The most wealthy and influential Protestants in Paris for the wedding stayed to celebrate the Feast of St. Bartholomew. The murder of Protestants continued for months after that.
- Her eye-witness account in her book, '**Memoirs**' inspired **Alexandre Dumas' novel of 1845**, called **La Reine Margot**. According to Marguerite, Catherine suggested that she annulled the marriage.

Plots and Power

- **In 1573, Henry III of France** was crowned **King of Poland**. **Charles IX** was in a fragile state of health. Moderate Catholics (**the Malcontents**) developed a plot to install Marguerite's youngest brother, (**Francois Duke of Alencon**) as King.



- **Marguerite and Francois Duke of Alencon** supported the plot because he was willing to find a compromise position between Catholics and Protestants. This group (**The Malcontents**) was tired of the wars and violence.
- She was an active participant in the coup, together with two of Catherine's ladies-in-waiting.
- In **1574**, the conspiracy was exposed leaders were beheaded and their heads left on public display. In **1574**, **Charles IX** also died. **Henry III of France (King of Poland/ Lithuania)** abdicated that other throne to become France's king.
- **Both Francois and Henry of Navarre were held as prisoners in the Chateau Vincennes.**
- **Henry III** ascended the throne. **Henry of Navarre** and **Francois** were freed from their prison but kept under surveillance.
- In **September of 1575**, both **Francois and Henry of Navarre escaped**, giving no warning to Marguerite. *She was confined to the court and used the time **to indulge herself in reading many of the books in the library.***
- In **1575 Henry of Navarre** again abjured the Catholic faith **Catherine and Henry III** would not allow her to be reunited with him.
- Catherine used Marguerite as bait to draw Henry of Navarre back to Paris
- In **May of 1576**, **Francois** took up arms with other Protestants and **refused to negotiate unless Marguerite was freed**; resulted in '**The Edict of Beaulieu**'.
- Reconciliation with Henry happened because of the part she played in the Edict of Beaulieu. She sent letters updating him on the events taking place at the Paris court.



- **The Catholic League** led by **Henry Duke of Guise** was born seven days after the edict was proclaimed. **Henry III** called a special meeting of the Parlement (*lit de justice*) to sign the edict, in support of his younger brother, Francois.

What Good Is An Edict?

- Between **1576 and 1579**, the **Edict of Beaulieu** went through a few changes because of failure to implement the terms.
- In **1577** the **Edict of Beaulieu** was modified to become ***The Peace of Bergerac*** **1579**



The Edict of Beaulieu	The Peace of Bergerac
The right to public worship of their religion throughout France except at the court and in Paris.	<i>Protestants were not free to worship all over France. Only in suburbs of 1 town in each judicial district.</i>
The official name of their religion was the religion prétendue réformée ("supposed reformed religion")	.
They had the right to build and own churches.	<i>Only senior noblemen could invite other people to worship in their homes and on their lands, but only if they were present; junior noblemen could worship in their homes but only with their families</i>
They had the right to hold consistories and synods.	<i>access to universities and towns again</i>
They had the right to occupy eight fortified towns.	<i>8 security towns, for a 6-year period. Henry of Navarre and 25 nobles had to swear to return those cities after 6 years.</i>
<i>8 judicial chambers with 50% split of Protestant/Catholic judges</i>	<i>only 4 judicial chambers, with a $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ split in representation.</i>
The families who suffered loss from the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre were to be financially compensated, and returned to their positions of prominence.	



- *Henry of Navarre sent a complaint letter to Henry III that the terms of peace were being ignored. Henry of Navarre also had not received the lands due from Marguerite's dowry & The Prince of Conde was also unhappy.*
- *The Peace of Bergerac was re-issued to read that: Protestants could live anywhere in France, worship freely, all noblemen and officials swore to uphold the treaty, and they were allowed their security towns for another 4 years.*