CHWNE Module 5 Lesson 1

Henry IV of France

Henry III of Navarre Module 5 Lesson 1

The Edict of Nantes

Henry of Navarre became **Henry IV of France in 1589**, when his cousin **(King Henry III)** was assassinated by a monk.

Henry IV ruled from **1589 to 1610,** when he too was assassinated.

His nine-year-old son **Louis XIII** came to the throne as a minor, with his mother **Marie de Medici** ruling on his behalf.

Henry IV was baptized as a Catholic, but raised as a Protestant by his mother **Jeanne D'Albret** in the kingdom of **Navarre.**

He had fought in the **Wars of Religion** before he was 15 years old.

In 1572, at the age of **19**, he lost his mother, thus becoming **Henry III of Navarre.**

He also married **Catherine de Medici's** daughter **(Marguerite of Valois)**, and witnessed the slaughter of many of his best soldiers and noblemen during the **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre**.

He saved his life by pretending to abjure to the Catholic faith.

For four years**(1572 -1576)**, he was held hostage in the court of Paris by his mother-in-law (Catherine de Medici) before **escaping back to Navarre in 1576.**

It was said that in **1576 when he escaped, he abjured Catholicism in Tours and rejoined his Protestant forces**, even leading them in their war against the royal army.

He was the de facto **Leader** of the **Huguenot** army. When he was 15 years old, he had been designated as leader by **Jean D'Albret** during the first siege of **La Rochelle** in the war of **1568-1570.**

Because he rejoined his army, he named his **16 year old sister (Catherine de Bourbon)** as regent in his absence. She kept the regency for nearly 30 years.

In 1584, Francois d'Alencon who was the younger brother of **King Henry III of France,** and heir to the throne, died.
King Henry III of France had no heir, which made **Henry III of Navarre** presumptive heir.

In 1588, King Henry III had already killed all the leaders of the Catholic League, and all contenders for the throne.

When he was in turn assassinated in **1589**, **Henry III of Navarre,** as presumptive heir, was the only living heir to the throne. He then become **Henry IV of France.**

To take control of France, **Henry IV** fought civil wars with his subjects.

Eventually he abjured his Protestant faith in favour of Catholicism, to unify his country.

He was able to gain military control of France with help from England and the German Lutheran princes.

When Henry IV abjured his faith for his country, neither **England nor his French Protestant followers** were happy.

He was previously excommunicated, but in **1595, Pope Clement VIII** removed the excommunication order.

In **1598,** he passed the **Edict of Nantes** which gave religious freedoms to the Protestants.

Also, the **Edict of Nantes** allowed them freedom to engage in trade and hold public office.

If any Protestant had a problem with receiving justice, they were allowed direct access to him.

Next was the issue of working on a legitimate heir.

His marriage to **Marguerite of Valois** was annulled in **1599** so that in **1600,** he could marry another **Catholic de Medici - Marie de Medici.**

He made social and political changes in finance, agriculture, education - and great efforts were expended at eliminating corruption.

Then, his sights turned to the **colonization of the ‘New World’.**

This was accomplished by giving trade monopolies to wealthy **Protestant noblemen** to establish colonies in **Acadia and New France**.

After his **assassination in 1610**, he was lauded for being consistently victorious over his enemies and his genuine care for the underdogs.

He was known as **‘Good King Henry'.**

The Edict of Nantes

The 1598 Edict of Nantes was said to be Henry IV's greatest achievement.

It brought an end to **36 years of religious conflicts** in France, which took place between **1562 and 1598.**

It was eventually rescinded by **Louis XIV,** with **the Edict of Fontainebleau**.

The original act that set forth the Edict of Nantes has disappeared.

All that remains in Paris is the text of a shorter document, which identifies **concessions given to the clergy and the Parlement of Paris.**
These concessions delayed the finalisation of the edict.

It was eventually signed with the appropriate seals in 1599.

Other provincial parlements also resisted, its signing with **Rouen signing it only in 1609**.

Thankfully, a copy of the original edict was sent to Geneva for safekeeping.

Literal Translation of The Edict of Nantes

This is the text of the shorter surviving document.

The **principal and most salient provisions** of **Henry IV's Edict of Nantes**, as promulgated at Nantes in Brittany probably on **30 April 1598**, include:

Henri, by the grace of God king of France and of Navarre, to all to whom these presents come, greeting:

Among the **infinite benefits** which it has pleased **God to heap upon us**, the most signal and precious is *His granting us the strength and ability to withstand the fearful disorders and troubles* which prevailed on our advent in this kingdom.

The realm was so *torn by innumerable factions* and sects that the *most legitimate of all the parties was fewest in numbers.*

God has given us strength to stand out against this storm; we have finally surmounted the waves and made our port of safety–peace for our state.

For which *His be the glory all in all*, and ours a *free recognition of his grace* in making use of our instrumentality in the good work....

We implore and *await from the Divine Goodness the same protection and favor which he has ever granted to this kingdom from the beginning*....

We have, by *this perpetual and irrevocable edict,* established and proclaimed and do establish and proclaim:

I. First, that the recollection of *everything done by one party or the other between March, 1585, and our accession to the crown, and during all the preceding period of troubles, remain obliterated and forgotten, as if no such things had ever happened....*

III. We ordain that the *Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion shall be restored and reëstablished in all places and localities of this our kingdom* and countries subject to our sway, *where the exercise of the same has been interrupted*, in order that it may be *peaceably and freely exercised*, without any trouble or hindrance;

forbidding very expressly *all persons*, of whatsoever estate, quality, or condition, *from troubling, molesting, or disturbing ecclesiastics in the celebration of divine service, in the enjoyment or collection of tithes*, fruits, or revenues of their benefices, and all other rights and dues belonging to them;

and that *all those who during the troubles have taken possession of churches, houses, goods or revenues, belonging to the said ecclesiastics, shall surrender to them entire possession* and peaceable enjoyment of such rights, liberties, and sureties *as they had before they were deprived of them....*

VI. And in order to leave no occasion for troubles or differences between our subjects, **we have permitted, and herewith permit,** those of the said **religion called Reformed** to live and abide in all the cities and places of this our kingdom and countries of our sway,

without being annoyed, molested, or compelled to do anything in the matter of religion contrary to their consciences ...

upon condition that they comport themselves in other respects according to that which is contained in this our present edict.

VII. It is *permitted to all lords, gentlemen, and other persons making profession of the said* ***religion called Reformed***, holding the right of high justice [or a certain feudal tenure], ***to exercise the said religion in their houses....***

IX. We also permit those of the said religion to make and *continue the exercise of the same* in all villages and places of our dominion *where it was established by them and publicly enjoyed several and divers times in the year 1597,* up to the end of the month of August, notwithstanding all decrees and judgments to the contrary....

XIII. *We very expressly forbid to all those of the said religion its exercise*, either in respect to ministry, regulation, discipline, or the public instruction of children, or otherwise, in this our kingdom and lands of our dominion, *otherwise than in the places permitted and granted by the present edict.*

XIV. It is *forbidden as well to perform any function of the said religion in our court or retinue,* or in our lands and territories beyond the mountains, or in *our city of Paris, or within five leagues of the said city*....

XVIII. We also *forbid all our subjects*, of whatever quality and condition, ***from carrying off by force*** *or persuasion,* **against the will of their parents**, *the children of the said religion, in order to cause them to be baptized or confirmed in the Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church;*

and *the same is forbidden to those of the said religion called Reformed*, upon penalty of being punished with especial severity....

XXI. Books concerning the said religion called *Reformed may not be printed and publicly sold,* ***except in cities and places where the public exercise of the said religion is permitted.***

XXII. We ordain that *there shall be no difference or distinction made in respect to the said religion, in receiving pupils to be instructed in universities, colleges, and schools; nor in receiving the sick and poor into hospitals, retreats, and public charities.*

While it recognized **Catholicism as the main religion of France**, the **Edict** also promised certain **'Rights and Obligations' for Protestants:**

- The guarantee of **protection from the Spanish Inquisition** when travelling abroad. *(It is said that when Pope Clement VIII heard that, he said, "This crucifies me.")*

- They were granted **cities of refuge (military strongholds) like La Rochelle,** which were financially **supported by the King, to the tune of 180,000** crowns.
- These cities of refuge were reduced to ***La Rochelle and Montauban*** *by* ***Louis XIII in 1622*** *at* the close of a ***Huguenot revolt in Languedoc.***

- **150 emergency forts** to be maintained at the Protestants' expense.
- **Along with Catholics,** Protestants were expected to **pay the tithe tax and show respect for the Catholic holidays.**
- It also gave them **direct access to the King for resolving grievances.**

For further reading from a Protestant perspective, see this site:

https://www.museeprotestant.org/en/notice/the-edict-of-nantes-1598/