

one of the better times for the French people, a nation used to selfish and inept rulers.

Charles IX, a second son, became ruler in 1560 (late) and held the throne until 1574. Catherine still exerted the power. While a Catholic, the promotion of her own family held a great deal of her interest. In 1561 she sponsored a mass meeting: discussion, disputation for Huguenots and Catholics. Beza came from Geneva, in the hope of some accord, but nothing was accomplished and it indicated to Catherine that some severe measure would be needed. These severe measures included a number of Huguenot wars (eight) and the infamous St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, 24 August 1572, in which all Catholics were instructed to murder protestant neighbors, etc. Thousands were killed in all levels of life and a papal medal was struck in honor of the occasion. But still the Huguenot move continued and grew in fashion.

Henry III succeeded to the chair in 1574 and ruled to 1589. He had been married to a Polish princess due to the ambition of his mother and had been king of Poland for two years. But to return to France...well, ask yourself! He seems to have desired unity and peace but with the family problems it was not likely either could have been found. The intrigue between the ruling houses was so great that he summarily arrested the Duke of Guise and Cardinal Bourbon, found them traitors and had them executed. It filled the land with revolution and Henry III fled to the largely protestant territory of Navarre, where he was assassinated by a roman loyalist.

France then fell under the rule of Henry of Navarre following the war of the "three Henrys" in 1590. He had been raised protestant and became a catholic in order to secure total rule in France..his famous statement being.."Paris is worth a mass" although the accuracy of this is not verifiable historically. He was trusted by the Huguenots and granted the Edict of Nantes in 1598 which guaranteed the Huguenots freedom, permitted them to maintain their own garrisons, gave tax support for their clergy, and invoked a non-aggression pledge. The Edict would stand until 1685. But his concession to Rome would pave the way for the complete turn of France to the Roman fold. The advent of many Jesuits, et al, and the undermining of the Huguenot ideals would continue in the next few decades...eventually on the strength of the edict and national emergencies the French evangelicals would yield much of their privilege and when the Edict of Nantes is reversed in 1685, great