

1598. This promised the Huguenots freedom, maintenance of their own cities and garrisons. They were in effect a "nation within a nation." They were to be loyal to the national government and non-persecutorial of Catholics. Thus in 17th century Europe France had a divided constituency with an "amicable" ecclesiastical diversity with the throne allowing co-existence of the two religious expressions.

The real ruler of France from 1624-1642 was Cardinal Richelieu...Frenchman first and Roman cleric second. ..a very distant second. He worked hard for the modernization of France, sought to create a national army and national image. He overcame the French nobility and the church although a churchman himself, in the quest for a real France. He was a very skillful politician and only slightly religious. He compelled the Huguenots to yield their fortresses in the interest of a united France (a long story behind this) but he continued to work for the honoring of the Edict of Nantes. He provided French money and force to Gustavus Adolphus. Vindictive and cruel, he was very capable as a leader and a man to be feared. He did no personal harm to the Huguenots but his policies left them virtually defenseless.

From 1642 to 1661 Cardinal Mazarin supplied the power for the throne. A naturalized Frenchman, Mazarin continued a policy of reconciliation with the Huguenots. He was, politically, equally capable with Richelieu, and thus a worthy successor. He forbade further arming of dissenting minorities and forbade the annual assemblies so important to the Huguenots. What persecution may have occurred under him was almost incidental, however. A course in the history of France will treat Mazarin with greater authority as he prepared the way for the rule of Louis XIV whom he tutored and groomed for the job.

Louis XIV would rule France from 1661 to 1715. At his accession he agreed to honor the Edict of Nantes. He began this way but officially revoked the treaty in 1685. The Huguenots had given up the fortresses, arms, and become more of a minority in France. Under Jesuit influence, Louis began the systematic oppression of their movement. They were forbidden the right of meeting, their churches were confiscated, their children made educational wards of the state and the Roman church while their ministers were exiled or assassinated. The common people were ordered to return to the Roman church. Many fled France, some coming to the new world, many to England