This is lecture 19 in the series on Reformation Church History. In our last lecture we were looking at the French Reformation and particularly had been focusing on the political circumstances that surrounded that reforming work. We looked at the antipathy of the king toward the spread of the Reformation in France, we looked at the external threat posed to France and to its stability by Habsburg ambitions, particularly the ambitions of Philip II of Spain, and then we looked at some of the serious internal problems faced in France with the spread of the Reformation, problems posed by the great families, the Guise family, the Montmorency family, the Coligny family, the royal family of the Valois, and the royal cousins of the Bourbon family.

We’d also looked at the restlessness of the lesser nobility and seen how Calvinism appealed to many in the lesser nobility, some for quite genuine religious reasons and to others as an ideology, as an ideology of decentralization. That is, for some of the nobility, particularly the Nobility of the Sword, the provincial nobility, Calvinism seemed to provide an intellectual basis on which they could resist the pretensions of the king to consolidate power in his own hands, and Calvinism with its teaching that the lesser magistrates, the lesser figures in a realm, could oppose tyranny seemed to offer them a justification for resistance to the monarch. And so Calvinism, as we saw last time, became extremely popular with this group, and estimates have run that as much as one half or more of the nobility, particularly the Provincial Nobility by 1562, had identified with the Protestant cause.

The result was that France soon found itself facing a series of civil wars, a series of problems of unrest that plagued the country in this sixteenth century and continued to trouble the country beyond. The First War of Religion, as it is known, was fought between April 1562 and March 1563 in a period in which the Protestant nobility began to feel they needed to assert some of their rights and to resist some of the harassment and persecution that their
co-religionists had been suffering. The Second War of Religion was fought from 1567 to 1568, and the Third War of Religion, as it is generally known, was in 1568 to 1570, and so France became a very tense place, a place in which varying religious and political interests began to confront one another on the battlefield, and this greatly complicated the problems of the French monarchy. The problems especially under young kings were complicated as they tried to maintain their own independence, to maintain maneuverability, and keep the country stable and hopefully at peace.

The ways in which these complex issues bore upon one another can be illustrated perhaps by the life and experience of one of the major players in this time and in this day, namely, through looking at the life of Jeanne d'Albret. Jeanne d'Albret known to history as the queen of Navarre, known to history as the mother of the first Bourbon king, was an important player in this period through her connections and through her activities. And by looking at her as one who became a sincere convert to Protestantism but also found as a Protestant significant labors and political responsibilities before her, we can perhaps understand something more of both the character and difficulties of French Protestantism.

Jeanne d'Albret was born in 1528. She was born into a situation of great prosperity. She was the daughter of a king. Maybe not a very important king, but still a king—the king of Navarre was her father. Navarre at that period of history was a small kingdom down by the Pyrenees Mountains between Spain and France, and her father was not only a king in Navarre but also was part of the great nobility of France. Her mother was perhaps even more highly favored in terms of worldly standards. She was the sister of the king of France. Jeanne's mother was Margaret of Navarre, Marguerite Angouleme, the sister of King Francis I of France, a woman of great culture, of great learning, and a woman who in her own life was very devout, very concerned about spiritual matters, and was the woman who had often used her influence to protect Protestantism and to get Protestants out of prison. Margaret of Navarre never herself identified with Protestantism, but she was one who was concerned about the spiritual state of the church and served often to promote reform and to protect Protestants.

Jeanne, then, was born to these two very influential and important figures in France, and Jeanne was their only child. And so as this only child of very important and influential people, she was pampered. She was raised in a home where she had some
twenty servants to care for her and for her needs, and she was carefully educated. She showed herself to be intelligent and talented, and so she began her life in a most favored situation with great opportunities before her. Yet her life was not always easy. Her father and her uncle arranged her first marriage. It was common for young women to have marriages arranged for them in this period. And Jeanne found herself in a situation where she was little more than a political pawn. Indeed she was married in 1541 at the age of twelve to a German duke, and the purpose of this marriage was to cement political alliance between the French royal family and this rather important duke, the Duke of Cleves, in Germany. And so Jeanne found herself as a pawn in the political ambitions of her family, and in spite of the fact that most women of that period had to put up with that situation, Jeanne showed that she had an amazing degree of courage, an amazing perception as a rather young person for what was just, because when the great marriage ceremony was taking place and the officiating priest turned to Jeanne as was the custom to ask if she entered freely into this marriage, she boldly declared that she did not and was being forced into this marriage by her family. That was quite remarkable for her and for her day, and was a sign of that courage that characterized itself so frequently in her life. That marriage was later annulled when the political interests of the kingdom changed and shifted, and Jeanne found herself once again little more than a pawn in the hands of her uncle, the king of France, and her father, the king of Navarre.

The second marriage seemed much more promising. In 1548 she was married to Antoine Bourbon, who was a cousin of the French monarchy. He was a young, handsome man, noble in birth, already proven as an able military leader, and this marriage then gave every promise of being successful and happy. Jeanne seemed genuinely pleased to be married to this great man of the realm, and there seemed to be real devotion between them in the early years. In 1555 Jeanne’s father died and she became queen of Navarre with her husband, Antoine, then, as king of Navarre, but problems began to mount for Jeanne at this period of her life. She bore six children to Antoine, but only two survived infancy: the one who would later become the first Bourbon king of France, Henry, and a daughter named Catherine. At this time also the marriage between the two of them began to show difficulties, and Antoine began to reveal his character as a philanderer, and there were other problems as well.
In this period of her newfound position as queen of Navarre, she became increasingly familiar with the spread of Protestantism. In the years 1555 and thereafter, you’ll remember the key years that the spread of Protestantism in France and Protestantism came to the attention of Jeanne and she began to be fascinated by it. The appeals of the Reformation were several fold to a woman like Jeanne. In the first place, she was attracted by the claim of biblical authenticity that the reforming preachers regularly made. It was their custom to open the Scriptures and show how the Scriptures agreed with their teaching, and that element of demonstrating that the Reformed faith was the ancient faith of the church as found in the Scripture, that it was the pure faith of God’s Word was often very attractive to people in the sixteenth century.

There were other features of the Reformed movement in France that seemed to be particularly attractive to women. For example, the Reformed churches in France insisted that equal justice be handed out in the church courts to men and to women. That is, when the elders were involved in discipline in the life of the church and the life of the congregation, when there were problems that arose, the elders dealt equitably with both men and women, and this was something that women were not always used to in the society of the sixteenth century. For example, there was a case in one of the French Reformed churches where a man had beaten his wife and she had complained to the elders. The elders had remonstrated with the husband, and he declared that there was nothing wrong with beating his wife, that she belonged to him, and the elders then placed him under discipline for that attitude. So this matter of justice was attractive to women as a product of the reforming movement in France.

Another factor that may have been particularly attractive to women in general was the religious importance that Protestants gave to the family. Previously the old medieval church had argued that the most important thing a woman could do with her life was to become a nun, to join the cloister and to devote herself to the service of God in a nunnery, but Protestants insisted that the faithful exercise of duties as wife and mother in the family were more important than being a nun. This gave the ordinary lives of the work of women in the sixteenth century a whole new religious importance that they found very fulfilling and important to them.

Also attractive to women was that they were able to be involved more actively in the worship of God. In the Protestant service, they were called to join in the singing of psalms of praise, and
there was a sense that they, like men, were priests before God. Every believer was a priest, every believer was involved in the service of God and the service of the neighbor, and that sense of being actively involved in the religious life of the community appealed very much to women.

Whatever the exact appeal for Jeanne was, she was gradually attracted, she had some very good advice, some very good counsel, but one of those who wrote to her and communicated with her and urged her to convert to the Protestant religion was Theodore Beza. Beza was Calvin’s right-hand man in Geneva. He was a man of great talent. He was also a member of the lower nobility in France, and so he wrote to advise Jeanne about the wisdom of identifying with the Protestant church. Finally, she and Antoine together committed themselves to conversion to the Reformed church and on Christmas Day 1560 announced their conversion to the Protestant faith. Jeanne later in her life would declare, “Since 1560 everyone knows that it pleased God by His grace to rescue me from idolatry to which I had been too long given and to receive me in His church.” So Jeanne had a sense that the old church had been idolatrous, that she had been filled with superstition and false teaching, and that she had found then in the Protestant church in the teachings of the Reformers, the true Word of God, and she rejoiced in that opportunity for her.

Life, however, did not remain easy for Jeanne. Immediately after Antoine’s conversion, he emerged as one of the most influential Protestant spokesmen and leaders in France since he was a cousin of the king, and many Protestants looked to him for leadership in their struggles, struggles which would lead to the wars of religion. And Antoine for a time enjoyed the flattery and attention that he got, but he soon revealed himself as one who was not genuinely committed to the Reformation. And as the French monarchy began to offer him all sorts of favors and honors in exchange for returning to the old religion, Antoine did return to the old religion and became an apostate.

Many expected that Jeanne would follow him back into the old church. It was customary for wives to follow their husbands in matters of religion, but Jeanne obstinately refused. She declared once that she would rather see her kingdom and her son thrown back into the sea than ever again to go to Mass. This is quite a remarkable statement of commitment and faithfulness of Jeanne’s part. Before her conversion, her family and the son that she had produced and the promise of an ongoing dynasty had
been almost her total concern. In addition to that she had shown great concern for the kingdom of Navarre that she had inherited from her father. These seemed to be the very focus of her life—her kingdom and her son—but now her commitment to the new religion is so adamant that she said she’d rather lose them both than ever to go to Mass and to be involved in what she saw as the idolatry of the Mass again.

This put her in a very difficult situation for a time, because her husband had the legal right of control for her children. He was the one who would see to their education, and she feared that he might well turn them against the religion that she held to, but it happened that only shortly thereafter in 1562, Antoine died, and Jeanne found herself a widow. Queen of Navarre, then, fully in her own right, and able to take over the education of her children and to raise them in the faith that she was saw as appropriate.

Still, life for Jeanne was not easy. She found herself not able always freely to move around the kingdom of France or to return freely to Navarre. She found herself often at the court of the monarch, very much under the eye of the queen mother, Catherine de Medici, at the royal court in France, and the queen mother kept an eye on Jeanne and restricted her movements in various ways, often insisting that she remain in court and at the royal palace and pressuring her to marry her son into the royal family, an alliance that Jeanne feared would compromise his own religious commitments.

Also about this time, perhaps as early as 1561, Jeanne began to show signs of tuberculosis, which would eventually kill her, and so in the midst of these political and spiritual problems that swirled around her, she also had very severe physical problems that she had to face. In the midst of all of this she revealed herself uncommonly faithful and devoted to God, to Christ, and the cause of His church. She showed that faithfulness in a number of ways. She showed that faithfulness in her administration of Navarre. She was a faithful sovereign. She worked to improve justice and fair taxation in Navarre and in some of the other noble territories that she ruled. And in those territories she not only worked for justice and for fairness, but she worked also to see that the Reformed religion was introduced faithfully.

This was a great concern to her, and in that concern she received advice from some notable people.
In 1563 she received a letter from John Calvin offering advice on how she should advance the cause of religion. Calvin wrote, “Now that the government is in your hands, God will test your zeal and fidelity. You have an obligation to purge your lands of idolatry. I take into consideration the difficulties which can hold you back. The fears and doubts which can sap courage, and I do not doubt that your advisors, if they look to this world, will try to stop you. I know the arguments advance to prove that princes should not force their subjects to lead a Christian life, but all kingdoms which do not serve that of Jesus Christ are ruined, so judge for yourself. I do not say that all can be done in a day.” There Calvin expressed a common view in the sixteenth century that sound religion was something that a monarch ought to lead his people in and indeed impose upon his people, and Calvin was calling upon her to fulfill that duty as he saw it and to be faithful as a servant of Christ in advancing true religion in her realm. And yet Calvin recognized the difficulty of doing that and did give her a little breathing room apparently when he concluded his letter by saying, “I do not say that all can be done in a day.”

Nonetheless, Jeanne gave herself to very active involvement in the matter of bringing true religion to Navarre. She purified the churches, as it was often put; that is, she removed images and religious symbolism from the church so that they would not engender superstition. She labored hard to hire ministers to preach and to introduce the discipline of the church. She helped found an academy, we might call it a seminary, in the kingdom of Navarre where potential preachers could be trained and prepared, and all in all she made remarkable progress in advancing the cause of the Reformation in her kingdom. Only about ten months after Calvin had written to Jeanne urging her to undertake this reforming work, a confidant of Calvin’s, Francis Holtmann, wrote back to Calvin and said, “The Queen of Navarre has banished all idolatry from her domains and sets an example of virtue with incredible firmness and courage.” And so there’s a remarkable tribute to Jeanne and her success in advancing the cause of the Reformation in her day.

She was not, as we said, always able personally to be present in Navarre to encourage this because she was often held at court, not really a prisoner, but without permission to leave the court, and even at court she showed her faithfulness. It was remarkable. She regularly organized preaching services and as the court’s attention and concern about the Reformation sort of rose and fell, sometimes she was able to get permission for the Protestant
preachers to preach quite openly and freely. Once the king himself came and listened to the Protestant preachers, and there was hope and expectation that maybe the king himself would become a Protestant. At other times the royal favor turned against Protestantism, and Jeanne was ordered to keep her chaplains, her Protestant preachers to herself, and even then she showed something of her courage. She’d open the doors of her chambers and put the ministers near the open doors and tell them to preach loud, at the top of their voices, so the sound of the preaching could at least float down some of the corridors of the palace, and in all these ways she was determined to promote the faith.

The devotion that she showed to the cause was not without its dangers. One of those dangers certainly was posed by King Philip II of Spain. Philip was mightily annoyed that a Protestant kingdom was to be found right on the borders of his own realm, and he meditated on what he ought to do to deal with that situation. One possibility, he felt, was to make an offer of marriage between Jeanne and one of the Spanish princes, hoping that by passing the real administration of the kingdom from her hands into the hands of a Spanish prince, he could end Protestantism in Navarre or at least seriously neutralize her efforts in that regard. On further reflection, though, he concluded as he wrote, “This is quite too much of a woman to have as a daughter-in-law. I would much prefer to destroy her and treat her as such an evil woman deserves.” So Philip was clear in his hatred of Jeanne and in his desire to see her and her kingdom destroyed, and the reality of an invasion was a very real one that Jeanne had to face and did face, and some of her advisors cautioned her about the dangers that she faced, and her response was one, again, of remarkable faithfulness and courage. She said, “Although I am just a little princess, God has given me the government of this country so that I may rule it according to His gospel and teach it His laws. I rely on God who is more powerful than the king of Spain.” And so in spite of the difficulties that she faced, she remained faithful and labored hard to promote the cause of true religion.

She promoted that cause not only in her own realm but also in France and used her wealth extensively to support the cause of the advancement of the Protestant faith. She founded not only the academy in Navarre but also another academy for the preparation of preachers. She funded scholarships to help for the cost of their studies. She provided money to pay for the travel expenses of ministers as they went preaching. She paid for the printing of an edition of the New Testament to be distributed among the people.
in the churches, and in the midst of the Third War of Religion, she hocked her jewels to help pay for the Protestant cause. So she was a woman who dedicated herself and all that she had to the cause, and that can be seen perhaps as clearly as anywhere in course of the Second War of Religion.

When the Second War of Religion broke out in 1567, Jeanne went to the great Protestant city of La Rochelle, which had a Protestant government and which became the sort of Protestant capital in the course of the war. La Rochelle was on the western coast of France. It was a city well fortified and relatively easily protected, and so Jeanne went there for her own protection and to encourage the Protestant forces there. She ended up staying there nearly three years.

At La Rochelle she was tremendously busy in the affairs of the city. She helped supervise the administration of the city while many of the men were off to war; she wrote treatises of propaganda, we might say, tracts defending the Protestant cause and trying to explain it to the people of France in general. She traveled outside of the fortifications of the walls of the city to inspect them and to see how they might be repaired in the course of battles and once was nearly captured on one of those tours of inspection. When her brother-in-law was killed in battle and had been the Protestant leader at that time, she rushed to the front to meet with the troops and to encourage them and to tell them that her son was willing in time to take up the banner of the Protestant cause in France. She nursed the sick during those years of war, and when the great Huguenot army captain . . . came wounded into the city and was told that he would have his arm amputated, she encouraged him and went through the surgery with him holding his other hand. And so she manifested really quite a remarkable faithfulness and courage and devotion.

She was not a perfect person. She could be dry and commanding in her air and in her manner, but she was a woman with great opportunities and a woman who used them with remarkable faithfulness in the service of the Lord. And when we bear in mind that these later years of her life were troubled by the advance of her tuberculosis, when we realize that when she died on June 9, 1572, she was only forty-four years of age, it is remarkable how much she had accomplished in her life of devotion, and yet her life in some ways would not be regarded as a success because some of the things she most devoutly hoped for did not come to be. Her daughter was raised in the Protestant church and
remained faithful, but her son eventually, like his father, became an apostate. It was Henry IV who finally found that in order to solidify his claims as king of France, he had to become a Roman Catholic, and he did.

Also she would have lamented to see that Protestantism ultimately was not successful in winning over the whole kingdom to its faith, and indeed Protestantism ultimately found itself forced out of France. But I think even had she known those great difficulties, even if she had been able to foresee the sorry end that would eventually come to the French Reformed Church, so would still have declared that God called her to faithfulness and that she did not at all regret the service that she had rendered. She knew that God alone was reliable and that one could not put one’s confidence in the things of this world.

And indeed very shortly after her death (she died in June 1572), in August 1572 the greatest calamity in history befell the French Reformed Church, one of the great calamities of all of church history when many of the leaders of the Protestant movement had gathered in Paris for the wedding of Jeanne’s son into the royal family, a terrible massacre broke out known as the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre. This massacre was focused initially on the leadership of the French Reformed Church and particularly upon the person of Gaspar de Coligny, one of the great, honorable, faithful leaders of the French Protestant Church and a great influence at court. And the leaders at court became convinced that de Coligny was too influential with the young king and needed to be removed from the scene. And so on August 24, in a carefully coordinated attack, mobs broke into the homes of many Protestant leaders and many lesser Protestants, and it is estimated that on that August 24 between three and five thousand Protestants were killed in Paris alone.

The massacre was not limited to Paris, and indeed not limited to Saint Bartholomew’s Day, and in the course of the week that followed, literally thousands upon thousands of Protestants were massacred. Word reached Theodore Beza in Geneva that three hundred thousand Protestants had been massacred, and the whole Protestant world reeled in shock at the news. Probably that figure is inflated. It probably was not as high as three hundred thousand. Some have said that the figure was as low as twenty thousand; other historians have said it’s more like seventy thousand. It’s very hard to reconstruct with the evidence that we have today exactly the size of the slaughter, but even if it’s as low as twenty
thousand and more likely higher than that, it certainly was a huge number that were slaughtered. And the result was that the cream of the leadership of the French Protestant Church was wiped out. The church literally reeled under this staggering blow and in a sense never fully recovered. It did recover in the sense that new leaders gradually arose. They arose, however, often with a much more radical idea of how Protestants should relate to the realm, a much stronger sense of the tyranny of the monarchy, a greater willingness to take up the sword, and yet the original religious impulse, the original religious leadership was never fully replaced and the church seemed to be permanently weakened.

Reactions throughout Europe were strong. Queen Elizabeth of England put on mourning and expressed the way in which she was appalled. Philip II in Spain and the pope rejoiced in the news, and all in all it was a most tragic and difficult time for the French Reformed Church. Two years later, the young King Charles IX died and was succeeded by his brother, Henry III, and Henry III found himself also in a situation of trying to balance now quite radicalized Protestants over and against radicalized Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics formed themselves in the Catholic League in 1576 headed by the Guise family, and that Catholic League then promoted the motto, “One faith, one law, one king,” and that one faith and one law was to be the law and faith of Roman Catholicism.

Henry tried to keep these radical Roman Catholics under control and did that by at one time favoring them and at one time favoring another, but the result was to alienate many and especially to alienate the Catholic League, and on August 1, 1589, Henry III was assassinated by Roman Catholic assassins. The irony of this assassination was that it led to Henry of Navarre becoming the king of France. Henry of Navarre was the next in the line of succession. This is the son of Jeanne d’Albret, and Henry of Navarre at the time of his succession was a Protestant, and so we have the irony of the Catholic League killing a Roman Catholic king because he wasn’t Catholic enough with the result that a Protestant became king of France.

But the efforts of Henry of Navarre to rally support throughout the realm proved to be impossible, especially in Paris as there was a strong commitment to the Roman Catholic faith and an unwillingness to accept Henry of Navarre as king as long as he remained a Protestant. This led finally in 1593 after years of struggle for Henry reluctantly to become a Roman Catholic, and
he spoke the famous words, “Paris is worth a Mass.” His mother had felt that no kingdom was worth a Mass, but Henry expressing that kind of political orientation of politics and of religion that many held in his day became a Roman Catholic for the sake of solidifying his power in the realm.

And so he did successfully emerge as the king of France and did remain a Roman Catholic all his days, but he surrounded himself with a number of Protestant advisors and determined to find a way to protect Protestantism in the realm to give them legal recognition and certain guaranteed rights in law. He accomplished that by issuing in 1598 a document known as the Edict of Nantes. The Edict of Nantes recognized that Roman Catholicism was the official religion of the kingdom of France but declared that Protestants would be allowed certain rights. By the time that the Edict of Nantes was issued, it is estimated that there were about a million and a quarter Protestants in France.

Protestants were given rights of freedom of religion to worship how they would and were given freedom to worship in all the places that they had held prior to 1597. That was a recognition of the de facto power and influence of Protestants and a recognition that in many parts of France they were the dominant religion and should be recognized as such, so Protestants were given a measure of freedom to worship as they chose. They were also guaranteed the right to hold public office; that is, they would not be forced into purely private life by their religion, but they could follow their religion and still serve in public office. They also, and this was most remarkable, were allowed to hold two hundred fortified places and to in effect have their own separate army. One of the great Protestant fears was that if they disarmed, if they genuinely made peace with the realm, that they would soon find themselves overrun by royal troops, and Henry wanted to try to speak to those concerns to try to assure them that their rights would be guaranteed and he guaranteed those rights by allowing them to have to fortified towns and cities and to have their own in effect army to protect themselves with.

And so a remarkable level of two faiths trying to coexist was achieved for a time under Henry IV, and we can see in these actions his determination to try to protect his former co-religionists.

Henry IV's reign was an important and influential one in France, but it came to an end as did that of his predecessor in an assassination. In 1610 Henry IV was assassinated on the eve of
the Thirty Years’ War, which was about to break out somewhat later in Germany, and right on the eve of great tensions between France and Habsburgs, and so once again a king of France was struck down.

Henry IV was succeeded by his son, Louis XIII. Louis XIII is probably best known today as the king who reigned during the days of the three musketeers, but Louis was an important king and was served by a great cardinal advisor, a cardinal by the name of Richelieu. Richelieu, who lived from 1585 to 1642, was willing to grant a measure of toleration to Protestants, but as a loyal servant of the king he felt that it was very unwise for Protestants to have their own army and their own fortified towns and cities. And so Richelieu began to undermine that measure of Protestant independence and Protestant self-protection, and Richelieu systematically began to force the Protestants to put down their arms and give up their fortified cities. There was a great siege at La Rochelle that focused around this very issue and led ultimately to the collapse of La Rochelle and the end of a Protestant armed resistance.

But still under King Louis XIII the Protestant church enjoyed formal protection and toleration, and even though it had lost its own army and fortified cities, it continued to have the right to worship and to survive in the realm. It was also under Louis XIII that the Reformed church was afflicted with certain theological struggles, theological struggles that were associated with the name of Amyrald or Amyraldus, a teacher at the Reformed Academy at Saumur, and this teacher was concerned as to how best to communicate the Protestant faith in these increasingly difficult circumstances in France. He focused on the issue that had become rather prevalent in Calvinism in the early seventeenth century: that Christ had died only for the elect. Amyrald had begun to argue that the gospel could be better communicated if Calvinism said that Christ had died for the whole world and then His saving benefits were applied only to the elect. This position of Amyrald became to be known as hypothetical universalism; that is, that Christ had hypothetically died for the whole world but that in reality his death was applied by the work of the Spirit only to the elect. Calvinism in general rejected Amyrald’s point of view arguing that Christ’s death was not hypothetical in its accomplishment and since He actually was the substitute for sin, He must have actually substituted for the sins only of the elect who would be saved. But Amyrald’s teaching caused a great deal of concern and division within the French Reformed Church and
may have served to weaken it against the blows that would soon come upon it.

The great blow that fell upon it happened under Louis XIV when in 1685, Louis XIV ordered the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Louis XIV was convinced that his realm, he the glorious Sun King, should be united in religion, that Roman Catholicism was the only true religion, and that Protestantism should not in any way be tolerated in the realm. And so he issued the revocation in 1685, and this caused great hardship to the Protestant churches. Some of the Protestants did become apostates and return to the Roman Catholic Church. Many Protestants left the country, fleeing to America or to the Netherlands, and still others held out and suffered great persecution. There are quite remarkable stories of the suffering of the French Huguenots in the late seventeenth and on into the eighteenth century, particularly in the southeastern part of France. And so the story of the French Reformation dwindled down to a rather small number of faithful witnesses in France. Otherwise, the great reforming work that for a time had attracted millions came to an end.

It’s interesting to note that some historians at least believe that Louis XIV in this action prepared the way for the coming of the French Revolution. It’s hard to evaluate that with certainty, but the argument goes that the French Protestants were the very heart of the French middle class, and that by exiling most of them, he so weakened his own economy that he undermined his own throne and it led finally to the collapse of the French monarchy.

In our next lecture we’ll turn to the subject of the Dutch Reformation.