

The Impact of the Huguenot Diaspora on International Commerce

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Abstract

The Huguenot legacy is an important strand of Reformation and early modern history that is relevant in the context of business ethics. A vital aspect of global business emanates from the impact of the Huguenot diaspora, which has left an abiding mark on international relations and commerce. This essay considers the main lines of Huguenot history, salient features of the Huguenot expulsion, and influences of their international resettlements on commerce and global leadership.

Keywords

Huguenots, international business, immigration, France, diaspora, global impact, Reformation

1. *Huguenot History*

The Huguenots began as the French followers of the Protestant Reformation.¹ Their identity was formed particularly through the theological leadership of John Calvin (1509–1564) and Theodore Beza (1519–1605). Their story is a vast tragedy shaped by the unyielding force of the French royalty adhering

¹ The following section relies on Peter A. Lillback, “Huguenots,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization, Volume II, E–L*, ed. by George Thomas Kurian (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell,

to the medieval vision of one France with one king and one religion. From antiquity, that religion had been the Roman Catholic Church.

A precursor of the French Reformation was the French version of the Bible developed by Guyard des Moulins circa 1294, which was published in Paris in 1487. Peter Waldo, the twelfth-century leader of the Waldensians, produced a Franco-Provençal translation of the Bible that ultimately brought the Waldensian forerunners of the Protestant faith together with the early French Protestants. The theological forerunners of the French Reformation were the humanist biblical scholars from “the little flock of Meaux” led by Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples (Faber Stapulensis, ca. 1455–1536) and Guillaume Briçonnet (Bishop of Meaux, 1470–1534). While there is considerable discussion about the origins of Protestantism in France, Calvin was a foundational leader. Other forces for the reformation of the French church included Luther’s writings and the Reformers of Strasbourg. While the French Reformers had great respect for Calvin and the Reformation from Geneva, they exercised a measure of independence.

The origin of the name Huguenot is obscure. It may have been derived from the German word *Eidgenossen* meaning “covenanter,” or “confederate” since a key idea of the Reformed tradition and Calvin’s theology was God’s covenant of grace with his elect people.

Scholars estimate that by 1562, some two million French Huguenots were gathering in more than two thousand churches. This remarkable success of Calvin’s Reformation in France—Calvin himself being an early exile from France—created cultural tensions that eventuated in the so-called wars of religion. The dramatic growth of the Huguenots resulted in severe tensions between the Reformers and the established Roman Catholic Church. Changes caused by the teachings of the Reformers impacted not only the church but also the state, the university, and popular culture. Because the church and the king were so intimately connected in the political tradition that passed to the Reformation from the Middle Ages,

2011), 1158–60. For literature on the Huguenots, see Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller, *Warriors of the Word: A History of the French Wars of Religion, 1562–1598* (Geneva: International Museum of the Reformation, 2006); Philip Benedict, *Faith and Fortunes of France’s Huguenots* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America: A Refugee People in New World Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Geoffrey Treasure, *The Huguenots* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); and Raymond A. Mentzer and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, eds., *A Companion to the Huguenots* (Boston: Brill, 2016). For Huguenots and the economy, see especially Warren Candler Scoville, *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development, 1680–1720* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); Warren Candler Scoville, “The Huguenots and the Diffusion of Technology,” *Journal of Political Economy* 60.4 (1952): 294–311, <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/257238>.

theological controversies inevitably created political tensions and leaders who defended their king's confession of faith by the sword or the pen and sometimes by both.

The first of the French wars of religion broke out in 1562, while Calvin was still alive. On March first of that year, troops led by Francis, Duke of Guise, attacked three hundred Huguenots worshipping in a barn outside the town wall of Vassy. With some sixty killed and a hundred more wounded, the opening salvo of the French wars of religion was fired.

Later in 1562, the Edict of Saint Germain granted limited religious liberty to French Calvinists. They were prohibited from religious practice in towns and at night and were prevented from carrying arms. The foremost military leader of the Huguenots was Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1519–1572), who was a member of the Montmorency noble family.

Ten years later, beginning on Saint Bartholomew's Day, August 23, 1572, a surprise assault came upon the French Calvinists and killed tens of thousands of Huguenots across France. This two-month carnage emanating from Paris to more than ten cities launched the first Huguenot emigration to England, Germany, and the Netherlands.²

The life of Coligny, a heroic and loyal warrior for the crown, came to a tragic end when he was murdered during the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. Scholars have debated who was most responsible for the Massacre, in which the horrific carnage totaled in the thousands. Some have pointed to Queen Mother Catherine de Medici (1519–1589) and others to the deeply anti-Huguenot Guise family.

The sinister character of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre is deepened by the context in which it occurred. Coligny and other Huguenot leaders were in Paris because they had been invited to celebrate the royal wedding of Henri of Navarre (1553–1610). Henri, a Protestant, was marrying Margaret of Valois, a Catholic and sister of Charles IX (d. 1574). The arranged marriage was viewed as a diplomatic step toward peace between Protestants and Catholics. But only four days after the wedding, the Massacre began. Henri was imprisoned for over three years and forced to convert to Catholicism. After his escape, he returned to his Protestant faith and the leadership of the Huguenots.

The Edict of Nantes in April 1598 ended years of civil war and granted a tenuous period of expanded but still limited civil liberties for Huguenots. The high point of the Huguenots' influence in France came under Henri's

² Barbara B. Diefendorf, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009).

“irrevocable and perpetual” 1598 Edict of Nantes, which unfortunately lasted only until 1685. This decree by Henri, who had become King Henri IV (reigned 1589–1610), gave the Huguenots significant freedoms and protections. But Henri’s experiment in religious liberty came at a personal cost. On the outskirts of Paris, he realized he could not unite France without Paris, but he could not conquer Paris as a Protestant since it desired a Catholic king. Henri solved this political problem by abjuring his Protestant faith again—this time freely—to become the Catholic King of France. His decision to convert to Catholicism has been captured by the undocumented statement, “Paris is well worth a Mass!” A little over a decade after the Edict, Henri died from the wound of a radical Roman Catholic assassin. Henri’s Huguenot attendant reported that he recommitted himself to his original Huguenot faith on his deathbed.

There were eight wars of religion until a period of uneasy peace was established by the signing of the Edict of Nantes in 1598. To keep his Protestant brethren loyal after the abjuration of his Calvinist creed, Henri appointed his trusted friend, Reformed theologian, warrior, and Huguenot statesman Phillippe du Plessis-Mornay (1549–1623), to care for his Huguenot citizens. Under Mornay’s leadership, the Edict of Nantes was signed. During this period, the Huguenots enjoyed control of two hundred cities, with government subsidies for their soldiers, freedom to worship, rights in government and the courts, and funding for the establishment of several important theological schools, such as those in Saumur, Montauban, and Montpellier, with state funding for the support of their pastors. Mornay’s relationship with Henri ended in 1600, when he was disgraced by the king and went into retirement at Saumur.

However, the Roman Catholics slowly reclaimed the rights, property, and honors they had lost due to the Edict of Nantes during the gradual erosion of the Edict’s provisions, which culminated in the eradication of Huguenot civil liberties by the Edict of Fontainebleau, popularly known as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685. In the successive reigns of Henri IV’s descendants, the Huguenots were consistently threatened and eventually directly assaulted.

One of the key events that assured the demise of the Huguenots was the ruthless siege of the Protestant stronghold of La Rochelle (1628) under the crafty leadership of Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642). With the defeat of this Huguenot stronghold on the Atlantic coast, the supply line for Huguenot support from European Protestant nations was closed. Richelieu sought through statesmanship to advance French power in Europe without regard for religion, so he attacked the Protestant Huguenots in France but

supported the Protestant states in Europe to diminish the power of the Catholic Hapsburgs in relationship to France during the Thirty Years War. The acceptance of Richelieu's political policies by the French monarchy "made his King first in Europe, but second in power to Richelieu in France."

The final blow to the Huguenots occurred under Louis XIV (1638–1715). Louis, the "Sun King," famously declared, "I am the state." Having been persuaded by his advisors that there were few Huguenots left in France and that the kingdom would benefit from the eradication of those who remained, the powerful monarch signed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The ultimate impact of this royal fiat and reversal of Henri IV's toleration of the Huguenots was their massive exile to the Protestant nations of the world and their demise in France.

Louis XIV reigned for more than seventy years (1643–1715). He renewed persecution of the Huguenots, seizing homes and forcing conversions. In 1685, he enacted the Edict of Fontainebleau, revoking the Edict of Nantes. With their faith outlawed, the Huguenots faced forced conversion, the removal of children, execution, confiscation, incarceration, and forced service on galleys. Stripped of civil liberties (unable to marry, worship, attend school, own property, or seek redress in court) and without military and legal protection, the Huguenots either fled, were killed, went into hiding, or endured forced conversion. The repressive policies of the crown included the wholesale destruction of the Huguenots' "temples,"³ often by their own hands.

Huguenot clergy were hung, tortured, imprisoned, or sent to the galleys, while Huguenot children were forcibly removed from their homes and raised as Catholics. Catholic citizens were encouraged to report any secret Huguenot worship services and then were rewarded with the property of the Huguenots who were captured. Military raids were regularly deployed to eradicate Protestant worship and practice. Known as *dragonnades*, since they were accomplished by the "dragons," or dragoons, they often culminated in the quartering of soldiers in Huguenot homes to impose and to ensure the anti-Protestant restrictions.

The escalating assaults on the Huguenots stripped them of one civil right after another. Their fidelity to their faith ultimately brought them execution, imprisonment, or expulsion from France. The flight of some two hundred thousand unrelenting Huguenots spawned widespread settlements throughout Europe, South Africa, and the new world.

The courageous and often poor Huguenots who remained in France continued to worship, but they had to do so in secret. Since this often

³ The Huguenots were forbidden to call their buildings churches.

happened in wilderness areas, they began to speak of themselves as “the church in the desert.” One of the great Huguenot leaders in the desert was Claude Brousson (1647–1698).⁴ Brousson had been an outspoken Huguenot attorney. When he was no longer able to defend the Huguenots in court, he turned preacher, missionary, theological writer, and international advocate, counseling passive resistance. After several years of itinerate ministry in the desert, which included near-miraculous escapes and providential interventions, he was captured and martyred.

The final armed struggle of the Huguenots occurred in the desert of the Cévennes Mountains in 1702–4. The revolt of the “Camisards” (the French word for “shirt”; the people had no uniforms) resulted in several battles that ultimately crushed the last of the Huguenot resistance. This period of suffering has left remarkable stories of heroic service and martyrdom and intriguing reports of extraordinary acts of God’s providence on behalf of his persecuted people.

II. *The Huguenot Diaspora*

The majority of the Huguenots were unable or unwilling to emigrate to avoid the mounting persecution by the Roman Catholic royalty. As a result, many Protestants succumbed to forced conversions or endured great suffering and even death. Approximately two hundred thousand fled, creating one of the largest mass exiles in history.⁵ The Huguenot refugees sought asylum wherever they might be welcomed, particularly in Protestant regions, resulting in the creation of Huguenot communities in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, America, and South Africa.

The Huguenots ultimately regained rights as citizens in the aftermath of the French Revolution with the establishment of Napoleonic law. In 1985, commemorating the tricentenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, President François Mitterrand offered a formal apology to the descendants of Huguenots around the world. The government produced a postage stamp declaring “France is the home of the Huguenots” (*l'accueil des Huguenots*).⁶

⁴ For more on Brousson, see Walter C. Utt and Brian E. Strayer, *The Bellicose Dove: Claude Brousson and Protestant Resistance to Louis XIV, 1647–1698* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003).

⁵ Cf. for information on the Huguenots, “Huguenots,” Wikipedia, April 11, 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huguenots>.

⁶ François Mitterrand, “Allocution de M. François Mitterrand, Président de la République, aux cérémonies du tricentenaire de la Révocation de l’Edit de Nantes, sur la tolérance en

Throughout these regions to this day, remnants of Huguenot culture—churches, French names of towns and streets, and textile and winemaking traditions—endure as reminders of the Huguenots’ global influence.

England was an important destination for the Huguenots.⁷ England’s reception of the refugees began with the charter of Edward VI (1547–1553) permitting the first French Protestant church to be opened in England.

About one-fifth of the Huguenot population ended up in England, with a smaller portion moving to Ireland. The Huguenots are credited with bringing the word “refugee” into the English language upon their arrival in the British Islands when it was first used to describe them.⁸

Scotland, too, was shaped by the Huguenots. “John Arnold Fleming wrote extensively of the French Protestant group’s impact on the nation in his 1953 *Huguenot Influence in Scotland*, while sociologist Abraham Laverder, who has explored how the ethnic group transformed over generations ‘from Mediterranean Catholics to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants,’ has analyzed how Huguenot adherence to Calvinist customs helped facilitate compatibility with the Scottish people.”⁹

The impact of the Thirty Years War on Germany was still being felt in sections of Germany. This added a motive to embrace the fleeing Huguenots. Cities such as Berlin and Brandenburg proclaimed their readiness for Huguenot immigration, and Berlin welcomed thousands of Huguenots.¹⁰ Most Huguenots settled in the Netherlands, especially Amsterdam.¹¹ In 1685, Huguenot refugees found safe havens in Germany and Scandinavia. Some fifty thousand Huguenots established themselves in Germany, twenty thousand of whom were welcomed in Brandenburg-Prussia.

The Dutch Republic became a major destination for Huguenot exiles. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Dutch Republic received seventy-five to a hundred thousand refugees, including two hundred pastors. The Dutch helped support settlements of Huguenots in their colonies at

matière politique et religieuse et l’histoire du protestantisme en France, Paris, Palais de l’UNESCO,” République Française, October 11, 1985, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/137277-allocation-de-m-francois-mitterrand-president-de-la-republique-aux-ce>.

⁷ Robin Gwynn, “England’s ‘First Refugees,’” *History Today* 35.5 (May 1985), <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/englands-first-refugees>.

⁸ History.com, Editors, “Huguenots,” History, March 16, 2018, last updated, September 17, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/france/huguenots>.

⁹ Owlapps.net, “Huguenots,” http://www.owlapps.net/owlapps_apps/articles?id=75899&lang=en.

¹⁰ History.com, Editors, “Huguenots.”

¹¹ “The Huguenot Refuge,” Musée protestant, 2022, <https://museeprotestant.org/en/notice/le-refuge-huguenot/>.

the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and the New Netherlands in North America. The Dutch East India Company gave the Huguenot settlers farmland in South Africa. Many settlers were given land in an area later called *Franschhoek* (Dutch for “French Corner”) in the present-day Western Cape Province of South Africa. The wine industry in South Africa owes significant debt to the Huguenots, some of whom had vineyards in France.

A group of Huguenots arrived in Brazil in 1555 at Guanabara Bay, present-day Rio de Janeiro, and produced the Guanabara Confession of Faith to explain their beliefs. Their settlement was destroyed in 1560 by the Portuguese.¹² A parallel experience occurred with the Huguenot settlement at Fort Caroline, near Jacksonville, Florida, which was destroyed by the Spanish in 1565.

As a result of the Huguenot diaspora, Huguenot culture, craftsmanship, and concern for religious liberty also spread to North America¹³ as the colonies of the New World became an important destination for Huguenot refugees.

In New York, the area around New Rochelle was the home of many Huguenots. Huguenots settled on Staten Island, once called Huguenot Island. Pierre Minuit, according to legend, bought the Island of Manhattan for twenty-four dollars. Isaac Bethlo from Picardie, who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1652, gave his name to the island on which stands the Statue of Liberty. Pierre Daillé from Saumur can be considered the founder of the Protestant church in New York. He had the first temple built in 1686. Daillé had taught at the Academy in Saumur and came to America in 1683.¹⁴

The Faneuil brothers were among the first families to come to the New World from La Rochelle. In 1691, they were mentioned as the first French admitted to the Boston colony. Faneuil Hall, one of the oldest buildings in Boston, was given to the city by the Faneuil family to serve as a public market.¹⁵

¹² “The Confession of Guanabara,” Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, 2022, <https://cprc.co.uk/articles/guanabaraconfession/>; see Alderi S. Matos, “The Guanabara Confession,” *Unio cum Christo* 1.1–2 (Fall 2015): 133–44.

¹³ “The Huguenot Refuge in America,” Musée protestant, 2022, <https://museeprotestant.org/en/notice/le-refuge-huguenot-en-amerique/>; Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, “The Huguenots in America,” Oxford Research Encyclopedias, November 19, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.874>.

¹⁴ “The Huguenot Refuge in America,” Musée protestant.

¹⁵ Jonathan M. Beagle, “Remembering Peter Faneuil: Yankees, Huguenots, and Ethnicity in Boston, 1743–1900,” *New England Quarterly* 75.3 (September 2002): 388–14, www.jstor.org/stable/1559785.

Huguenots also established communities in the Delaware River Valley of Eastern Pennsylvania and Hunterdon County, New Jersey, where Frenchtown marks their presence. Paradise in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, was so named as a Huguenot settlement. The name may have no connection, but Paradise was also the name of one of the Huguenot temples in France.¹⁶

In 1700, several hundred French Huguenots migrated from England to the colony of Virginia. Huguenots also settled in the area of present-day Charleston, South Carolina. The French Huguenot Church of Charleston, which remains independent, is the oldest continuously active Huguenot congregation in the United States.

Huguenots left their mark on American history. Paul Revere, the silversmith immortalized in the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem describing his midnight ride to warn the colonists about a British attack, was a descendant of Huguenot refugees.¹⁷ Other Huguenots in the American Revolutionary era include Jack Jouett, who made the ride from Cuckoo Tavern to warn Thomas Jefferson and others that Tarleton and his men were on their way to arrest him for crimes against the king; Rev. John Gano, a Revolutionary War chaplain and spiritual advisor to George Washington;¹⁸ and Francis Marion, a guerrilla fighter in South Carolina. Governmental leaders Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and Elias Boudinot were all of Huguenot descent. George Washington was a descendant of a Huguenot named Nicolas Martiau.¹⁹

John Jay was an American statesman and Founding Father who served the United States in numerous government offices. The New York native drafted the state's first constitution in 1777 and was chosen president of the Continental Congress the following year. Two of the five people who signed the peace treaty consecrating the independence of the United States, Henry Laurens and Jay, were descendants of refugees. Laurens signed the Articles

¹⁶ Dan Nephin, "Blazing a Path to Paradise," *LancasterOnline*, September 16, 2012, updated, September 25, 2013, https://lancasteronline.com/news/blazing-a-path-to-paradise/article_21a6d8f4-7344-5538-95eb-4cbc82c13c39.html; "Temple of Lyon Called 'Paradis,'" International Museum of the Reformation, 2022, <https://www.musee-reforme.ch/en/tresors/temple-de-paradi/>.

¹⁷ History.com editors, "Paul Revere," November 17, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/paul-revere>.

¹⁸ Jacob Hicks, "The Legend of George Washington's Baptism," Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2022, <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/the-legend-of-george-washingtons-baptism/>.

¹⁹ Helen Holshouser, "Nicholas Martiau, Ancestor of George Washington and Jamestown Colony Engineer—52 Ancestors in 52 Weeks," Heart of a Southern Woman, April 1, 2014, <https://heart2heartstories.com/2014/04/01/nicholas-martiau-ancestor-of-george-washington-and-my-9th-great-grandfather-52-ancestors-in-52-weeks/>.

of Confederation for South Carolina,²⁰ and Jay served as the first chief justice of the United States Supreme Court.²¹

In 1924, the United States issued a commemorative half-dollar known as the “Huguenot-Walloon half-dollar” to celebrate the three-hundredth anniversary of the Huguenots’ settlement in what is now the United States. As we shall consider next, the business world was impacted by the Huguenot expatriates. In America, for example, Éleuthère Irénée Du Pont, a student of Lavoisier, established the Eleutherian gunpowder mills. Howard Hughes, famed investor, pilot, film director, and philanthropist, was a descendant of Rev. John Gano.

III. *The Impact of the Huguenot Expulsion on Global Business*

The impact of the expulsion of the Huguenots from France has been a matter of scholarly discussion. The loss of the Huguenots cost the nation a substantial workforce, and a talented and educated class of citizens. The brutality of the Edict of Fontainebleau may have had a long-term negative cultural and economic impact on France and its national reputation.²² The destruction of French royalty in the French Revolution of 1789 and the ensuing bloody chaos may have been fueled by the cultural memory of the carnage perpetrated on a previous generation of Frenchmen.²³ Typical of the zeitgeist of “*liberté, égalité, et fraternité*” (liberty, equality, and fraternity) at the start of the French Revolution, Dr. Joseph Guillotin addressed the National Assembly in 1789 to argue for equality in executions as well.²⁴ The device he created, the guillotine, bears his name. Might the Huguenot spirit of civility have ameliorated the troubled events that toppled the monarchy and issued in the ascent of Napoléon Bonaparte had France not been bereft of the Huguenot presence?²⁵

²⁰ Robert Brammer, “Henry Laurens, the Founding Father Who Was Imprisoned in the Tower of London,” Library of Congress, May 13, 2020, <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2020/05/henry-laurens-the-founding-father-who-was-imprisoned-in-the-tower-of-london/>; “Henry Laurens,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/chpi/learn/historyculture/henry-laurens.htm>.

²¹ History.com editors, “John Jay,” January 28, 2010, last updated, March 22, 2022, A&E Television Networks, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-government/john-jay>.

²² Cédric Chambru, “What Consequence Did Religious Intolerance against the Huguenots Have in France?,” The London School of Economics and Political Science, October 16, 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2020/10/16/what-consequences-did-religious-intolerance-against-the-huguenots-have-in-france/>.

²³ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia, “Reign of Terror,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 29, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Reign-of-Terror>.

²⁴ Christopher Klein, “The Guillotine’s First Cut,” History, A&E Television Networks, April 25, 2012, updated August 30, 2018, <https://www.history.com/news/the-guillotines-first-cut>.

²⁵ For a study of the intersection of enlightenment and the Huguenot persecution, see J.

France's loss of the Huguenots was the world's gain. John Francis Boshier writes,

Several waves of emigration brought Huguenots to Protestant parts of Europe Some of them found their way to the English colonies of North America, particularly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685. ...The refugees who left France in the generations that settled in America were not only joining the Protestant colonies of English North America but were also joining a cosmopolitan diaspora, a "Protestant international."²⁶

Warren Scoville writes, "One of the mass movements of people who in recent centuries have carried superior skills and processes from one country to other areas which were in some respects 'backward' was the exodus of the Huguenots from France, preceding and following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes."²⁷

The exodus of Huguenots from France created a "brain drain," as many of them possessed significant skills or had occupied significant places in society. The French kingdom

did not fully recover for years. ... The persecution and the flight of the Huguenots greatly damaged the reputation of Louis XIV abroad, particularly in England. Both kingdoms, which had enjoyed peaceful relations until 1685, became bitter enemies and fought each other in a series of wars, called the "Second Hundred Years' War" by some historians, from 1689 onward.²⁸

For instance, the famous French military engineer Vauban wrote a memorial in 1688 to deplore the weakness of France that stemmed from the exiled Huguenots taking with them millions of *livres tournois* (£) of capital and thus accelerating the ruin of French trade and industries.²⁹

The Huguenots were leaders in the textile industry, and so some countries welcomed their arrival, believing they would benefit from the immigrants' industry and contributions to their communities. An example of the positive

Marc MacDonald, "Crossroads of Enlightenment, 1685–1850: Exploring Education, Science, and Industry across the Delessert Network" (PhD diss, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 2015), https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/ETD-2015-03-2022/MACDONALD_CROSSROADS_OF_ENLIGHTENMENT.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y.

²⁶ John Francis Boshier, "Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 52.1 (January 1991): 77–102.

²⁷ Scoville, "The Huguenots and the Diffusion of Technology," 294.

²⁸ "Huguenots," Wikipedia.

²⁹ Cédric Chambru, "Socio-Economic Consequences of Protestantism in Early Modern France: New Evidence, Presented at the European Economic Association's Annual Congress, August 2020," EEA Congress, 2020, <https://www.eeavirtual.org/node/1436>.

impact of French-speaking Calvinists fleeing persecution is the Belier family, who fled to Heidelberg, Germany.³⁰ Calvin's city of Geneva had insufficient room for those who would have settled there,³¹ but the influx of French craftsmanship helped to establish Geneva's abiding reputation as a destination for refugees and for premier clock- and watchmaking.³²

Learning English, joining the Church of England, intermarrying, and succeeding in business enabled the Huguenots to assimilate into British culture. They founded the silk industry in England and served as private tutors, schoolmasters, and owners of riding schools, serving the upper class.

What measurable impact, then, did the nearly fifty thousand refugees entering England have on the nation? Scoville offers the following assessment:

All refugees skilled in preparing and manufacturing silk consequently were cordially welcomed when they settled at Blackfriars in Canterbury and at Spitalfields in London The Royal Lustring Company, chartered in 1692, is said to have had 768 looms at work in Ipswich and London by 1695. French refugees were among its founders and provided much of its skilled labor and management.³³

Numerous other trades benefited from the special skills, processes, and ideas brought to England by the refugees. Protestant glassworkers from Normandy and Picardy, for example, helped the English gain proficiency in making crown glass for windows, cast plate glass, and mirrors. Imports from the Low Countries and France had helped to supply the domestic demand for such glassware until the wars of 1689–1713 cut off the trade. France, even in the seventeenth century, had acquired fame for such high-quality, luxury goods as laces, gloves, fancy buttons, gold and silver galleons, tapestries, and jewelry. ... There were among the French refugees at least 146 goldsmiths, silversmiths, jewelers, and diamond-cutters in London; 14 watchmakers in London; 7 goldsmiths in other English towns; and 43 goldsmiths, jewelers, and watchmakers at Cork and Dublin. Other Frenchmen skilled in these occupations had already fled to England in the sixteenth century, and between 1710 and 1780 their number in London and Dublin continued to increase. Huguenots skilled in the metal trades also set up shops in England, where they fashioned needles and pins, fine quality knives and scissors, surgical instruments, elaborately wrought locks, and kitchenware of iron and copper.³⁴

Scoville notes, "In 1698 it was estimated that woollens engaged the energies of some forty-two thousand Protestant families in Dublin and

³⁰ Peter A. Lillback, *Saint Peter's Principles: Leadership for Those Who Already Know Their Incompetence* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), xxvii–xxviii.

³¹ "The Huguenot Refuge in Switzerland," Musée protestant, 2020, <https://museeprotestant.org/en/notice/le-refuge-huguenot-en-suisse/>.

³² "The History of the Swiss Watch Industry (Part One)," December 2018, Swiss Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2022, https://www.swissbiz.ca/is_article.php?articleid=132.

³³ Scoville, "The Huguenots and the Diffusion of Technology," 300.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 304.

other places.”³⁵ He offers further evidence for the production of hats, paper, silk fabrics, linen cloth, wool, fine hardware, gold and silver thread, window glass, glass tableware, soap, lace, and gloves, noting that “the membership lists of the Huguenot churches include artisans skilled in fashioning precious metals, glassmaking, sugar-refining, beer-making, tanning, hat-making, and various other trades.”³⁶

Scoville provides a report from London of two French government officials, Anisson and Fenellon, sent to England to negotiate a trade treaty. Their assessment is a revealing recognition on the part of French leadership that the expulsion of the Huguenots had been a costly policy for the nation:

It is principally since the epoch of the Prince of Orange’s reign that one must report the decadence of our trade with the English. The privileges and favors which he accorded our Protestants who withdrew to England in great number and who carried there our manufactories of silk, hats, hardware, paper, linen, and several other commodities have broken the usage in England of all similar imported goods which they formerly obtained from us. And the refugees have carried the manufactories to such a degree of perfection that even we begin now to import some of their output. There is reason to fear that they may cause our manufactories to fail by offering their output at lower prices. The raw materials used in these manufactures pay no import duties and neither do the drugs used in dyeing. And all manufactured products which pass outside the realm are also exempted from export levies. Labor which was formerly very expensive in England when employers hired only Englishmen has become as cheap as in France since our religious refugees have gone there in such great number.³⁷

Given the Huguenot work ethic, frugality, and commercial acumen and energies, they likely accumulated wealth and added it to the substantial amount that they were able to take with them in their exodus from France. This suggests an enriching and furthering of the banking businesses of the host nations. Scoville quotes a letter stating that the Huguenots impacted

the balance of trade to such an extent that the sub-director of the mint at London, a French refugee named Foucquier has confessed to us that during the four years of peace after the Treaty of Ryswick, he had received a considerable quantity of our gold louis. This he regarded as a certain proof that we were debtors of English merchants.³⁸

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 311.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.

Scoville adds, “Finally, it should be noted that in 1716 a Huguenot named La Touche formed one of the strongest banks that Ireland had in the eighteenth century.”³⁹

The immediate impact on France due to the Huguenot expulsion is still being analyzed. While there was a “brain drain” impacting France, others have argued that the impact was less damaging on France than often claimed even though the arrival of the Huguenots was clearly beneficial to the host nations.⁴⁰ Cédric Chambru states,

Recent studies have documented how Huguenots fostered productivity and economic development in host countries ...[,] the overall effect of the Revocation in France is still not clearly understood.

After 1685, approximately 200,000 Huguenots, one per cent of the total population, refused to convert to Roman Catholicism and fled to neighbouring countries. There was, however, substantial local variations in the severity of population shocks. For instance, the city of Nîmes, Metz and Sedan lost respectively 12, 15 and 20% of their population within a few years, whereas the population of Rouen and Lyon remained roughly stable.

In many cities and ports, Protestant merchants had carried out a large portion of the foreign trade and dominated the textile industry during the 17th century. In other regions, they represented a significant share of the population, sometimes up to 30%, including among agricultural labourers. Many contemporaries feared that the departure of Huguenots would disrupt trade networks, endanger industrial and agricultural production, and, in turn, reduce living standards.

Chambru’s analysis, however, has led him to this conclusion:

My preliminary findings reveal that, in 1708, there were significantly more localities with a textile industry in areas with a Protestant community, even after taking into account factors such as trade connectedness, urbanisation rate and various geographic characteristics. In addition, I find no significant effect of the departure of Huguenots on the presence of the textile industry. Whereas Huguenot refugees contributed substantially to the diffusion of technological knowledge and economic development of host countries after 1685, the vast majority remained in France and continued to carry out their economic activity during the 18th century.

I show that there were no significant differences in grain prices before and after the Revocation between areas with a Protestant community and the rest of France. That suggests trade networks were well functioning and markets continued to be integrated after 1685 despite the exodus of some Protestant merchants I interpret this evidence as supporting the hypothesis that areas mostly affected by Huguenot exodus were maybe better off in the short-run. While surprising and at odds with the views of many contemporaries, this result is consistent with other empirical findings showing that negative population shocks can have a positive effect on wages and output per capita.

³⁹ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁰ Chambru, “Socio-Economic Consequences of Protestantism in Early Modern France.”

At last, I analyse the effect of the Revocation along one more dimension: the diffusion of human capital. That the Reformation, and more broadly speaking Protestantism, required reading the Bible and was one of the leading drivers of the development of education is a well-accepted fact in the historiography. Its influence in a country where Protestants had always been a minority before being officially forbidden is less well understood. I show that if areas with a higher Protestant population share before 1685 had significantly higher literacy rates in both the late 17th and 18th centuries, the effect was smaller in areas where a significant share of the Protestant population fled abroad.

I document that the French Revocation and the subsequent exodus of Huguenots did not hamper the diffusion of the textile industry or impede market integration, and may have resulted in an improvement in living conditions in the short-run in areas which experienced a significant population loss.⁴¹

There is clearly a difference in the evaluation of the impact of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes on France between twenty-first-century scholar Chambru and early eighteenth-century government officials Anisson and Fenellon, as quoted above.

Perhaps a decisive way to assess the impact of the Huguenot exodus on global business and culture is to move from the historical immediacy of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes to the long-term generational benefits of Huguenot descendants and their contributions to their host nations. When this is done, the vast and abiding impact that those of Huguenot descent have had on Western civilization becomes readily evident by a survey of those who have impacted important facets of Western culture in the realms of the arts and entertainment, education, business, journalism, law and philosophy, military, politics and government, religion, and science.⁴²

A summary of the Huguenot impact on England's business climate by Scoville may serve as a fitting general assessment of the fruitful and sweeping impact of the Huguenot legacy on the modern world:

Although the evidence is not wholly conclusive, the French refugees apparently did not add any major new industry to the English economy. Rather, they developed special branches along lines for which France had already become famous. They raised the level of production qualitatively, and they diffused many of the skills and arts that had long been cherished secrets of French manufacturers. Hence, there can be little doubt that they acted as leaven.⁴³

The Huguenot "leaven" continues to leave its life-enriching mark not just on business, but on culture and global Christianity.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For a list of leading historical figures, see "Famous Huguenots," The Huguenots of Spitalfields, 2022, <https://www.huguenotsofspitalfields.org/famous-huguenots/>.

⁴³ Scoville, "The Huguenots and the Diffusion of Technology," 306.



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