

Timeline of the Reformation 1517–1648

Main events of the Reformation and Counter Reformation in Europe



*Martin Luther in the Circle of Reformers, 1625–50, by an artist of the German School.
Image: DHM Berlin/Bridgeman Images*

1516 (March)

Erasmus published new Greek and Latin versions of the New Testament

1517 (31st October)

Martin Luther made a protest against the Catholic practice of indulgences by nailing his 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg

1520 (August)

Martin Luther published 'To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation'. In this pamphlet Luther outlined the Christian priesthood and also denied the ability of the Pope to interpret the Bible.

1520 (October)

Martin Luther published 'On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church'. In this pamphlet Luther discusses the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church and condemns the Catholic Church and the Pope.

1520 (November)

Martin Luther published 'A Treatise On Christian Liberty' sometimes referred to as 'On the Freedom of a Christian Man'

1521 (January – May)

Diet of Worms

Martin Luther was summoned to answer questions before Charles V Holy Roman Emperor. He was charged with heresy and excommunicated by the Pope.

1521 (4th May)

Elector Frederick the Wise allowed Martin Luther to live at Wartburg Castle. He hoped that removing him from the limelight would reduce his popularity.

1521 (October)

[King Henry VIII](#) of England wrote '*Septum Sacramentorum*'. This pamphlet defended the Catholic Seven Sacraments against the attack made by Luther in 'On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church'. The Pope gave King Henry the title '*Fidei Defensor*' (Defender of the Faith).

1522 (September)

Martin Luther completed his translation of the New Testament into German and the book was published.

1525 (3rd February)

The Anabaptist movement began. Anabaptists are Christians that believe that baptism should not occur until later in life when the subject is able to confess their sins. Anabaptists were disliked by both Catholics and Protestants.

1526 (during)

William Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English was published.

1529 (1st – 4th October)

Marburg Colloquy

This was the name given to the meeting between Martin Luther and the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli at Marburg Castle, Marburg, Hesse, Germany. The two attempted to find common ground in order to unify the Protestant movement but they were unable to settle their differences over the presence of Christ during Communion.

1530 (25th June)

Augsburg Confession

This was the name given to the 28 articles written in both German and Latin outlining Lutheran doctrine. The articles were presented to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V by Philip Melancthon

1531 (11th October)

Ulrich Zwingli was killed during the battle of Kappel which was fought between the Catholic and Protestant Cantons in Switzerland.

1533 (23rd May)

In England the marriage of Henry VIII and [Catherine of Aragon](#) was declared void on the grounds of consanguinity and affinity. A passage in Leviticus which states "And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be

childless”, together with the fact that only one child of their marriage had survived was given as evidence that the marriage was not legal in the eyes of God.

1533 (during)

Henry VIII was excommunicated by the Pope

1534 (3rd February)

Martin Luther published his six part German translation of the Bible

1534 (15th August)

The Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuit Order, was founded by Ignatius Loyola. The male only order was a form of Catholicism.

1534 (November)

In England, the Act of Supremacy made King Henry VIII the head of the Church in England. All links with the Catholic Church were broken.

1535 (6th July)

In England, Thomas More, Lord Chancellor, was executed for refusing to accept King Henry VIII as head of the Church in England.

1536 (6th October)

William Tyndale was found guilty of heresy. He was tied to a stake, strangled then burnt.

1536 (during)

John Calvin published ‘Institutes of the Christian Religion’. This book defined Protestant religion according to Calvin (Calvinism). Divided into four sections the book defines – God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Church.

1536 (11th March)

A bill was presented to the English Parliament which would, when passed, authorize the closure of all monasteries with a revenue of less than 200 pounds per year. About 376 monasteries fell into this category.

1542 (1st January)

The Jesuits were given control of the Spanish and Italian Inquisitions. Their aim was to remove non-Catholics either by forced recantation or death and re-affirm Catholicism.

1545 (December)

The Council of Trent sat for the first time. Called by Pope Paul III it was the 19th Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church and sought to examine and clarify Catholic Doctrine. Protestantism was firmly repudiated and Catholic Doctrine clearly defined.

1546 (18th February)

Martin Luther died in Eisleben, Germany. He was aged 62.

1549 (15th January)

In England the Book of Common Prayer was introduced. Written in English by Thomas Cranmer the book outlined details of Anglican Services.

1553 (October)

[Queen Mary I](#) restored Catholicism to England.

1555 (25th September)

The Peace of Augsburg

This was a treaty made between Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) and the Lutheran Schmalkaldic League whereby the Lutherans were granted toleration within the Holy Roman Empire.

1558 (during)

[Queen Elizabeth I](#) restored Protestantism to England

1559 (January)

John Knox helped to establish a Protestant Church of Scotland.

1560 (during)

The Geneva Bible was published. It was the first mechanically printed, mass produced bible. Printed in English it was compiled by a number of English scholars that had fled England under Mary I and sought refuge in Geneva, Switzerland.

1564 (27th May)

John Calvin died in Geneva, Switzerland

1598 (30th April)

King Henry IV of France granted toleration to the French Protestant Huguenots.

1611 (during)

The King James Bible was published. This bible was an English translation that was authorized by [King James I](#) to be used in England and Scotland.

1633 (January)

Galileo was declared a heretic for supporting the scientific theories of Copernicus.

1648 (October)

The Treaty of Westphalia

This ended the Thirty Years War and brought religious toleration to Europe.

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