

TIMELINE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In many ways the period of history known as the Protestant Reformation could be viewed as a second Axial Age (apologies to Karl Jaspers). Stemming from the European Renaissance, the rise of humanism and political and scientific growth this period in religious history marked a decrease in the central authority and power of the Catholic Church, or more correctly the Latin Church. It was the first of the clashes with Islam which took place outside the Holy Lands and a time when explorers pushed the boundaries of what constituted the known world. In many ways it was to quote Dickens, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” And as Patrick Henry would say over two hundred years later and in a very different context, it was a time “that tries men’s souls.” Before I move too deeply into the Reformation allow me to present a timeline which covers the highlights for a variety of people and events of this age of great change.

Reformation

See also: [Protestant Reformation](#)

- 1517 [95 Theses](#) of [Martin Luther](#) begins German [Protestant Reformation](#)
- 1521 [Diet of Worms](#) condemns Luther
- 1521 [Ferdinand Magellan](#) claims the [Philippines](#) for Spain, first [mass](#) and subsequent conversion to Catholicism, first in [East Asia](#)
- 1522 [Luther's NT](#), German NT translation
- 1525 [Anabaptist](#) movement begins
- 1526 [Tyndale's NT](#), English NT translation from 1516 [Greek text of Erasmus](#), first printed edition, used as a vehicle by Tyndale for bitter attacks on Catholicism, reflects influence of Luther's NT in rejecting [priest](#) for [elder](#), [church](#) for [congregation](#), banned in 1546 by [Henry VIII](#)
- 1529 [Marburg Colloquy](#), Luther defends doctrine of Real Presence in discussion with Zwingli.
- 1530 [Augsburg Confession](#), Luther founds the [Lutheran Church](#)
- 1531 [Huldrych Zwingli](#), Protestant [Reformation in Switzerland](#), independent of Luther
- 1531 [Our Lady of Guadalupe](#) in [Mexico](#) According to tradition, when the roses fell from it the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared imprinted on the cactus cloth. The sudden, extraordinary success of the evangelizing of ten million Indians in the decade of 1531–1541, which constitutes the most successful evangelization ever.
- 1534 [Henry VIII](#) established new independent entity [Church of England](#), see also [English Reformation](#)

- 1534 [Jesuit](#) order founded by [Ignatius of Loyola](#), helped reconvert large areas of Poland, Hungary, and S. Germany and sent missionaries to the New World, India, and China
- 1535-1537 [Myles Coverdale's Bible](#), used Tyndale's NT along with Latin and German versions, included [Apocrypha](#) at the end of the OT (like Luther's Bible of 1534) as was done in later English versions, 1537 edition received royal license, but banned in 1546 by [Henry VIII](#)
- 1535 [Thomas More](#) refused to accept [King Henry VIII's](#) claim to be the supreme head of the [Church in England](#), and was executed.
- 1535-1679 [Forty Martyrs of England and Wales](#)
- 1536 [Desiderius Erasmus](#), Dutch scholar, [Greek NT](#) used in many 16th century translations
- 1536 [Tyndale](#) put to death, left his OT translation in manuscript, English ecclesiastical authorities ordered his Bible burned because it was thought to be part of Lutheran reform
- 1536 [Institutes of the Christian Religion](#) written by [John Calvin](#) ([Calvinism](#))
- 1536 [John of Leiden](#), fanatic Dutch Anabaptist
- 1536 [Jacob Hutter](#) founder of [Hutterites](#)
- 1536 [Helvetic Confessions](#) of the Reformed Churches of Switzerland
- 1536-1540 [Dissolution of the Monasteries](#) in England, Wales and Ireland
- 1536 [Pilgrimage of Grace](#)
- 1537 [Christian III of Denmark](#) decreed Lutheranism state religion of Norway and Denmark
- 1537-1551 [Matthew Bible](#), by [John Rogers](#), based on Tyndale and Coverdale received royal license but not authorized for use in public worship, numerous editions, 1551 edition contained offensive notes (based on Tyndale)
- 1536-1541 [Michelangelo](#) paints the Last Judgement
- 1539-1569 [Great Bible](#), by [Thomas Cromwell](#), 1st English Bible to be authorized for public use in English churches, defective in many places, based on last Tyndale's NT of 1534-1535, corrected by a Latin version of the Hebrew OT, Latin Bible of Erasmus, and [Complutensian Polyglot](#), last edition 1569, never denounced by England
- 1541 [John Calvin](#) returns to [Geneva](#)
- 1542 [Roman Inquisition](#) established by [Pope Paul III](#)
- 1543 [Parliament of England](#) bans Tyndale's translation as a "crafty, false and untrue translation"
- 1545-1563 Catholic [Council of Trent](#), counter-reformation against Protestantism, clearly defined an official theology and [biblical canon](#)
- 1549 original [Book of Common Prayer](#) of the Church of England by Thomas Cranmer
- 1551 The [Stoglav Church Council](#) (One Hundred Chapters) [Moscow](#), [Russia](#)
- 1552 [Joachim Westphal](#) starts controversy against Calvinist, defending Lutheran doctrine of Real Presence
- 1552 [Francis Xavier](#), Jesuit missionary, "Apostle of the Indies"
- 1553 [Pontifical Gregorian University](#) founded at [Vatican City](#)
- 1553 [Michael Servetus](#) founder of [Unitarianism](#), [burned at the stake](#) in Geneva
- 1553-1558 Queen [Mary I of England](#) persecuted reformers: [John Rogers](#), [Hugh Latimer](#), [Nicholas Ridley](#), [Thomas Cranmer](#); of 238 [burned at the stake](#)
- 1555 [Peace of Augsburg](#) gives religious freedom in Germany only to Lutheran Protestants

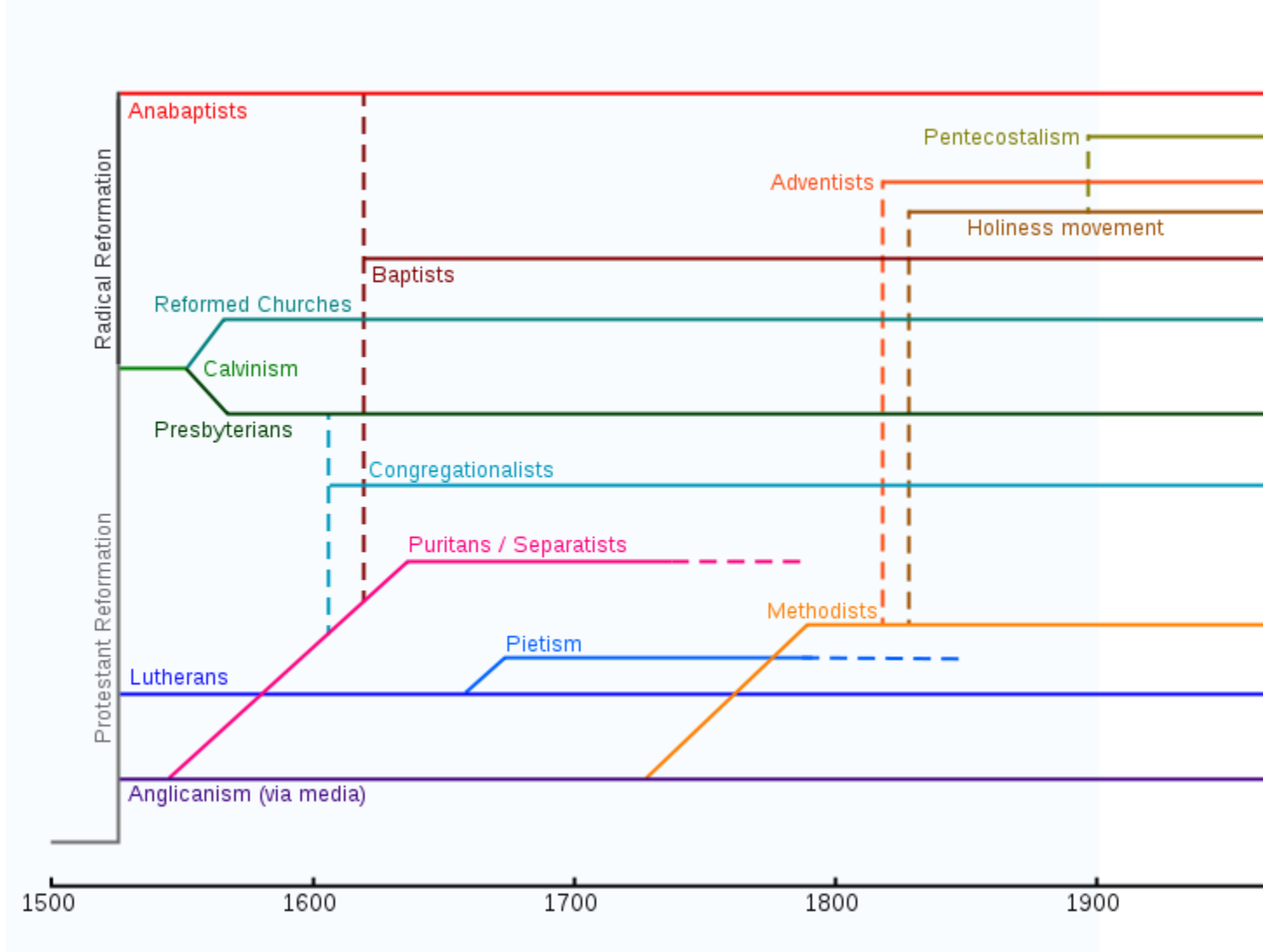
- 1559 Military [Order of the Golden Spur](#) founded by [Pope Paul IV](#)
- 1560 [Geneva Bible](#), NT a revision of Matthew's version of Tyndale with use of [Theodore Beza](#)'s NT (1556), OT a thorough revision of Great Bible, appointed to be read in Scotland (but not England), at least 140 editions, first Bible with chapter and verse numbers
- 1560 [Scots Confession](#), [Church of Scotland](#), Scottish Reformation
- 1560-1598 [French Wars of Religion](#)
- 1560-1812 [Goa Inquisition](#), persecution of Hindus and Jews in India, see also [Christianity in India](#)
- 1561 [Menno Simons](#) founder of [Mennonites](#)
- 1563 [Thirty-Nine Articles](#) of [Church of England](#), also decreed [Biblical canon](#)
- 1563 [Heidelberg Catechism](#) of [Reformed churches](#)
- 1565-73 *Examination of the Council of Trent* by [Martin Chemnitz](#).
- 1566 [Roman Catechism](#)
- 1569 [Metropolitan Philip](#) of Moscow strangled by [Malyuta Skuratov](#)
- 1571 [Dutch Reformed Church](#)
- 1571 [Battle of Lepanto](#) saves Christian Europe; [Pope Pius V](#) organizes the Holy League lead by Don Juan de Austria to defend Europe from the larger Islamic Ottoman forces (230 galleys and 56 galliots)
- 1572 [John Knox](#), founded Scottish [Presbyterian](#) Church, due to disagreement with Lutherans over sacraments and church government
- 1572-1606 [Bishops' Bible](#), a revision of the Great Bible checked against the Hebrew text, 1st to be published in England by episcopal authority
- 1579 Discovery of the holiest Russian icon, [Our Lady of Kazan](#)
- 1580 [Book of Concord](#) of Lutheranism
- 1582 [St Teresa of Avila](#)
- 1582 [Gregorian calendar](#) of [Pope Gregory XIII](#) adopted at different times in different regions of the world
- 1587 [Toyotomi Hideyoshi](#) expelled Jesuits from [Kyūshū](#)
- 1587? Mission Nombre De Dios in [St. Augustine](#), Florida, considered first Catholic mission to North America [\[11\]](#)
- 1589 [Metropolitan Jove](#) is elected the first [Patriarch of Moscow](#)
- 1590 Michelangelo's dome in St Peter's Basilica completed
- 1591 [St John of the Cross](#)
- 1592 [Clementine Vulgate](#) of [Pope Clement VIII](#), replaced Sistine Vulgate of 1590, standard Latin Catholic Bible till reforms of the [Second Vatican Council](#)
- 1596 [Ukrainian Catholic Church](#) forms when Ukrainian subjects of the king of Poland are reunited with Rome, largest Byzantine Catholic Church.

This timeline is from the internet source Wikipedia and is probably the most condensed form I could find to show the scope of activity that was taking place, not only in Europe, but in other hemispheres as well. I am afraid that as Lutherans we tend to take a personal and narrow view of the Reformation. It is my hope that we can look at the bigger picture for a bit of time and

appreciate what was happening outside of Germany and how many of the events in the Reformation echoed what took place during the first several centuries of the rise of Christianity.

In much the same manner that early Christianity invented and defined itself, so the Protestant Reformation opened the flood of discussion about a broad number of topics.

Movements within Protestantism



The above chart is to show how a variety of protestant faith groups came into being during the Protestant Reformation, which I will simply call the reformation for the remainder of this presentation. As with the timeline, the chart is from Wikipedia. What I plan to present is a fast framework of the major theological points and disagreements of the various protestant denominations that came into existence during the early years of the sixteenth century.



Martin Luther: Father of the Reformation.

Protestantism begins with Martin Luther's theology, which is based on the distinction between Law and Gospel. That is, between the Word of God which commands sinners to do what they cannot do; and, therefore condemns them, and the Word of God which promises Grace to sinners and gives what it promises? We are justified by faith alone apart from works of the Law. Because the Gospel is the promise of Christ, it provides a basis for certainty that God is gracious to sinners like us, which Luther could not find in other forms of medieval piety.

Luther's reluctant parting from the Catholic Church concerned the sale of indulgences with the intention of freeing souls from Purgatory. And here I want to delve into the teaching of the church at the time of the Reformation. The Catholic Church teaches that salvation involves a gradual process of sanctification over time. Believers can lose their salvation and become isolated from God. Few people who are in a state of mortal sin at the time of their death are sent directly to Hell. Purgatory cleanses the remained from the temporal consequences of the sins that they had collected during their lifetime on earth. Eventually, the latter will be eligible to be transferred to Heaven.

Some early Church Fathers wrote about an intermediate state after death; a way station on the path to Heaven. These writers included: Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Eusebius, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine. Both purgatory and prayers for the dead were upheld by several Church councils beginning with the Council of Carthage in 394. The existence of Purgatory is based on a very subjective interpretation of Matthew 12:32 and 1 Corinthians 3: 11-15 in addition to the apocryphal 2 Maccabees 12:39-45.

The effectiveness of indulgences was based the *Treasury of Merit*, a church teaching that certain holy people had built up a surplus of good works during their lifetime and could pass these credits to sinners. Luther's objection to the sale of indulgences was that there was no act of

penance on the part of the sinner and thus the forgiveness was not merited. He further objected on the basis that the existence of purgatory meant that Jesus Christ had not died for the sins of all, but only a select few. More on this subject of election in our discussion of John Calvin.

In the posting of his *95 Theses*, Luther attacked both the efficacy of indulgences as well as the Treasury of Merit. Several of his points are repeated and his tone becomes strident and caustic-consistent with any good polemic. During his time of captivity, Luther devoted himself to writing both his Large and Small Catechism. Another point of departure for Luther concerns the Eucharist or communion. The teaching of Luther is that we have only two sacraments: Baptism and Communion. And during the Communion the bread and wine with God's word truly become the body and blood of Jesus. This became a major point of contention not only with the Roman Catholic Church, but also with Calvin and the Reformed movement. One of Luther's colleagues, Phillip Melanchthon, would spend a great deal of time and space defending Luther's position in both the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord.

Since this is intended to be a summary, I would close with a list of Five Things you should know about the Lutheran Reformation.

1. Most people in medieval times had low expectations.
2. The 'Lutheran' reformers were Catholic.
3. People in medieval times weren't allowed to choose their own religion.
4. Martin Luther wasn't the only reformer.
5. Luther and his colleagues cared about what you hear in church today.

Two other minor points: Luther wanted his followers to be called *Evangelicals* and they were not called Lutherans until 1527 at the Council of Speyer.

Calvin and the Reformed Movement



John Calvin, a major figure of Reformed Theology.

Reformed theology, whose greatest representative is John Calvin, joined the Lutherans in teaching the three *solas* of Protestantism. *Sola Fide* (Faith alone) means that we are never justified by works. *Sola Gratia* (Grace alone) means we can never do anything to merit God's acceptance. And *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) means that no beliefs are necessary to accept unless they are in the Bible. At the center of Calvin's theology is "adoption," which means God elects to make some people his children by the grace of Christ. What is new in Calvin's doctrine of predestination is that believers can and should know they are among the elect, predestined for salvation, so they can be certain even in this life that they are already saved for eternity.

While Calvin taught that God predestines some people for damnation as well as salvation; later Calvinists incorporated this doctrine of "double predestination" into a system of eternal divine decrees. The Synod of Dordt (1618- 1619) formulated the classic doctrines of ***Five-Point*** Calvinism, traditionally symbolized by the acronym **TULIP**. This word stood for the concepts of: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints. Total depravity is a doctrine shared with Lutherans, while unconditional election and irresistible grace are shared with Augustine. The Calvinist doctrine of perseverance of the saints, however, stems from Calvin's radical innovation in the doctrine of predestination, teaching that believers can know they are eternally saved because they will persevere to the end in faith. The doctrine of limited atonement is the most controversial of the five. It is found nowhere outside of Calvinism, and even some Calvinists disagree with it.

To perhaps better appreciate the diversity of the Reformation here are a few words about the Synod of Dordt. It was convened by Dutch Reformed pastors and theologians to formalize reformed thought. But, much like the council of Nicea it was also convened to reject Arminianism. This is a Protestant theology in the Reformed tradition (named for Jacob Arminius) which assigned a larger role to free will in salvation. While rejected by the Calvinists and Dutch Reformed movement, it became widespread among both Anglicans and Baptists and was wholeheartedly adopted by John Wesley and the Methodists.

As noted before, Lutherans and Reformed theologians disagreed about the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist or Lord's Supper; Lutherans arguing for the doctrine of real presence and the Reformed insisting that the body of Christ was not physically enclosed in the bread. Calvin attempted to close this gap, but could never accept the Lutheran insistence that even unbelievers receive Christ's body in the Supper.

In terms of theology Luther and Calvin often in disagreement, but Calvin's theology was a major impetus in the development of the Protestant forensic doctrine of justification. What this means is that God declares sinners righteous when they believe. Think of the line from the hymn *Amazing Grace*, "How blessed did that grace appear the hour I first believed." And you can better grasp the concept. For all Protestant theologians, the foundation of all the benefits received by faith is union with Christ. At this time I want to move on to yet another group that emerged during the Reformation the Anabaptists.



Huldrych Zwingli, reformer and the early Anabaptist.

The Anabaptists, meaning "re-baptizers," broke from the Reformed tradition in Switzerland when they could see no grounds for infant baptism in scripture. For the Anabaptists, baptism was only for adult believers, a mark of their commitment to living a radically new life in Christian community. Some Anabaptists were persecuted as dangerous radicals- some of them were. They took over the Dutch city of Münster by force. But after they were slaughtered, the movement took a pacifist turn lead by Menno Simons, after whom the Mennonites are named. Other strands of the radical reformation included the Rationalist Socinians, who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and spiritualists such as Sebastian Franck who denied any need for an institutional church. Other mainline Protestant denomination which sprang from the Anabaptist line are the Baptists, Amish and Mennonites as previously mentioned.

Anglicans and Puritans

Anglican theology, which is the theology of the English Reformation, retains some Catholic sacramental and ceremonial practices (The Book of Common Prayer) but is based on a largely Reformed theological foundation (confessional document *39 Articles*). For this reason it is often called the *via media* or middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Puritans began as Anglicans who desired a more thoroughly Reformed church, divested of the “popish ceremonies” and devoted more seriously to biblical preaching effective church discipline. They disagreed about church government, most opposed the Episcopal government of the Church of England, and a majority advocated Presbyterianism, but there were also influential Congregationalists, including those who founded the New England colonies.

The first Baptists were Puritan Separatists early in the 17th century, who rejected infant baptism because they believed the church was a covenanted community. Key issues for Baptists include whether any kind of baptism outside a Baptist church is valid; whether those who are not members of the covenanted community should be admitted to communion; whether there is such a thing as a non-Baptist church and, if not, whether it is possible if there ever was a time that the Baptist church did not exist.. Later in the 17th century, the Quakers developed a theology and church practice based on turning to the inner light of the Spirit as the true source of revelation. Like the Baptists, their rejection of the claims of the state church led to their persecution and their advocacy of freedom of religion for all.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. With modern communications, how might the Reformation be different?
2. What do you believe about Heaven and Hell and what is the basis of your belief?
3. How important are the sacraments as a part of Christian life?
4. Is the concept of purgatory important to you?
5. In what way is Luther's concept of the Gospel both Catholic and Protestant?
6. Do the three Protestant *solas* seem to you a gain or a loss by comparison to Catholicism?
7. What is at stake in disagreements about whether justification is wholly forensic?
8. Should baptism matter that much?
9. Was it ever a good idea to have an established church?
10. Is the Baptists' radical congregationalism a strength or a weakness?
11. Do you think there is a common core to all religions?
12. Do you think that traditions are opposed to critical rational thought?
13. What do you see as key challenges facing Christianity today?
14. What are the advantages and disadvantages of separation of church and state?
15. How important was theology in your decision to join a particular church?