

THE REFORMATION

Long-standing dissatisfaction at the conduct of the Roman Catholic Church led to a schism in 1517, causing Reformed (or Protestant) churches to spring up throughout Europe. A period of hostility followed as Catholic states tried to reassert papal authority.

In 1517, Martin Luther, a German Augustinian friar, composed his *Ninety-five Theses*—a tract condemning many of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church's hostile reaction forced Luther to reject the Catholic hierarchy and adopt a new theological position. He attracted large numbers of supporters, who formed the nucleus of the Reformed churches which proliferated throughout the German states. Once German princes began supporting this movement, a series of religious wars broke out. Amid the hostilities, more radical Protestant reformers appeared, such as Calvin in Switzerland, while

"A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it."

MARTIN LUTHER, 1519

the English and Swedish kings either rejected papal authority or even adopted Protestantism, increasing the geographical spread of Reformed churches. In 1542, the Catholic church council at Trent strengthened the education of the clergy and clamped down on its more dubious practices, and in 1555, a peace agreement was brokered at Augsburg, granting limited religious tolerance to Protestants. The peace, however, was brittle at best, and renewed religious conflict broke out in France in the 1560s and simmered elsewhere, too, before exploding anew in 1618 in the Thirty Years' War (see pp.168–169).

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY MASSACRE A BLOODY EPISODE IN FRENCH HISTORY

On August 24, 1572, on the instruction of the Queen Mother, King Charles IX of France ordered the assassination of Huguenot Protestant leaders in Paris. Among those marked for death was the Huguenot leader, Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, who was brutally beaten and thrown out of his bedroom window just before dawn. The act set off a wave of mass fanaticism as Catholic mobs took to the streets and massacred 10,000–20,000 Protestants throughout the country.



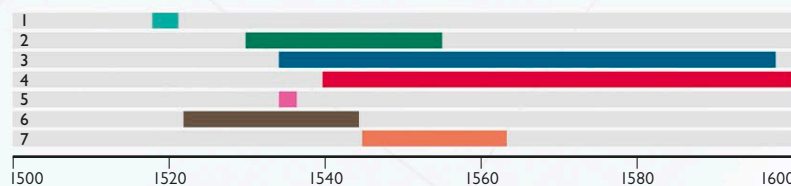
RELIGIOUS MAP OF EUROPE

A powerful force of revivalism swept across Europe following Martin Luther's attack on the Roman Catholic Church in 1517. Secular rulers in Germany and Scandinavia established Protestantism along Lutheran lines. Calvinism became dominant in the Netherlands, Scotland, and Eastern Europe, while Anglicanism emerged in England.

KEY

- Catholic majority areas 1555
- Protestant majority areas 1555
- Frontier of the Roman Holy Empire c. 1570

TIMELINE



1 THE NINETY-FIVE THESES 1517–1521

Martin Luther pinned his *Ninety-five Theses*, to the door of Wittenberg Castle Church in October 1517. The document listed 95 complaints against the Church and adopted new theological positions on topics such as salvation and the interpretation of communion. The tract caused a huge stir throughout Europe, and led to his excommunication by the Catholic Church in 1521.

- ➡ Birthplace of Lutheranism ➡ Spread of Lutheranism
- Lutheran areas

2 CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT CONFLICT 1530–1555

In 1530, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V ordered all Protestant churches to abandon their reforms, sparking a series of wars in the 1540s and 1550s. Eventually, peace was brokered in 1555 at Augsburg, Germany, with the Catholic Church agreeing to accept Protestantism but only in those German states that had already adopted the religion.

- Site of Augsburg Agreement

3 RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN FRANCE 1534–1598

Religious wars initially broke out in 1534 after King Francis I (r. 1515–1537) tried to repress Protestantism on French soil. On St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572, thousands of Protestants, known as Huguenots, were massacred in Paris. In 1598, Henri IV (r. 1589–1610), a former Huguenot, issued the Edict of Nantes, which tolerated Protestantism in France. Protestants also faced persecution in London and Rome.

- ✝ Site of persecution
- ➡ Edict of Nantes
- Huguenot centers

4 CALVINISM 1540–1600

The French theologian John Calvin established a Protestant community in Geneva in the 1540s. His movement advanced a theology more radical than that of Luther, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the doctrine of predestination. Calvinism spread rapidly in France, the German states, the Netherlands, Scotland, and many parts of central Europe.

- Calvinism
- ➡ Spread of Calvinism



5 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND 1531–1534

The Reformation made little headway in England until King Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) quarreled with the Papacy over his decision to divorce (an act forbidden by Catholic canon law) his wife, Catherine of Aragon. He rejected papal supremacy and established in 1534, through the Act of Supremacy, the Church of England and introduced Protestantism to England.

6 THE REFORMATION IN SWEDEN 1523–1544

As Lutheran ideas spread across Sweden, King Gustavus Vasa (r. 1523–1560) sought to establish a national church, still in communion with the papacy. However, following an assembly led by reformer Olavus Petri at Västerås in 1527, Catholic Church property was seized. In 1544, Sweden was officially declared a Protestant nation.

7 THE COUNTER-REFORMATION 1545–1563

The three sessions held by the General Council of Trent between 1545 and 1563 was the high point of the Catholic Reformation. The Church hierarchy upheld papal supremacy and core Catholic doctrines, but reformed education of the clergy and banned abuses such as the sale of Indulgences—where a penitent was able to gain absolution for a monetary contribution.



Church of England

Site of Västerås assembly

Site of Council of Trent

1559 Calvinist reformer John Knox returns to Scotland, beginning the Reformation there

1527 Church synod disendows monasteries, weakening the Catholic Church

1593 Swedish Church becomes Lutheran and adopts the Augsburg Confession of Faith

1521 Imperial Diet orders Luther to recant; Luther's refusal forces him to go into hiding

1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Protestants aggravates religious civil war in France

1545 First session of Catholic Church Council opens the Counter-Reformation

1536 Protestant reformer John Calvin publishes his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

1555 Peace of Augsburg determines that religion in German states be determined by their ruling power

▷ **Martin Luther**
German theologian Martin Luther forever changed Christianity when he began the Protestant Reformation in 16th-century Europe.

