

← **TIMELINE** →

Reform, Counter-Reform, and the New Sciences

Year(s)	Event	Significance
1380–1415	John Wycliffe and Jan Hus call for church reforms.	From England to Bohemia, ideas take root about the form of the Eucharist, morals of the clergy, and so forth. Wycliffe's followers go underground as Lollards in England; Hus is burnt at the stake for heresy, but his followers, Hussites, wage war and win concessions from the papacy.
1517	Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, posts his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Wittenberg church.	Luther's Theses, in which he protests the sale of indulgences, puts him at odds with the politics of the Catholic Church and leads him to further acts of rebellion, which then spark the Protestant Reformation.
1520–1521	Luther publishes four pamphlets and is excommunicated by the pope.	Luther defines his doctrines of faith, grace, and scriptures alone; at the Diet of Worms, he refuses to recant his beliefs; the Pope excommunicates him, and the emperor puts him under imperial ban. As an outlaw to the Church and the Emperor, Luther had to seek refuge with the Elector of Saxony, and this saved him to publish a German Bible and to become the leader of the Reformation.
1527–1534	In his quest for a male heir, Henry VIII of England divorces the Holy Roman Emperor's aunt, Katharine, and marries Anne Boleyn.	Henry's divorce lead to the Act of Supremacy (1534) in which Parliament declares him "supreme bishop" of England, thus freeing him from the authority of the Pope.
1541	John Calvin publishes his <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> in its French edition.	A trained lawyer, Calvin sees God as a stern judge who has predestined the elect as well as the damned from all time; Calvin directs his followers, called Calvinists, to work hard and live godly lives on earth, to found the New Jerusalem, the "City of God on earth." Calvin offers the prospect of salvation to merchants and workers who felt that the Catholic Church preferred poverty and idle lives to their work.
1543	Nicolas Copernicus publishes his heliocentric theory.	Copernicus's theory challenges the long-held belief in the Ptolemaic geocentric universe; however, his writing is not much read for sixty years.

1545–1563	The Council of Trent meets three times to settle issues of Catholic doctrine.	This church council, under papal rule, reaffirms most doctrines, ends the sale of indulgences, establishes new rules on the residency of bishops, and creates many new seminaries for better priest training.
1555	Holy Roman Emperor Charles V establishes the Peace of Augsburg.	Distracted by wars against the Turks and the French, Charles V is unable to crush German Protestants, so he grants the Peace of Augsburg, which enshrines the rule <i>cuius regio, eius religio</i> (he who rules the land decides its religion). He then abdicates in disgust.
1562–1598	Wars of religion in France begin following the end of the long Habsburg-Valois conflict.	The French royal family, often allied to the ultra-Catholic Guises, fights Huguenot families until Bourbon Huguenot Henri IV becomes king and converts to Catholicism to save France (see: <i>politiques</i>). His Edict of Nantes (1598) grants Huguenots some religious and political freedoms.
1566–1581	Calvinists in the Spanish Netherlands revolt against strictness of Philip II, leading to the Dutch wars of independence.	The Spanish are eventually driven out of the Calvinist northern provinces in the 1590s, and the warring ends in 1609, though Spain does not officially recognize the north's independence until 1648.
1587–1588	Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed by Elizabeth I of England; the English navy destroys the Spanish Armada.	Elizabeth I, to make England safe from papal plots and foreigners, executes Mary, Queen of Scots. Philip II launches Armada, but it fails. Elizabethan era marks a golden age for arts and power. The events further establish Elizabeth as a powerful ruler to be feared. Her reign marks a golden age in arts and literature.
1609	In his Letter of Majesty, Matthias, the Holy Roman Emperor, grants religious freedom to Bohemian Calvinist nobles.	The emperor's Letter of Majesty addresses a shortfall of the Peace of Augsburg, which had no provisions for Calvinists. Both a Catholic and a Protestant league form.
1609	The scientific revolution begins.	Johannes Kepler publishes three laws of planetary orbits. Galileo turns his new telescope to the heavens and publishes his findings of new celestial objects and "imperfect" matter. His ideas upset the church.

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1618–1648	Thirty Years' War begins.	The Letter of Majesty is rescinded, which leads to the defenestration of deputies of the Holy Roman Empire in Prague. Leagues war over religion, then over the balance of power: Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs versus French and Protestant princes.
1648	Treaty of Westphalia is signed.	The anti-Habsburg side wins. The treaty grants religious rights to Calvinists, and recognizes as sovereign the Netherlands and Switzerland as well as more than three hundred states in the Holy Roman Empire. France becomes a new superpower.
1662–1725	Royal academies of science form throughout Europe.	Starting with the Royal Society in England, monarchs see advantages in supporting the new scientific spirit apparent in methods of Francis Bacon, René Descartes and, above all, Isaac Newton.
1667	John Milton publishes <i>Paradise Lost</i> .	In this great biblical epic, Milton tries to “justify the ways of God to man” and also to reconcile his Puritan past and Calvinist theology with the restored Anglican monarchy of Charles II. Satan is the hero.
1687	Newton publishes <i>Principia Mathematica</i> .	Newton’s synthesis of new astronomy adds the all-important universal law of gravitation to the theories and observations of Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, and others.