**THE REFORMATION**

**Introduction:**

The **Reformation** (alternatively named the **Protestant Reformation** or the **European Reformation**) was a major movement within [Western Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Christianity) in 16th-century Europe which posed a religious and political challenge to the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) and in particular to [papal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papal) authority, arising from what were perceived to be [errors, abuses, and discrepancies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_the_Catholic_Church) by the Catholic Church. The Reformation was the start of division of the Western Church into Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. It is also considered to be one of the events that signify the end of the [Middle Ages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages) and the beginning of the [early modern period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_period) in Europe.

The Reformation is usually considered to have started with the publication of the [Ninety-five Theses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninety-five_Theses) by Martin Luther in 1517, he was not [excommunicated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Excommunicated) until January 1521 by [Pope Leo X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Leo_X). The [Edict of Worms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Worms) of May 1521 condemned Luther and officially banned citizens of the [Holy Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire) from defending or propagating his ideas. [Gutenberg's](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Gutenberg) [printing press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press) provided rapid spread of religious materials in the vernacular. The initial movement in Germany diversified, and other reformers like  [Huldrych Zwingli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huldrych_Zwingli) and [John Calvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin) arose. In general, the Reformers argued that [salvation in Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation_in_Christianity) was a completed status [based on faith in Jesus alone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_fide) and not a process that requires [good works](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_works), as in the Catholic view. Key events of the period include: [Diet of Worms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Worms) (1521), formation of the [Lutheran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran) [Duchy of Prussia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchy_of_Prussia) (1525), [English Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Reformation) (1529 onwards), the [Council of Trent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Trent) (1545–63), the [Peace of Augsburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Augsburg) (1555), the [excommunication of Elizabeth I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regnans_in_Excelsis) (1570), [Edict of Nantes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Nantes) (1598) and [Peace of Westphalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia) (1648). The Counter-Reformation, also called the Catholic Reformation or the Catholic Revival, was the period of Catholic reforms initiated in response to the Protestant Reformation. The end of the Reformation era is disputed.

**Causes of the Reformation**

* The invention and presence of a [printing press](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_press) in cities by 1500 made Protestant adoption more easy by 1600 through the spread of the new ideology.
* Protestant literature was produced at greater levels in cities where media markets were more competitive, making these cities more likely to adopt Protestantism.
* Ottoman invasions decreased conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, which helped the Reformation take root.
* Greater political autonomy increased the chances of adopting Protestantism.
* Wherever Protestant reformers enjoyed princely patronage, they were much more likely to succeed.
* Proximity to neighbours who adopted Protestantism increased the likelihood of adopting Protestantism.
* Cities that had higher numbers of students enrolled in heterodox universities and lower numbers enrolled in orthodox universities were more likely to adopt Protestantism.
* Regions that were poor but had great economic potential and bad political institutions were more likely to adopt Protestantism.
* A 2020 study linked the spread of Protestantism to personal ties to Luther (e.g. letter correspondents, visits, former students) and trade routes.

**Spread**

The Reformation spread throughout Europe beginning in 1517, reaching its peak between 1545 and 1620. The greatest geographical extent of Protestantism occurred at some point between 1545 and 1620. In 1620, the [Battle of White Mountain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_White_Mountain) defeated Protestants in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) who sought to have the 1609 [Letter of Majesty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_of_Majesty) upheld.

The [Thirty Years' War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War) began in 1618 and brought a drastic territorial and demographic decline when the House of Habsburg introduced counter-reformation measures throughout their vast possessions in Central Europe. Although the [Thirty Years' War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War) concluded with the [Peace of Westphalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia), the French [Wars of the Counter-Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation#Politics) continued, as well as the expulsion of Protestants in Austria.

According to a 2020 study in the American Sociological Review, the Reformation spread earliest to areas where Luther had pre-existing social relations, such as mail correspondents, and former students, as well as where he had visited. The study argues that these social ties contributed more to the Reformation's early breakthroughs than the printing press.

**Consequences of the Reformation**

Six princes of the [Holy Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire) and rulers of fourteen [Imperial Free Cities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Free_City), who issued [a protest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestation_at_Speyer) (or dissent) against the edict of the [Diet of Speyer (1529)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Speyer_(1529)), were the first individuals to be called Protestants. The edict reversed concessions made to the [Lutherans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutherans) with the approval of [Holy Roman Emperor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Emperor) [Charles-V](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_V,_Holy_Roman_Emperor) [three years earlier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Speyer_(1526)). The term protestant, though initially purely political in nature, later acquired a broader sense, referring to a member of any Western church which subscribed to the main Protestant principles. Today, Protestantism constitutes the [second-largest form](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_by_number_of_members) of Christianity (after Catholicism), with a total of 800 million to 1 billion adherents worldwide or about 37% of all Christians. Protestants have developed [their own culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_culture), with major contributions in education, the humanities and sciences, the political and social order, the economy and the arts and many other fields. The following outcomes of the Reformation regarding [human capital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_capital) formation, the [Protestant ethic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_work_ethic), [economic development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_development), [governance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governance), and "dark" outcomes have been identified by scholars:

**Human capital formation**

* Higher literacy rates.
* Lower gender gap in school enrollment and literacy rates.
* Higher primary school enrollment.
* Higher public spending on schooling and better educational performance of military conscripts.
* Higher capability in reading, numeracy, essay writing, and history.

**Protestant ethic**

* More hours worked.
* Divergent work attitudes of Protestant and Catholics.
* Fewer referendums on leisure, state intervention, and redistribution in Swiss cantons with more Protestants.
* Lower life satisfaction when unemployed.
* Pro-market attitudes.
* Income differences between Protestants and Catholics.

**Economic development**

* Different levels of income tax revenue per capita, % of labor force in manufacturing and services, and incomes of male elementary school teachers.
* Growth of Protestant cities.
* Greater entrepreneurship among religious minorities in Protestant states.
* Different social ethics.
* Industrialization.

**Governance**

* The Reformation has been credited as a key factor in the development of the state system.
* It became the key factor in the formation of transnational advocacy movements.
* The Reformation impacted the Western legal tradition.
* Establishment of state churches.
* Poor relief and social welfare regimes.
* [James Madison](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison) noted that [Martin Luther](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther)'s [doctrine of the two kingdoms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_kingdoms_doctrine) marked the beginning of the modern conception of [separation of church and state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state).
* The Calvinist and Lutheran doctrine of the [lesser magistrate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesser_magistrate) contributed to [resistance theory in the Early Modern period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resistance_theory_in_the_Early_Modern_period) and was employed in the [United States Declaration of Independence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence).
* Reformers such as Calvin promoted [mixed government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_government) and the [separation of powers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers), which governments such as the United States subsequently adopted.

**Other outcomes**

* Trial of Witches became more common in regions or other jurisdictions where Protestants and Catholics contested the religious market.
* Christopher J. Probst, in his book Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany (2012), shows that a large number of German Protestant clergy and theologians during the Nazi Third Reich used Luther's hostile publications towards the Jews and Judaism to justify at least in part the anti-Semitic policies of the National Socialists.
* In its decree on [ecumenism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitatis_redintegratio), the [Second Vatican Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council) of Catholic Bishops declared that by contemporary dialogue that, while still holding views as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, between the churches "all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform" (Unitatis Redintegratio, 4).

**Conclusion and legacy**

* There is no universal agreement on the exact date the Reformation ended. Various interpretations emphasized different dates, entire periods, or argue that the Reformation never really ended. However, there are a few popular interpretations. [Peace of Augsburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Augsburg) in 1555 officially ended the religious struggle between the two groups and made the legal division of Christianity permanent within the [Holy Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire), allowing rulers to choose either [Lutheranism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism) or [Roman Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism) as the official [confession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed) of their state. It could be considered to end with the enactment of the [confessions of faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed#Christian_confessions_of_faith). Other suggestions include the [Counter-Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation) or the 1648 [Peace of Westphalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia). From a [Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) perspective, the [Second Vatican Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council) called for an end to the Counter-Reformation.
* In the history of theology or philosophy, the Reformation era ended with the Age of Orthodoxy. The Orthodox Period, also termed the [Scholastic Period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:17th-century_scholasticism), succeeded the Reformation with the 1545–1563 Council of Trent, the 1562 Anglican Thirty-nine Articles, the 1580 Book of Concord, and other [confessions of faith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creed#Christian_confessions_of_faith). The Orthodox Era ended with the development of both Pietism and the Enlightenment.
* The [Peace of Westphalia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_of_Westphalia) might be considered to be the event that ended the Reformation.
* Yet, some historiansargue that the Reformation never ended as new churches have splintered from the Catholic Church (e.g., Old Catholics, Polish National Catholic Church, etc.), as well as all the various Protestant churches that exist today. However, no church splintering from the Catholic Church since the 17th has been done till date.