

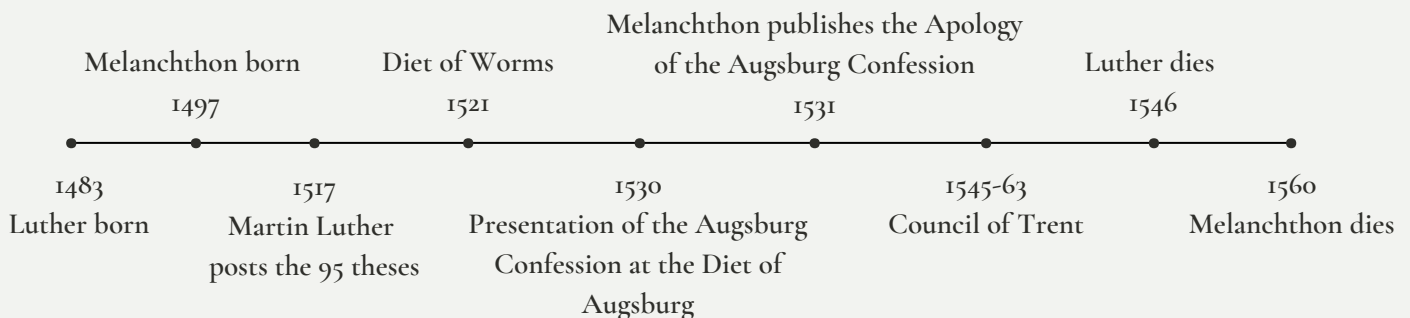


History

The religious reforms that came in the wake of Martin Luther's 95 Theses brought about a controversy that threatened to disturb the unity of the Holy Roman Empire. Yet disunity was the last thing that Emperor Charles V could afford as the Turks threatened to invade his lands and subject his peoples to Islamic rule. As a result, he called a meeting of princes, city leaders, and their advisors, which assembled at Augsburg in 1530 to discuss the religious question. In obedience to the emperor's request, the princes and cities that had agreed with Luther's doctrine submitted an account of their

faith that had been written by Philip Melancthon, an account that is now known as the Augsburg Confession. Containing a brief statement of the Christian faith followed by an extended explanation of the reasons why Luther and his coreligionists had corrected certain medieval abuses, the confession was read before the emperor and the gathered civic leaders and theologians on June 25, 1530. While the Romanist party rejected the Augsburg Confession, Lutherans throughout the empire quickly recognized it as the premier articulation of the Lutheran faith, which is how it came to occupy a prominent place in the Book of Concord.

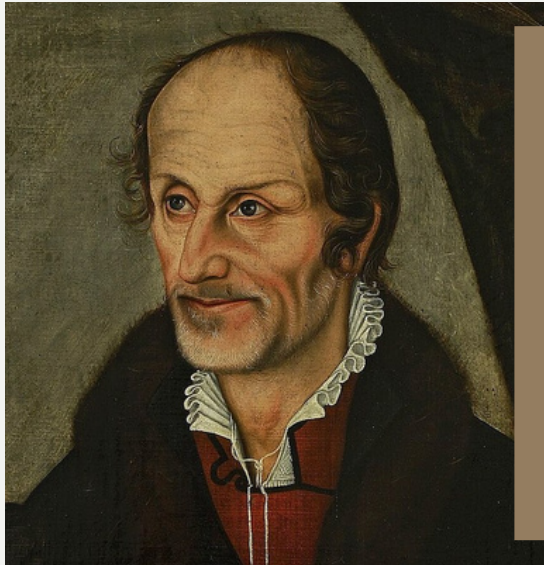
Timeline



Leading Characters

MARTIN LUTHER

Born in 1483 in Mansfeld, Martin Luther left his study of law in order to become a monk in 1505, and his superiors rapidly made him a priest and professor of Old Testament at the University of Wittenberg in light of his intellectual abilities. His 95 Theses in 1517 challenged the practice of indulgences as he had witnessed it and set off a chain of events now known as the Reformation. In spite of papal and imperial judgments against him, Luther continued his reform movement until his death in 1546. His catechisms and Smalcald Articles remain among the Lutheran Church's confessional writings to this day.



PHILIP MELANCHTHON

Born in 1497 in the Palatinate, Philip Melancthon was a gifted student from an early age, was granted a masters degree at the age of 19, and became a professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg in 1518. There he met the famous professor Martin Luther and quickly became a crucial part of his inner circle. When Luther could not attend the Diet of Augsburg, Melancthon was sent as a theological advisor and completed the Augsburg Confession. After the diet, he also wrote the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, another confessional document for Lutherans. He died in 1560 after a long and sometimes controversial career as a professor and reformer.

EMPEROR CHARLES V

Born in 1500 in Flanders, Charles V was the son of Philip of Habsburg and the heir of the rulers of Austria, Spain, and the Netherlands. When he became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519, Charles became responsible for the religious upheavals rocking that area in the wake of Luther's 95 Theses. After his many attempts to restore unity under the papacy by diplomatic means—including the Diet of Augsburg in 1530—failed, he waged war against the Protestant estates in his empire in the Schmalkaldic War, defeating most of them in 1547, yet he was never able to reestablish religious unity. He died in 1558.



Sources

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Augsburg Confession. New World Encyclopedia.

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Diet of Augsburg, Christian Beyer, Germany, n.d.

Portrait of Martin Luther, Georg Pencz, Germany, 1533.

Portrait of Philipp Melanchthon, Lucas Cranach the Younger, Germany, 1564.

The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, Spain, 16th century.