Week 3: 5/4- 5/8

*Monday 5/1*

Read article

What was Martin Luther trying to accomplish by posting the 95 Theses?

How did the invention of the printing press help or hurt Martin Luther's cause?

# Martin Luther and the 95 Theses

Born in Eisleben, Germany, in 1483, Martin Luther went on to become one of Western history’s most significant figures. Luther spent his early years in relative anonymity as a monk and scholar. But in 1517 Luther penned a document attacking the Catholic Church’s corrupt practice of selling “indulgences” to absolve sin. His “95 Theses,” which propounded two central beliefs—that the Bible is the central religious authority and that humans may reach salvation only by their faith and not by their deeds—was to spark the Protestant Reformation. Although these ideas had been advanced before, Martin Luther codified them at a moment in history ripe for religious reformation. The Catholic Church was ever after divided, and the Protestantism that soon emerged was shaped by Luther’s ideas. His writings changed the course of religious and cultural history in the West.

## **Early Life**

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was born in Eisleben, Saxony (now Germany), part of the Holy Roman Empire, to parents Hans and Margaretta. Luther’s father was a prosperous businessman, and when Luther was young, his father moved the family of 10 to Mansfeld. At age five, Luther began his education at a local school where he learned reading, writing and Latin. At 13, Luther began to attend a school run by the Brethren of the Common Life in Magdeburg. The Brethren’s teachings focused on personal piety, and while there Luther developed an early interest in monastic life.

Did you know? Legend says Martin Luther was inspired to launch the Protestant Reformation while seated comfortably on the chamber pot. That cannot be confirmed, but in 2004 archeologists discovered Luther's lavatory, which was remarkably modern for its day, featuring a heated-floor system and a primitive drain.

## **Martin Luther Enters the Monastery**

But Hans Luther had other plans for young Martin—he wanted him to become a lawyer—so he withdrew him from the school in Magdeburg and sent him to new school in Eisenach. Then, in 1501, Luther enrolled at the University of Erfurt, the premiere university in Germany at the time. There, he studied the typical curriculum of the day: arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and philosophy and he attained a Master’s degree from the school in 1505. In July of that year, Luther got caught in a violent thunderstorm, in which a bolt of lightning nearly struck him down. He considered the incident a sign from God and vowed to become a monk if he survived the storm. The storm subsided, Luther emerged unscathed and, true to his promise, Luther turned his back on his study of the law days later on July 17, 1505. Instead, he entered an Augustinian monastery.

Luther began to live the spartan and rigorous life of a monk but did not abandon his studies. Between 1507 and 1510, Luther studied at the University of Erfurt and at a university in Wittenberg. In 1510–1511, he took a break from his education to serve as a representative in Rome for the German Augustinian monasteries. In 1512, Luther received his doctorate and became a professor of biblical studies. Over the next five years Luther’s continuing theological studies would lead him to insights that would have implications for Christian thought for centuries to come.

## **Martin Luther Questions the Catholic Church**

In early 16th-century Europe, some theologians and scholars were beginning to question the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. It was also around this time that translations of original texts—namely, the Bible and the writings of the early church philosopher Augustine—became more widely available.

Augustine (340–430) had emphasized the primacy of the Bible rather than Church officials as the ultimate religious authority. He also believed that humans could not reach salvation by their own acts, but that only God could bestow salvation by his divine grace. In the [Middle Ages](https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages) the Catholic Church taught that salvation was possible through “good works,” or works of righteousness, that pleased God. Luther came to share Augustine’s two central beliefs, which would later form the basis of Protestantism.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church’s practice of granting “indulgences” to provide absolution to sinners became increasingly corrupt. Indulgence-selling had been banned in Germany, but the practice continued unabated. In 1517, a friar named Johann Tetzel began to sell indulgences in Germany to raise funds to renovate St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

## **The 95 Theses**

Committed to the idea that salvation could be reached through faith and by divine grace only, Luther vigorously objected to the corrupt practice of selling indulgences. Acting on this belief, he wrote the “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences,” also known as “The 95 Theses,” a list of questions and propositions for debate. Popular legend has it that on October 31, 1517 Luther defiantly nailed a copy of his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. The reality was probably not so dramatic; Luther more likely hung the document on the door of the church matter-of-factly to announce the ensuing academic discussion around it that he was organizing.

The 95 Theses, which would later become the foundation of the Protestant Reformation, were written in a remarkably humble and academic tone, questioning rather than accusing. The overall thrust of the document was nonetheless quite provocative. The first two of the theses contained Luther’s central idea, that God intended believers to seek repentance and that faith alone, and not deeds, would lead to salvation. The other 93 theses, a number of them directly criticizing the practice of indulgences, supported these first two.

In addition to his criticisms of indulgences, Luther also reflected popular sentiment about the “St. Peter’s scandal” in the 95 Theses:

Why does not the pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?

The 95 Theses were quickly distributed throughout Germany and then made their way to Rome. In 1518, Luther was summoned to Augsburg, a city in southern Germany, to defend his opinions before an imperial diet (assembly). A debate lasting three days between Luther and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan produced no agreement. Cajetan defended the church’s use of indulgences, but Luther refused to recant and returned to Wittenberg.

## **Luther the Heretic**

On November 9, 1518 the pope condemned Luther’s writings as conflicting with the teachings of the Church. One year later a series of commissions were convened to examine Luther’s teachings. The first papal commission found them to be heretical, but the second merely stated that Luther’s writings were “scandalous and offensive to pious ears.” Finally, in July 1520 Pope Leo X issued a papal bull (public decree) that concluded that Luther’s propositions were heretical and gave Luther 120 days to recant in Rome. Luther refused to recant, and on January 3, 1521 Pope Leo excommunicated Martin Luther from the Catholic Church.

On April 17, 1521 Luther appeared before the Diet of Worms in Germany. Refusing again to recant, Luther concluded his testimony with the defiant statement: “Here I stand. God help me. I can do no other.” On May 25, the Holy Roman emperor Charles V signed an edict against Luther, ordering his writings to be burned. Luther hid in the town of Eisenach for the next year, where he began work on one of his major life projects, the translation of the New Testament into German, which took him 10 years to complete.

## **Martin Luther's Later Years**

Luther returned to Wittenberg in 1521, where the reform movement initiated by his writings had grown beyond his influence. It was no longer a purely theological cause; it had become political. Other leaders stepped up to lead the reform, and concurrently, the rebellion known as the Peasants’ War was making its way across Germany.

Luther had previously written against the Church’s adherence to clerical celibacy, and in 1525 he married Katherine of Bora, a former nun. They had five children. Although Luther’s early writings had sparked the Reformation, he was hardly involved in it during his later years. At the end of his life, Luther turned strident in his views, and pronounced the pope the Antichrist, advocated for the expulsion of Jews from the empire and condoned polygamy based on the practice of the patriarchs in the Old Testament.

Luther died on February 18, 1546.

## **Significance of Martin Luther’s Work**

Martin Luther is one of the most influential figures in Western history. His writings were responsible for fractionalizing the Catholic Church and sparking the Protestant Reformation. His central teachings, that the Bible is the central source of religious authority and that salvation is reached through faith and not deeds, shaped the core of Protestantism. Although Luther was critical of the Catholic Church, he distanced himself from the radical successors who took up his mantle. Luther is remembered as a controversial figure, not only because his writings led to significant religious reform and division, but also because in later life he took on radical positions on other questions, including his pronouncements against Jews, which some have said may have portended German anti-Semitism; others dismiss them as just one man’s vitriol that did not gain a following. Some of Luther’s most significant contributions to theological history, however, such as his insistence that as the sole source of religious authority the Bible be translated and made available to everyone, were truly revolutionary in his day.

*Tuesday 5/5*

Read Counter Reformation

Why would the Catholic Church so drastically change it's ways?

When it says they created the Roman inquisition to try heresy, what does that tell us about the trials? (Think Salem witch trials and the Red Scare of the 50's)

**Throughout the middle ages the Catholic Church sunk deeper into a pit of scandal and corruption. By the 1520s, Martin Luther's ideas crystallized opposition to the Church, and Christian Europe was torn apart. In response, the Catholic Church set in motion the counter-reformation. An era of strict conformity and accompanying terror had begun**.

During the reign of Pope Leo X, discontent amongst Catholics in Europe was at an all-time high. The sale by the Pope of indulgences, a guarantee of salvation, was the last straw. Martin Luther became a figurehead for the discontented masses, and his “95 Theses” proposed dramatic reforms of the Catholic Church. With the advent of the printing press Luther's manifesto spread far and wide and garnered widespread support.

The challenge from Luther caught the Pope by surprise. The leaders of the Catholic Church were also frightened by how confidently the Princes of Germany resisted Vatican pressure. These leaders, supposedly subject to the authority of the Church, now declared themselves independent of Vatican rule. Ultimately the Princes' defiance ensured Luther's survival,and prompted the birth of a Catholic movement known as the Counter-Reformation.

In 1545, the leaders of the Catholic Church gathered in the Northern Italian city of Trent for an emergency conference. Their aim was to reclaim the moral high ground, and the superiority of the Holy Mother Church, in the wake of the Protestant challenge. The stakes were high. They were playing for the survival of the Roman Catholic Church.

After 20-years of debate, the Council of Trent established the basis for a Catholic counter-attack. Decrees were issued covering every aspect of Church authority, from the holding of multiple offices, to the chastity of priests, and monastic reform. Ignatius Loyola was charged with forming the Jesuits, a band of militant missionaries whose task was to reconvert the converted.

The “Index of Forbidden Books” was published, naming and shaming 583 heretical texts, including most translations of the Bible and the works of Erasmus, Calvin and Luther. New churches were ordered, with space for thousands of worshippers, and acoustics designed, for the first time, for vernacular sermons. The Catholic Church used the weapon of reform to entice back its disillusioned congregations.

A new agency of obedience was created. Taking its cue from a successful Spanish model, the Council of Trent formally established the Roman Inquisition, to examine and try all evidence of heresy or dissent. No Catholic country was exempt. All crimes in the eyes of the Church would be handed to a local Inquisitor, equipped with all necessary means of persuasion. Guilt was always assumed, interrogation relentless, and torture deployed to squeeze the truth out of a witness.

As Giordano Bruno, Galileo, and even Cosimo I found out, once you were collared by the Roman Inquisition, the only thing you could do was pray.

*Wednesday 5/6*

Read Article

Highlight unknown words (at least 5)

Create vocab Chart

# Three surprising ways the Protestant Reformation shaped our world

 **(CNN)**If you're a Protestant, the anniversary of the revolution Martin Luther set in motion 500 years ago this Tuesday is a big deal. But even if you're not, it should be. The Reformation was one of the decisive events that made the world we live in, for better or worse.

Luther and his followers weren't trying to reshape the world: they were trying to save it. They had a gospel to proclaim and thought the end was near. But in their urgency they trampled down the walls that had kept life in Western Christendom neatly ordered.

Luther outflanked the power of the Catholic Church hierarchy with a new communications technology, the printing press, that allowed him to speak directly to the people. When he was finally dragged before the assembled majesty of church and empire in 1521 and ordered to renounce his errors, he refused, insisting that his conscience was captive to the Word of God, a higher authority than any pope, bishop or king.

Suddenly, everyone had a voice and no one could tell anyone else what to believe. Luther's radical appeal to the total supremacy of personal faith would trigger nearly 200 years of religious warfare.

Bottom of Form

### **1. Free inquiry**

Luther wasn't an apostle of free speech. He wanted Christians to believe the truth, not whatever they wanted. But by insisting that all human authority was provisional and that conscience can be constrained only by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, he ensured that Protestants who try to police the boundaries of acceptable argument will in the end always fail.

Protestantism has given us not a paradise of free speech, but an open-ended, undisciplined argument. It has continuously generated new ideas, revived old ones and questioned its own orthodoxies.

To take the iconic example: slavery, which for centuries Christians had assumed was a necessary evil or simply a fact of life. A few Protestants in the 1700s and many more in the 1800s reached a new conviction: that slavery was an absolute and intolerable evil. The arguments and battles were bitter, but in the end the old orthodoxy was overthrown. Censorship was worn down by Protestants' refusal to shut up when told to, and by their bare-knuckle style of public argument.

Protestant universities and scholars also led the way in the emergence of the new natural sciences in the 16th and 17th centuries. And slowly, reluctantly, one notion a few radical Protestants put about -- that freedom of speech and of worship were actually good things, not just unavoidable necessities to be tolerated -- became a new orthodoxy.

### **2. Democracy**

Luther would have choked on his beloved German beer had you told him that he would lead the world toward democracy. Like virtually everyone of his time, he found the idea horrifying.

But Luther wasn't the last Protestant to defy a hostile government. The movement he started led relentlessly in that direction. Protestants asserted not the right to choose their rulers, but the duty to challenge them. In performing that duty, the Scottish radical John Knox wrote in 1558, "all man is equal."

He didn't mean that the way we would understand it today, and he very definitely meant men and not women. But the idea had a life of its own. A generation after Knox, the Scottish King James VI was accusing his Protestant subjects of plotting a "Democratic form of government."

It wasn't true. They favored monarchy, good order and social stability. But their rulers had an intolerable tendency to defy God's will. Again and again, they were forced reluctantly to take matters into their own hands. They insisted that their voices be heard, and, when forced to, they took up arms against rulers who persecuted them. If we all stand equally before God, it is hard not to conclude that we should all have a voice before this world's rulers.

Left to itself, this notion could have led to the creation of self-righteous theocracies like the one some New England Puritans tried to build. But those have been rare, partly because Protestants are so ready to quarrel, but also because of the Reformation's third legacy to the modern world.

### **3. Limited government**

Protestants have sometimes confronted or overthrown their rulers, but their most constant political demand is simply to be left alone.

Going back to Christianity's roots in ancient Rome, they have tried to carve out a spiritual space where political authority does not apply and have insisted that that space, the kingdom of God, matters far more than this world's sordid and ephemeral quarrels.

The results are paradoxical. Protestants have often been obedient subjects to thoroughly noxious rulers, taking no interest in politics so long as their own separate sphere is respected. They have also given unexpectedly stubborn opposition to rulers who won't respect their demand to be free of government intrusion. In the process, they helped give the modern world the counterintuitive notion of limited government: the principle that a government's first duty is to get out of the way of its people's lives as much as it can. It's a principle they wove into the DNA of the United States.

If Protestantism has given the modern world these three legacies, did it also give us a fourth one, capitalism?

The German sociologist Max Weber famously argued that the "Protestant work ethic" produced the modern economy, and though his evidence didn't really add up, the idea won't go away.

Capitalism first emerged in a group of Protestant countries: the Netherlands, Britain and the United States. In modern times, the years when South Korea's economy grew from $2.7 billion to $230 billion (1962-89) are the same years when the proportion of Protestants in the country grew from 2.5% to 27%. The Protestant surge in Latin America seems to be matched by a similar surge of private enterprise.

"Max Weber," the sociologist Peter Berger said, "is alive and well and living in Guatemala."

As Weber pointed out, capitalism is a system of "restless activity."So is Protestantism. Protestant activism isn't always economic, but Protestants do have a certain itchy instability, a restless, argumentative search for better, truer, purer.

Protestants are forever seeking out new sins or striving to recover old virtues. That self-perpetuating dynamo of dissatisfaction and yearning has certainly had economic effects, and has meant that Protestantism has thrived most during periods of rapid or wrenching social change.

It also means that its behavior is unpredictable. You can never tell where these restless consciences are going to go next. Politicians who imagine they have Protestants in their pockets should beware

*Thursday 5/7*

Reread above article

Which explained impact is most important to us in today's society? (Half a page)

*Friday 5/8*

Write a short essay (2-3 paragraphs) doing two things

1) Explain the importance of the Renaissance and Reformation

2) Chose one to go and relive, explain why or why not?