

**Topic:** The Reformation in England and Germany:  
Politics v. Doctrine

**Grades:** 10, 11

**Course:** World History

**Context:** The Reformation was a religious revolution in Europe in the 16th century. Brought about by dissatisfaction with the established Roman Catholic Church, it led to the creation of the Protestant branch of Christianity. It was started in the early 1500s by Martin Luther, who preached salvation as achieved by each believer. In England, the Reformation arrived when Henry VIII wanted to divorce his first wife and the Catholic Church would not let him; he created the Church of England.

Luther's Reformation was the unintended outcome of an effort to reform the Church from within. His Ninety-Five Theses were not meant for public consumption. However, a stolen copy was printed and distributed using the recently developed printing press, igniting interest in Luther's message of a simplified Christianity. The new humanism, which emphasized individual and personal understanding aligned with Luther's belief that one came to know Jesus Christ through "faith alone." The Church, fearful of losing control of the movement, looked to crush Luther's work rather than actually reform. As Luther refuted Papal authority he gained the support of a number of German princes who were, at least in part, also eager to escape the burden of Church tithes.

England itself actually had two reformations: one under King Henry VIII and one under Queen Elizabeth I. In England, the Reformation first gained a foothold when Henry wanted to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and Pope Clement VII refused to allow it. Before Henry's reign, the English Church had been fairly medieval, and Henry himself was a staunch supporter of the Catholic Church in his youth. There was, however, a slowly growing dissatisfaction with ecclesiastical practice and corruption. When the king's first wife failed to produce him a male heir, the English people understood the difficulties the situation presented; it was a matter of national security, because the lack of an heir could open England up to domination by the Habsburg dynasty. When the pope would not consent to a divorce, Henry rejected his authority and established his own Church of England in 1534, with the king its supreme head. He dissolved Catholic monasteries in 1536, and the state took over much of the Church's wealth.

**Focus:** To understand the deeply religious nature of the call for reform in the German Catholic Church and the importance of faith in the early modern world. Luther's calls to reform motivated people who took religion seriously. The creation of the Anglican Church had religious elements, but was mostly a political event.

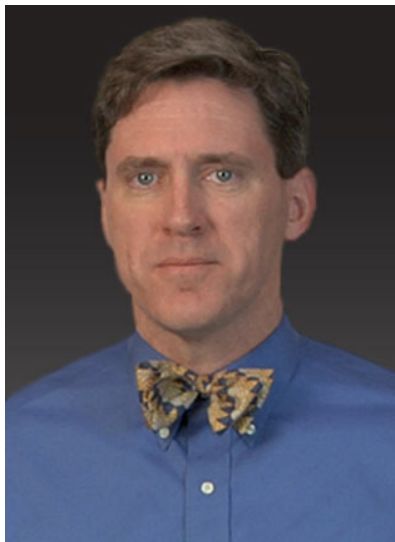
**Outcomes:** Students will understand the primary concerns of Luther as a religious reformer. They will see the difficulties involved in a reform process and the reason for the institutional Catholic response. Finally, students will see the motivations for Henry VIII's separation from Rome and its outcome.

**Factors:**

- The work of Martin Luther
- The corrupt nature of the late Medieval Church
- The political goals of Henry VIII
- The efforts of the Counter-Reformation

**Student Writing:** The Reformation is arguably the greatest social and religious change in modern Western history. Why would this be true? What changes in Germany and England were so radical? Please give at least four examples and explain each.

*This lecture is brought to you by:*



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