

# Luther's changing attitude on the Church

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Preacher: Carl Truman

[ 0 : 01 ] Paul asked if I would give a couple of historical lectures today. He sort of left the topics open to me. What I want to talk on is in the first lecture, I'm going to speak about Martin Luther, but rather than just do a sort of standard, you know, this was Martin Luther and this was the kind of stuff he did, I want to look particularly, I want to trace his biography, particularly relative to how his understanding of the church changes.

So, hopefully this lecture will tie in a little bit with yesterday. It will give some historical examples, if you like, of the kind of things that I was pointing towards yesterday.

In the second lecture, I want to give a, it's a lecture I've given a couple of times before, but I want to talk about B.B. Warfield. Some biographs, some reflections on B.B. Warfield's life and theological contribution.

But first then, Martin Luther. I've called the title, I titled this lecture, Seven Marks of a Healthy Church. Really as a whack against Mark Deber.

At least, Luther remembers that prayer is a mark of the church. Just as a facetious jab there. I think it was Paul Levy who said to me, he said, I wondered if Mark Deber woke up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, realising there were actually ten marks of the church and he had forgotten completely to mention prayer, but the books had already gone to the press and it was too late.

[ 1 : 28 ] Anyway, seven marks of a healthy church because in Luther's great treatise of 1538-1539, on the councils of the church, he gives his most thorough exposition of the nature of the church and church authority.

One of the peculiarities of, well, not Luther, but of knowledge about Luther, is that we tend, on the whole, to focus on Luther in early, mid-career.

It's the Luther between sort of 1516 and 1525, or maybe 1529, the Marburg Colloquy, that has tended to capture the popular imagination about Luther.

One of the problems with looking at Luther, just through that lens, however, is that Luther is a work in progress. He dies in 1546, and there's quite a lot that goes on in the 1520s and 1530s that causes him not to change his mind on things that he said earlier, but certainly to supplement and to add to what he has said earlier.

And I really want today to trace, broad strokes, his early career, through that mid-career phase and up to the late 1530s, in order to show how Luther's own thinking on the church changed.

[ 2 : 47 ] A couple of preliminary comments first. Just a few comments about the Reformation as a whole. I think this probably goes without saying in this company, but I'm going to say it anyway.

The Reformation was, of course, not a rejection of church tradition. No Reformer rejected church tradition. The Anabaptists rejected church tradition.

The Sassinians, of a slightly later date, rejected church tradition. The Reformation did not reject church tradition. What the Reformation sought to do was to correct or to norm church tradition in light of the scripture.

It would never have crossed Calvin's mind to get rid of all that had gone before and build the church from the ground up. He assumes that the church has been right on a whole swathe of things for the previous 1500 years.

His interest is in norming that tradition by the standards of scripture. Reminds, of course, that the Reformation is not a clean break with the past.

[ 3 : 50 ] Martin Luther no more comes out of nowhere than anybody else does. Certainly there is a dramatic break, institutional break, at the time of the Reformation.

But intellectually, we can see that Luther's roots, his intellectual roots, lie in the late medieval period. And much of the scholarly work of the last 60, 70 years of the Reformation has been

involved in tracing out the points of dependence and continuity between Luther and the Catholic teachers he had at the University of Erfurt and beyond.

And that brings me to a point that is sometimes missed about Martin Luther, but is crucial, I think, to understanding him on a number of levels.

And that is, Luther comes onto the scene in the early 16th century at a time and there is great eschatological expectation among numerous churchmen that the world is coming to an end. Late Middle Ages is a difficult time. We're at plague of the 14th century that wipes out, is it, a third of Europe's population. Casts a long, dark shadow over Europe.

[ 5 : 00 ] And by the time we get to the end of the 15th, beginning of the 16th century, we have various of end-time figures popping up. Savonarola in Florence would be an obvious example. Martin Luther is another.

Martin Luther thinks he's living at the end of time. 1521, after the Diet of Worms, popular tracts start to identify Martin Luther with figures in the Book of Revelation, both good figures and bad figures. And Luther, while he never takes the identifications himself, he never distances himself. One of the good ones, anyway. That there is a sense in Luther that things are coming to an end.

And that's very important for understanding the development of his theology. As I'm sorry, it's very important for understanding his approach to the Jews as well. 1523 is quite a remarkable treatise that Jesus Christ was born a Jew.

Argues that Christians should really treat Jews very well in order to open the door for evangelism. 1543, of course, just three years before his death, he writes his famous treatise on the Jews and their lives.

[ 6 : 09 ] A few years ago, I did a bit of research on Holocaust denial for a small book on historical method I was writing. And it amazed me how many Holocaust denial sites have links to Martin Luther's 1543 treatise on the Jews.

Luther turns from being a philo-semitic, we might say, to being an anti-semitic, a slightly anachronistic terminology there.

Why does he do that? Because in 1523, he thinks the world is coming to an end. The Reformation will carry on before it. The Jews will be converted and Christ will return. By 1543, it's patently obvious that isn't going to happen.

And he's looking around for people to blame. And he blames the Turks. He blames the Anabaptists. He blames the Papists. And he blames the Jews. So Luther thinks he's living at the end of time. And that's important because that helps us to understand what looks in retrospect like rather naive confidence that Luther has in the early days of the Reformation.

[ 7 : 13 ] How long are we going for this morning, Paul? If you go to quarter to 11. Okay. Because I could talk for hours on Luther, so I really do need to remember myself. Luther's eschatological expectation will profoundly shape the early years of the Reformation.

It gives him this tremendous confidence. When he returns to Wittenberg in 1520 and preaches a famous sermon, and riots broken out in Wittenberg in his absence, he returns and he preaches a famous sermon that brings the riot into an end.

And he has this great statement in it where he says, you know, people ask me, why has the Reformation succeeded? And I say, I don't know. I've sat around in the pub with my friend, Philip and Amsdorf, drinking beer, and the Word of God was out there doing it all.

Supremely confident statement about the power of the Word of God to carry all before him. As we shall see as we work through his biography. After 1525, things really start to change for Luther. And he begins to realise that the Word of God won't do it all, but actually you need to think more thoroughly at a grassroots level about Christian holiness, and at an institutional level, about structures, and what the Church looks like.

[ 8 : 37 ] Just as an aside, it interests me that the, I don't know if you followed some of the debates about holiness that are going on in the United States, and Luther's quoted a lot, and it is always the Luther before 1525.

It is always the Luther before 1525. After 1525, you have a different Luther, because he realises there's more to it than just preaching the Gospel.

Luther then, protest of 1517, is when he first hits the popular imagination. It's often thought of as the start of the Reformation. A myriad Victorian paintings and book illustrations have the scowling, angry, determined-looking Luther driving a nail into the castle door in Wittenberg, nailing up his 95

Theses, symbolically driving a stake through the heart of the Catholic Church, or a nail into the coffin of the Catholic Church.

Of course, it wasn't that radical. What he was doing was simply advertising debate. And if you read the 95 Theses, by and large, you will probably find them relatively incomprehensible. They are deeply rooted in late medieval debates about penance and indulgences and merit.

There is very little there that one would describe as distinctively Protestant other than it appears to be a protest of some kind. For some reason, frankly, this remains a mystery to me.

[ 9 : 57 ] This tract is translated and printed and becomes a bestseller. It seems that the time is just right for people to have some kind of protest about the Church.

It doesn't matter that people don't understand it. It captures the popular imagination. It appears to be saying rude things about the Pope. It seizes the popular imagination in electoral Saxony and beyond.

It's actually not that radical, as I said. He's, in some ways, if you go and pin up a notice on the Church Notice Board here, saying that you're going to be debating something on a certain day. What Luther's doing is not a whole lot more radical than that.

And I think he has every reason to believe that the Pope will be on his side when he says things if indulgences do what you say, then surely the Pope would let everybody out of purgatory.

I think what Luther's saying is, if the Pope knew what Texel was saying in this indulgence, he'd close him down. Texel can't possibly be right because the Pope wouldn't let this happen. So Luther's protest for 1517 is not such a radical protest.

[ 11 : 01 ] It's really a demand for clarification on the practice of the sale of indulgences that is taking place across the Holy Roman Empire. at that particular point in time.

And of course, Texel is not allowed to go into electoral saxony to sell indulgences because Frederick the Wise, Luther's princely protector, has his own set of relics.

An enviable collection of relics. Luther and Frederick the Wise never meet, actually. If you've seen the movie, the movie's pretty good. It kaleidoscopes, it compresses a bit of the history.

But there is that Hollywood moment at the end. If you've seen the movie when Luther's and Frederick the Wise meet in the relic room in the castle in Wittenberg, and Frederick the Wise is sort of saying, you know, I've had this wonderful collection and you've rendered it worthless.

Never happened. Frederick the Wise never meets Luther. They must have passed in the streets at times. Frederick the Wise, a very clever politician, he always maintained distance, so that if ever it went wrong, Frederick the Wise would be able to say, nothing to do with me, and walk away from the situation.

[ 12 : 07 ] The relationship between them was mediated by a man called Spalatin. If you go into the chapel of the castle church in Wittenberg, it's interesting, Zwingli is up in the stained glass windows as well, I'm not sure that Luther would have approved of that, but Spalatin is there, and who was Spalatin?

Spalatin was the man who made it all possible by connecting Luther and Frederick the Wise, but allowing for political distance between them. Luther's protest, though, brings him to attention, certainly within electoral and ducal Saxony.

More radical, of course, is what takes place in April 1518. Luther goes to a regular chapter meeting of the Saxon chapter of the Augustinian order to which he belongs.

He goes to the city of Heidelberg and presides there over a disputation where he has prepared a series of theses that are actually debated by a man called Leonard Bayer. And it's the Heidelberg disputation of 1518 that I think really marks in some ways the proper beginning of the theological reformation.

It either starts in September 1517 when Luther has a disputation on scholastic theology or April 1518 when Luther engages at Heidelberg and articulates his notion of the theologian, of the cross and the theologian of glory, arguing that there are two ways of doing theology.

[ 13 : 34 ] We could boil it down into very simple terms and say either theology is done by making God in the image of man or it's done by understanding that man is in the image of God.

Either we take our cue from the world around and we assume that what we do is we simply expand that and that human notion of power, extend it to the nth degree and that's something akin or analogous and divine power or we look at the cross and see how God has revealed his power to be, power through weakness.

It's real 1st Corinthians kind of stuff. We also see at Heidelberg an increasing emphasis upon humility as the key. Late medieval theologians of the tradition to which Luther belonged were always looking at what is that thing that one has to do in order to access the grace of God. And what is the requirement if you like triggering God's arrangement with human beings that will bring you into that first initial state of grace. And Luther really by March of 1518 has come to identify, April of 1518 has come to identify that with humility.

Absolute despair of oneself before God. Will very quickly of course morph into his later understanding of faith. Scholars debate about when Luther makes his breakthrough on justification by faith.

[15:00] Some date it as early as 1515. Some push it to 1521, 1522. I think we're all slightly misled by comments Luther makes in 1545 in the so-called autobiographical fragment when he talks about this moment where everything snapped into focus relative to Romans 1.17.

probably it never happened that way. And certainly I think we can trace a more steady development in Luther's thinking that brings him to his mature understanding of justification by faith.

One of the important things though about Luther coming to understand humility as that which if you like triggers the grace of God, that's which brings one into a state of grace, is the impact this has on his understanding of the sacraments.

Catholic Church, even today this is the case, the Catholic Church's authority is primarily a sacramental authority. It's rooted in the administration of the sacraments. Late medieval theologians really weakened that dramatically by making the first condition for salvation, if you like, a non-sacramental one.

How does humility fit with the sacraments? Well it doesn't really. despairing of oneself before God. That doesn't really fit with the sacraments. Of course as Luther's theology matures and he starts to talk in terms of justification by grace through faith.

[16:29] Sacraments again, their position, their role is fundamentally restructured. What is taking place in Heidelberg, though Luther himself I think doesn't fully appreciate this at the time, he sees actually knocking away the foundations of authority in the medieval church.

What gets Luther into trouble in the Reformation is not justification by faith directly, if you like, it's the implications that his emerging understanding of salvation has for late medieval Catholicism.

And if you read a book that was published last year by the Roman Catholic historian Brad Gregory called *The Unintended Reformation*, it's an amazing book, it's this sort of brilliant mix of amazing learning and scholarship and I think an utterly wrong headed thesis.

But one of the things that comes through in that book is how much conservative Catholics today hate late medieval Catholicism because they see a clear connection between late medieval Catholicism and Luther.

And what is that connection? Late medieval Catholicism is eroding the importance of the sacraments for salvation. And they see Luther as, if you like, the end term of that development.

[17:42] So Luther's articulating a theology of Heidelberg then that is implicitly corroding, eroding, chipping away at the authority of the church.

This becomes explicit in 1519. The early years of the Reformation, as is always the way, education institutions, individual scholars, are all jockeying for position, are all trying to put one over on each other.

And a figure, John Eck, challenges Luther and Luther's colleague, a man called Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who is arguably equal, if not senior to Luther at this point at Wittenberg, challenges them to debate at the University of Leipzig.

It's the Leipzig disputation. And I think the Leipzig disputation in 1519 is the moment at which the real issue becomes obvious, both to the Lutherans and to the Catholic Church.

At Leipzig, Huss is, not Huss, Eck is a very, very clever debater and very quickly zeros in on the issue of authority. And Eck is actually a better debater than Luther and tricks him into making a number of mistakes.

[19:06] most significantly, well, Luther, Luther preaches before the debate takes place. And he preaches on the power of the keys, Matthew 16.

And Eck goes to hear him. And as Eck leaves the church, in fact, it may have been a lecture, it may have been a lecture theatre, they may have had to move it because so many showed up.

As Eck leaves the service that day, he says in a loud voice to those gathered around him, that sermon was completely bohemian. What Eck is doing is setting up his strategy for the subsequent debates.

Bohemian to us, we think bohemian, we think of the rock group Queen, I guess, Bohemian Rhapsody. We think of people who, you know, we think of nightlife in London, sort of weird, way out, trendy, cool kind of people.

Yeah, a bit like my brother down in the front row here. In 1519, bohemian in this context only means one thing.

[ 20 : 16 ] It means John Huss. A hundred years previously, John Huss, a Czech reformer, had, in fact, much of Huss's story is actually important to the Luther story.

Huss travelled to the Council of Constance, which had been called to try to sort out the crisis in the papacy, got three popes, got to try to establish which one the legitimate one is. Huss travelled under safe conduct from Prague to the Council of Constance.

His safe conduct is removed and Huss is tried for heresy and burned at the stake. Key thing is, he's been tried for heresy, found guilty and burned at the stake. If you can tie Luther in with Huss, then it's game over.

He's a heretic and he should pay the ultimate price. So Eck is setting up his strategy for the following day. And in the debate with Luther, he very quickly starts to push Luther to say, you know, you're agreeing with Huss, you're agreeing with Huss, you're agreeing with Huss.

And at some point, Luther almost in exasperation says, you know, many of the articles that were condemned at the Council of Constance are actually thoroughly orthodox and consistent with the position of Augustine. Bad move.

[ 21 : 24 ] Because what you're essentially saying there is, I'm identifying myself with a heretic. More than that, of course, you know, you have, Eck is able to say, so, so, Luther, you think the papacy is erring?

You think councils erring? What's left, man? What kind of authority is left? You've taken away the papacy, you've taken away conciliarism, what's left?

What does the nature of authority look like to you? So the Leipzig disputation brings clear to the fore the implications, the implicit things that have been going on all the time.

From the moment Luther nails his 95 Theses to the Castle in Wittsburg, he doesn't know it, but he's actually challenging the church's authority. That becomes more explicit at Heidelberg, and it becomes absolutely explicit in the Leipzig disputation.

We then come to the great year of 1520 for Martin Luther. 1520 is the year in which I think in some ways Luther is never more optimistic than he is in 1520.

[ 22 : 34 ] He's survived thus far. That in itself is quite an achievement. It's becoming clear to him that he thought the Pope would answer to his rallying cry and reform the church.

It's becoming clear that that's not going to happen. And I think it's also becoming clear to him that his vision of reform is somewhat different from some of the other visions of reform out there. There are a lot of people in the beginning of the 16th century who want to reform the church.

Many of them think the problem is a bureaucratic one. Clean up the bureaucracy, clean up the moral sleaze in the church and everything will be okay. Luther's reformation is heading in a very different direction.

That the fundamental reformation has to be a theological or a doctrinal one. And 1520 is the year of the three great treaties. If you've never read Luther then 1520 is a good place to start.

It's much more accessible in many ways than 1517. Much more accessible even than the Heidelberg disputation. Luther writes three great treaties among numerous other things in this year.

[ 23 : 36 ] The freedom of the Christian man, the Babylonian captivity of the church, and the appeal to the German nobility. Freedom of the Christian man is essentially his reconstruction of Christian ethics in the light of his developing new understanding of justification by grace through faith.

Good works are necessary, but they flow as a response to God's action in Christ. Knowing that God has freed us through Christ from the need to work for our own justification, we can work for our neighbour freely.

The freedom of the Christian man, if you like, is freedom from the curse of the law, and freedom to be a slave to our neighbour, to give of ourselves to our neighbour.

Babylonian captivity of the church is his reconstruction of the sacramental system of the Catholic church.

The Catholic church has seven sacraments, Luther reduces them. Well, the treatise is somewhat ambiguous. The treatise itself says that penance is a sacrament, and in the conclusion he says, you know, I'm not sure that penance is a sacrament after all.

[ 24 : 49 ] So, he reduces it either to three or to two sacraments, depending which part of the treatise you prioritise. But Luther gets rid of marriage, holy orders, final unction, and confirmation as sacraments, retains the Mass, retains baptism, and possibly retains penance.

Reconstructs the meaning of baptism and the Mass, though. Baptism ceases to be a washing or a healing, and comes to be death and resurrection. It's connected with Luther's new understanding of sin.

Sin isn't a wound, sin isn't a weakness, sin is the status of death. If you're dead, you don't need to be healed. You don't need to be cleaned, you need to be resurrected. You need to bring your understanding of baptism into line with your understanding of sin.

And often, as evangelicals, we can tend to forget that Luther's pathway to justification by faith is intimately connected to his reflections on baptism. It's actually quite a sacramental pathway when you trace it out.

He changes his understanding of the Lord's Supper from being, well, interestingly enough, his criticism of transubstantiation is not that the body and blood of Christ are present.

[ 26 : 06 ] His criticism of transubstantiation is that the bread and wine are absent. Luther wants both. You have the bread and wine, and you have the body and blood of Christ. Later, he will talk about the body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine.

And penance is really, penance is effectively, it's sort of, almost, you might say, kind of cancelling now. It's sort of speaking the gospel, the law and the gospel to each other, almost on a one-to-one basis.

You know, you come across a friend sinning, it's your responsibility to rebuke him for his sin, and then he repents to speak to him words of comfort through the gospel. So the sacramental system is reconfigured.

And finally, the appeal to the German nobility. It's becoming obvious the church authorities aren't going to reform themselves. So to whom does one look for a reformation at this point?

To the princes. It's a brilliant political move. You know, no prince is going to object to having more power, and potentially more money. So it's a, you know, it's a pretty easy sale to the princes.

[ 27 : 13 ] It's one of the reasons why it's so difficult for Mary, the first of England, to get Catholicism back to England. You know, when Edward VI, the young boy king, died, his older sister, Mary I, was a very reactionary Catholic, succeeded to the throne.

Amidst cheers, you know, the English people are just so glad that Catholicism has come back, because the Protestants, they seem, are so corrupt. Mary does two brilliant things for the Protestants.

One, she burns them. That doesn't sound too brilliant, but actually, what it does is it creates public sympathy for Protestantism that was never there before. It allows Protestantism to rehabilitate itself in the public eyes.

And secondly, the other thing she can't do is that I think she underestimates how much money the Catholic nobility have made out of the English Reformation. When Henry VIII appropriates church land and sells it, who's making money?

Who's getting land cheap? The nobility. The nobility, are they Protestant or Catholic? They're predominantly Catholic. And so, the Catholic nobility of England, I think, are heavily invested in the Protestantisation of England.

[ 28 : 27 ] I mean, there's nothing like money to really appeal where somebody, you know, theological conviction, making money, it's always a bit of a, an even balance, isn't it? Appeal to the German nobility, then.

The appeal to the German nobility essentially says to the nobles, take back what is rightfully yours. The church has expanded its sphere of power into what we would now call the secular realm.

And it is time for you to take back that power. And so, if you like, there could be a sort of negative reform of the church by stripping it of its worldly and earthly pretensions.

Underlying all of these three books is Luther's great confidence that just preaching the word of God will bring about the Reformation in Germany. We just, we're at the end of time, we preach the word, the word goes out, it does not return empty, all will fall before it.

Think of that line in A Mighty Fortress, one little word shall fell him. Great confidence in the preaching of the word rooted against the background of this eschatological hope, this expectation which is, you know, not unprecedented in the late medieval period and another one of those things that makes Luther in some ways a man of the middle ages rather than a man of the early modern age.

[ 29 : 52 ] It never gets better than 1520. The end of 1520, the papal bull of excommunication, ex-Sergé Domine, arrives in Wittenberg.

Sixty days after its arrival, the faculty and the high hedions of Wittenberg process into the Terram Square and they have a mass bonfire.

By and large, the Lutherans didn't burn books to suppress them. It's a bad move. Burning books to suppress them just makes them more interesting. It would be like banning, ban the Rolling Stones from the radio in the 60s and you guarantee they get to number one.

But there is a book burning this day and the books that are burned are, it's the papal bull is burned. And that's the one in some ways that often captures our imagination. Luther's received the papal bull and he throws it in the fire.

How cool is that? But just as significant is the burning of the books of canon law. In some ways the burning of the books of canon law is more powerful as a gesture because it's not only saying we defy your authority on the issue of Luther.

[ 30 : 58 ] Burning of the books of canon law says we defy your authority. End of story. Everything that represents who and what you are, we're throwing on the bonfire today and getting rid of it.

1520 then is in some ways Luther's most glorious year. It never gets better than 1520. Luther is never more optimistic I think than he is in 1520.

We then come to a series of crises that will change Luther's thinking forever. First crisis is the crisis of late 1521-1522.

Bit of a back story. Luther has been summoned to the Diet of Worms. It's a bit of a legal problem because once you're excommunicated you have no legal status and there is some debate.

It reminds me of a sort of classic OPC kind of debate takes place in Rome. How do you summons Luther to an imperial diet when he's already been excommunicated? Is there any procedural way we can do this?

[ 32 : 03 ] And finally they decide well probably there isn't but we're going to do it anyway. So they summons Luther to meet before the emperor at the Diet of Worms. And it's a magnificent moment.

Here you have this man who three years earlier four years earlier he was just an unknown professional academic and pastor in Wittenberg. Now he's the most famous man in Europe. And he's taken place and he has to stand before the emperor and answer for his opinions.

You can only imagine how terrified he must have been. Famously of course on the first day when Luther is asked are these your books and do you recount them? Luther says I need time to think about my answer.

You know as if he wasn't expecting that question. Scholars have always debated why does he delay? Is it part of some sneaky strategy to wrong foot the opposition? Or is it just that he was scared?

Possible that he was just scared and at that moment his nerves started to go and he needed time to gather his thoughts. Worms, the Diet of Worms really ends fairly inconclusively.

[ 33 : 07 ] And as Luther is riding away from Worms, he's kidnapped. Frederick the Wise sends out a sort of a SWAT team if you like to seize Luther on his way back to Wittenberg and whisk him up to the Wartburg castle which stands high over the town of Eisenach.

If you ever do a Reformation tour, Eisenach is one of those great two for one towns. You've got the castle on the hill and then down in the town, who was born in Eisenach?

Which other famous person was born in Eisenach? Johann Sebastian Bach. You've got the Bach birth house and the great museum there. So it's a wonderful place to go on a sort of tourist visit.

You get two for one. Luther is closeted away in this castle up on the hill. He lives under the pseudonym of Sir George. He does do some little expeditions out into the hinterland at points.

There's a famous story of a group of students arriving in a pub late one night and they notice in the corner there's a knight sitting there with a big sword and bushy beard and this knight is reading the Psalms in Hebrew.

[ 34 : 20 ] And that's not a normal scene in a medieval German tavern. So the students go there on their way to Wittenberg to start their theological studies and they go over and sit with this knight and this knight expands the Psalms in Hebrew to them showing them how Christ is in the Psalms.

And at the end of the evening when they get up together the knight's going they find that the knight has paid their bill. I mean that's the nicest part of the story in some ways. And then some months later at Wittenberg they're waiting their first class with Martin Luther who walks through the door but the man they recognize as this knight they met in this tavern.

So Luther does some quiet incognito visits to Saxony. Saxony while he is sequestered at the castle. But this is where the Wittenberg Reformation takes a turn for the worst. The leadership of Wittenberg falls to Karstadt who we've met. Philip Melanchthon the brilliant young Greek scholar who becomes professor of Greek at Wittenberg age 21 if you can imagine that.

And a man called Conrad Zwilling. And not Melanchthon but Karstadt and Zwilling really want to push the Reformation in a radical direction and so they stir up iconoclastic riots.

[ 35 : 35 ] Luther returns to Wittenberg in December 1521 just to see what's going on and it's bad. There's rioting. And then finally in 1522 Frederick the Wise brings Luther back and it's this point he preaches that sermon where he talks about sitting in the pub and drinking beer.

1522 is actually the point I think in Luther's career where he's most vulnerable. We tend to think of diet of worms. Actually I think it's the riots of 1522.

Because if Luther can't bring the people back under control Frederick the Wise will certainly pull his support from it. Frederick the Wise will have to engage in what we call military intervention and Luther will be finished.

And Luther by sheer force of personality is able to bring the riots under control. But what this does is it brings to Luther's attention that preaching the word may not be enough.

That bad stuff is starting to happen in the Reformation. It becomes intensified in 1525. 1525 is a fascinating year in Luther's life.

[ 36 : 43 ] He engages in his brutal polemic with Erasmus over the perspicuity of scripture and the bondage of the will. He marries Catherine von Bora. If you go to Wittenberg you go to the he was given by Frederick the Wise he was given the the old monastery as a gift as a wedding gift and because being a reformer doesn't bring in much money Luther and his wife would have students to lodge at the house and at the doorway there's these two little chairs cut in stone and the door of the Augustinian the former Augustinian monastery.

And that was a birthday present that Katie bought for Luther because she didn't think they spent enough time talking to each other. So she bought this door frame this stone door frame with these two chairs so that on sunny days they could spend time sitting on either side of the door and talking to each other.

And if you go inside upstairs there's a room where the same thing occurs in a window as well. And so if it was raining outside they could go up and they could actually spend some time sitting and talking together.

So the marriage is very sweet. It's a PR disaster at the time though because Luther gets married at the height of what historians call the Peasants' Rebellion or the Peasants' War. Really from the beginning of the 16th century a series of peasant rebellions, peasant unrest have been sort of popping up over the Holy Roman Empire.

And they come to a sort of climax in 1525, a major explosion of unrest. And the imperial armies made up of Protestants and Catholics march against the peasants to put them down.

[ 38 : 17 ] Many of these peasants are using the rhetoric of Luther to justify their cause. Luther's freedom rhetoric strikes a deep chord with the peasants. And they're claiming to be with Luther.

Luther first of all is sympathetic to some of their claims, some of their calls, but ultimately has to radically distance himself from them because it's like 1522 all over again. If the Reformation becomes identified with revolution, social revolution, the nobility, do we want social stability or do we want Protestantism?

We've got to go for social stability. The nobles will cut Luther adrift. So Luther comes out swinging against the peasants and again it sets in his mind the idea that maybe the preaching of the word is

not going to be enough after all.

1529, just very briefly of course, he falls out with Holger Zwingli over the Lord's Supper. That's often very difficult for us to think why is Luther prepared to break over the Lord's Supper?

Why is he prepared to break Protestantism over the Lord's Supper? Why does he say to Zwingli we're of a different spirit on this issue? Persists strongly in Lutheranism. At the end of the 16th century, Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva, is involved in an ecumenical dialogue with the Lutherans and at the end he offers the Lutheran theologian the hand of Christian fellowship.

[ 39 : 44 ] And the Lutheran theologian says, I won't shake your hand out of Christian fellowship, but I will shake it out of civic fellowship. In other words, you're not a Christian. Runs very deep.

Disillusioning to Luther that Protestantism has split, even though really he is, I think he has to take the lion's share of the blame for that. And then in 1530, Philip Melanchthon, Luther's right-hand man, puts together the Augsburg Confession.

If you have the Book of Concord, the Lutheran confessional documents, the Augsburg Confession is sort of the centerpiece of Lutheran confessional identity.

It's written by Philip Melanchthon in 1530 in an attempt to provide a Protestant confessional basis for the Holy Roman Empire. And the emperor refuses to subscribe it.

And only a handful of the princes subscribe the confession. And it's at that point that Luther, I think, realizes it's done. We're never going to see a united Protestant Europe under the banner of the Reformation.

[ 40 : 56 ] Interestingly enough, at that point, Luther actually shifts his view of rebellion. Everybody knows that Luther teaches, you know, that you should always submit to the civil authorities. Well, actually, the later Luther is slightly different.

After 1530, Luther thinks that the electors, the princes in the empire, can resist the emperor.

Because, of course, it's the electors who elect the emperor, and therefore power kind of flows from them to the emperor before the emperor has it, and therefore they're able to resist him.

It's very convenient for Luther, of course, because it means that the elector of Saxony can maintain Lutheranism in opposition to imperial policy. So, there's that that kicks in.

And then also, in the late 1520s, Melanchthon and Luther head up a visitation of, you know, what's going on in Saxony relative to Protestant churches.

Let's find out what life's like on the ground. And they are horrified by what they discover. Not only have we got these political crises that are shattering Luther's confidence in the mere, simple preaching of the gospel to effect big political change, at grassroots level, they find that preaching of the gospel, people are using it as an excuse to do whatever they want.

[ 42 : 16 ] And Luther, of course, at that point, puts together some catechisms. We've got to start getting people taught properly. We've got to realize that it isn't just enough to preach the gospel.

The law has to be preached appropriately as well. And that's why I say, you know, in the debates about Luther and holiness and justification, you've got to take the later Luther into account as well.

The Reformation is a work in progress. These men are opening up new theological territory, which will generate its own new problems and require a response. An example, perhaps closer to home for us is the Westminster Assembly's teaching on assurance of faith.

Some people get worried that Calvin seems to identify faith and assurance by the time you get to Westminster, so they're making a distinction that one can have true faith but not be assured for periods of time.

People say, this is disturbing. Maybe it's a retrogression to late medieval Catholicism. I think, no. It's the result of a hundred years of pastoral reflection like that Protestant preaching does in the pew.

[ 43 : 22 ] These men are aware that it's not quite as simple as the first generation of reformers thought it was. And that's not a criticism of the first generation of reformers.

They're doing something new and they don't know what the long-term impact of it's going to be.

They're not going to see their imbalances until they've worked out someone.

So by the time we get to the 1530s, Luther is really, I think, beginning to think, it's not enough just to preach the gospel.

It's not enough. We need to give ethical guidelines for behaviour. We need to think about structure in the church.

And that leads me, and this will be a fairly brief summary now, to the Treatise of 1538-1539 on the councils of the church. Luther, like all reformers, has to wrestle with what is the identity of the

church.

[ 44 : 20 ] Once you've got rid of what we call sacramental apostolic succession, how do you identify the true church? Where do you look around and find the true church?

And Luther comes up with seven marks. And there's just one or two of them that I want to sort of zero in on. The most fundamental mark for Luther, as it was for all reformers, was the word. The apostolicity of the church was established by the conformity of the teaching of the church with apostolic teaching. So when the reformers confessed their belief in one holy catholic and apostolic church, they were not thinking of a succession of laying on of hands that somehow gets traced back to Peter in the first century.

They were thinking of those who taught as those before them had taught, going all the way back to the apostles. And the word remains the most fundamental mark of the church for Protestantism.

There can be no sacramental practice without a preaching of the word. It's why, it doesn't work here, it doesn't work in my church, but if you're in a church that was really designed, properly, if I could put it that way, you have the pulpit and then you have the table underneath it.

[ 45 : 34 ] Making a clear point, a symbolic point, if you like, that the pulpit, the word, stands above the sacraments. Sacraments are important, they're there at the front, but they're clearly subordinated to the word.

Such that one cannot practice the sacraments without first preaching the word. The sacramental significance is grasped by faith and that requires the preaching of the word.

Just as an aside, I read a great book recently called *When Church Became Theatre*. Not really into architecture, but this book is a study of American church architecture in the 19th century.

And how the Second Great Awakening really led people to start designing churches that were like theatres. And it opened my eyes, so yes, churches today, they design like sort of conference halls and rock concert arenas.

And that's not incidental. And it says something about how one visualises the church. In the Reformation, St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, I suspect the word is not as central at St. Giles these days as it should be.

[ 46 : 36 ] Some of you will have more direct experience of that, I'm sure. But one of the great things is you go in there and all roads lead to the pulpit. The pulpit's in the centre, at least geographically, if not metaphysically, anymore.

The word is central. Baptism too, the initiation rite, that has to be there as a mark of the church. The Lord's Supper for Luther. The office of the keys.

It's a church discipline. Luther says that's one of the seven non-negotiables of the church. The office of the keys is there. And then he comes to something that really one would not find in the early Luther.

And I think it shows how his thinking has shifted. The calling and ordination of ministers. It's interesting in 1520 when Luther sort of asks, you know, why do we, why do we have a, you know, minister?

Luther's sort of shoulder shrugging. Well, you know, if we didn't have one guy to do it, it would just be total chaos. It's a pure, pragmatic, practical move. By 1539, he's saying, ordination, you've got to make sure that the right, competent men are set aside to do the task.

[ 47 : 59 ] If you like, go back to my first lecture yesterday. Luther is grasping that point that Paul is making in the pastoral epistles. Paul doesn't say to Timothy, oh, just read the Bible on a Sunday and keep preaching it and everything will be okay.

He doesn't say that. He says, appoint men. You know, make sure the right men are in charge and run in the show. That's where Luther is in 1539. Luther's starting to think very structurally about the church at this point.

Even though Protestantism roots its authority ultimately in the word of God. That does not mean, you know, the sufficiency of scripture does not mean if you like, that scripture is sufficient for all things.

You still need a structure. Then, of course, he improves on Mark Deva by saying that prayer, praise and thanksgiving are an important mark of the church. By the way, I have to say, I'm not saying anything here that I haven't said to Mark's face and wound him up and down.

He refuses to back down. He gave me some waffle about it. Well, of course, I didn't mean that they were the only nine marks of the church. They were just the ones I wanted to focus on. I was like,

yeah, yeah. If that helps you sleep at night.

[ 49 : 10 ] And then finally, the cross. And I think this is where Luther is most magnificent in some ways. The church, the true church, will suffer. And that, I think, is a very useful lesson for us today.

I know that religious freedom plays out differently in the United States than it does here. But everybody, I think, in the West is starting to feel the cold blast of legal changes that are beginning to squeeze the church.

I read something recently in America about somebody saying, you know, freedom of speech is not really an absolute right. That's kind of interesting. I've seen law shifting where freedom of religion is becoming to be understood as, well, the freedom to own your own building and do what you want within the bounds of your building and not anywhere else.

My church last year did, we did an outreach in a park, a local park, and we got permission to do it. It was a pretty low-key and offensive thing. I just read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and we handed out tracts afterwards, and I got a note from the church secretary yesterday saying that we contacted the township for permission to do it this year.

We got a letter back from the township saying that they'll be in touch with us in a couple of weeks because they're reviewing and revising their policy on the use of public parks. You know, you can just guess the way that's going down.

[ 50 : 29 ] That's not much suffering, of course, compared to what Luther said. But for Luther, the final mark of the church is the cross. Not only is the cross of Christ, if you like, the axiom on which theology is built for Luther, not only is it the critical thing that all theology has to be refracted through the cross, that has a practical experiential aspect as well.

If you're doing theology right, if you're doing church right, then one can expect to suffer for it, for that cross-shaped theology to manifest itself in the life, not only of individual believers, but also of the church as a whole.

So that then is a brief trolley bus tour, if you like, of Luther's thinking on the church, and the main point is, Luther in some ways is a bit like a sort of modern, non-ecclesiastical, evangelical in his early days.

All we've got to do is preach the gospel, and everything will fall into place. By 1539, no, no. Actually, we need to prepare. Think of Thomas Chalmers, you know, from 1530 onwards, what's Thomas Chalmers doing in Scotland?

He's preparing. Preparation, preparation, preparation. Organization, organization, organization. We need to remember as a church, as churches, it's not just, it isn't even primarily those who preach the gospel who win, if you like, it's those who preach the gospel and organize effectively.

[ 52 : 00 ] Lesson Luther learned the hard way. Brings me up to time, I'll throw it open for questions, comments, pushback. Anything else you want me to say about Luther? I know the answer, I'll try to give it.

Thank you very much, Kyra, for that. Any questions? Mark? I wrote it back. And, Kyra, that last one, I'm very interested.

When you all think the difficulty between Luther and the reform, it's that the reform wants you to reform everything out of the world. Luther needs to distract us from the church, because we sort that out ourselves. Can you expand on why that is?

If Luther started to think this, why does the Lutheran Reformation so so different from the ancient of the church? Wow, that's, the question, everybody's probably heard it, because you're all closer to Matthew than I am, but the question is, why does the Lutheran Reformation look very different to the reformed Reformation?

You know, there are a whole host of reasons for that. One reason is to do with the personality of Luther. I don't think there's anybody in the reformed Reformation who has quite the dominant influence that Luther has.

[ 53 : 11 ] So, for example, there's no doubt in my mind that the Lord's Supper issue is a huge issue, initially at least, because of Luther's autobiography. So much of his own development is wrapped up with the Lord's Supper.

So much of his reaction to Zwingli is determined by the fact that he's heard these views before, in 1522, from Karstadt. And Karstadt was a rioting lunatic. And Zwingli may look polite, but it's like Sinn Féin IRA, if you like.

Everybody knows it's the same guys, basically. Zwingli looks polite, but man, he's undermining the basis of the church and of society. So there's a strong personal impact.

There's also a very different political context. Luther's operating in really a, what is essentially a slowly modernizing, but basically medieval, feudal environment.

Zwingli and the Reformed are by and large operating in cities, where there's a certain level of popular representation within towns, where it's more feasible in some ways for preachers to have a much more profound and transformative impact on the culture around them.

[ 54 : 22 ] So that's an aspect to it. I think Luther doesn't, you know, with the exception of Luther, most of the other Reformers come from a background in Renaissance Humanism. And Renaissance Humanism is a program of cultural change.

And people like Zwingli become Reformers, I think, because they realize that the cultural change they want to achieve is not possible simply on the basis of what Erasmus has taught them. They need something more radical.

Luther is a medieval man. He's a man of the monastic cloister. He doesn't have this vision of cultural change that Zwingli and even Calvin bring to their ministries.

So there's a whole variety of reasons why Lutheranism and the Reformed look different in the 16th, 17th century. Is that what you're getting at? Yeah, so it's technically the only issue of church structures, exactly.

Okay, yeah. If Luther starts to realize that church structures need to be placed in order to preserve or to enable Reformation to be able to take. I guess my question is, when does it get the end of the position of thinking, well, then we need to reform church structures for it to work, so in the same way as we reformed after it to work.

[ 55 : 33 ] I think that then you come to the difference, the different ethos in the Lutheran. The Lutheran Reformation is much less iconoclastic in all senses of the word than the Reformed regime.

A great example would be that there's a strong conservative temper to Luther's Reformation. A good example would be the debates over the catechisms in the 15th century. The debate goes on in Lutheranism about, you know, should we still call the mass the mass?

Or should we use different terminology? And it's a great debate because it's one of those discussions where you think, well, both sides have got good arguments. And it's not obvious whether one is right and the other is wrong.

One side of the Lutheran church wants to say, you know, we have a new radical theology. We need a new vocabulary to express it. Luther is more on the side of, you know, we're disturbing people by what we're doing.

The big change in the church, things coming into the vernacular, the shifts in the liturgical action of the mass. This is very disturbing for ordinary people. So we should keep in place as much as we possibly can from the old regime.

[ 56 : 41 ] So people are minimally disturbed. What we do, if you like, is we subvert the old forms. We don't get rid of them. And that, I think, speaks to a conservative temper in Luther. Where, when it comes to church structures, you see this a bit in the Anglican Reformation as well.

Now, we don't see the details of church government in the New Testament, so we will adopt, adapt, transform the structures that we already have. Because the structures, they're not bad.

We just need to make sure it's the right way of manning them. So, and underlying that, of course, ultimately, I think, is a different view of what we call the regulative principle, I suppose.

A different view of how and what scripture can and must regulate. So the Lutheran Reformation is much more conservative. You go to Sweden and wander into a Lutheran church in Sweden, it could look more ornate than the Catholic church in this country.

You know, they didn't get rid of images. They didn't get rid of the guilt-edged stuff. It's all retained. Luther had this strong, conservative element. He was in great fear of unrest, rioting, out-of-control, popular opinion.

[ 57 : 51 ] Does that? Yeah. Okay. So you heard it here, first, Swingley was a member of the IRA. Any other questions?

David. It's not very clear on Luther, but your side-point about assurance in Westminster. A way that you explained that in terms of the divides were effectively coming in terms of a hundred years or Protestant and the speech.

Yeah. Do you think, I couldn't tell from the way, but do you think there is actually a difference between those Calvin and whether assurances of the essence of faith or...

That's a really good question and I don't think there's any consensus on this. I would say there's a difference in degree, not in kind. I think if you look at Calvin's sermons, I mean, you'll know this better than I do, if you look at Calvin's sermons, you find a more nuanced view of faith than you do if you just read the Institutes and some of the commentaries.

So I would say Calvin's statements on faith assurance, certain knowledge, etc., etc., set in the context of Calvin's whole pastoral ministry are not his last word on it.

[ 59 : 06 ] His own position is more nuanced. And then I think you're getting down to debates of, well, are the Westminster Divines more open to lack of assurance on the whole than Calvin is?

Is it more exceptional for Calvin? But I myself would say part of the problem is guys who write books on Calvin and all they do is read the Institutes and essentially present with the Institutes as Calvin's complete theology, which emphatically is not.

I mean, the Institutes is very important, but his preaching, his commentaries, his letters, his tracts, all I think have to be taken into account in order to understand how he saw Protestant preaching impacting the laity.

You know, Rene of France, his correspondence with Rene of France, this poor lady who's swinging backwards and forwards between Catholicism and Protestantism because of the persecution that her husband is heaping on her.

I'd want to look at that correspondence and take that into account. So, it was a sweeping aside. I think the situation is more nuanced. Would you agree? I mean, you know Calvin better than I do.

[ 60 : 05 ] Well, yes, I don't actually think there is a divide between the but it's just a way that you put it in terms of the rest of it. Yeah. Yeah. It was more a swipe at the scholars who don't take into account the concrete pastoral context in which this stuff is being worked out than it was a definitive statement on Calvin.

I wondered if you could just clarify the swing of Luther from philo-semitism to anti-semitism. It didn't seem to me convincing to have an explanation that it was just the end of the world didn't come or something.

It's a bit of blame for the Jews. Well, I think your problem actually, well, first of all, the language of philo and anti-semitism I think is problematic because it's strongly racial. And I am, although I've been, I read a book recently that's making me go back to this and rethink it, I'm pretty persuaded that Luther's problem with the Jews is a religious one not a racial one.

I'm not sure that Luther really has racial categories. Compare Luther to the Nuremberg laws in Nazi Germany. The Nuremberg laws are very clear that if you convert to Christianity it doesn't make any difference because the blood is polluted.

I think for Luther if a Jew converts to Christianity that's fine, you know, problem solved. So there's a, that's the first point I would want to make. Secondly, I would say we often come at Luther 1543 from the wrong end.

[ 61 : 37 ] It's not the treatise of 1543 that's a surprise. Everybody hates Jews in the, well, not everybody, most people hate Jews in the 16th century. There is a strong tradition of anti-Jewish writing in the late Middle Ages.

The 1543 treatise that Luther writes uses a lot of the clichés of that tradition. The blood libel, you know, the idea that Jews are kidnapping Christian babies and crucifying them. That occurs.

So Luther's 1543 treatise is very much part of a much larger and wider genre of anti-Jewish writing. He's jumping on the bandwagon. Well, he's part and parcel of the cultural flow of the times.

The problem for Luther on the Jews is 1523. Why does he write positively about the Jews in 1523? So the problem is not why he's anti-Jewish in 1543.

That's easy to explain. That was the way the culture was going. The problem is, why does he like the Jews in 1523? And that's where the eschatological argument comes in. Because he expects them to be converted and the end of the world to come.

[ 62 : 39 ] And when that hope dies, he reverts to time. And then I would play the classic historian's ploy at this point. That's speculation. Give me a better explanation for it and I'll abandon it.

You know, so that's... So that's... So that's... Calvin, are you? I've not looked at Calvin on the Jews enough to know.

But certainly, you see, Luther is a late medieval man. Calvin is a trained humanist. He's a man of the modern world, we would say. Luther's entire education operates within the boundaries of late medieval Catholicism, really.

So, I would say, Luther is the exceptional reformer for a number of reasons, not least the fact that he doesn't like Erasmus. There's little time for Erasmus. He's not really influenced by Erasmus beyond the text of the Greek New Testament.

But I'd have to go and look at... Have you looked at Calvin on the Jews at all, David? A little bit, yeah. Calvin's much more... It's easier to refer to Calvin as being anti-Jewish rather than anti-Semitic.

[ 63 : 44 ] So he has a much more clearer theological position of why, particularly in Romans 9-11, why the way that Paul reads Old Testament Jews is not believing the gospel and so having Paul in favor of Calvin reads that in a way that's a lot more acceptable because he doesn't seem to slip into racist language.

Luther is a bombast. I mean, Luther is a powerful rhetorician and it's both his strength at times and it completely undoes him at others. Peasants' war, dreadful writings against the peasants, against the Jews.

You know, we should lock them in their synagogues and burn their synagogues down. That is A, powerful rhetoric at the time and B, from a post-Holocaust perspective, that's exactly what was done in some...

It looks like a prophecy or a policy. But I think what Luther's... Luther's just being Luther and bombastic at that point. He doesn't expect anybody to do it. Well, unfortunately, our words live beyond the grave.

I'd go over and argue that the reform come off better from the... And this is a question because there are the experience of much. The Jewish experience of dispersion and exile and that's a way that was the reformer of the person who didn't fight them so much.

[ 65 : 00 ] I saw a conservative and the Jews in a way that prevented them from using the language of the Jews. There is a superb book... Sorry. There's a superb book just being published maybe in the last year by...

I think it's the Institute for Holocaust Studies in Washington. I can't remember the gentleman's name. His father-in-law is actually a Westminster grad and the gentleman is a...

The scholar who wrote it is an RTS grad, a Form Theological Seminary grad, who did his PhD I think at King's College London. And it's called *Demonising the Jews*. And it's a fascinating study of the use of Luther's writings in Germany between 1900 and 1945.

It's a fascinating study of how Luther is appropriate. I think you'd... you would find a more sophisticated treatment of Luther and the Jews there than I can give you now. Thank you very much. It's...

Send me an email if you lose the title or need to know the name of the author. I've got it on my bookshelf at home. It's a very, very good book. In fact, I did an article on the website *Reformation 21* just a week or two ago on part two of a sort of book on how to read Luther and I list the book there in the last section and say Luther on the Jews and I give three or four titles and that's one of them.

[ 66 : 18 ] It's really a very excellent treatment. Right. We need to wind it up there. Maybe, just thinking about the astrological connection, it's interesting in the 19th century when there was the explosion in missionary out of the UK there was an expectation both of the Lord's return the world was going to be evangelized and that went hand in hand with an increasing concern for evangelization of the Jews.

Just an interesting... Yeah, the 19th century Scotland of course. Yeah, yeah. He's got McShane and company. I think we need to... Maybe we'll want a quick question. Bob or that by Christopher Brooks.

Christopher Brooks. That's the name. Yeah. Thank you very much. Oh, right. Because he was based in London for a while. Go back to the US. Yeah, yeah. Christopher Brooks. It's an excellent book.

And that's the book that's making me... He makes the argument that there is a racial component even to Luther. And I've got to think about that. I've really been an Oberman man until now but his arguments are not insubstantial.

It's a very good book. Yeah, it's a very, very good book. Fortunately, I like Paul Althaus's writings on Luther. Paul Althaus doesn't come out too well. A bit too close to the Nazi party, unfortunately.  
[ 67 : 36 ] Thank you very much, Carl. Paul, what...