

OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

LECTURE 19 – OVERVIEW OF THE REFORMATION; MARTIN LUTHER

We'll start with a prayer from the period to be studied.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Martin Luther's Morning Prayer)

The rest of this page is an outline of this lecture.

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Martin Luther - tough, foursquare, proud of coming from peasant stock. His deep-set disturbing eyes were earnest rather than subtle.

In preparation, read Cairns, 267-89; Olson, 369-96; Lion, 366-76; Vos, 85-88; Lane, 127-131; Hanks, *Great Christians*, 104-113; *Great Events*, 175-82.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition of ‘The Reformation’

‘The Reformation’ with a capital ‘R’ describes the religious revolution that began in northern Europe in the early C16, as a reaction to medieval Catholic doctrines and practices. It had no effect or influence on the Eastern Orthodox Church. Calls for reform of the Catholic Church had been heard in Europe for several hundred years before 1517, as we saw in Lecture 18; Catherine of Sienna and Peter Waldo and John Wyclif and John Huss and others pointed out abuses in the Church of their time, but the term ‘The Reformation’ is used only to describe the C16 movements described in this and the next seven Lectures. Where does the word ‘Protestant Reformation’ come from?

1.2 Definition of ‘Protestant’

In 1526, at the Diet of Speier - that is a conference held at the town of Speier in what is now North Germany (No. 7 on the map on page 6) - some German princes who supported Martin Luther persuaded the dominant Catholic princes to allow every State to choose its own religion. Three years later, at another Diet/Conference held in the same town, the Catholic princes revoked this freedom of choice, and imposed the Catholic faith on every German State. The princes who supported Luther lodged a formal ‘protest’ at this withdrawing of their freedom of religion, so the Catholics nicknamed them ‘Protestants’ (‘protesters’); in due course the Catholics extended the word ‘Protestant’ to include everyone (except Eastern Orthodox Christians) who opposed Catholicism - that is, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, Anglicans, etc.

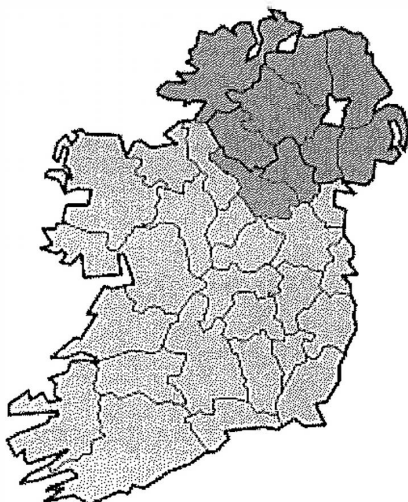
In Germany, Protestants preferred to be called ‘Evangelicals’, and they still do; the Notice Board outside a Protestant church in Germany today may describe it as an *Evangelische Kirche*, not in the sense that we use ‘evangelical’ but meaning ‘not Roman Catholic’. Similarly, in France the Reformers preferred to be called ‘Huguenots’.

1.3 Six parts to The Reformation

The term ‘The Reformation’ is often applied only to Martin Luther and John Calvin, but in its wider sense it describes six aspects of reform in C16 Europe, so we’ll start with an overview of them.

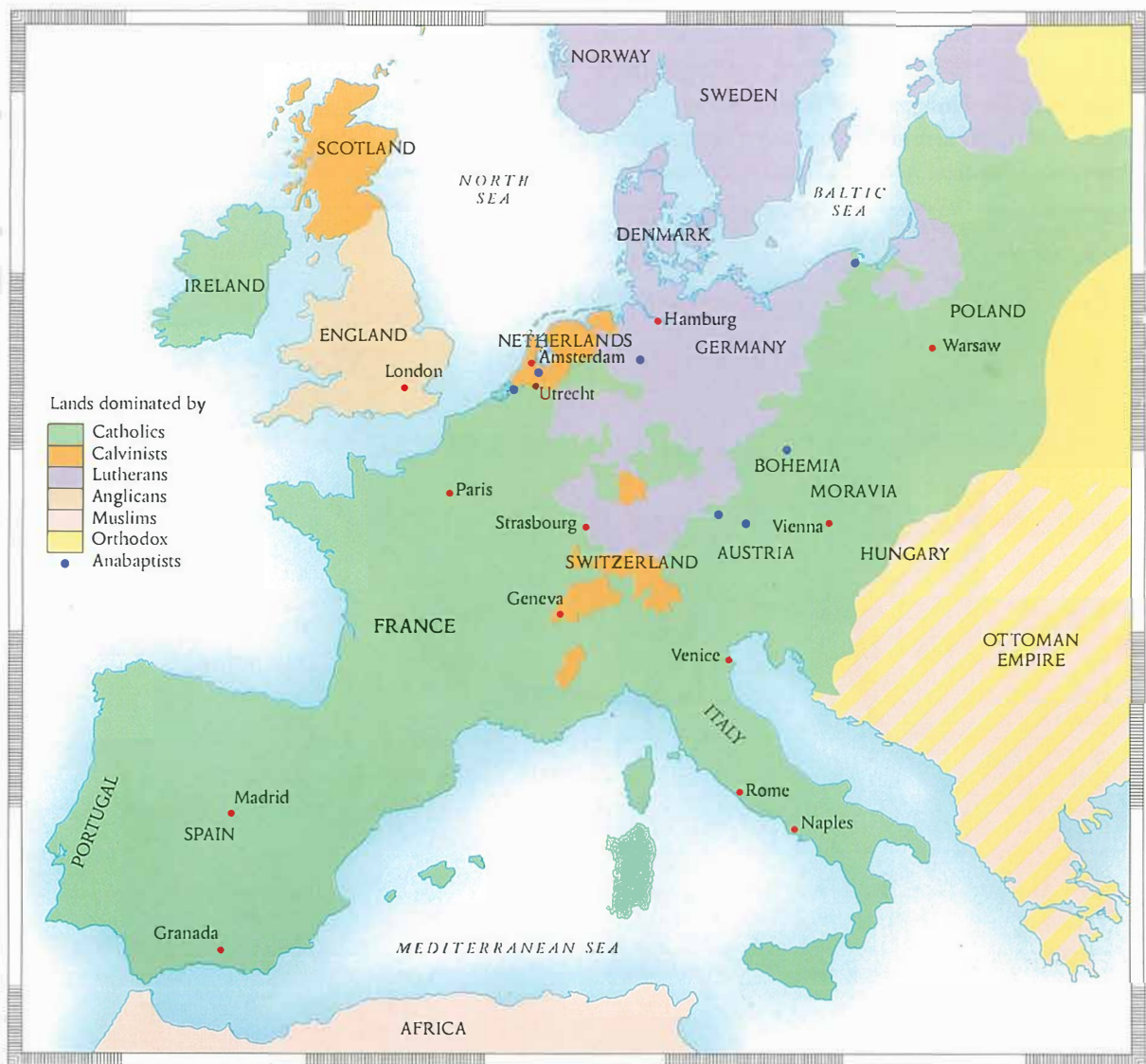
2. OVERVIEW OF SIX PARTS OF THE REFORMATION

If the map on the next page had been drawn before 1517, it would have been nearly all green – no orange, no purple, no pink. The only other colour would have been the yellow on the right of the map (the Eastern Orthodox Church, described in the map as the Ottoman Empire) and the other yellow at the foot of the map, marked Africa, which was Muslim - the Muslims had now been forced out of Spain. We’re going to see over the next eight lectures why the religious map changed.



The map on the next page is undated, but it must be before 1610, because after putting down a rebellion by the Irish in the first decade of the C17, the British Crown ‘planted’ Scottish and English settlers in nine northern Provinces of Ireland (the darker ones on this map), and their Protestant faith became the dominant religion in these Provinces from 1610 onward.

EUROPE c1600 (THAT IS AFTER THE REFORMATIONS),
SHOWING THE DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS



EUROPE AT THE CLOSE OF THE REFORMATION

England, Scandinavia, Holland, most of Scotland, and parts of Switzerland and Germany were Protestant, with Anabaptists scattered across Europe (the blue dots on the map mark concentrations

of Anabaptists). Most of the rest of western Europe remained Catholic with Protestant minorities in France, Hungary, and Poland. Ferdinand II had re-Catholicized Bohemia and Moravia by force.

2.1 The Lutheran Reformation - purple - began when Martin Luther nailed Ninety-five Theses (propositions) against Indulgences to the church door in Wittenberg in the north of Germany on 31st October 1517. What distinguished Luther from previous reformers was that while they attacked corruption and abuses within the life of the Church, he went to the theological root of the problem – starting with the sale of indulgences to buy salvation. This influenced (and came to dominate) Northern Germany and then Eastern Europe and Scandinavia - the purple areas on the map. (Lion, 384-6).

2.2 Reformed / Calvinist Reformation

The Reformed or Calvinist Reformation - orange on the map. In Zurich in Switzerland, a Catholic priest called Zwingli began to preach reform at the same time as Luther, but independently of him; to distinguish themselves from Lutherans, the Swiss called their Reformation the 'Reformed Reformation'. Zwingli died young, and his place was taken by John Calvin in Geneva – see it on the map above. His influence was so dominant that the Swiss Reformation is often called 'Calvinist' instead of 'Reformed' (its original

name). This Reformation influenced (and came to dominate) parts of Switzerland, then Holland and Scotland, as you see from the orange on the map.

2.3 The Radical Reformation, many of whose followers were called Anabaptists

There is no coloured area for them on the map, because they never dominated any large area, and by 1600 they had been persecuted almost to extinction. However, there are some blue dots on the map, in Austria and in the Netherlands and, as the key on the left of the map says, these were continuing Anabaptist communities. They began when a group surrounding Zwingli in Switzerland wanted to be more radical than Zwingli; they wanted to go right back to the roots of the New Testament Church - they said that Zwingli had not gone far enough, so they were called Radical Reformers - 'back to the roots'. Opponents seized on their practice of 're-baptising' those who had been baptised in infancy and called them 'Anabaptists' or 'Rebaptisers'. From Switzerland they spread to Germany and they became influential in Holland. They were persecuted and largely wiped out, but their ideas survived and became influential, as we'll see in Lecture 21 – where we'll see what, if any, is their link with Baptist Churches as we know them to-day.

2.4 The English Reformation

This was started by King Henry VIII for personal, not religious, reasons. Reformation in England - pink on the map - had distinctive features which gave birth to the form of Church government known as Episcopacy (archbishops and bishops) - Lecture 24.

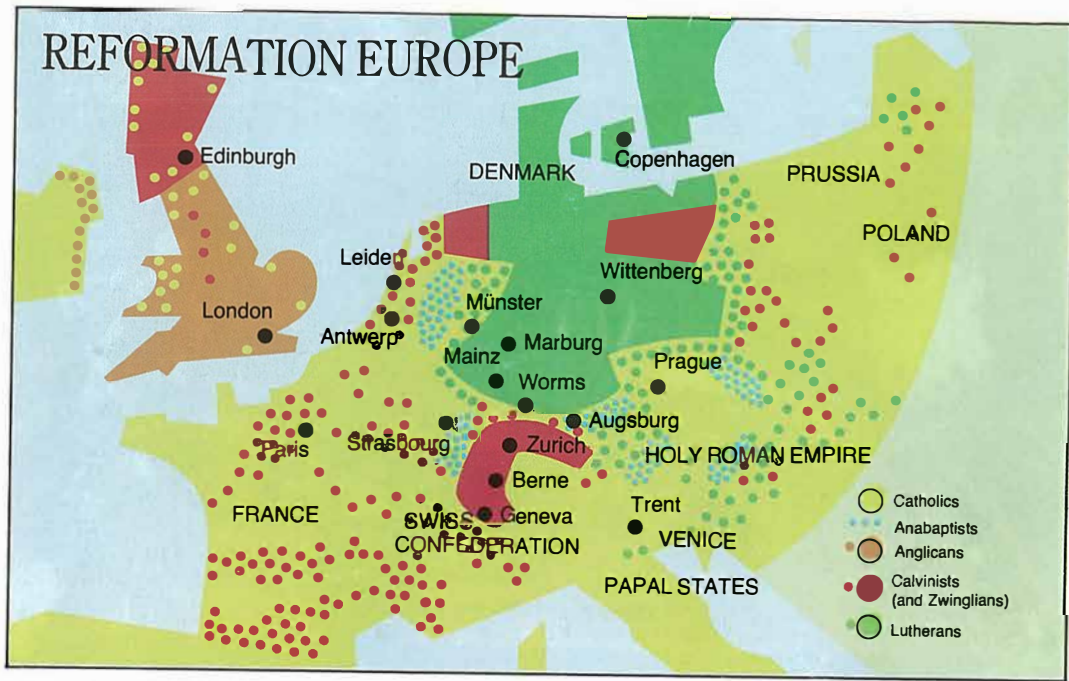
2.5 The Scottish Reformation

John Knox led and developed a particular type of Reformation in Scotland, characterized by a distinctive form of Church government known as Presbyterian; we'll study this in Lecture 25. In contrast to the English Reformation, which was 'top-down', imposed by the king, John Knox fiercely opposed the wishes of Mary Queen of Scots; the Scottish Reformation - one of the orange-coloured areas on the map - was driven by the barons and the middle classes, and so the reform was more radical than in England.

2.6 The Counter Reformation or Catholic Reformation

Some say that the Catholic Church 'counter attacked', and so call this the 'Counter Reformation'; others say that the Catholics simply speeded up reforms which were taking place anyway, and so they prefer to call it the 'Catholic Reformation'. As we'll see in Lecture 26, there is truth in both names - there was a violent physical response to the Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists, but there was also continued reform of areas which had started before Luther made his protest.

We've got a whole Lecture on that, number 26, but to set the scene for the overall picture of the Reformation I'll mention now, very briefly, three features of it. First, the counter-attack on Protestantism was spearheaded by the Society of Jesus, also known as Jesuits. They were formed as an independent Society, like the Franciscans and the Dominicans (Lecture 12), recognized by the Catholic Church, but not as priests (who were pastors to local churches) and not as monks, who were based in their monasteries. Secondly, the Pope convened a Council at Trent in North Italy, which met (on and off) from 1545 to 1563 to debate and to put into writing exactly what the Catholic Church believed; the Council defined Catholic doctrine in an overtly anti-Protestant direction and also continued Catholic reform. The third feature to notice at this stage, is that Spain and Italy were the centres of the Counter-Reformation; we'll look at the reasons for that in Lecture 26, but Protestantism never gained a foothold in Spain or Italy.



This map is here for two reasons: (1) it shows the position in 1560, 40 years before the map on page 3; this map shows large areas of Protestants in France (Huguenots); thousands were brutally murdered in 1572 and others fled, so by 1600 there weren't enough Protestants in France to show on the previous map, and (2) Poland has both green dots (Lutherans) and red dots (Calvinists), but Poland was won back for Catholicism by 1600. The Jesuits offered to teach in the local schools and since they provided the best education available in the area, the leaders of Poland sent their children to these schools; the result was, as the Jesuits claimed, 'give us a child to the age of seven and we will show you the man'. By 1600, Poland was back in the Catholic fold. We'll come to that in more detail in Lecture 26.

3. MARTIN LUTHER (1483 - 1546)

(Cairns, 280-89; Olson, 369-96; Lion, 366-76; Vos, 85-88; Lane, 127-131; Hanks, *Great Christians*, 104-113; *Great Events*, 175-82.)

3.1 Biography up to ordination as a priest

Luther was born on 10 November 1483 at Eisleben, in Saxony (now Germany), and baptised the next day. He was the first son of Hans and Margaret Luther, who were described as 'tough Saxons'. Luther's father had a copper mining business and the family was wealthy by local standards. Martin had a strict upbringing. At the age of seven he was sent to a Latin school and at 14 to the Brethren of the Common Life (the same lay religious order as Thomas a Kempis, Topic with Lecture 18).

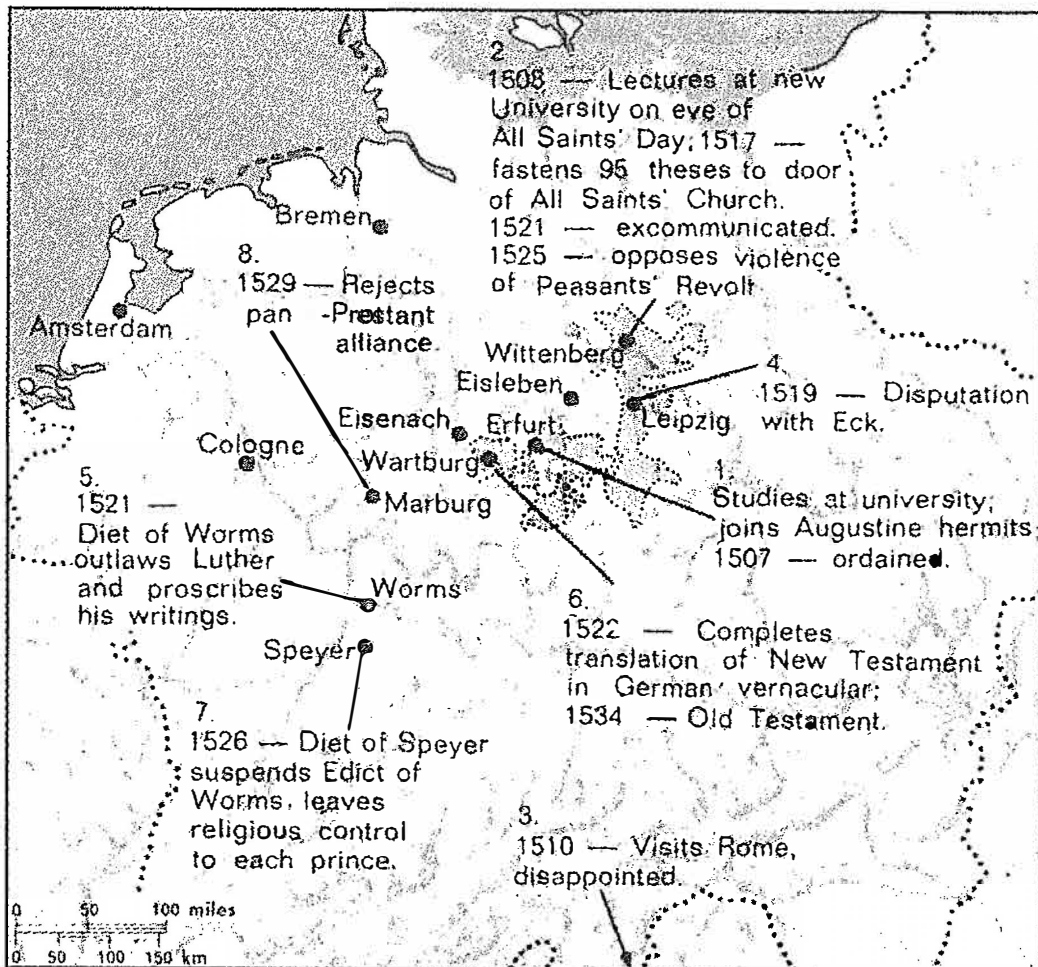
MARTIN LUTHER



Hans (father)

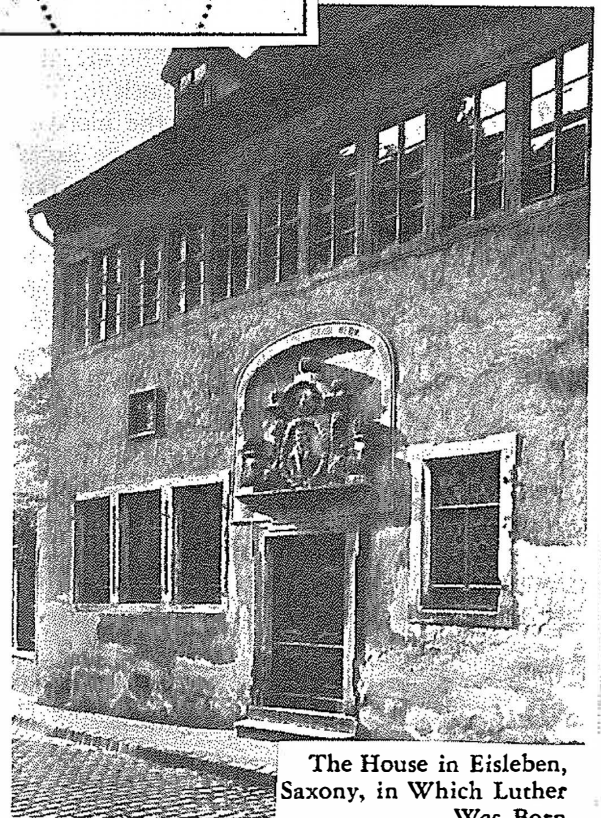


Margaret (mother)



Martin's father kept pushing him to be 'upwardly mobile' (as we say). In 1501, aged 18, he matriculated at the University of Erfurt, (No. 1 on the map above). Hans Luther wanted his son to practise civil (not canon) law. At age 22 he graduated M.A., placed second among seventeen candidates. So far, Martin had done all his parents could have hoped.

Six weeks later, in June 1505, Martin was riding on horseback to the University of Erfurt from his home, when he experienced a violent storm and a bolt of lightning struck the ground next to him. Some accounts say that a friend, who was with him, was killed by it. Martin was knocked to the ground and, terrified, he called out: 'St Agnes, help me. I will become a monk' Behind his cry was a great fear of death and purgatory – and the assumption that to become a monk was the surest way to avoid purgatory.



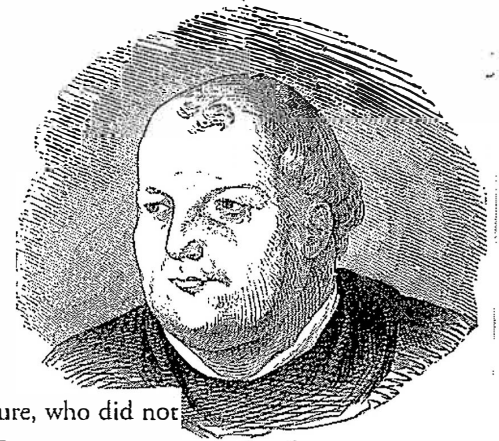
The House in Eisleben, Saxony, in Which Luther Was Born

He joined an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt (No. 1 on the map above). Augustinians had by this time over 2,000 monasteries, and the one in Erfurt had seventy members. As a novice, Martin had to go around with his eyes downcast, never to laugh, never to eat or speak except at prescribed times, and to do domestic chores. He lived in a single cell, nine by six feet, with one chair, bed, candlestick and a straw bed. He ate twice a day, but

only once on fast days (there were over a hundred of them in year). There was no heating in the cell - and North German winters can be very cold.

This next bit is crucial to understanding Luther and the Reformation. Remember the penitential cycle (Lecture 16, page 7) - sin was forgiven in three stages: (1) you confessed your sins to a priest, (2) the priest gave you absolution on condition that (3) you did what the priest laid down by way of penance. Luther had an inordinately sensitive conscience. He was obsessed with the fear that he might not have confessed all of his sins; if he had not confessed them, they would not be forgiven. He would come to his mentor, a monk called Staupitz, confess his sins, walk away, then come back with some foible he had not mentioned. At one point the exasperated Staupitz, said 'Look, Brother Martin, if you're going to confess so much, why don't you go and do something worth confessing? Kill your mother or father! Commit adultery! But quit coming to me with such minor sins'. But Luther persisted; he couldn't find peace in the penitential cycle - he kept questioning whether he confessed everything, and he thought that his salvation depended on his confession of all his sins.

Johannes von Staupitz, Luther's great father figure, who did not follow him into the Reformation.



Despite his inordinately sensitive conscience, Luther completed his training and was ordained a monk in 1507.

3.2 Wittenberg and Rome

The monastery at Erfurt was linked with the University of nearby Wittenberg, number 2 on the map on page 7; in 1508, Luther was selected for post-ordination study there. Two years later, in 1510, he was assigned to accompany a senior monk to visit Rome. (No 3 on the map.) As an ardent young man of 28, Luther was filled with great anticipation but this turned to disillusionment as he saw the Roman clergy's slick professionalism. When he celebrated Mass, he was so devout that he created a bottleneck, and he was pushed forward and told to hurry up.

After Luther returned from Rome, he was appointed in May 1512 to the Chair of Biblical Theology at Wittenberg. He lectured on the Psalms, Hebrews, Galatians and Romans. He had an unusual lecturing method; he expounded Scripture, rather than following the standard curriculum of medieval theology, which was scholasticism - Lecture 16, page 8. Printing was now easily available, as we saw in the last Lecture, so Luther had the Biblical text printed on paper with wide margins, and he then worked his way through the text, making comments. This was real humanism - stripping away medieval commentary, and examining the text itself. He later remarked: 'in the course of this teaching, the papacy slipped away from me'.



Martin Luther.

I would not have missed seeing Rome for a hundred thousand florins, for then I might have been afraid of being unjust to the Pope.

— Luther

3.3 Luther's conversion

The date of this is debated, with dates as far apart as 1508 and 1519 being given. Probably it took place over a number of years, as he taught from the Bible. He started, as did all his contemporaries, with the idea that God gave people grace, if people first made the effort to be good. There was a universally accepted maxim: 'God will not deny grace to those who do their best.' Grace had to be earned, but

wondering whether he had done enough convinced Luther that the system was flawed.¹ Relief came gradually through the study of the Bible, and a key verse was Romans 1.17, ‘in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed’. Luther had previously read that verse through medieval spectacles, that God was seeking righteousness by people’s own efforts. When he realised that Paul was not talking about our righteousness but God’s righteousness, which is received by faith in Christ, he felt that he had been ‘born again’ (which he had). This was the doctrine of justification by faith, which became the watchword of the Reformation.

After his great discovery, that he was justified by faith and not by works, Luther went quietly back to teaching. It is sometimes said that he was an unknown monk, in a backwater university, and that’s partly true, but he was by now experienced beyond his 34 years, having travelled to Rome and having seen the Pope; he was now responsible for not only his own monastery but also for eleven other monasteries, which meant supervising them, disciplining monks who misbehaved, looking after the buildings, auditing the accounts and tackling any legal problems arising in all twelve monasteries. He was a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Theology, he had been teaching for nine years and he was a talented preacher; he was one of the first professors in Germany to lecture on the Old Testament from the original Hebrew and the New Testament from the Greek. He was also one of the first professors in Germany to lecture in German instead of Latin. He knew the Prince of Saxony, and he had corresponded with some of the most prominent men of his time. He was a long way from being a simple or obscure monk

However, the Reformation did not start with Luther’s new theological insight, but with his concern about the abuse of Indulgences.

3.4 Indulgences

The Catholic Church’s claim to forgive sins had a long history, but as we saw in Lecture 15, page 9, from about 1100 those who went on a Crusade received Indulgence for all their sins. Shortly after that, the Church began to offer forgiveness for sins, by way of Indulgence, for cash, because paying money to the Church was a ‘good deed’. Until 1476 this was available only for people who were still alive, but then the Pope, unashamedly looking for money, extend Indulgences to cover dead people who had uncompleted penance and who had gone to purgatory. From 1476 their friends could purchase an Indulgence to hasten their passage from purgatory to heaven.

This reached a new and preposterous level while Luther was teaching at Wittenberg. The Archbishop of Mainz (nearby) had bought this appointment by promising to pay huge sums of money to the Pope (far beyond his means), because the Pope was rebuilding St Peter’s in Rome and was desperate for capital. The Archbishop, Albert, hit on a scheme to meet his promises - he farmed out the sale of Indulgences to Johan Tetzel (1465 - 1519), a Dominican monk who made heart rendering appeals to people:

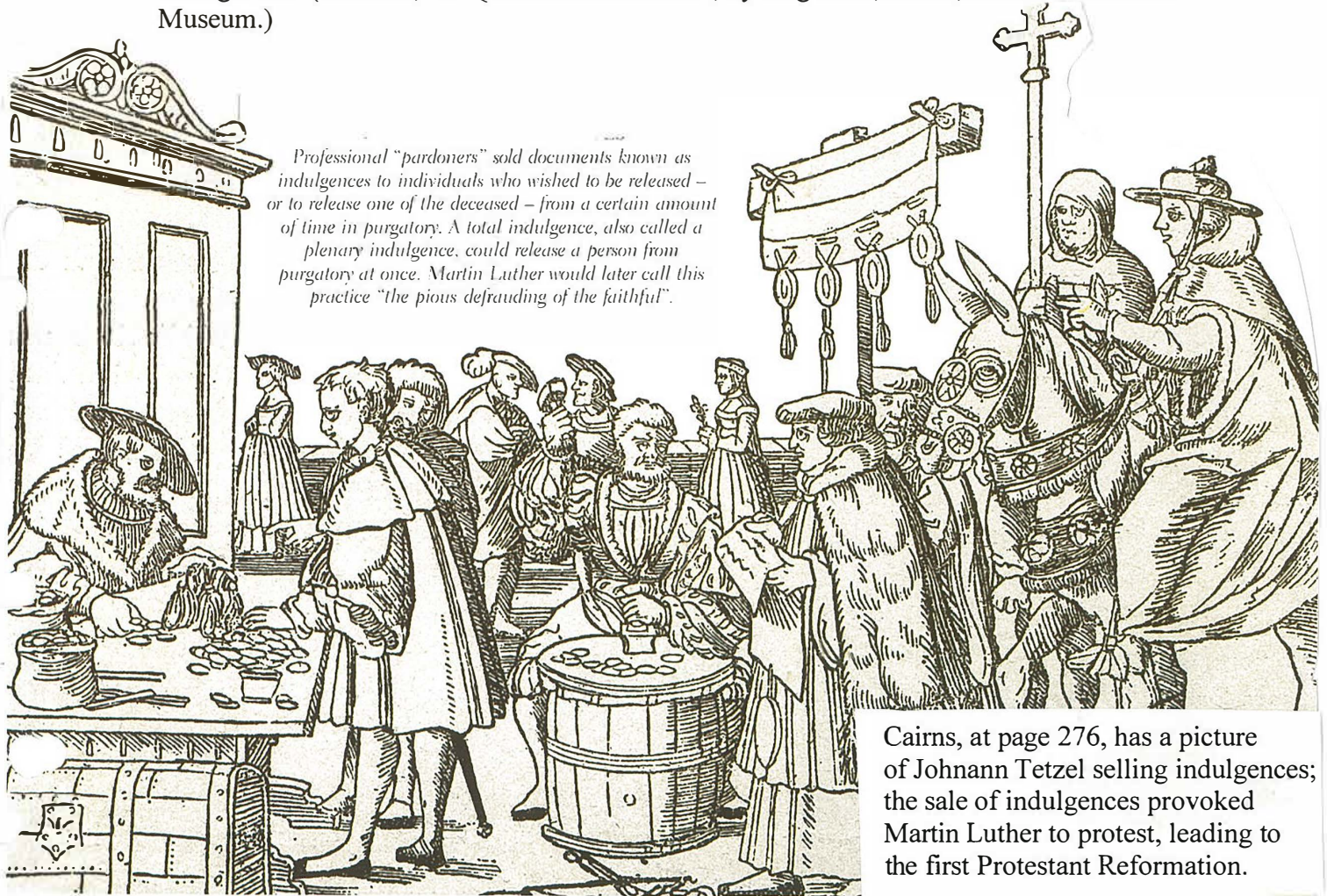
The dead cry, Pity us! Pity us! We are in dire torment from which you can redeem us for a pittance. Will you let us lie here in the flames? Will you delay our promised glory?

going on to assure his hearers that ‘As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs’.

¹ Older historians picked up Luther’s comment, in his Table Talk from 1532, that his theological insight came in ‘this tower and heated room’, and they assumed a Damascus Road type of experience which overwhelmed Luther in his study in the tower of the monastery. It is more generally recognized now that his theological perspective probably changed gradually over a number of years, especially over 1514-19, so that when the debate on indulgences came up, he approached it with new insights.

A near-contemporary woodcut showing Tetzel in the flat cap (centre of picture), holding a scroll, the Indulgence he was selling, making an appeal, and bankers' agents collecting money, two bankers' agents collecting money in exchange for Tetzel promising purchasers relief for souls suffering in purgatory, The banner (top right) advertises a typical Indulgence letter, with papal seals as evidence of Pope's authorization for sale of Indulgences. (woodcut, 'A Question to a Minter', by Jorg Breu, c1530, is now in a Berlin Museum.)

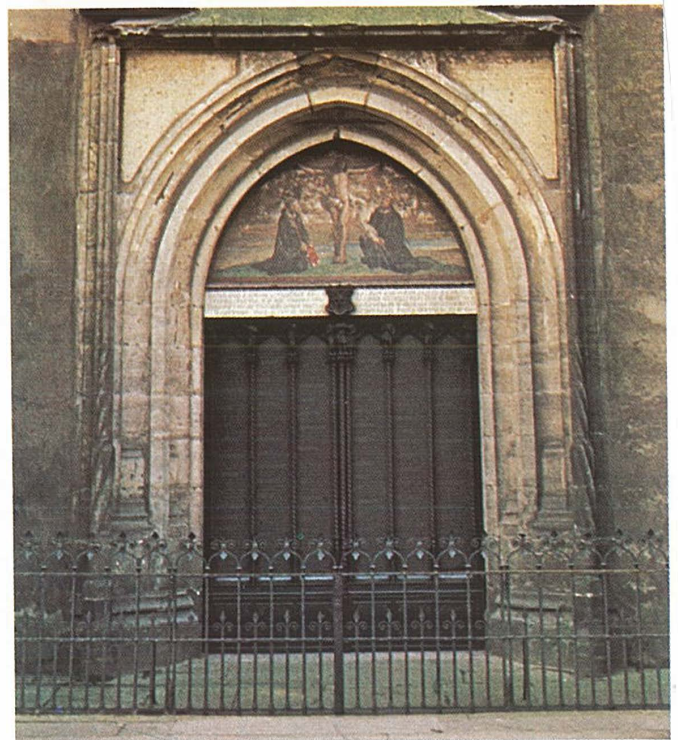
Professional "pardoners" sold documents known as indulgences to individuals who wished to be released – or to release one of the deceased – from a certain amount of time in purgatory. A total indulgence, also called a plenary indulgence, could release a person from purgatory at once. Martin Luther would later call this practice "the pious defrauding of the faithful".



Cairns, at page 276, has a picture of Johann Tetzel selling indulgences; the sale of indulgences provoked Martin Luther to protest, leading to the first Protestant Reformation.

3.5 The 95 theses (Hanks, *Great Events*, 175)

The door of the church in Wittenberg (picture on right) was used as a notice board. On 31 October 1517, the eve of All Saints Day, Luther, aged nearly 34, nailed 95 theses (proposals) there, calling for debate. The date was no coincidence; All Souls Day was celebrated in the Catholic Church as the day for honouring the dead. The Church taught that the soul of most people who die goes to purgatory, and Luther wanted to debate the Church's claim that an Indulgence, purchased for money, could shorten their time there.



I came across this 1864 oil-painting, entitled ‘Wittenberg, October 31, 1517’, when visiting the Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, U.S.A. It shows:

On the left, Johann Tetzel on a horse and his followers carrying a crucifix.
On the right, Luther's followers, including his wife (in a nun's habit), his parents (on either side of his wife) and his sister (in green).



The problem with this painting is only Luther was there. (1) Tetzel was banned from the area; (2) Luther did not meet his future wife until 1523; (3) his parents and sister had no knowledge of what he was about to do; (4) Luther had no following at this stage and (5) there was no confrontation when he nailed his 95 theses to the church door.

3.6 Subsequent events

Luther sent a copy of his 95 theses to his bishop (in Latin) and his friends asked a printer to run off copies of a German translation. The enterprising printer saw the potential and sold the theses widely. Germany was, politically and socially, a tinderbox of discontent with Rome, especially over payment of taxes, and it needed only a spark to set Germany ablaze. The 95 theses were the spark. They rapidly became a best seller and Luther became a hero overnight.

The theses did not question purgatory or the authority of the Pope. There were essentially three points:

First, financial abuses - excessive taxes claimed by Rome from the German people; Luther said that if the Pope realised the poverty of the German people, he would rather that St. Peter's lay in ashes than that it should be built out of the 'skin, flesh and blood of his sheep'.

Second, doctrinal abuses - the Pope has no jurisdiction over purgatory, i.e. to sell indulgences to get dead people out of it; if he did, he should empty it free of charge.

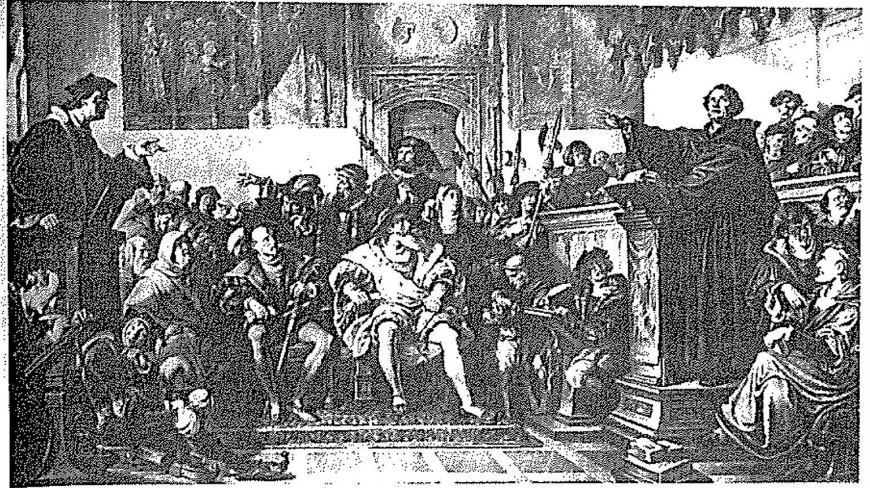
Third, religious abuses - Luther denied the 'treasury of merits', by which the Church claimed to draw down the 'surplus merit' of worthy Christians who had died with more merit than they needed for their own salvation and offered it (for a price) to living or recently deceased penitents. (Lecture 15).

3.7 Augsburg, October 1518

Luther was ordered to Augsburg in October 1518, to be interviewed by the Pope's representative. The debate moved from Indulgences to the authority of the Pope. Luther declared that Scripture took precedence over papal decrees, and insisted that justification was by faith, not by the sacraments. The Pope's representative duly reported back, and it was only a matter of time before the Pope took further action against Luther. Fortunately for Luther, the Pope had a lot of other things on his mind, so the next hearing was scheduled for July of the following year, nine months away. Luther spent the nine months studying the Scriptures and Church law, deciding how best to put across his new understanding of the Church and of salvation. That led to:

3.8 The Leipzig Disputation: July 1519 - No. 4 on the map on page 6.

The debate was with a leading Catholic theologian, John Eck (1486-1543). He was a clever debater, and gradually pushed Luther into approving some of the teachings of Jan Hus, the Hungarian reformer (Lecture 18). The Church regarded Hus as a heretic, and so Luther's approval of any of his teachings meant that Luther was heretical in the eyes of the Church. Again, debating the issue had clarified Luther's own



The Leipzig Debate with Dr. Eck

thinking. Although he still hoped to purify the Church, not divide it, his condemnation by the Catholic Church was now inevitable.

Luther began to publish books, both in the vernacular for the German people and also in Latin for the universities - three major works and about 50 pamphlets, now challenging not just Indulgences, but priestly mediation as a whole, and denying the authority of the



Martin Luther
Burning
the Pope's Bull
Against Him

Pope. Accordingly, in December 1520, the Pope excommunicated Luther, by sending what was called a papal bull (a formal document, signed by the Pope). Luther gathered a large crowd in a meadow outside Wittenberg, prepared a bonfire and burned the papal bull. This was open rebellion. It was so significant that the people present planted an oak tree to mark the spot where Luther openly broke with Rome – it is still there, or at least a replacement oak tree.

This is a good point to take our

TOPIC – PHILIP MELANCHTON; it was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

3.10 Diet of Worms, 1521 - No. 5 on the map on page 6.

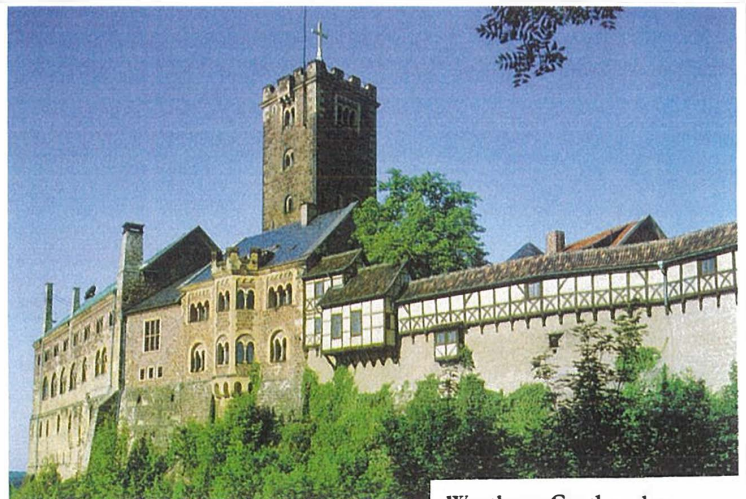
Because the Pope had excommunicated Luther, the Church had no authority over him. However, the Pope leaned on the Emperor to convene a secular tribunal, an assembly of the States of the Holy Roman Empire, known as a Diet, and it met at Worms in 1521.

This was not to prove that he was a heretic (challenging the Church) but that he was a rebel, undermining civil order. Luther wanted a theological debate, but the Emperor was shrewd enough not to allow that, and asked Luther only two questions: ‘was he the author of the books on the table?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Would he now renounce them?’ Luther replied: ‘My conscience is captive to the Word of God, I cannot and I will not recant anything’. While Luther probably did not use the famous words, ‘Here I stand, I can do no other’, they accurately summarize his reply. The Emperor ordered Luther not to preach or write.



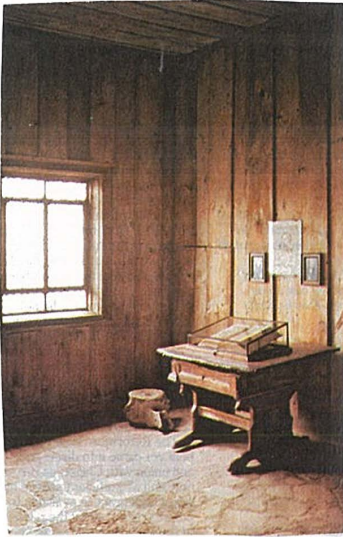
Luther Before the Diet of Worms

That put the Ruler of Saxony (which included Wittenberg) in a quandary - he liked Luther but he couldn't challenge the Emperor. So he arranged for Luther to be kidnapped on his way home, for his own safety, and hid him in Wartburg Castle, overlooking Eisenach, watched over by guards for his own protection. He was given two rooms (one pictured on the next page) and he was there for nearly a year.



Wartburg Castle, where Luther was taken for his own safety after the Diet of Worms.

3.10 Translation of the New Testament into German



During his enforced stay in the Castle, Luther translated the whole New Testament from the Greek text of Erasmus into idiomatic, pungent, powerful German. Nothing did so much to win popular adherence to his teaching. Now people, on reading or hearing the simple, vigorous words of Jesus and of Paul, said of Luther's teaching, 'he's right.'

This is a picture of the room in the fortress where Luther made the translation and where he also wrote books and pamphlets in support of the Reformation.

3.11 Return to Wittenberg.

Luther returned to Wittenberg in March 1522 and resumed his teaching ministry; he also preached every Sunday. Many monks left their monasteries to join the cause - one-third of the Augustinian order in Wittenberg.



The Augustinian monastery of Wittenberg, at which Martin Luther was a monk, was dissolved at the outset of the Reformation. Part of it was made into residences for students and the rest was given to Luther as a family home. He occupied the rooms around the bay window on the left of the photograph. The whole building is now a museum.

3.12 The Peasants' Revolt

Luther had two distinctive ideas on how 'reform' should proceed, and both are illustrated by the disastrous Peasants Revolt of 1524-5. He believed (1) in a close relationship between Church and State, differing from the Radical Reformers whom we will study in Lecture 21, who believed in total separation, and (2) in reforming only where Scripture was expressly *against* the practice, differing from John Calvin, whom we will study in Lecture 23, who did only what was expressly *authorised* by Scripture.

In 1524, Luther became increasingly concerned at the teaching of a radical Protestant reformer, Thomas Müntzer (or Munzer) (1489-1525), who believed that the Second Coming was imminent and that as 'God's Servant against the Godless' he must destroy the wicked in order to prepare the way for it. Luther opposed him because Luther believed that the Church/State relationship was important and the Peasants' War was a greater evil than the oppression against which they were rebelling. He encouraged the

nobility swiftly and violently to crush the rebelling peasants, publishing an article *Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants* in May 1525, just as the rebels, led by Müntzer, were being defeated on the fields of battle. Later, Luther also criticized the ruling classes for their merciless suppression of the insurrection, as about 100,000 were killed and others had their farms destroyed, but the peasants (naturally) felt betrayed and support for the Lutheran Reformation came, from then on, from rulers rather than from peasants. History remembers Luther unkindly for his response to the Peasants' Revolt.

3.13 Later developments

Of the many later developments of the Lutheran Reformation, there is time to look at only five.

(1) Communion

Because the Catholic Church taught that the bread and wine at the Mass became the body and blood of Christ, the laity were not allowed to handle either. The priest gave every communicant bread in the form of a wafer, in case any crumbs fell to the ground, but never the wine, in case a drop was spilled - only the priest drank the wine. Luther insisted that the laity should be allowed to receive both the bread and the wine at Communion, as both were signs of God's grace, and the practice of 'communion in both kinds' (as it became known) was a characteristic of the Reformation.

Luther denied the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, that the bread and wine of the Mass were transformed into the body and blood of Christ. In its place, Luther proposed a doctrine now known as 'consubstantiation', which we'll look at in the Lecture 20 because he debated this with Zwingli, who is a subject of that Lecture.

(2) From 1520, city after city in Germany went over to the Lutheran Reformation, often after a vote by the Town Council. Fifty of the sixty-five cities in Germany voted to break with Rome - taking control of their own affairs was a bonus.

(3) By 1525, Luther encouraged those who left Catholic Orders to marry, saying that the monastic vow of celibacy was not binding. In consequence, many monks and nuns arrived at Wittenberg, where he arranged marriages for all but one, Katherina von Bora. She indicated that she would consider Luther and so, although initially reluctant, he reasoned: (1) it would please his father, (2) it would displease the Pope. He found great happiness with her and they had large family.

(4) Luther's hymns, which, with his German Bible, were the twin pillars of the Reformation, Perhaps the best-known now is 'A mighty fortress is our God'. Luther not only got people singing, but he made sure that the words of his hymns taught them Biblical doctrine.

(5) The priesthood of all believers

(a) People do not need a priest to mediate with God, or to seek his forgiveness, for all believers have direct access through Christ.

(b) All Christians should read the Bible, understand its message and make moral decisions based on it.

(c) All Christians are to be priests to one another; every Christian had a duty to pray for, care for, and give guidance to others.



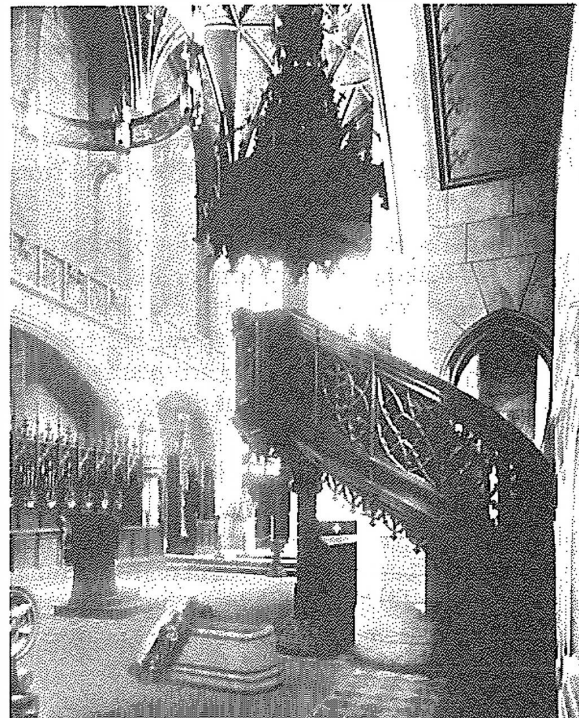
Catherine Von Bora, Luther's wife.

(d) Everyone should serve God in the world by faithfully performing their daily occupations; shoemakers, housewives, farmers and businessman, if they do their work to the glory of God, are more pleasing to Him than monks and nuns. This was one of Luther's most important and fundamental teachings. It was also the widest possible departure from mediaeval monasticism, and it became one of the most distinctive traits of Protestant Christianity. 'The scrub maid on her knees is as much in the will of God as the pope on the throne.' (Luther)

Luther's greatest contribution to history was to take four basic Catholic concerns and offer invigorating new answers. To the question, how is a person saved? - Luther replied: not by works but by faith alone. To the question, where does religious authority lie? - he answered: not in the visible institution called the Roman Church but in the Word of God found in the Bible. To the question, what is the Church? - he responded: the whole community of Christian believers, since all are priests before God. And to the question, what is the essence of Christian living? - he replied: serving God in any useful calling, whether ordained or lay. To this day any classical description of Protestantism must echo those central truths.²

3.14 Luther's death

In January 1546, during the dead of winter, sixty-three year old Luther, always a pastor to people in need, travelled to his birthplace, Eisleben, to settle a family dispute. After long negotiations, which were successful, he was taken ill and died on the following day. He was buried in the Castle Church of Wittenberg, where he had posted his theses.



Religious News Service Photo

Martin Luther was buried in the Castle Church in Wittenberg after his death on February 18, 1546.

4. THREE LATER DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 Lutheranism after Luther

Luther's titanic personality and respect for his achievements meant that Lutherans who differed from him on points of doctrine or practice - even his right-hand man, Philip Melancthon (our Topic) disagreed with him on several matters, listed in footnote 4 below - kept silent for as long as he was alive. However, the thirty years after Luther's death in 1546 were marked by controversies so fierce that they threatened the entire Lutheran Reformation with self-destruction. Peace and unity were restored only when the issues were comprehensively resolved by an agreement known as the *Formula of Concord* in 1577. The *Formula* defined Lutheranism against Calvinism and, alongside the *Augsburg Confession* and *Luther's Small Catechism*, it remains the chief doctrinal statement for conservative Lutherans today. There is no time to study it here, nor to go into details of the controversies over the preceding thirty years, which it resolved, but

² Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed, 1995, Nashville, Nelson, p. 246.

footnote 3 on this page lists the twelve provisions of the *Formula*³ and footnote 4 briefly summarizes the six main controversies over the previous thirty years, which it ended.⁴

4.2 The Lutheran Church

The last thing on Luther's mind was to create a new Church. He wanted to reform the Catholic Church and he was embarrassed when people called themselves 'Lutherans', but the Lutheran Church is now one of the major Christian denominations, with more than sixty million members world-wide.

4.3 Five hundred years later

The Evangelical Alliance issued a statement in 2017, entitled *The Reformation, Evangelicals and Roman Catholicism*, to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther publishing his 95 Theses. It included:

As evangelicals, we owe a great deal of our doctrinal, spiritual and cultural identity to the Reformation. The Reformation was not so much an innovation as a recovery - a recovery of the essential content of the 'evangel' or 'good news' of salvation proclaimed by Jesus Christ himself, and by his apostles. That work of recovery is reflected in our own designation as evangelicals. (continued on page 17.)

³ The *Formula of Concord* had twelve articles: Original Sin; Free Will; The Righteousness of Faith Before God; Good Works; The Law and the Gospel; The Third Use of the Law; The Lord's Supper; The Person of Christ; The Descent of Christ to Hell; Church rites; God's Eternal Foreknowledge and Election; List of Factions that were not embraced in it.

⁴ (1) **Antinomians** (from the Greek *anti*, against, and *nomos*, the law, hence antinomian) claimed that the Old Testament Law and the New Testament Gospel are so different that Christians should not use Law to bring conviction of sin nor to seek guidance for living.

(2) **'Indifferent things'** (from the Greek *adiaphora*, indifferent). In 1547 the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor imposed his own religious settlement on Lutheran territory he had conquered, so Melanchthon produced an alternative statement called the *Leipzig Interim*, which maintained key Lutheran doctrines but restored some mediaeval Catholic ceremonies. Other Lutherans attacked the *Leipzig Interim* as a dangerous compromise; Melanchthon said that the ceremonies were *adiaphora*, indifferent, but his detractors said they could not be tolerated. Five years later, these Lutherans defeated the Emperor militarily, and so the issue became history but bad feeling lingered on.

(3) **The Lord's Supper**. After Luther's death, Melanchthon and some of his supporters began to teach publicly what they had believed all along but which they had kept to themselves so as not to upset Luther, that they preferred Zwingli's understanding of the Lord's Supper (to be explored in Lecture 26) rather than Luther's understanding of it (page 14 of these Notes). The majority of Lutherans opposed Melanchthon and in 1574 the sovereign intervened and enforced Luther's view.

(4) **Good works**. The traditional Lutheran view was that good works in the lives of Christians glorify God but in 1551 a theological professor at Wittenberg taught that they were necessary for salvation. Much confusion followed.

(5) **Justification**. In 1550, a leading Lutheran theologian confused sanctification (Christ living in the believer) with justification (Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer). This was bitterly attacked as lapsing back into the Catholic error about justification.

(6) **Divine grace and human will**. Luther had insisted that God's grace alone liberated the enslaved human will. After his death, Melanchthon began to teach that the human will cooperates with divine grace in conversion. A conference in 1560 failed to resolve the differences and this dispute raged until the *Formula of Concord* in 1577.

(Continuing from the top of page 16.) Over the past 40 years, although there has been greater clarity about the points of continued divergence between evangelical and Roman Catholic belief, there has also been greater clarity about points of shared conviction and concern and opportunities for collaboration. While significant differences in doctrine and practice remain, many evangelicals have found ways in which they can work together with Catholic believers.

Points of convergence and co-operation

Creeds: Although not all evangelical churches recite or formally subscribe to the key ecumenical creeds of the early Church, we do share with Roman Catholics the substantive doctrines affirmed by those creeds. Hence the creation and sustaining of the cosmos by God, the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the deity of Christ and his uniqueness for salvation, his conception by the Spirit and birth of the Virgin Mary, his atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension, universal rule and promised return to judge humanity and usher in a new and eternal order – all are held by evangelicals and Catholics alike.

Evangelism and renewal: from its earliest days the Evangelical Alliance has promoted religious liberty, and this has included support for the right of evangelicals to persuade Catholics of the evangelical understanding of the gospel. In the past century, however, there has been growing mutual understanding and effort between Catholics and evangelicals in the work of evangelism. Significant numbers of evangelicals and Catholics since the 1960s have also found new depths of fellowship as they have explored the gifts, work and life of the Holy Spirit together.

Social and medical ethics, and the common good. In the 1990s, ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ crystallized a good deal of earlier joint action by each community on ethical issues related to the start and end of life, as well as on the classical Christian understanding of marriage and family. Joint work on abortion, euthanasia and marriage is born out of a shared conviction about the sanctity of human life as created in God's image, and the sovereignty of God over life and death, family life and relationships.

Points of divergence

The nature and authority of the Church: we do not accept that the Church is expressed definitively by the church of Rome and that evangelicals and others should be classed less definitively as ‘ecclesial communities’.

The papacy and papal infallibility: while some evangelicals belong to churches led by bishops, we reject the narrative of papal supremacy and Petrine succession as without biblical warrant.

Sacraments: with respect to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, evangelicals would typically disagree with the Catholic notion that they intrinsically or instrumentally mediate regeneration and grace, and would disavow Catholic teaching on Communion as a Eucharistic sacrifice.

Mariology: there is much that we can glean from Mary's life and witness; yet on biblical grounds we nonetheless regard her, like us, as a pilgrim sinner, and we find no basis for her own immaculate conception or assumption. Nor do we find any biblical grounds for the common Roman Catholic construal of Mary as one through whom we should pray.

OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

TOPIC FOR LECTURE 19 – PHILIP MELANCHTHON (1497-1560)

Please tell us about the life of Philip Melanchthon, including his part in the Protestant Reformation and especially about his relationship with Martin Luther.

Cairns mentions Melanchthon briefly, 283, 285 and 287-8; Lion, 377; Olson (in passing), 367, 379 and 398; Lane, 131-2.

Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560). Appointed Professor of Greek in Wittenberg in 1518 (when a mere 21 years of age) he came into contact with Luther and became his co-worker in the furtherance of the Gospel. Sweet-tempered and gentle in argument, he balanced Luther's vehemence. In 1521 he wrote the first Protestant work on dogmatic theology. It passed through over 50 editions while its author lived.



Melanchthon (on left) with Martin Luther, translating the Old Testament into German. (Cairns, 283). (Luther had translated the New Testament while in hiding in 1521 - 3.10 of Lecture 19.)

