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**“A History of the Anglican Church—Part XXIII (Sec. 2):
An Essay on the Role of Christian Lawyers and Judges within the Secular
State”©**

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The ideas expressed in this Apostolate Paper are wholly those of the author, and subject to modification as a result of on-going research into this subject matter. This paper is currently being revised and edited, but this version is submitted for the purpose of sharing Christian scholarship with clergy, the legal profession, and the general public.

PREFACE

The organized Christian church of the Twenty-First Century is in crisis and at a crossroad. Christianity as a whole is in flux. And I believe that Christian lawyers and judges are on the frontlines of the conflict and changes which are today challenging both the Christian church and the Christian religion. Christian lawyers and judges have the power to influence and shape the social, economic, political, and legal landscape in a way that will allow Christianity and other faith-

based institutions to evangelize the world for the betterment of all human beings. I write this essay, and a series of future essays, in an effort to persuade the American legal profession to rethink and reconsider one of its most critical and important jurisprudential foundations: the Christian religion. To this end, I hereby present the thirty-fifth essay in this series: “A History of the Anglican Church—Part XXIII (Part 2).”

INTRODUCTION¹

“When Martin Luther sought to democratize the Roman Catholic Church, with theories such as the ‘justification by faith alone,’ ‘the priesthood of all believers,’ ‘Sola Scriptura,’ ‘the right of the Christian faithful to judge and select pastors and bishops,’ etc., he unwittingly laid the foundations for the modern Western democratic nation-state and modern-day constitutional law.”

“Without Martin Luther, many of the freedoms that we today take for granted—freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and press, and the separation of church and state—would either not exist or would have come into existence much later in history.”

“It was altogether the work of Divine Providence that the great civil rights leader in the United States, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), was named after the great German theologian, Dr. Martin Luther (1483-1546). Both of these men were ordained ministers of the Christian faith; both led oppressed national minorities groups; both men grappled with great theological, legal, and constitutional questions; both men were suppressed by their own governments and treated as outlaws; and, in a very real sense, both men sealed their indelible mark upon Western civilization.”

— **Roderick O. Ford, Esq.**

In this paper, we turn to the theology, life, and times of the great German theologian Martin Luther (1483-1546). The emphasis in this paper is on Luther’s theology and its lasting impact upon Anglo-American constitutional jurisprudence.

As we shall see throughout this paper, Martin Luther was one of the few people in history who stood toe-to-toe with King Henry VIII of England (1491-1547); who called Henry VIII profane epithets such as a “Satan worshiper”; and who argued and disagreed with Henry VIII, and lived to tell about it. This was, in essence, that democratic spirit within western democracy that is fundamentally

¹ This paper on the Protestant Reformation in England (1530-1650) is dedicated to **Bishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr.** and to the **Immani Temple African-American Catholic Congregation of Washington, D.C.** I met Bishop Stallings in 1998 at a rather casual setting inside of a local Afrocentric bookstore in Columbia, South Carolina.

“Lutheran.” The foundation of this democratic spirit was Luther’s theological conception of the common man, who, when converted to Christ, is both “priest” and “king.”

Christian lawyers and judges may take special interest in knowing that Martin Luther felt that Christians had a fundamental duty to not sit still and permit injustice, but rather Luther admonished Christians to hold the secular government accountable for establishing justice. Luther once wrote: “Christ has instructed us preachers not to withhold the truth from the lords (rulers) but to exhort and chide them in their injustice. Christ did not say to Pilate ‘*You have no power over me.*’ He said that Pilate did have power, but he said, ‘*You do not have this power from yourself. It is given to you from God.*’ Therefore he upbraided Pilate. We do the same, we recognize the authority, but we must rebuke our Pilates in their crime and self-confidence.” This Lutheran spirit—the idea that God had authorized the common man to hold both ecclesiastical and secular rulers accountable-- was interwoven into England’s political and social consciousness. Indeed, during the 16th century, Martin Luther moved the forceful English monarch Henry VIII and indeed the whole of England and Europe, in a way that few others had been able to do. Today, the Church of England honors Martin Luther on its liturgical calendar as a saint and leader of the Protestant Reformation.

In the spirit and legacy of the great Saint Augustine of Hippo, I consider Martin Luther to be a true Christian and fellow Augustinian brother. For I, like Martin Luther and John Calvin before me, was an avid student of St. Augustine during my formative years as a college and law student during the late 1980s and early 90s. My liberal arts education at Suwannee High School—where I selected “Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation” as the topic of my senior paper-- opened the door to St. Augustine of Hippo in college. And St. Augustine of Hippo’s writings, in turn, opened the proverbial theological door to Martin Luther’s writings, several years after I had finished law school, during which time I was still seriously grappling with whether or not I should convert to the Roman Catholic faith.

When I held in my hands a copy of Martin Luther’s essay, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (a reprint located inside of a general book on Protestantism), in many ways my theological journey had come full circle.

In many ways, this journey began in high school with the German theologian Martin Luther, and after more than fifteen years later, returned home to Luther. My theological journey with Martin Luther had taken an interesting twist: first, high-school research; then a ten-year hiatus, during which period I studied Roman Catholicism; and, finally, a sudden burst of theological energy in 1998! In high school, I first learned about the life of Martin Luther and his contributions to western civilization.² My high-school English teacher, Ms. Crawford, was so impressed with my research design, outline, and topic, that she held them up as a model for other students to follow!

In college and law school, from between 1987 and 1995, I lost track of Martin Luther, for I was too engulfed with my fascination with Catholicism, grappling with my decision to convert to the Catholic faith, and with my new career as a practicing attorney.

Then came the year 1998—this was a watershed period in my Christian development. During the year 1998, while attending the Bethel A.M.E. Church in Columbia, South Carolina, I was first introduced to the idea, or proposition, that the Methodist Church was indeed “catholic.” I asked myself, How can this be? They repeated the Apostle’s Creed, circa 390 A.D., which says:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,

² I had known, in general outline, what all of the theological concerns and issues were, which moved Martin Luther to nail his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg. I had heard about what then appeared to me as a blatantly-corrupt practice of selling indulgences and holy relics in exchange for Christian salvation. Like most high school students, I was assigned to read excerpts from Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and excerpts from Dante’s Divine Comedy. Somehow, in the back of my mind, I had assumed that the modern Roman Catholic world no longer accepted the theology on “Purgatory” and the practice of selling Indulgences--what I then perceived as “superstition.”

the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

What was this “the holy catholic Church,” if not the Roman Catholic Church?
What, then, was the true meaning of “catholic”? And could the answers to these questions perhaps shed light on my initial hesitation for joining the Roman Catholic Church?

During this year 1998, I also met Reverend George Augustus Stallings,³ an African American clergyman and a former Roman Catholic priest, *who had once*

³ George Augustus Stallings Jr. (born March 17, 1948) is the founder of the Imani Temple African-American Catholic Congregation, an African-American-led form of Catholicism. He served as a Roman Catholic priest from 1974 to 1989. In 1990, he made a public break with the Roman Catholic Church on The Phil Donahue Show, and was excommunicated that year.... Stallings was born in 1948 in New Bern, North Carolina to George Augustus Stallings, Sr., and Dorothy Smith. His grandmother, Bessie Taylor, introduced him as a boy to worship in a black Baptist church. He enjoyed the service so much that he said he desired to be a minister. During his high school years he began expressing "Afrocentric" sentiments, insisting on his right to wear a mustache, despite school rules, as a reflection of black identity. Wishing to serve as a Catholic priest, he attended St. Pius X Seminary in Kentucky and received a B.A. degree in philosophy in 1970. Sent by his bishop to the Pontifical North American College in Rome, he earned three degrees from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas between 1970 and 1975: the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.), a master's degree in pastoral theology and a Licentiate of Sacred Theology (S.T.L.). Stallings was ordained a priest in 1974. His first assignment was as an associate pastor at Our Lady of Peace Church, Washington, D.C. In 1976, at the age of 28 years and just two years after ordination as a priest, he was named a pastor of St. Teresa of Avila parish in Washington. He was the pastor of this church for 14 years. During Stallings' pastorate, the parish become known for its integration of African-American culture and gospel music in the Mass. In 1988, he was named to a new position as a diocesan evangelist.... In 1989, one year after having received this new appointment, Stallings announced he was leaving it to found a new ministry, the Imani Temple African American Catholic Congregation. He stated that he left because the Catholic Church did not serve the African American community or recognize talent. In January 1990, Stallings announced on The Phil Donahue Show that he was breaking with papal authority and giving up Catholic teaching on abortion, contraception, homosexuality, and divorce. James Cardinal Hickey, Archbishop of Washington, excommunicated him and any Catholics remaining in the Imani Temple. Critics claimed that Stallings had lived extravagantly and that Hickey had ordered him to seek psychiatric treatment. Stallings was ordained a bishop in May 1990 by Richard Bridges, a bishop of the Independent Old Catholic Church, a denomination not in communion with Rome, and was given the title of archbishop in 1991 by the same group.... In the year 2001, Stallings married Sayomi Kamimoto, a native of Okinawa, Japan, in a ceremony presided over by Sun Myung Moon, the founder of the Unification Church. They now have two sons. In 2004 he was a key organizer for an event in which Moon was crowned with a "crown of peace". The event was attended by a number of members of the U.S. Congress. Stallings regained attention in 2006 due to his association with excommunicated Roman Catholic archbishop Emmanuel Milingo and his group Married Priests Now! Milingo consecrated Stallings and three other independent Catholic bishops conditionally in a ceremony in September of that year. Stallings is also active in the Middle East Peace Initiative, which promotes conflict resolution between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims.... In the late 1980s, George Stallings made numerous appearances in the news media. He was interviewed on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Larry King Live, The Phil Donahue Show and The Diane Rehm Show. Published works: I am ... Living in the Rhythm of the god within the key of g minor (2003, SKS Press)." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Augustus_Stallings_Jr.

been compared to the Protestant reformer Martin Luther. For like Martin Luther, Rev. Stallings had led a protest movement from within the Roman Catholic Church.⁴ For it was then I began my serious research in church history (i.e., the history of the early church, the Medieval Roman Catholic Church, the African Coptic Churches in Egypt and Ethiopia, and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Protestant Reformation.⁵

I met Rev. Stallings at a bookstore called “Doreatha’s African Books,” in Columbia, South Carolina in 1998. There, the erudite bookstore owner, Mrs. Doreatha, and I engaged Rev. Stallings in what turned into a most lively three-way debate on religion, Christianity, African spiritualism, and the African American church. At that time, Rev. Stallings was in Columbia visiting family and friends, and he shared with me the story behind his call to the Roman Catholic priesthood, his break with the Roman Catholic Church, and dedication to Afrocentric Christianity, which I found to be quite interesting.

I had heard of “Rev. George Stallings” from a fairly recent news article that had been printed in one of the national newspapers, either the *New York Times*⁶, *USA Today*, or *The Wall Street Journal*; and so I was quite honored to have met him in person and to have then had the privilege of inquiring, first-hand, into the real reasons for his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church.

For the first time ever, I had had a chance encounter with a serious Catholic scholar and former priest who shared with me his reasons for breaking with the Roman Catholic faith—most of which revolved around Catholic dogma and the Catholic Church’s irresponsiveness to the needs of the African American community.⁷ Rev. Stallings had much to say on the topic of the Roman Catholic

⁴ See, e.g., the attached link to a New York Times article from the year 1989, titled “Maverick Priest Says He is No Luther but a Man of Ethnic and Religious Soul”: <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/09/us/maverick-priest-says-he-is-no-luther-but-a-man-of-ethnic-and-religious-soul.html>. This was not the same article which I had recently read during the early 1990s, but it is similar.

⁵ I also picked up books on Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Confucian philosophy, but I could not find the extra time to study these other eastern religions as I had wished.

⁶ See, e.g., the attached link to a New York Times article from the year 1989, titled “Maverick Priest Says He is No Luther but a Man of Ethnic and Religious Soul”: <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/09/us/maverick-priest-says-he-is-no-luther-but-a-man-of-ethnic-and-religious-soul.html>. This was not the same article which I had recently read, but it is similar.

⁷ See, e.g., New York Times article from the year 1989, “Maverick Priest Says He is No Luther...” (“The Rev. George Augustus Stallings Jr. says he is no Martin Luther, no renegade Roman Catholic with a fistful of heretical theses to nail to a church door. But if he is no Luther, this maverick among Catholic priests has nevertheless defiantly embarked on a course that is forcing the 53-million-member church to consider anew whether it is adequately addressing the needs of its 1.5 million black parishioners. He has done so by establishing an “African-American” congregation. While there is some sympathy among fellow black Catholic clergymen, so far there is scant interest

Church, African spirituality, Christianity, and the Sacred Scriptures, all of which I found to be quite appealing. Most significantly, Rev. Stallings set me down the course of looking most critically at the development of the Christian church since the time of the original twelve Apostles; and, while making his defense of Afro-centered Christian theology, Rev. Stallings briefly talked about the first several Ecumenical Councils and the first schisms within the Catholic Church. At that time, I was especially looking for the history of Christian faith on the African continents, together with the interplay between native African religions and the Christian faith.

It is true that perhaps African American Christians experience the Christian faith slightly differently than most white or non-black Christians. For instance, as I have stated previously throughout this series of essays, during my Christian journey of faith, *I could not avoid Afrocentric challenges to the Christian religion—challenges which pinpointed the role of Christianity in the African slave-trade and slavery*. And so, I was, throughout college and law school, confronted with certain disturbing facts: in Latin America, the Roman Catholic Church was implicated in slavery and much wrong-doing during the 16th century, just as it was implicated in the African slave-trade and slavery during the same period.

I honestly discussed these matters as a matter of disturbing Christian facts with Rev. Stallings, there in Doreatha's African Bookstore, in 1998. I can recall that Rev. Stallings' perspective was truly catholic, broad, and global. And he

among them in making a similar break. 'For years black Catholics have experienced racism and have still stayed in the church,' said John H. Ricard, auxiliary bishop of Baltimore and chairman of the Committee for Black Catholics of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. 'I would be very, very surprised that the vast majority would want to see themselves separated from the church.' Moreover Father Stallings's bold move has raised the question of whether he will end up the same as Luther, the excommunicated founder of a separate church.... Father Stallings says the foot-stomping, hand-clapping, body-swaying service that brought his new congregation together last Sunday for the first time was only the first step toward establishing African-American congregations across the United States. But just days after the first service of the African-American Catholic Congregation, which he calls the Imani Temple, Father Stallings was suspended from priestly duties by his archbishop, James Cardinal Hickey. He has chosen to ignore the suspension. In Father Stallings's view, there is racism and insensitivity to the cultural, social and spiritual needs of black parishioners in the archdiocese of Washington and across the country. He says his aim is more black priests ministering to people with a service combining Catholic ritual, gospel choirs, readings from prominent blacks and the spontaneity often found in black Protestant churches. At his Mass on Sunday, for example, he altered the three readings that are normally drawn from the Scriptures. For the second reading, usually from the New Testament, Father Stallings substituted a prayer from "The Centering Movement," by the late Howard Thurman, an Afro-American religious leader and academic.... 'We're going national,' Father Stallings said as he ended a week of news conferences and interviews and prepared for a second gathering of his flock at the Imani Temple on Sunday. "Imani" is Swahili for "faith." 'We have established the mother congregation for African-American Catholics,' he said, 'and we will now build a church for it that will hold 6,000, maybe even 8,000 worshipers. Then we'll begin to branch out around the country, hundreds, thousands of more congregations. You ain't seen nothing yet. Ain't no turning around.' ")

challenged me to look at the entire global picture when analyzing Church history, and not just focus on a narrow period of history, particular race, or point of view. As a result, I became very interested in the history of the early Church during its first few centuries of existence; and its later involvement in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

For example, about the same time when the Augustinian priest and monk Martin Luther (1483-1546) was leading the Protestant Reformation in Germany (circa, 1517-1546), there were other courageous priests, monks and bishops within the Roman Catholic Church (e.g., Fr. Antonio de Montesinos (1475-1540), Fr. Francisco de Vitoria (1492-1546), Fr. Domingo de Soto (1494-1560) , and Bishop Bartolome de Las Casas(1484-1566) who were petitioning the Pope and the King and Queen of Spain for a legal redress of the atrocities that were being committed against scores of helpless Native Americans.⁸ In Switzerland and France, during the same period, Catholic humanist and lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564) picked up and carried the mantle of Protestant leadership. Calvin's views against slavery was much similar to those of the above-mentioned Spanish Catholic priests.

Table 1. Catholic Priests Who Petitioned the Roman Catholic Church and European Monarchies for Reform during the 16th Century

Catholic Priest's Name	Date of Birth/ Death	Country/ Nationality	Reform Issues
Antonio de Montesinos	1475-1540	Spain/ Latin America	Native American genocide and slavery in the New World
Martin Luther	1483-1546	Germany/ Holy Roman Empire (Central Europe and Scandinavia)	Catholic Church Reform and Corruption; German national suppression
Bartolome de Las Casas	1484-1566	Spain/ Latin America	Native American genocide and slavery in the New World

⁸ Thomas E. Woods, Jr., *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2005), pp. 135-153.

Francisco de Vitoria	1492-1546	Spain/ Latin America	Native American genocide and slavery in the New World
Domingo de Soto	1494-1560	Spain/ Latin America	Native American genocide and slavery in the New World
William Tyndale	1494-1536	England	Catholic Church Reform and Corruption/ interpretation of the Bible (New Testament) into English.
John Calvin	1509-1564	France/ Switzerland	Catholic Church Reform and Corruption; constitutional reform in church/ state relations

This and similar materials on the history of Christianity in sub-Sahara Africa and Latin America came to my attention following my conversation with Rev. Stallings in 1998.⁹ Rev. Stallings enabled me to see the development of the Protestant Reformation from a broader context of worldwide developments taking place inside of the Roman Catholic Church, so that when I later picked up a copy of Luther’s essay, *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, I

⁹ In fact, Chancellor Williams’ account of the origins of African slavery and the slave trade in *The Destruction of Black Civilization* is generally echoed by the Rev. John Wesley in his *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, as being a factual and credible account of England’s involvement with the African slave trade. Throughout my college and law-school years, this and similar accounts of the contact between European and Christian civilization with the continent of Africa dominated classroom discussion, course curricula, and the general attitude of my fellow Pan-African student colleagues. And yet, even thus, I would be remiss if I did not point out that, even then, as a sincere Christian college and law student, I did not hesitate to defend the “City of God” and “true Christian faith,” and to distinguish them from what was obviously corruption from within the Roman Catholic Church. During my college years, I continued to defend Christianity against its many detractors within the academy by arguing that “true Christians” and the “true Christian faith” could not, and had not, done all of these awful things to Africa—but instead, corrupt churchmen had instigated these crimes. The real proof of my arguments in favor of the Christian faith was none other than the Sacred Scriptures, which did not condone such awful crimes, and St. Augustine’s *The City of God*.

was able to place Luther's movement within a broader context of other abuses within the Roman Catholic Church during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.

In many ways, Rev. Stallings' Afrocentric movement within the Roman Catholic Church during the 1980s and 90s was similar to Luther's movement within that same church during the 16th century. Of course, in England, there was John Wycliffe (1330-1384) and William Tyndale (1494-1536), both Roman Catholic priests, who fought for church reform and were martyred. Wycliffe's and Tyndale's movements were also very similar to Luther's movement. As a member of the A.M.E. Church congregation, I could not see that Rev. Stallings' Afrocentric Catholicism was much different than African Methodism or Black American Anglicanism!

Rev. Stallings' reasons for breaking with the Roman Catholic Church cemented my basic understanding that the "true church" should not be confused with man-made church denominations (or non-denominational churches). As St. Augustine has stated in *The City of God*, the **true church is hidden** both within and outside of organized, man-made churches. The "true church" is actually immersed inside of all church denominations. And so, too, is "church corruption, heresy, and schism" equally immersed inside of all church denominations. For this reason, this essay should not be construed as anti-Roman Catholic; for what happened inside of the Roman Catholic Church during the 15th and 16th centuries has, and can, occur inside of every church denomination and inside every secular, non-sectarian organization (i.e., business enterprise, government agency, non-profit corporation, etc).

I have construed the life and work of Martin Luther (1483-1546) to be within this context of the "true church." Indeed, in order to understand the life and works of Martin Luther, and the times in which he lived, we must first recollect that Luther eventually concluded that Christ's "true church" had been held captive inside of a corrupt Roman Catholic Church oligarchy, and that this "true church" needed to be completely extracted out from this "Babylonian captivity."¹⁰

¹⁰ See, generally, Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), pp. 177-192; ("Perhaps the most dramatic example of this was in his second treatise, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in which he parsed the theological errors of the whole sacerdotal system... he excised five of the seven [sacraments], saying that only two stood the true test of whether something was indeed a genuine sacrament. The only ones instituted by Christ himself, he said, were Communion and baptism. Thus the other five—confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance, and extreme unction—were man-made and must be

This idea of the “true church” being intermixed with a “corrupt church” can also be found in St. Augustine’s *The City of God*: “the nations have... so filled the church...the clean and unclean together, until the appointed end”¹¹; that within the church, both the righteous and unrighteous are “intermixed until the last judgment effect their separation”¹²; that the church “has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the lot of the saints”¹³; and, within the church, many of unrighteous “are not now recognized... and do not hesitate to make common cause with our enemies in murmuring against God, whose sacramental badge they wear.”¹⁴

Thus, from the beginning, since the time of Judas Iscariot, who was one of the first apostles who betrayed Christ, and since the days of the early church when the Apostle Paul forewarned it against enemies within who promote dissension and schism, the Church has had to grapple with heretics and its own internal enemies and detractors. In *The City of God*, St. Augustine lucidly described the origin, nature, and reasons for heresies within the Church:

But the devil, seeing the temples of the demons deserted, and the human race running to the name of the liberating Mediator, has moved the heretics under the Christian name to resist the Christian doctrine, as if they could be kept in the city of God indifferently without any correction, just as the city of confusion indifferently held the philosophers who were of diverse and adverse opinions.

Those, therefore, in the Church of Christ who savour anything morbid and depraved, and, on being corrected that they may savour what is wholesome and right, contumaciously resist, and will not amend their pestiferous and deadly dogmas, but persist in defending them, become heretics, and, going without, are to be reckoned as enemies who serve for her discipline.

For even thus they profit by their wickedness those true catholic members of Christ, since God makes a good use even of the wicked,

tossed outside the camp to rot.... [T]he papacy itself, with all its attached ecclesiastical machinery... has become anti-Christ....” at pp. 188-189).

¹¹ *The City of God*, p. 519.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

and all things work together for good to them that love Him. For all the enemies of the Church, whatever error blinds or malice depraves them, exercise her patience if they receive the power to afflict her corporally; and if they only oppose her by wicked thought, they exercise her wisdom: but at the same time, if these enemies are loved, they exercise her benevolence, or even her beneficence, whether she deals with them by persuasive doctrine or by terrible discipline.

And thus the devil, the prince of the impious city, when he stirs up his own vessels against the city of God that sojourns in this world, is permitted to do her no harm. For without doubt the divine providence procures for her both consolation through prosperity, that she may not be broken by adversity, and trial through adversity, that she may not be corrupted by prosperity; and thus each is tempered by the other, as we recognize in the Psalms that voice which arises from no other cause, ‘According to the multitude of my griefs in my heart, Thy consolations have delighted my soul.’ Hence also is that saying of the apostles, ‘Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.’

For it is not to be thought that what the same teacher says can at any time fail, ‘Whoever will live piously in Christ shall suffer persecution.’ Because even when those who are without do not rage, and thus there seems to be, and really is, tranquility, which brings very much consolation, especially to the weak, yet there are not wanting, yea, there are many within who by their abandoned manners torment the hearts of those who live piously, since by them the Christian and catholic name is blasphemed; and the dearer that name is to those who will live piously in Christ, the more do they grieve that through the wicked, who have a place within, it comes to be less loved than pious minds desire.

The heretics themselves also, since they are thought to have the Christian name and sacraments, Scriptures, and profession, cause great grief in the hearts of the pious, both because many who wish to be Christians are compelled by their dissensions to hesitate, and many evil-speakers also find in them matter for blaspheming the Christian name, because they too are at any rate *called* Christians. By these and similar depraved manners and errors of men, those who will live piously in Christ suffer persecution, not in their bodies, but in their hearts.

Whence is that word, ‘According to the multitude of my griefs in my heart;’ for he does not say, in my body. Yet, on the other hand, none of them can perish, because the immutable divine promises are thought of. And because the apostle says, ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His; for whom He did foreknow, He also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son,’ none of them can perish; therefore it follows in that psalm, ‘Thy consolations have delighted my soul.’ But that grief which arises in the hearts of the pious, who are persecuted by the manners of bad or false Christians, is profitable to the sufferers, because it proceeds from the charity in which they do not wish them either to perish or to hinder the salvation of others. Finally, great consolations grow out of their chastisement, which imbue the souls of the pious with a fecundity as great as the pains with which they were troubled concerning their own perdition. Thus in this world, in these evil days, not only from the time of the bodily presence of Christ and His apostles, but even from that of Abel, whom first his wicked brother slew because he was righteous, and thenceforth even to the end of this world, the Church has gone forward on pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.¹⁵

And, according to St. Augustine and orthodox Christian teachings, “the last persecution” of the Church “is to be made by Antichrist,”¹⁶ during an unrevealed, unknown time. But Martin Luther certainly felt that the corrupt Roman Catholic oligarchy of his day was much like the antichrist; he wrote: “[t]he Church of Rome, formerly the most holy of all churches, has become the most lawless den of thieves, the most shameless of brothels, the very kingdom of sin, death and hell, so that not even the Anti-Christ, if he were to come, could devise any addition to its wickedness....”¹⁷

According Catholic tradition, the *true church*, then, is embattled from within by its own enemies who are hypocrites, and from without by those who are in open rebellion against God whose son is Christ. For this reason, those persons who today observe the Church’s short-comings, scandals, and failures, and who, without searching the Sacred Scriptures for themselves, point to all of the Church’s

¹⁵ *The City of God*, pp. 661-663.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 665.

¹⁷ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), p. 189.

faults, as their primary reasons for rejecting the Christian faith, misunderstand the fundamental nature of the Church's existence as *a pilgrimage people* amidst on-going persecution in the present world.¹⁸

For this reason, the true sons of the Church—such as the scores of Popes and Church Fathers, including St. Peter, St. Paul, Origen, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Clement of Rome, Tertullian of Carthage, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc., —have had, down through the centuries, to combat heresy and heretics from within the very bosom of the Church.¹⁹

In addition to combatting heresy, church leaders have often looked back at early church history in order to trace its roots from the days of the first apostles up to their present times, in order to fairly and faithfully judge the current controversies then raging before them, within the modern-day Church—i.e., to ask, **“Has our Church of today deviated away from the true, authentic and apostolic church of Christ?”**²⁰

¹⁸ *The City of God*, pp. 661-663.

¹⁹ “In its first three centuries, the Church was threatened not only by division within and by persecution from without, but also by rival systems of salvation, some of which claimed to be truer and more enlightened forms of Christianity. During the second and third centuries AD, there arose a number of sects that are traditionally called the ‘Gnostic’ cults—a term deriving from their claim to offer a gnosis or privileged knowledge that would bring salvation to the enlightened. Many forms of Gnosticism claimed to have access to Apostolic traditions that had been kept secret from most Christians. Some contemporary scholars would prefer to dispense with the category of ‘Gnosticism altogether, and to speak instead of ‘alternate Christianities’—in other words, variants of the faith which, through sheer historical misfortune, ultimately lost out to mainstream ‘orthodoxy’, but which in their time were equally viable forms of early Christianity. This, though, is a difficult position to defend. Gnosticism (even Christian Gnosticism) was clearly not an organic outgrowth of the Apostolic Church, but rather a kind of syncretistic, trans-religious theosophy that drew from Christian, Jewish, Greek, Syrian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Persian sources, often simultaneously. As such, it may be likened to modern ‘New Age’ spirituality. The Naassene sect, for instance, worshipped ‘Christ’, but conflated his worship with that of Dionysus and Attis. And the scriptures used by those sects that claimed to be Christian—alternate Gospels, various acts of the Apostles, mystical discourses—were, like the traditions attached to them, late inventions with no credible claim to any historical links to the Apostolic Church. Even pagan observers were apparently able to tell the difference. The great Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus (205-70) attacked Gnosticism vigorously, but never treated it as a species of Christianity.” David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* (New York, N.Y.: Metro Books, 2007), pp. 30-31.

²⁰ “In its earliest days, Christianity disseminated its message principally through the synagogues. It was among communities of Hellenized Jews—at least, in the greater world of the Diaspora—that evangelization first spread beyond the Church’s native confines. Moreover, it was quite common for Diaspora synagogues to include, at the margins of the community, a number of Gentiles who had adopted Jewish customs and beliefs and who, in many cases, were on their way to full conversion. However, having no houses of worship of their own, Christians met in private dwellings. Their gatherings, therefore, naturally included not only a celebration of the Lord’s Supper, but an actual shared meal. They met on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day of Jesus’ resurrection. The worship of the community generally consisted in the singing of Psalms and hymns, mutual exhortation and teaching, prophecy, glossolalia (praying in tongues) and healings. This was the form in which the new faith expanded throughout the eastern half and into the western half of the Roman empire, establishing itself in cities like Antioch

In many ways, this same task of reviewing church history in order to combat theological heresy was before the great German theologian Martin Luther during the 16th century. It is important to understand the nature of Church-State relations during this period, in order to rightly place Luther's contributions into a proper context.

As we shall observe in several of Martin Luther's essays and sermons, below, when Luther sought to democratize the Roman Catholic Church, with theories such as the "justification by faith alone," "the priesthood of all believers," "Sola Scriptura," "the right of the Christian faithful to judge and select pastors and bishops," etc., he unwittingly laid the foundations for the modern Western democratic nation-state and modern-day constitutional law.

Without Martin Luther, many of the freedoms that we today take for granted—freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and press, and the separation of church and state—would either not exist or would have come into existence much later in history. Luther's influence and impact, albeit indirectly, upon Anglo-American constitutional law and society were also very profound. Eric Metaxas has described Luther as, "The man who created the Future,"²¹ in which he writes:

[O]nce Luther sided with a view of the Bible that was different from Rome's, our modern idea of freedom had been born.

and Alexandria, as well as in Rome itself.... As the Church grew, the issue of authority became increasingly important. As the first generation of Christians died out, and with it the Apostles themselves, Christian communities relied upon the institution of the *episkopos* (bishop or 'overseer') or *presbyteros* (priest or elder) to preserve their historical continuity with the first Church in Jerusalem, as well as to maintain theological and moral rectitude. The institution had been established, as it happens, in apostolic times; and, wherever the Church took root, the bishop or priest, with the aid of deacons, was responsible for the baptism of converts, the administration of the Eucharist, the distribution of goods for the relief of the poor and the general governance of the community.... At the beginning of the second century, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch—in a series of letters he wrote as he was being transported to Rome to be executed for his faith—insisted that the Church existed only where as duly appointed bishop was to be found. Without the bishop, understood, as a living link to the Apostles, specially commissioned by the Holy Spirit, no Eucharist could be celebrated, and no Christian community established. Ignatius' stress upon the unique authority of the bishop was prompted in part by the prevalence in the Christian world of 'false teachers', such as the 'docetists' (from the Greek *dokein*, meaning 'to appear') who claimed that Christ had not really possessed a human body, but had only seemed a man of flesh and blood, and so had suffered only in appearance. Yet the institution of bishops was only an imperfect safeguard against dissent and division. Schisms were therefore part of the Church's life from a very early period." David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* (New York, N.Y.: Metro Books, 2007), pp. 30-31.

²¹ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), p. 189.

What follows is, in a word, everything. First there was a plurality of churches. The Reformation spread beyond Germany to England and to many other countries. But then this phenomenon metastasized as aspects of this new way of seeing things raised their heads even against these newly established Protestant churches. Still more churches broke out everywhere, but not without skirmishes and horrible bloodshed. But hope had been born, and from that point on the momentum once and for all lay with the thing with feathers that Luther had hatched.

In 1644, in the midst of the English Civil War, John Milton published *Areopagitica*, his landmark defense of the freedom of expression. In 1689, England decided that it would tolerate religions other than the established Church of England. In the first years of that century, those men and women we today call the Pilgrims were being persecuted by King James in England. But emboldened by their faith, they would flee first to Holland and then in a famous ship cross the Atlantic to what is today Massachusetts. Hard on their heels were John Winthrop and what came to be called the Massachusetts Bay Colony in Boston. Religious tolerance certainly was not yet enshrined in their way of thinking. The stories of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams are two infamous examples.

But in part because in the American colonies different faiths found themselves living cheek and jowl, tolerance of other views became a growing trend. During the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, George Whitefield preached the Gospel up and down the thirteen American colonies so often that by the time of his death in 1770 not less than 80 percent of all Americans had heard him preach in person at least once. What he preached was a kind of ecumenical Christianity that underscored the profoundly Lutheran idea that conscience and fealty to God preceded fealty to any church or government. It therefore followed that those who did violence to the teachings of Jesus must be disobeyed. This played a huge role in emboldening the American colonists to move toward self-government. When England forced their hand, as Rome had forced Luther's, they would vote with their feet and rebel against their mother country, just as Luther had rebelled against Mother Church.

The new nation in 1776 enshrined the idea of religious liberty in its laws, such that every citizen must be free to follow his own conscience and his own religion. This stands as another of the high-water marks of Luther's legacy. The government of the new country was specifically forbidden to establish a religion in any state or throughout the country and was obliged to trust the free market of ideas—regulated by the democratic government of the people—to make such decisions as the people themselves thought best. It is this so-called wall of separation that allowed the genius of the free market of ideas to flourish....

Around this same time in England, a group of Methodists led by John Wesley were frowned upon by the official Church of England. But they and the Quakers were nonetheless now allowed to exist, and because of the greater devotion of these dissenters to the ideals of the New Testament they led the battle for the end of the slave trade in the British Empire. Without the respect for dissent and the free market of ideas that Luther introduced, this could never have occurred. The champion in Parliament of these evangelicals was William Wilberforce, who cannily never officially separated from the Church of England but who led the battle to end the slave trade—and then slavery—throughout the British Empire. He also led the way for its end throughout Europe, and of course it ended in America too, with such as Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass looking back to Wilberforce as their hero and the great pioneer of the movement.

Abolition was only the first and most important of the innumerable social reforms that took place in England in the nineteenth century. Evangelicals—led by Wilberforce—pushed forward reforms in helping the poor, in child labor laws, in animal cruelty laws, in penal reform, and much else. Wilberforce and his spiritual heirs took Luther's ideas that next step into the world of culture and government in a way Luther himself could never have done but that Luther had nonetheless made possible, and these ideas leaped the borders of Wilberforce's England and ran rampant throughout the West. By freeing truth and the ideas of the Bible from the institution of the church, Luther enabled these things to enter the entirety of the secular world, such that every good agnostic and atheist

today knows that caring for the poor and the marginalized is a measure of our humanity.²²

Of course, it was altogether the work of Divine Providence that the great civil rights leader in the United States, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), was named after the great German Theologian, Dr. Martin Luther (1483-1546). Both of these men were ordained ministers of the Christian faith; both led oppressed national minorities groups; both men grappled with great theological, legal, and constitutional questions; both men were suppressed by their own governments and treated as outlaws; and, in a very real sense, both men sealed their indelible mark upon Western civilization. With all that has thus far been said in this lengthy introduction, we now turn to ideals, ideas, life, and times of Martin Luther.

SUMMARY

This paper, which is a summation of the life and works of Martin Luther is Part 2 of a four-part series on the Protestant Christian theology that impacted the Church of England during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Protestant Reformation in England cannot be correctly understood without understanding the ideas of Martin Luther of Germany (1483-1546) and John Calvin of France and Switzerland (1509-1564). And both Luther's and Calvin's polemics against the Roman Catholic order cannot be rightly understood without an understanding of St. Augustine's theology on "justification through faith alone."²³ For it must be understood that Luther and Calvin did not see themselves as creating a "new holy catholic church," but instead they considered themselves as preserving the old one. They both believed that the Roman Catholic Church of their day was thoroughly corrupt and had veered away from Catholic teachings, the ancient Catholic Church, the Sacred Scriptures, and the original, ancient teachings of the Church Fathers. And they both relied heavily upon the theology of St. Augustine of Hippo in order to lay the theological foundations of the Protestant Reformation in Europe. John Calvin's landmark work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (discussed in Part 3 of this paper) especially relied on St. Augustine's theology in order to impeach many Roman Catholic liturgical practices and theological doctrines. And the Augustinian monk Martin Luther's famous *Ninety-Five Theses*, which set the Protestant Reformation in motion, and his work *On the Bondage of the Will*, adopted a definition of "justification by faith alone" that is found in St. Augustine's *On Grace and Free Will*, discussed in Part 1 of this paper).

²² Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), pp. 443-445.

²³ See, e.g., Saint Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* (Louisville, Kentucky: GLH Publishing, 2017).

Author Eric Metaxas has commented on St. Augustine’s influence on Martin Luther’s theology, stating: “[Martin Luther’s] copies of Augustine’s *Trinity* and *City of God* are also annotated. In one of them, Luther wrote, ‘I find it more than astonishing that our scholars can so brazenly claim that Aristotle does not contradict Catholic truth.’ So here we have manuscript proof that it was the great Augustine—who was as foundational and revered a church thinker as any who ever lived—who first helped Luther begin to see things that would lead him to challenge the church of his own day. And one of these things was the idea that human truth had limits and that by itself it could never reach heaven.”²⁴ For these and other reasons, including his influence upon Luther, St. Augustine of Hippo may very be considered to be a founding father of the Protestant Reformation.

Part XXIII. Anglican Church: “Christian Theology and Protestant Dissent in England (1530-1650)” (Part 2)

The Roman Catholic Church is Europe’s oldest institution, and it ought to be revered and respected as the “mother church” of Western Christianity. Today, it is a great Christian institution and remains the largest Christian denomination in the world. It has produced the holiest of Christian servants. It preserved classical Greco-Roman culture and learning during the Middle Ages, developed world-renowned universities, and nurtured western philosophy and jurisprudence. Its orthodox teachings provide profound and extraordinary insight into the life and message of Christ. And, today, both the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church functions as the “salt of the earth” in many important areas of life. Nevertheless, since the death of St. Peter, who was the first Pope, the Roman Catholic Church has been rent with political intrigue, political ambition, simony, heresy, corruption, the rise and fall of antipopes, luxury, adultery, fornication, slavery and schism. So that by the late 15th century and early 16th century, when Martin Luther was born, many of the Roman Catholic Church’s theological claims and practices could no longer command widespread obedience and respect among the Catholic faithful. In fact, Luther himself reached the inevitable conclusion that the Roman Catholic Church had become so huge, powerful, and corrupt, that it was also much too arrogant to reform itself from within. The only viable solution for the true Apostolic Holy Catholic Church, which was trapped inside of this Roman Babylon by the Papal Curia, was to sever its ties with the Church of Rome.

²⁴ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), p. 51.

A. The Life and Times of Martin Luther²⁵ (1483-1546)

1. Early Life (1483-1505)

Martin Luther was born as “Martin Ludher” in 1483 (or 1484?) to Hans and Margarethe Ludher in Eisleben, Electoral Saxony (Germany) in the Holy Roman Empire. At some point, Martin Ludher changed his last name to “Luther,” and after he became a famous theologian, his parents too changed their names to “Luther.”²⁶

When Martin was born, the Holy Roman Empire had existed since about 800 A.D., with the crowning of the Emperor Charlemagne, and by the time Luther was born, very little had changed in the world of Western and Central Europe. That world was Roman Catholic in every way. The power and wealth of the papacy remained unaltered, authoritarian, and undemocratic for several centuries. The papacy was big politics and big business; and, to fund its administration, the papacy relied upon creative ways to extract revenue from Europe’s Christian faithful. The result was that the Roman Catholic Church appeared to be vastly different from the church of the Sacred Scriptures and of the early churches of Bishops Ambrose and Augustine. Hence, Martin Luther’s story is largely the story of “six tragically unpopal pontiffs, which also included Pope Innocent VIII (1484-1492), Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503), Pope Pius III (1503), Pope Julius II (1503-1513), and Pope Leo X (1513-1521)...”²⁷ Hence, in order to fully understand the work and ideas of Martin Luther, we must first grasp an understanding of the Holy Roman Empire²⁸ and the Roman Catholic Church during his lifespan, when the

²⁵ This summation of the “Life and Times of Martin Luther” is taken primarily from Eric Metaxas’ work, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Chapter One, pp. 7-30.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁸ “The Holy Roman Empire (Latin: Sacrum Romanum Imperium; German: Heiliges Römisches Reich) was a multi-ethnic complex of territories in central Europe that developed during the Early Middle Ages and continued until its dissolution in 1806. The largest territory of the empire after 962 was the Kingdom of Germany, though it also came to include the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Kingdom of Burgundy, the Kingdom of Italy, and numerous other territories. On 25 December 800, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor, reviving the title in Western Europe, more than three centuries after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The title continued in the Carolingian family until 888 and from 896 to 899, after which it was contested by the rulers of Italy in a series of civil wars until the death of the last Italian claimant, Berengar, in 924. The title was revived in 962 when Otto I was crowned emperor, fashioning himself as the successor of Charlemagne and beginning a continuous existence of the empire for over eight centuries. Some historians refer to the coronation of Charlemagne as the origin of the empire, while others prefer the coronation of Otto I as its beginning. Scholars generally concur, however, in relating an evolution of the institutions and principles constituting the empire, describing a gradual assumption of the imperial title and role. The precise term “Holy Roman Empire” was not used until the 13th century, but the concept of *translatio imperii*, [c] the notion that he – the sovereign ruler – held supreme power inherited from the emperors of Rome, was fundamental to the prestige of the emperor.[8] The office of Holy Roman Emperor was traditionally elective, although frequently controlled by dynasties. The German prince-

following three Holy Roman emperors reigned, including Frederick III (1452-1493); Maximilian (1486-1519); and Charles V (1519-1556); together with the following nine Popes:

- a. Sixtus (1471-1484)²⁹;
- b. Innocent VIII (1484-1492)³⁰;

electors, the highest-ranking noblemen of the empire, usually elected one of their peers as "King of the Romans", and he would later be crowned emperor by the Pope; the tradition of papal coronations was discontinued in the 16th century. The empire never achieved the extent of political unification formed in France, evolving instead into a decentralized, limited elective monarchy composed of hundreds of sub-units: kingdoms, principalities, duchies, counties, Free Imperial Cities, and other domains. The power of the emperor was limited, and while the various princes, lords, bishops, and cities of the empire were vassals who owed the emperor their allegiance, they also possessed an extent of privileges that gave them de facto independence within their territories. Emperor Francis II dissolved the empire on 6 August 1806, after the creation of the Confederation of the Rhine by Napoleon.... The Holy Roman Empire never had a capital city. Usually, the Holy Roman Emperor ruled from a place of his own choice. This was called an imperial seat. Seats of the Holy Roman Emperor included: Aachen (from 794), Munich (1328–1347 and 1744–1745), Prague (1355–1437 and 1576–1611), Vienna (1438–1576, 1611–1740 and 1745–1806) and Frankfurt am Main (1742–1744) among other cities. "

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire

²⁹ "**Pope Sixtus IV (21 July 1414 – 12 August 1484)**, born Francesco della Rovere, was Pope from 9 August 1471 to his death in 1484. His accomplishments as pope included building the Sistine Chapel and the creation of the Vatican Archives. A patron of the arts, the group of artists that he brought together introduced the Early Renaissance into Rome with the first masterpieces of the city's new artistic age. Sixtus aided the Spanish Inquisition, though he fought to prevent abuses therein, and annulled the decrees of the Council of Constance. He was noted for his nepotism and was personally involved in the infamous Pazzi conspiracy.... The two papal bulls issued by Pope Nicholas V, *Dum Diversas* of 1452 and *Romanus Pontifex* of 1455, had effectively given the Portuguese the rights to acquire slaves along the African coast by force or trade. These concessions were confirmed by Sixtus in his own bull, *Aeterni regis* of 21 June 1481. Arguably the "ideology of conquest" expounded in these texts became the means by which commerce and conversion were facilitated. In November 1476 Isabel and Fernando ordered an investigation into rights of conquest in the Canary Islands, and in the spring of 1478 they sent Juan Rejon with sixty soldiers and thirty cavalry to the Grand Canary, where the natives retreated inland. Sixtus' earlier threats to excommunicate all captains or pirates who enslaved Christians in the bull *Regimini Gregis* of 1476 could have been intended to emphasise the need to convert the natives of the Canary Islands and Guinea and establish a clear difference in status between those who had converted and those who resisted.[21] The ecclesiastical penalties were directed towards those who were enslaving the recent converts." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Sixtus_IV

³⁰ "**Pope Innocent VIII (Latin: Innocentius VIII; 1432 – 25 July 1492)**, born Giovanni Battista Cybo (or Cibo), was Pope from 29 August 1484 to his death in 1492. Born into a prominent Genoese family he entered the church and was made bishop in 1467 before being elevated to the rank of cardinal by Pope Sixtus IV. He was elected Pope in 1484, as a compromise candidate, after a stormy conclave. As pope, he personally endorsed and gave official Church approval to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a controversial fifteenth-century guide to witch hunting.... Minnich (2005) notes that the position of Renaissance popes towards slavery, a common institution in contemporary cultures, varied. Minnich states that those who allowed the slave trade did so in the hope of gaining converts to Christianity.^[16] In the case of Innocent he permitted trade with **Barbary** merchants in which foodstuffs would be given in exchange for slaves who could then be converted to Christianity. King Ferdinand of Aragon gave Innocent 100 **Moorish** slaves who shared them out with favoured Cardinals.^[17] The slaves of Innocent were called "moro", meaning "dark-skinned man", in contrast to negro slaves who were called "moro nero".

- c. Alexander VI (1492-1503)³¹;
- d. Pius III (1503)³²;
- e. Julius II (1503-1513)³³;

³¹ **"Pope Alexander VI, born Rodrigo de Borja (Valencian: Roderic Llançol i de Borja [roðe'rig òan'sɔt i ðe 'βərdʒa], Spanish: Rodrigo Lanzol y de Borja [ro'ðriyo lan'θol i ðe 'βorxa]; 1 January 1431 – 18 August 1503),** was Pope from 11 August 1492 until his death. During the Age of Discovery, the Iberian-born pope's bulls of 1493 confirmed or reconfirmed the rights of the Spanish crown in the New World, following the finds of Christopher Columbus in 1492.[3][4] He is one of the most controversial of the Renaissance popes, partly because he acknowledged fathering several children by his mistresses. Therefore his Italianized Valencian surname, Borgia, became a byword for libertinism and nepotism, which are traditionally considered as characterizing his pontificate. Two of Alexander's successors, the controversial pontiffs Sixtus V and Urban VIII, described him as one of the most outstanding popes since Saint Peter.... It is often alleged, sometimes by serious historians, that Alexander and his son, Cesare, poisoned Cardinal Adriano Castellesi, but this is unlikely.[Note 5] (When cardinals died, their wealth automatically reverted to the Church.) There is no evidence that the Borgias resorted to poisoning, judicial murder, or extortion to fund their schemes and the defense of the Papal States. The only contemporary accusations of poisoning were from some of the servants of the Borgias, extracted under torture by Alexander's bitter enemy and successor, Julius II.... While the enterprising explorers of Spain imposed a form of slavery called "encomienda" on the indigenous peoples they met in the New World,[35] some popes had spoken out against the practice of slavery. In 1435, Pope Eugene IV had issued an attack on slavery in the Canary Islands in his papal bull Sicut Dudum, which included the excommunication of all those who engaged in the slave trade with native chiefs there. A form of indentured servitude was allowed, being similar to a peasant's duty to his liege lord in Europe. In the wake of Columbus's landing in the New World, Pope Alexander was asked by the Spanish monarchy to confirm their ownership of these newly found lands.[36] The bulls issued by Pope Alexander VI: Eximiae devotionis (3 May 1493), Inter caetera (4 May 1493) and Dudum Siquidem (23 September 1493), granted rights to Spain with respect to the newly discovered lands in the Americas similar to those Pope Nicholas V had previously conferred with the bulls Romanus Pontifex and Dum Diversas.[37][38][39] Morales Padron (1979) concludes that these bulls gave power to enslave the natives.[40] Minnich (2010) asserts that this "slave trade" was permitted to facilitate conversions to Christianity.[38] Other historians and Vatican scholars strongly disagree with these accusations and assert that Alexander never gave his approval to the practice of slavery.[41] Other later popes, such as Pope Paul III in "Sublimus Dei" (1537), Pope Benedict XIV in Immensa Pastorum (1741), and Pope Gregory XVI in his letter In Supremo Apostolatus (1839), continued to condemn slavery. Thornberry (2002) asserts that Inter Caetera was applied in the Requerimiento which was read to American Indians (who could not understand the colonisers' language) before hostilities against them began. They were given the option to accept the authority of the Pope and Spanish crown or face being attacked and subjugated.[42][43] In 1993, the Indigenous Law Institute called on Pope John Paul II to revoke Inter Caetera and to make reparation for "this unreasonable historical grief". This was followed by a similar appeal in 1994 by the Parliament of World Religions.[42] The requests were ignored." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Alexander_VI

³² **"Pope Pius III (29 May 1439 – 18 October 1503), born Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini,** was head of the Catholic Church and ruler of the Papal States from 22 September 1503 to his death. He had one of the shortest pontificates in papal history." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_III

³³ **"Pope Julius II (Italian: Papa Giulio II; Latin: Iulius II) (5 December 1443 – 21 February 1513),** born Giuliano della Rovere, and nicknamed "The Fearsome Pope"[1] and "The Warrior Pope". During his nine-year pontificate his military and diplomatic interventions averted a take-over by France of the Italian States (including the Papal States). He also proved a bulwark against Venetian expansionism.[2] His spiritual leadership was less impressive. The quintessential "Renaissance pope", Julius' rule from 1 November 1503 to his death in 1513 was marked by an active foreign policy, ambitious building projects, and patronage of the arts. He commissioned the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica, and Michelangelo's decoration of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. His discerning eye in hiring the

artist Raphael as a young man brought numerous improvements to the Vatican.... Giuliano Della Rovere thenceforth took the name of his fourth century predecessor, Julius I, and was pope for nine years, from 1503 to 1513. From the beginning, Julius II set out to defeat the various powers that challenged his temporal authority; in a series of complicated stratagems he first succeeded in rendering it impossible for the Borgias to retain their power over the Papal States. Indeed, on the day of his election, he declared: *'I will not live in the same rooms as the Borgias lived. He [Alexander VI] desecrated the Holy Church as none before. He usurped the papal power by the devil's aid, and I forbid under the pain of excommunication anyone to speak or think of Borgia again. His name and memory must be forgotten. It must be crossed out of every document and memorial. His reign must be obliterated. All paintings made of the Borgias or for them must be covered over with black crepe. All the tombs of the Borgias must be opened and their bodies sent back to where they belong—to Spain.'* Others indicate that his decision was taken on 26 November 1507, not in 1503.[65] The Borgia Apartments were turned to other uses. The Sala dei Papi was redecorated by two pupils of Raphael by order of Pope Leo X.[66] The rooms were used to accommodate the Emperor Charles V on his visit to the Vatican after the Sack of Rome, and subsequently they became the residence of the Cardinal nephew and then the Secretary of State. Julius used his influence to reconcile two powerful Roman families, the Orsini and Colonna. Decrees were made in the interests of the Roman nobility, in whose shoes the new pope now stepped. Being thus secure in Rome and the surrounding country, he set himself the task to expel the Republic of Venice from Faenza, Rimini, and the other towns and fortresses of Italy which it occupied after the death of Pope Alexander. In 1504, finding it impossible to succeed with the Doge of Venice by remonstrance, he brought about a union of the conflicting interests of France and the Holy Roman Empire, and sacrificed temporarily to some extent the independence of Italy to conclude with them an offensive and defensive alliance against Venice. The combination was, however, at first little more than nominal, and was not immediately effective in compelling the Venetians to deliver up more than a few unimportant places in the Romagna. With a campaign in 1506, he personally led an army to Perugia and Bologna, freeing the two papal cities from their despots, Giampolo Baglioni and Giovanni II Bentivoglio. In December 1503, Julius issued a dispensation allowing the future Henry VIII of England to marry Catherine of Aragon; Catherine had previously been briefly married to Henry's older brother Prince Arthur, who had died, but Henry later argued that she had remained a virgin for the five months of the marriage. Some twenty years later, when Henry was attempting to wed Anne Boleyn (since his son by Catherine of Aragon survived only a few days, and two of her sons were stillborn, and therefore he had no male heir), he sought to have his marriage annulled, claiming that the dispensation of Pope Julius should never have been issued. The retraction of the dispensation was refused by Pope Clement VII. The Bull entitled *Ea quae pro bono pacis* issued on January 24, 1506, confirmed papal approval of the *mare clausum* policy being pursued by Spain and Portugal amid their explorations, and approved the changes of the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas to previous papal bulls. In the same year, the Pope founded the Swiss Guard to provide a constant corps of soldiers to protect the Vatican City. As part of the Renaissance programme of reestablishing the glory of antiquity for the Christian capital, Rome, Julius II took considerable effort to present himself as a sort of emperor-pope, capable of leading a Latin-Christian empire. On Palm Sunday, 1507, "Julius II entered Rome . . . both as a second Julius Caesar, heir to the majesty of Rome's imperial glory, and in the likeness of Christ, whose vicar the pope was, and who in that capacity governed the universal Roman Church." Julius, who modelled himself after his namesake Caesar, would personally lead his army across the Italian peninsula under the imperial war-cry, "Drive out the barbarians." Yet, despite the imperial rhetoric, the campaigns were highly localised. Perugia voluntarily surrendered in March 1507 to direct control, as it had always been within the Papal States; it was in these endeavors he had enlisted French mercenaries. Urbino's magnificent court palace was infiltrated by French soldiers in the pay of the Duke of Gonzaga; the Montefeltro Conspiracy against his loyal cousins earned the occupying armies the Pope's undying hatred. Julius relied upon Guidobaldo's help to raise his nephew and heir Francesco Maria della Rovere; the intricate web of nepotism helped secure the Italian Papacy. Moreover the Pope's interest in Urbino was widely known in the French court. Julius left a spy at the Urbino Palace, possibly Galeotto Franciotti della Rovere, Cardinal San Pietro, to watch the Mantua stables in total secret; the secular progress of the Papal Curia was growing in authority and significance. In Rome, the Pope watched from his private chapel to see how his court behaved. This was age of Renaissance conspiracy." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Julius_II

f. Leo X (1513-1521)³⁴;

³⁴ "The **second son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, ruler of the Florentine Republic**, he was elevated to the cardinalate in 1489. Following the death of Pope Julius II, **Giovanni** was elected pope after securing the backing of the younger members of the Sacred College. Early on in his rule he oversaw the closing sessions of the Fifth Council of the Lateran, but struggled to implement the reforms agreed. In 1517 he led a costly war that succeeded in securing his nephew as Duke of Urbino, but which reduced papal finances. In protestant circles, Leo is associated with granting indulgences for those who donated to reconstruct St. Peter's Basilica, a practice that was soon challenged by Martin Luther's 95 Theses, following his visit to Rome in 1511. He refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the demands of what would become the Protestant Reformation, and his Papal Bull of 1520, Exsurge Domine, condemned Martin Luther's condemnatory stance, rendering ongoing communication difficult. Notwithstanding these divisions, he granted establishment to the Oratory of Divine Love. He borrowed and spent with circumspection. A significant patron of the arts, upon election Leo is alleged to have said, "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it." Under his reign, progress was made on the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica and artists such as Raphael decorated the Vatican rooms. Leo also reorganised the Roman University, and promoted the study of literature, poetry and antiquities. He died in 1521 and is buried in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome. He was the last pope not to have been in priestly orders at the time of his election to the papacy... As a patron of learning, Leo X deserves a prominent place among the popes. He raised the Church to a high rank as the friend of whatever seemed to extend knowledge or to refine and embellish life. He made the capital of Christendom, Rome, a center of European culture. While yet a cardinal, he had restored the church of Santa Maria in Domnica after Raphael's designs; and as pope he had San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, on the Via Giulia, built, after designs by Jacopo Sansovino and pressed forward the work on St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican under Raphael and Agostino Chigi. Leo's constitution of 5 November 1513 reformed the Roman university, which had been neglected by Julius II. He restored all its faculties, gave larger salaries to the professors, and summoned distinguished teachers from afar; and, although it never attained to the importance of Padua or Bologna, it nevertheless possessed in 1514 a faculty (with a good reputation) of eighty-eight professors. Leo called Janus Lascaris to Rome to give instruction in Greek, and established a Greek printing-press from which the first Greek book printed at Rome appeared in 1515. He made Raphael custodian of the classical antiquities of Rome and the vicinity. The distinguished Latinists Pietro Bembo and Jacopo Sadoletto were papal secretaries, as well as the famous poet Bernardo Accolti. Other poets such as Marco Girolamo Vida, Gian Giorgio Trissino and Bibbiena, writers of novelle like Matteo Bandello, and a hundred other literati of the time were bishops, or papal scribes or abbreviators, or in other papal employ. Under his pontificate, Latin Christianity assumed a pagan, Greco-Roman character, which, passing from art into manners, gives to this epoch a strange complexion. Crimes for the moment disappeared, to give place to vices; but to charming vices, vices in good taste, such as those indulged in by Alcibiades and sung by Catullus.... Pope Leo X spent money lavishly — on the arts; on charities; on benefices for his friends, relatives, and even people he barely knew; on dynastic wars, such as the War of Urbino; and on his own immoderate, personal luxury. Within two years of becoming Pope, Leo X spent all of the treasure amassed by the previous Pope, the frugal Julius II, and drove the Papacy into deep debt. This debt contributed not only to the calamities of Leo's own pontificate, (e.g. the sale of indulgences that precipitated Protestantism), but severely constrained later pontificates (i.e. that of Adrian VI; and that of Leo's beloved cousin, Clement VII), forcing austerity measures. Leo X's personal spending was likewise vast. For example, during the year 1517, his personal income is recorded as 580,000 ducats, of which 420,000 came from the states of the Church, 100,000 from annates, and 60,000 from the composition tax instituted by Sixtus IV. These sums, together with the considerable amounts accruing from indulgences, jubilees, and special fees, vanished as quickly as they were received. To remain financially solvent, the Pope resorted to desperate measures: instructing his cousin, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici to pawn the Papal jewels; palace furniture; tableware; and even statues of the apostles. Additionally, Leo sold cardinals' hats; memberships to a fraternal order he invented in 1520, the Papal Knights of St. Peter and St. Paul; and borrowed such immense sums from bankers that upon his death, many were ruined. At Leo's death, the Venetian ambassador Gradenigo estimated the number of the Church's paying offices with a capital value of approximately 3,000,000 ducats and a yearly income of 328,000 ducats at two thousand one hundred and fifty...." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Leo_X

- g. Adrian VI (1522-1523)³⁵;
- h. Clement VII (1523-1534)³⁶; and,

³⁵ “Born in the Episcopal principality of Utrecht, **Adrian** studied at the University of Leuven in the Low Countries, where he rose to the position of professor of theology, also serving as rector (the equivalent of vice-chancellor). In 1507, he became the tutor of the future Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who later trusted him as both his emissary and his regent. In 1516, Adrian became bishop of Tortosa, Spain, and was soon appointed Grand Inquisitor of the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile. He was appointed cardinal by Pope Leo X in 1517 and elected pope in 1522 as a compromise candidate after Leo's death. Adrian came to the papacy in the midst of one of its greatest crises, threatened not only by Lutheranism to the north but also by the advance of the Ottoman Turks to the east. He refused to compromise with Lutheranism theologically, demanding Luther's condemnation as a heretic. However, he is noted for having attempted to reform the Catholic Church administratively in response to the Protestant Reformation. His efforts at reform, however, proved fruitless, as they were resisted by most of his Renaissance ecclesiastical contemporaries, and he did not live long enough to see his efforts through to their conclusion. He was succeeded by the Italian Medici pope, Clement VII. Adrian VI and his eventual successor Marcellus II are the only popes of the modern era to retain their baptismal names after their election.... Adrian VI was not successful as a peacemaker among Christian princes, whom he hoped to unite in a war against the Turks. In August 1523 he was forced into an alliance with the Empire, England, and Venice against France; meanwhile, in 1522 Suleiman the Magnificent (1520–66) had conquered Rhodes. In his reaction to the early stages of the Lutheran revolt, Adrian VI did not completely understand the gravity of the situation. At the Diet of Nuremberg, which opened in December 1522, he was represented by Francesco Chiericati, whose private instructions contain the frank admission that the disorder of the Church was perhaps the fault of the Roman Curia itself, and that it should be reformed. However, the former professor and Inquisitor General was strongly opposed to any change in doctrine and demanded that Martin Luther be punished for teaching heresy. He made only one cardinal in the course of his pontificate, Willem van Enckevoirt, made a cardinal priest in a consistory held on September 10, 1523. Adrian VI held no beatifications in his pontificate but canonized Saints Antoninus of Florence and Benno of Meissen on 31 May 1523. Charles V's ambassador in Rome, Juan Manuel, lord of Belmonte, wrote that he was worried that Charles's influence over Adrian waned after Adrian's election, writing " The Pope is "deadly" afraid of the College of Cardinals. He does whatever two or three cardinals write to him in the name of the college."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Adrian_VI

³⁶ “Elected in 1523 at the end of the Italian Renaissance, **Clement VII** came to the papacy with a high reputation as a statesman, having served with distinction as chief advisor to both Pope Leo X (1513-1521) and Pope Adrian VI (1522-1523). Assuming leadership in a time of crisis, with the Church nearly bankrupt, Clement VII initially sought to unite Christendom, which was then fragmenting, by making peace among the many Christian leaders then at odds. He also aspired to liberate Italy, which had become a battleground for invading, foreign armies, thereby threatening the Church's freedom. The complex political situation of the 1520s thwarted Clement's intentions. Inheriting Martin Luther's growing Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe; a vast power struggle in Italy between Europe's two most powerful kings, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France, each of whom demanded that the Pope choose a side; and Turkish invasions of Eastern Europe led by Suleiman the Magnificent; Clement's problems were exacerbated by King Henry VIII of England's contentious divorce, resulting in England breaking away from the Catholic Church; and in 1527, souring relations with Emperor Charles V leading to the violent Sack of Rome, during which the Pope was imprisoned. After escaping confinement in Castel Sant'Angelo, Clement — with few economic, military, or political options remaining — compromised the Church's and Italy's independence by allying with his former jailor, Emperor Charles V. In contrast to his tortured Papacy, Clement VII was personally respectable and devout, possessing a “dignified propriety of character,” “great acquirements both theological and scientific,” as well as “extraordinary address and penetration — Clement VII, in serener times, might have administered the Papal power with high reputation and enviable prosperity. But with all of his profound insight into the political affairs of Europe, Clement does not seem to have comprehended the altered position of the Pope” in relation to Europe's emerging nation-states and Protestantism. A discerning patron, Clement VII personally commissioned Michelangelo's The Last Judgment for the Sistine Chapel; Raphael's

i. Paul III (1534-1549).³⁷

Young Martin Luther grew up in this Holy Roman Empire with very firm Christian convictions that seemed to haunt him throughout his youth—particularly when determining his course of study and future work.³⁸ Although Luther's parents were not wealthy, they shared ambitious goals for their son Martin and made

masterpiece, The Transfiguration; as well as celebrated works by Benvenuto Cellini, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Parmigianino, among others. Artistic trends of the era are sometimes called the "Clementine style," and notable for their virtuosity. In matters of science, Clement VII is best known for personally approving, in 1533, Nicholas Copernicus's theory that the Earth revolves around the Sun — 99 years before Galileo Galilei's heresy trial for similar ideas. Ecclesiastically, Clement VII is remembered for approving the Capuchin Franciscan Order, and securing the island of Malta for the Knights of Malta." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Clement_VII

³⁷ "He came to the papal throne in an era following the sack of Rome in 1527 and rife with uncertainties in the Catholic Church following the Protestant Reformation. During his pontificate, and in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, new Catholic religious orders and societies, such as the Jesuits, the Barnabites, and the Congregation of the Oratory, attracted a popular following. He convened the Council of Trent in 1545. He was a significant patron of the arts and employed nepotism to advance the power and fortunes of his family. It is to Pope Paul III that Nicolaus Copernicus dedicated *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres)... In May–June 1537 Paul issued three documents: the bulls *Sublimus Dei* (also known as *Unigenitus* and *Veritas ipsa*); *Altitudo divini consolii*; and *Pastorale officium*, the brief for the execution of *Sublimus Dei*. "*Altitudo divini consolii*" was essentially a bull to settle a difference between the Franciscans and Dominicans over baptism, but "*Sublimus Dei*" is described by Prein (2008) as the "Magna Carta" for the human rights of the indigenous peoples of the Americas in its declaration that "the Indians were human beings and they were not to be robbed of their freedom or possessions". "*Pastorale officium*" declared automatic excommunication for anyone who failed to abide by the new ruling. Stogre (1992) notes that "*Sublimus Dei*" is not present in Denzinger, the authoritative compendium of official teachings of the Catholic Church, and that the executing brief for it ("*Pastorale officium*") was annulled the following year in "*Non Indecens Videtur*". [8] Davis (1988) asserts it was annulled due to a dispute with the Spanish crown. [9] The Council of The West Indies and the Crown concluded that the documents broke their patronato rights and the Pope withdrew them, though they continued to circulate and be quoted by Las Casas and others who supported Indian rights. According to Falkowski (2002) "*Sublimus Dei*" had the effect of revoking the bull of Alexander VI *Inter Caetera* but still leaving the colonizers the duty of converting the native people. Prein (2008) observes the difficulty in reconciling these decrees with "*Inter Caetera*". Father Gustavo Gutierrez describes "*Sublimus Dei*" as "the most important papal document relating to the condition of native Indians and that it was addressed to all Christians". Maxwell (1975) notes that the bull did not change the traditional teaching that the enslavement of Indians was permissible if they were considered "enemies of Christendom" as this would be considered by the Church as a "just war". He further argues that the Indian nations had every right to self-defence. Stark (2003) describes the bull as "magnificent" and believes the reason that, in his opinion, it has belatedly come to light is due to the neglect of Protestant historians. Falola notes that the bull related to the native populations of the New World and did not condemn the transatlantic slave trade stimulated by the Spanish monarchy and the Holy Roman Emperor. In 1537, he also issued *In nomine Sancte*, a bull in which he talks about evangelism and conversion tasks. In 1545 Paul repealed an ancient law that allowed slaves to claim their freedom under the Emperor's statue on Capitoline Hill, in view of the number of homeless people and tramps in the city of Rome. The decree included those who had become Christians after their enslavement and those born to Christian slaves. The right of inhabitants of Rome to publicly buy and sell slaves of both sexes was affirmed. Stogre (1992) asserts that the lifting of restrictions was due to a shortage of slaves in Rome. In 1548 Paul authorized the purchase and possession of Muslim slaves in the Papal states...."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Paul_III

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter One, pp. 7-30.

provisions for him to connect with influential persons within their circles, such as Mayor Heinrich Schalbe, who took Luther in to live and to be an apprentice. It is believed that the Schalbe family afforded Luther certain educational advantages that would enable him to attain entrance at the university in Erfurt. It is also believed that, during Luther's years living with the Schalbe family, that he was first exposed to the various troubles and scandals plaguing the Roman Catholic Church; that he would have heard about heretics such as John Wycliff (England) and the Franciscan monk Johannes Hilten (Germany). Indeed, when Luther was a young man, there had already been scores of prominent clergymen who had vigorously criticized the Church, and some of them had been imprisoned and martyred. And young Luther would likely have learned about these men and their ideas and efforts.³⁹

2. The University of Erfurt (1501-1505)

Luther's father, of course, wanted his son Martin to make his mark upon the world, but his idea was that young Martin would go into law and become a lawyer. This idea, no doubt, was behind Martin's apprenticeship with Mayor Heinrich Schalbe, and the room and board with the Schalbe family which he received, as he trained for entrance at the University of Erfurt. The plan was that Martin would "go on to take his law degree... and at last begin his practice of law."⁴⁰

While at the university, Luther studied all sorts of subjects, including Latin, Greek, the Vulgate Bible, theology, philosophy, and the new, fashionable philosophy of "humanism." Renaissance Humanism's principle ideas were Aristotelian and Greco-Roman, and, when Luther was at the university, humanism was poised to challenge Scholasticism (i.e., the idea that all reason must trace its source in a Biblical foundation), whose principle proponents were Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, and Thomas Aquinas.

It should also be pointed out that the Renaissance Humanists found solace in the life and works of St. Augustine of Hippo, whose *Confessions* led the way toward humanist introspection and individuality in a broad new way that was commensurate with both humanism and Catholic thought. During Luther's day, the chief proponent of this humanism was Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. (Erasmus would have a great influence on Luther; he would later befriend and defend

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

Luther's writings and ideas, until around the year 1520, when it was clear that Luther was making his final break from the Roman Catholic Church.)

In 1504, Luther was awarded the master of liberal arts (magister atrium) degree and was ranked second among the seventeen graduates in his class.⁴¹ He was given a master's ring and "the coveted red-brown biretta."⁴² Upon receiving his master's degree, all knew and understood that Luther would enter law school to become a lawyer. "Until this juncture in his life, he had been precisely fulfilling his father's expectations, and now, by entering the study of law, he would take the final step toward becoming a lawyer."⁴³

But prior to entering law school, Luther not only questioned his purpose in life and entertained puzzling theological questions, but he also experienced a terrible plague in the city of Erfurt, which in April 1505 claimed the lives of "two young Erfurt lawyers,"⁴⁴ as well as two of Luther's classmates.

To see two young men die who had taken the same path Luther was now taking could not help but cause him to wonder whether he had made the right choice [in becoming lawyer], whether if he too were suddenly to leave this world he would be prepared as he should be for what lay ahead. In fact, Luther later said that the last words of both of these lawyers had been '*O, that I had become a monk!*' The idea was that they knew that their eternal salvation was at stake, and in the nightmarish light of the eternity that yawned before them, they both piteously remonstrated against the worldly paths they had chosen. Luther surely participated in the requiem masses for both men. If these deaths were not enough, there would be two more from the plague, and both still closer to home. Two of his own fellow students during this time were struck down by death's scythe. One was Hieronymus Buntz, who took part in Luther's own master's examination.⁴⁵

For it was this experience with the plague that caused the young twenty-three-year-old Martin Luther to reassess his life's plan and work. Already filled with a deeply-

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

rooted Christian conviction, the last thing that Luther wished to do was to waste his life with worldly pursuits.

The idea of some form of Christian ministry must have entered his mind during the plague and following the deaths of the young lawyers and his fellow classmates in 1505. Then, suddenly, in July 1505, came a storm at Stotternheim, Germany, which horribly frightened the young Luther so much that he did not think that he would survive it. He prayed to his patron Saint Anne and begged her for intercession; he promised her that if he survived the storm, then he would become a monk. From that day onward, Luther's fate was sealed. Of course he survived that storm and, much to his father's chagrin, Luther sold his volume of the *Corpus Juris* and abandoned his plans to become a lawyer. During the next month, July 1505, Luther joined the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, Germany.

3. Augustinian Monastery; Priesthood (1505-1512)

The years 1505 to 1512 were years of profound intellectual and spiritual growth for Luther. First, he developed an important and life-long relationship with the rector of the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, Johannes von Staupitz; second, he lived in Erfurt, Wittenburg, and travelled to Rome; and, third, he was selected for a professorship at the University of Wittenburg, a position which required him to complete his doctorate of theology degree. From the very beginning of Luther's entrance into the monastery, his superior intellectual abilities were readily noticeable.

Luther's ordination to the priesthood appears to have been expedited, followed by an appointment to teach at the university and the opportunity to earn the doctorate degree. But Luther had his detractors and enemies within the monastery—those persons who were, to say the least, quite envious of Luther's rapid rise within the order. These detractors, in fact, caused Luther to be transferred from the Erfurt monastery to the Wittenburg monastery, where he would make other very important connections. But most significantly, Luther began to engage in pioneering theological research on the text of the Bible. And this research led him to several other questions that hitherto had gone overlooked, such as comparing the original Greek New Testament to the Latin Vulgate version; the inaccurate comparisons of Aristotelian philosophy on Christian theology; and the Sacrament of Penance (including the practice of confession and the sale of indulgences).

From the very beginning of Luther's career as a Catholic clergyman, he intuitively felt that the Sacred Scriptures were the governing documents for everything else that occurred in the Roman Catholic Church. He did not believe that the Roman Catholic Church or the Pope had authority to override the Scriptures. But this belief led Luther into a quagmire of other delicate questions, such as "Who should have the power to judge whether the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church was following the Sacred Scripture?" As author Eric Metaxas has observed, lower-level clergymen in the Roman Catholic Church (i.e., monks, parish priests, etc.) were not even taught the Bible and were not really expected to know the Bible.⁴⁶ "For example, monks and theological students read the commentaries of Duns Scotus and the Sentences of Peter Lombard, both of which were mainly about what was in the Bible. But in a way these things obscured the Bible itself as a whole text. It was a plain fact that no one was really entrusted with reading the Bible by itself, so that monks and even priests and theologians were typically kept at one or more removes from it."⁴⁷

For this reason, Luther's keen interest in the interpretation and meaning of the texts of the Bible was quite revolutionary for his position as a monk. Interestingly, the more Luther studied the Bible, the more he rejected St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, and the more he drifted away from conventional Catholic dogma. Luther felt that Augustine's writings were almost as important as the Sacred Scriptures, and that a man or woman could perhaps attain salvation through reading Augustine's writings. Luther once wrote:

Our theology and St. Augustine are progressing well, and with God's help rule at our university. Aristotle is gradually falling from his throne, and the final doom is only a matter of time. It is amazing how the students disdain the lectures on the Sentences. Indeed, no one can expect to have any students if he does not want to teach this theology, that is, lecture on the Bible or on St. Augustine, or another teacher of ecclesiastical eminence.⁴⁸

Luther's disdain for the Roman Catholic Church's champion Thomas Aquinas is presumed by Luther's disdain for Aristotle, whom Aquinas held in very high

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 52-56.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁸ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), p. 94.

esteem. Luther once described Aquinas's writings as "rambling long-windedness."⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Luther noticed "disturbing discrepancies between Aristotle and Augustine," and once wrote, "Augustine can even use reason to prove that the whole of philosophy is foolishness. Imagine what that means!"⁵⁰ In fact, Luther believed that (a) St. Augustine of Hippo's theology represented "Catholic truth" but that (b) St. Thomas Aquinas' theology, insofar as it relied upon Aristotle and similar philosophies, was a defection from "Catholic truth."⁵¹ This fact alone—that is, Luther's keen interest in the original texts of the Bible, and disdain toward Aristotle—set him apart from most Roman Catholic clergymen of his day.

A second major development in Luther's life, during the years 1505-12, was his first-hand experience with the Sacrament of Penance and the practice of confession. This Sacrament, of course, requires the Catholic faithful to confess his or her sins to a priest (i.e., a Confessor), who in turn is vested with divine authority of dispensation (i.e., to absolve the sin and to grant forgiveness), a process that also included "penance" through some form of good works, as prescribed by the priest. Luther's experience with this process was exhausting. He was puzzled by the fact that he was never able to get to the bottom of all of the sins that he either committed or imagined within his heart. He wore out his confessors with outrageously-long confession sessions. In addition, this whole process caused Luther to conclude that God and Christ were harsh, cruel judges; and that the machinery of the Roman Catholic Church had actually separated God and Christ from individuals. The practice of allowing the Catholic faithful to either perform good works or "purchase an indulgence from the church" also seemed odd to Luther.

A third major event in Luther's life during this period was his trip to the city of Rome in 1510. He was selected by Staupitz to travel to Rome in order to represent the Erfurt Augustinian sect. This trip was an opportunity of a lifetime and Luther was greatly honored. He imagined that he would find a most holiest, eternal city of Rome and that he would meet Catholic mentors, gurus, and sagas, as well as sincere, fellow priests and monks. Much to Luther's chagrin, he encountered unspeakable, unimaginable church corruption: most of it revolved around the fraudulent and sacrilegious sale of indulgences.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵¹ Ibid.

One way a humble Christian could get ahead and earn indulgences was not only in paying money when an indulgence preacher came by but in traveling to a place exhibiting relics. One paid a small amount to view the relics, of course, but once one had viewed them, one was awarded an indulgence, and some of these indulgences could be quite significant. For example, here in Rome lay the fabled Crypt of Callixtus, which was said to hold the bones of forty popes and seventy-six thousand martyrs! If one journeyed through a certain one of these catacombs five times while Mass was being celebrated, one earned an indulgence allowing a single soul to be freed from purgatory. Considering it was believed that one might spend thousands or even millions of years suffering in purgatory, this was a bargain that would be nearly impossible to pass up. Still, who knew how this had all been calculated? On the other hand, who would have time to care? It was an endless buffet of eternal riches, a veritable groaning board of everlasting goodies, and anyone wasting time thinking about them and not taking advantage of them while one had the opportunity must be reckoned worse than a fool!

Here in Rome, one could google at a preserved piece of the original burning bush, a branch of the very one Moses himself beheld in the Sinai desert three millennia before. It was one of the very branches that, though engulfed in flames, had failed to be consumed, and here was proof! And although everyone knew Judas had been paid thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus, how must it feel to feast one's eyes on one of those pieces; but here it was, the fabled filthy lucre itself. For beholding this singular abomination, one was awarded an indulgence shortening one's time in purgatory by fourteen hundred years....⁵²

In young Luther's mind, this whole process of buying and selling indulgences was, to say the least, an embarrassment to the Catholic faith, and it was being practiced in broad daylight in Rome for all to see. For instance, a person could pay a certain sum of money in order to view the relics (i.e., bones) of St. Peter, and for viewing this exhibit, he or she could earn a certain number of indulgences (i.e., credits toward time that one would otherwise spend in purgatory).

⁵² Ibid., p. 60.

A priest, such as Luther, who got a chance to say the Mass in St. John Lateran could, for example, secure his mother's salvation and enable her to bypass purgatory altogether! What was perhaps much worse, and even horrifying, was that Luther met many priests who did not take their holy orders seriously and who even joked about various prayers and even the Holy Eucharist itself. This was absolutely horrifying to Luther. Luther's visit to Rome in 1510 left him with a completely different view of the Roman Catholic Church. He was likely left with the impression that "something was rotten with the state of the medieval church."⁵³

When Luther returned from Rome to Erfurt in 1511, he was temporarily assigned to Wittenberg in order to quell tension within the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt. While in Wittenberg, Luther discovered that the practice of selling indulgences to be most extreme:

Thanks to Frederick's ambitions for Wittenberg, the relics here rivaled even those ancient treasures at Rome. A tooth of Saint Jerome was in the collection as well, as were several fragments of the bodies of other saints: four each from Saint Augustine and Saint Chrysostom. There were six from Saint Bernard. The purported relics from the life of Christ included a swatch of his swaddling clothes, a piece of the very gold brought to him by the Magi, and three precious fragments of the funeral myrrh they had prophetically included. There were also thirteen lucky fragments said to be from Jesus' childhood crib, doubtless made by Joseph's own hands (no berg). But, lo, here was a strand of hair from the beard of Jesus and four hairs from the head of his dear mother. Mary was also represented by three holy fragments taken from the veil that had been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. If it was desiccated food that fueled one's devotional fires, the Upper Room fifteen centuries earlier, as well as a vial containing drops of milk from the breast of the Virgin Mary. How and why they had not been consumed by the infant Jesus but had instead found their way into this vial is lost to history. There was even a piece of John the Baptist's cloak and a portion of the very rock upon which the Savior had stood as he wept over Jerusalem. There was the complete skeleton of one of the infants killed by Herod in Bethlehem, as well as an additional 204 bones from some others in the tragic category. And there were precisely thirty-five splinters from the True Cross! And last and certainly most ethereal of all was the pinnate stunner of the

⁵³ Ibid., p. 66.

collection, the very feather of an angel! Its provenance is not recorded.⁵⁴

However, it would take another six years to pass before Luther was prepared to publically protest this corruption.

4. University of Wittenberg (1512-1517)

In 1512, Luther was asked to permanently transfer to the town of Wittenberg where he would take up the position as professor of theology at the university. It was understood, that Luther must commence studying for the doctorate if he accepted this position—not something that Luther wanted at that time in his life. But Luther found the opportunity to teach and to “spend infinite hours digging into the Bible in a way he had never been able to do before” to be quite appealing. Luther was also promised that he would not need to teach Aristotle. And so he accepted the proposal, and in 1513, Luther completed, and was awarded, his doctorate degree.

From between 1513 and 1517, which is the year when Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, Luther rose to prominence in the Roman Catholic world as a preeminent professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, where he became well-connected to powerful leaders in Wittenberg, including Frederick the Elector, a powerful and influential German prince who would later provide cover and protection for Luther during most of Luther’s career as leader of the Protestant Reformation. Luther also met and befriended other world-renowned scholars during this period, including Johannes Reuchlin, Philip Melancthon and Desiderius Erasmus. By the time that Luther had commenced his professorship at the University of Wittenberg in 1513, a quiet movement to reform the Church from within had already begun.

5. Born-Again Experience (1517)

The year 1517 is a watershed moment in church history for two reasons. First, Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg during October of that year. These 95 Theses would spark the debates which catapulted the Protestant Reformation into existence. And, second, and perhaps most importantly, Martin Luther became “born again” earlier that year—

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

an experience which he described as inner peace accomplished through an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and an inward devotion to God.⁵⁵

Hitherto, following the Seven Sacraments has not brought Luther closer to Christ; nor did he have the Spirit of God. “Though I lived as a monk without reproach,” Luther later wrote, “I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love... yes, I hated the righteous God who punished sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God....”⁵⁶

In early 1517, Luther had “a single tremendous insight,” an “illuminating and life-changing moment,” and a single “moment in the so-called Cloaca Tower at the Black Cloister in Wittenberg.”⁵⁷ I do not know if Luther developed the Protestant theology of getting “born again,” but he certainly laid the foundations for elevating it far above the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church. According to Luther, individuals are completely dead, and do no good whatsoever, without Christ. As author Eric Metaxas has explained:

Luther saw in this the very essence of Christian theology. God reached down not halfway to meet us in our vileness but all the way down, to the foul dregs of our broken humanity. And this holy and loving God dared to touch our lifeless and rotting essence and in doing so underscored that this is the truth about us. In fact, we are not sick and in need of healing. We are dead and in need of resurrecting. We are not dusty and in need of a good dusting; we are fatally befouled with death and fatally toxic filth and require total redemption. If we do not recognize that we need eternal life from the hand of God, we remain in our sins and are eternally dead. So because God respects us, he can reach us only if we are honest about our condition. So it fit well with Luther’s thinking that if God were to bestow upon him—the unworthy sinner Luther—such a divine blessing, it must needs be done as he sat grunting in the ‘cloaca.’ This was the ultimate antithesis to the gold and bejeweled splendor of papal Rome. There all was gilt, but here in Wittenberg it was all *Scheisse*. But the shit in its honesty as shit was very golden when compared to the pretense and artifice of Roman gold, which itself was

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 93-106.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

indeed as shit when compared to the infinite worth of God's grace. That was cheap grace, which was to say it was a truly satanic counterfeit. True grace was concealed in the honesty—in the unadorned shit—of this broken world, and the devil's own shit was concealed in the pope's glittering gold.⁵⁸

This “born-again” experience essentially eviscerated in Luther's mind the necessity of the Sacrament of Penance and several other Catholic practices, which Luther defined as a “doctrine of good works,” which could never achieve salvation. Luther thus became convinced that man could be justified through becoming born-again (i.e., through “faith alone”) and not through the “works” imposed by the Roman Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Penance and other canon laws.

Luther essentially adopted Saint Augustine's theology in *On Grace and Free Will*, wherein Augustine set forth a simple and cogent argument for the doctrine of “justification through faith alone, and not works.” Luther would later take up the same theme in his masterpiece *On the Bondage of the Will*, which set forth the cogent argument that human beings were completely powerless to earn their way, through good works or through carrying out the Sacraments, into the kingdom of heaven, *without God's grace*. In the process, Luther's theology would essentially dismantle at least five of the Seven Sacraments that were enforced through the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁹

About the time when Luther was experiencing his “born-again” experience, Pope Leo X had dispatched the Dominican Friar Johannes Tetzel to Germany for the purpose of raising revenue for various projects, including the refurbishing and building of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Fr. Tetzel, as it turned out, was an expert fundraiser through the sale of indulgences. Although his sales pitches were gross exaggerations of the official Catholic doctrine on indulgences, they were extraordinarily effective at getting the Catholic faithful to purchase indulgences, and so Catholic leadership turned a blind eye to Tetzel's exaggerations.⁶⁰ Tetzel's famous slogan was that “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁵⁹ According to Luther, “[t]he only ones instituted by Christ himself, he said, were Communion and baptism. Thus the other five—confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance, and extreme unction—were man-made and must be tossed outside the camp to rot.” Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 99-101.

When Tetzel's fundraising campaign reached Wittenberg, Luther had had enough. Other priests were already speaking out against this practice of promising salvation in exchange for payments. By 1517, Luther had long studied and opined as to the theology of indulgences, so that by late October of that year, he was most qualified to address the problem with Church leadership. On October 31, 1517, Luther addressed a letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, in which he affixed his 95 Theses. In this letter, Luther wrote:

Most Reverend Father in Christ, Most Illustrious Sovereign: Forgive me that I, the least of all men, have the temerity to consider writing to Your Highness. The Lord Jesus is my witness that I have long hesitated doing this on account of my insignificance and unworthiness, of which I am well aware. I do it now impudently, and I am motivated solely by the obligation of my loyalty, which I owe you, Most Reverend Father in Christ. May Your Highness therefore deign to glance at what is but a grain of dust, and for the sake of your episcopal kindness, listen to my request.

Under your most distinguished name, papal indulgences are offered all across the land for the construction of St. Peter. Now, I do not so much complain about the quacking of the preachers, which I haven't heard; but I bewail the gross misunderstanding among the people which comes from these preachers and which they spread everywhere among common men. Evidently the poor souls believe that when they have bought indulgence letters they are then assured of their salvation. They are likewise convinced that souls escape from purgatory as soon as they have placed a contribution into the chest.

Further, they assume that the grace obtained through these indulgences is so completely effective that there is no sin of such magnitude that it cannot be forgiven—even if (as they say) someone should rape the mother of God, were this possible. Finally they also believe that man is free from every penalty and guilt by these indulgences.

O great God! The souls committed to your care, excellent Father, are thus directed to death. For all these souls you have the heaviest and a constantly increasing responsibility. Therefore I can no longer be silent on this subject. No man can be assured of his salvation by any episcopal function. He is not even assured of his salvation by the

infusion of God’s grace, because Apostle [Paul] orders us to work out our salvation constantly ‘in fear and trembling.’...

How can the [indulgence agents] then make the people feel secure and without fear [concerning salvation] by means of those false stories and promises of pardon? After all, the indulgences contribute absolutely nothing to the salvation and holiness of souls; they only compensate for the external punishment which—on the basis of Canon Law—once used to be imposed.⁶¹

Naive and unassuming, Luther could not have realized that the very archbishop (i.e., Archbishop Albrecht) to whom his letter (which had Luther’s 95 Theses attached) was addressed had a vested stake in Tetzels indulgence sales. Pope Leo X and Archbishop Albrecht had already agreed on sharing the revenues, as Albrecht had old debts to repay to the Pope.

Thus, when Luther posted his 95 Theses, which attacked the abuses stemming from the sale of indulgences, on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, he may not have realized the depths of the corruption within the church. “Over the centuries, the church bureaucracy had swelled to become something like a vast corporation or government whose distant leaders were out of touch with its vast outposts. It had grown more and more powerful, and the rules and laws of the church had become less and less in tune with anything that would have been recognizable to the first-century Christians.”⁶²

6. Luther Posts Ninety-Five Theses (1517)

The posting of Luther’s *95 Theses* in 1517 was not an unusual or revolutionary act at the time, since this was the usual and customary method of publicizing community and church events, including notices regarding sermons, public discussions, lectures, and debates. Luther believed that he was honestly brining before the public and the church hierarchy a public service with the posting of his *95 Theses* in 1517. It is not likely that his intentions were to start a widespread church revolution.

But Luther’s personality, style of argument, and manner of writing were imposing, and the subject matter of his *95 Theses* struck a nerve within the German

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁶² Ibid., p. 104.

population, including all classes of society. For it was readily apparent that the German people were a subjugated people and that the might and authority of the Roman Catholic Church lay behind this subjugation.

For this reason, and much to Luther's chagrin, when the *95 Theses* were posted in 1517, they were taken to nearby villages, re-printed, and re-distributed, until they spread like wild-fire throughout Germany, Europe and England. Luther no doubt struck a nerve within the consciousness of Europe and England, and he, by doing so, unleashed a revolutionary spirit.

Below in Table 2 is a re-print of Martin Luther's *95 Theses* (note: portions of these Theses have been highlighted in bold letters in order to stress the main points which Luther makes). In a nutshell, Luther forewarns the Christian world against over-reliance upon the purchase and sale of indulgence letters. He insisted that the Pope's authority over the canon law was not the same as Christ's authority to forgive sins. Luther believed that indulgence letters could absolve a person for having committed an infraction against the canon law, such as the failure to attend church regularly.

However, Luther argued that "purgatory" was a hoax, since neither the Pope or any of the bishops could actually forgive sins. Only Christ maintained the authority to forgive sins, and this is attained through Grace alone, which is not dependent upon the Pope, the Bishops, or the canon law. For Luther, the sinner needed to have (a) inner repentance followed by (b) holiness, outward contrition, and mortification of the flesh; purchasing indulgences were clearly not an adequate substitute for inner repentance and holiness. The whole doctrine of indulgences appeared to encourage moral relativism, licentiousness, and corruption; the preaching of indulgences during church services befouled the Gospel of Christ; and, more and more, those Christians who were wealthy and who could purchase indulgences were naturally made the most holiest of Christians through this indulgence doctrine.

In the *95 Theses*, Luther himself did not reject "indulgences" outright, but he forewarned against the dangers of promising the laity that indulgences could achieve grace and salvation. (After 1520, Luther did reject "indulgences" outright. He said they were unbiblical and a form of ecclesiastical fraud). Luther did, however, reject the doctrine of Purgatory as being unsupported in either reason or

Sacred Scriptures.⁶³ Purgatory was, according to Luther, the Church's invention and a money-making racket; accordingly, Luther thus wrote: "[t]hose tares of changing the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory were evidently sown while the bishops slept (Mt 13:25)."

Significantly, Luther observed that poor, unassuming peasants were being exploited by this indulgence system, while the pope, in all of his personal wealth, splendor, and opulence, extracted these peasants' meagre savings in order to fund the building of St. Peter's basilica. "*Why does the Pope not use his authority to empty Purgatory through an act of love and mercy, rather than require the payment of money?*" Luther's sarcasm, wit, and intellect were so imposing in the 95 Thesis that he achieved over-night "rock-star" status throughout Europe.

Tab 2. Martin Luther's 95 Theses (October 31, 1517)

Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology 95 Thesis, October 31, 1517

Out of love for the truth and from desire to elucidate it, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, and ordinary lecturer therein at Wittenberg, intends to defend the following statements and to dispute on them in that place. Therefore he asks that those who cannot be present and dispute with him orally shall do so in their absence by letter. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "**Repent**" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. This word **cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance**, that is, confession and

⁶³ The current viewpoint on "indulgences" and "purgatory" of the Roman Catholic Church has not significantly changed since the days of Pope Leo X and Martin Luther during the 16th century. This current viewpoint is stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 411-413 ("The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance. What is an indulgence? 'An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.' 'An indulgence is a partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.' The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.... The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the 'old man' and to put on the 'new man'.... An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishment due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity. Since the faithful departed now being purified [in Purgatory] are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.")

satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.

3. Yet **it does not mean solely inner repentance**; such inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various **outward mortification of the flesh**.
4. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self (that is, true inner repentance), namely till our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
5. The **pope neither desires nor is able to remit any penalties** except those imposed by his own authority or that of the canons.
6. The **pope cannot remit any guilt**, except by **declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God**; or, to be sure, by remitting guilt in cases reserved to his judgment. If his right to grant remission in these cases were disregarded, the guilt would certainly remain unforgiven.
7. God remits guilt to no one unless at the same time **he humbles him in all things and makes him submissive to the vicar**, the priest.
8. The **penitential canons are imposed only on the living**, and, according to the canons themselves, **nothing should be imposed on the dying**.
9. Therefore the Holy Spirit through the pope is kind to us insofar as the pope in his decrees always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.
10. Those **priests act ignorantly and wickedly** who, in the case of the dying, **reserve canonical penalties for purgatory**.
11. **Those tares of changing the canonical penalty to the penalty of purgatory were evidently sown while the bishops slept (Mt 13:25)**.
12. In former times canonical penalties were imposed, not after, but before absolution, as tests of true contrition.
13. The **dying are freed by death from all penalties**, are already dead as far as the canon laws are concerned, and **have a right to be released from them**.
14. **Imperfect piety or love on the part of the dying person** necessarily brings with it great fear; and the smaller the love, the greater the fear.
15. This fear or horror is sufficient in itself, to say nothing of other things, to constitute the penalty of purgatory, since it is very near to the horror of despair.
16. **Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation**.
17. It seems as though for **the souls in purgatory fear should necessarily decrease and love increase**.
18. Furthermore, **it does not seem proved**, either by reason or by Scripture, **that souls in purgatory are outside the state of merit**, that is, unable to grow in love.
19. Nor does it seem proved that **souls in purgatory, at least not all of them, are certain and assured of their own salvation**, even if we ourselves may be entirely certain of it.
20. Therefore **the pope**, when he uses the words **"plenary remission of all penalties," does not actually mean "all penalties,"** but only those imposed by himself.
21. Thus **those indulgence preachers are in error who say that a man is absolved from every penalty and saved by papal indulgences**.
22. As a matter of fact, **the pope remits to souls in purgatory no penalty which, according to canon law, they should have paid in this life**.
23. If remission of all penalties whatsoever could be granted to anyone at all, certainly it would be granted only to the most perfect, that is, to very few.
24. For this reason **most people are necessarily deceived by that indiscriminate and high-sounding promise of release from penalty**.
25. That power which the pope has in general over purgatory corresponds to the power which any bishop or curate has in a particular way in his own diocese and parish.
26. **The pope** does very well when he grants remission to souls in purgatory, not by **the power of the keys, which he does not have**, but by way of intercession for them.
27. **They preach only human doctrines who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory**.
28. It is certain that **when money clinks in the money chest, greed and avarice can be increased**; but when the church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone.
29. Who knows whether all souls in purgatory wish to be redeemed, since we have exceptions in St. Severinus and St. Paschal, as related in a legend.
30. **No one is sure of the integrity of his own contrition**, much less of having received plenary remission.
31. **The man who actually buys indulgences is as rare as he who is really penitent**; indeed, he is

exceedingly rare.

32. Those who believe that they can be **certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters** will be **eternally damned, together with their teachers.**
33. Men must especially **be on guard against those who say that the pope's pardons are that inestimable gift of God by which man is reconciled to him.**
34. For the **graces of indulgences** are concerned **only with the penalties of sacramental satisfaction established by man.**
35. They who **teach that contrition is not necessary on the part of those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessional privileges** preach **unchristian doctrine.**
36. Any **truly repentant Christian** has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without **indulgence letters.**
37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, **participates in all the blessings of Christ** and the church; and this is granted him by God, **even without indulgence letters.**
38. **Nevertheless, papal remission and blessing are by no means to be disregarded, for they are, as I have said (Thesis 6), the proclamation of the divine remission.**
39. It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people **the bounty of indulgences** and **the need of true contrition.**
40. A **Christian who is truly contrite** seeks and loves to pay penalties for his sins; the **bounty of indulgences, however, relaxes penalties and causes men to hate them** -- at least it furnishes occasion for hating them.
41. **Papal indulgences** must be preached with caution, **lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.**
42. Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend that **the buying of indulgences** should in any way be **compared with works of mercy.**
43. **Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.**
44. Because love grows by **works of love, man thereby becomes better. Man does not, however, become better by means of indulgences** but is merely freed from penalties.
45. **Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives his money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath.**
46. Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, **they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences.**
47. Christians are to be taught that **buying of indulgences is a matter of free choice, not commanded.**
48. **Christians are to be taught that the pope, in granting indulgences, needs and thus desires their devout prayer more than their money.**
49. Christians are to be taught that **papal indulgences are useful only if they do not put their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.**
50. **Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.**
51. Christians are to be taught **that the pope would and should wish to give of his own money, even though he had to sell the basilica of St. Peter, to many of those from whom certain hawkers of indulgences cajole money.**
52. **It is vain to trust in salvation by indulgence letters, even though the indulgence commissary, or even the pope, were to offer his soul as security.**
53. They are the enemies of Christ and the pope **who forbid altogether the preaching of the Word of God in some churches in order that indulgences may be preached in others.**
54. **Injury is done to the Word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or larger amount of time is devoted to indulgences than to the Word.**
55. It is certainly the pope's sentiment that if **indulgences, which are a very insignificant thing, are celebrated with one bell, one procession, and one ceremony, then the gospel, which is the very greatest thing, should be preached with a hundred bells, a hundred processions, a hundred ceremonies.**
56. **The true treasures of the church, out of which the pope distributes indulgences, are not sufficiently discussed or known among the people of Christ.**
57. That **indulgences are not temporal treasures** is certainly clear, for many indulgence sellers do not distribute them freely but only gather them

58. **Nor are they the merits of Christ and the saints, for, even without the pope, the latter always work grace for the inner man, and the cross, death, and hell for the outer man.**
59. St. Lawrence said that the poor of the church were the treasures of the church, but he spoke according to the usage of the word in his own time.
60. Without want of consideration we say that the keys of the church, given by the merits of Christ, are that treasure.
61. For it is clear that **the pope's power is of itself sufficient for the remission of penalties and cases reserved by himself.**
62. **The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.**
63. But this treasure is naturally most odious, for it makes the first to be last (Mt. 20:16).
64. On the other hand, **the treasure of indulgences is naturally most acceptable, for it makes the last to be first.**
65. Therefore the **treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth.**
66. **The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men.**
67. The **indulgences** which the demagogues acclaim as the greatest graces are actually understood to be such only insofar as they **promote gain.**
68. They are nevertheless in truth **the most insignificant graces** when compared with **the grace of God and the piety of the cross.**
69. Bishops and curates are bound to admit the commissaries of papal indulgences with all reverence.
70. But they are much more bound to strain their eyes and ears lest these men preach their own dreams instead of what the pope has commissioned.
71. **Let him who speaks against the truth concerning papal indulgences be anathema and accursed.**
72. **But let him who guards against the lust and license of the indulgence preachers be blessed.**
73. Just as the **pope** justly thunders against those who by any means whatever contrive harm to the sale of indulgences.
74. Much more does he intend to thunder against **those who use indulgences as a pretext to contrive harm to holy love and truth.**
75. **To consider papal indulgences so great** that they could absolve a man even if he had done the impossible and had violated the mother of God **is madness.**
76. We say on the contrary that **papal indulgences cannot remove the very least of venial sins** as far as guilt is concerned.
77. To say that even St. Peter if he were now pope, could not grant greater graces is blasphemy against St. Peter and the pope.
78. We say on the contrary that even the present pope, or any pope whatsoever, has greater graces at his disposal, that is, the gospel, spiritual powers, gifts of healing, etc., as it is written. (1 Co 12[:28])
79. To say that **the cross emblazoned with the papal coat of arms, and set up by the indulgence preachers is equal in worth to the cross of Christ is blasphemy.**
80. The bishops, curates, and theologians who permit such talk to be spread among the people will have to answer for this.
81. **This unbridled preaching of indulgences makes it difficult even for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander or from the shrewd questions of the laity.**
82. Such as: **"Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?"** The former reason would be most just; the latter is most trivial.
83. Again, **"Why are funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continued and why does he not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded for them, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed?"**
84. Again, **"What is this new piety of God and the pope that for a consideration of money they permit a man who is impious and their enemy to buy out of purgatory the pious soul of a friend of God and do not rather, because of the need of that pious and beloved soul, free it for pure love's sake?"**
85. Again, **"Why are the penitential canons, long since abrogated and dead in actual fact and through disuse, now satisfied by the granting of indulgences as though they were still alive and in force?"**
86. Again, **"Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?"**
87. Again, **"What does the pope remit or grant to those who by perfect contrition already have a right to full remission and blessings?"**
88. Again, **"What greater blessing could come to the church than if the pope were to bestow these remissions**

and blessings on every believer a hundred times a day, as he now does but once?"

89. **``Since the pope seeks the salvation of souls rather than money by his indulgences, why does he suspend the indulgences and pardons previously granted when they have equal efficacy?"**
90. **To repress these very sharp arguments of the laity by force alone, and not to resolve them by giving reasons, is to expose the church and the pope to the ridicule of their enemies and to make Christians unhappy.**
91. If, therefore, indulgences were preached according to the spirit and intention of the pope, all these doubts would be readily resolved. Indeed, they would not exist.
92. Away, then, with all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, ``Peace, peace," and there is no peace! (Jer 6:14)
93. Blessed be all those prophets who say to the people of Christ, ``Cross, cross," and there is no cross!
94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell.
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace (Acts 14:22).

B. Diet of Augsburg, Germany (1518)

What follows from between 1517 and 1520 are shock waves throughout Europe, from the Vatican to every palace, church, monastery, and university. Under most circumstances, Luther would have been arrested and executed. But in this case, Luther managed to win the sympathy of the masses of German peasants as well as the German nobility, who rallied to his aid. In Wittenberg, the powerful Frederick the Wise used his influence to protect Luther and to ensure that Luther was treated fairly.

When the Pope summoned Luther to Rome to be heard on charges of heresy, it was Frederick who used his influence with the Emperor Maximilian I to persuade the Pope to have Luther to be tried in Germany. The Pope agreed, and in 1518 he dispatched Cardinal Cajetan to Augsburg, Germany to summon a diet and to conduct a hearing at which Luther was to appear. This would be the Church's first first-hand experience with Luther's powerful logic and erudite learning; the Augsburg hearing was a catastrophe for the Church. Cardinal Cajetan did not know how to deal with Luther. At the very heart of Luther's theology was the authority of the Pope and the whole foundation upon which the Roman Catholic Church seemed to rest:

Cardinal Cajetan had raised [an objection] concerning Luther's claims the idea that it was one's faith that produced God's forgiveness. Church teaching clearly implied that it was not the person's faith but the priest's act that followed the person's declaration of faith. The moment a priest granted absolution, the person asking forgiveness was forgiven. The church held the power of God to forgive, and this

forgiveness could not exist outside the church exercising that power. It must be mediated through the church and could not happen without the church and the church' priest. It was the church, after all, that had been given the keys. But Luther said that this was not possible, because even if the priest were granting absolution, the person must in his heart have faith, else the priest's absolution was an empty religious act. It was the faith that mattered more than the priest's actions. Luther backed up this position with several scriptural references, the most notable being the one with which he has come to be most closely associated, Romans 1:17, which states, 'For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.' It did not say or imply that the church must somehow be involved in this, nor did the other scriptural examples imply that. On the contrary, Luther was implying that the priest was really only ratifying what had already taken place between the believer and God by faith.⁶⁴

Cardinal Cajetan was simply out-gunned, out-maneuvered, and out-generaled by the young Luther. Luther said that he was fully prepared to recant his statements and positions, if only Cardinal Cajetan could show him where in the Sacred Scriptures that Luther had erred. Cardinal Cajetan had not been prepared to debate theology with Luther; and, as a result, Cardinal Cajetan was left in utter bewilderment. "So Luther had bested [Cardinal] Cajetan..."⁶⁵ "Cardinal Cajetan found himself buffaloed by Luther's confidence."⁶⁶ When the hearing was ended, but not yet formally closed, Luther was expected to appear before the Cardinal on the next morning. But instead, Luther fled Augsburg upon hearing rumors that "the cardinal was now secretly fixing to abduct Luther and bundle him south to Rome..."⁶⁷ And so Luther fled.

When Luther failed to appear before the Cardinal Cajetan on the next morning, he demanded that Frederick the Wise capture and turn Luther over to Rome. But the political forces then in play gave Frederick the upper hand. For the German nobility and peasantry had sided with Luther, for nearly all believed that the Vatican had over-taxed the Germans and was ruining Germany's economic growth. The Emperor was in no position to wage war on the Germans, as he was busy and overstretched putting down rebellion and war on other fronts in Spain and

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 150.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 155.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

France. Hence, as of 1518, a “papal warrant” had been issued for Luther’s arrest, but it could not be enforced.

C. The Leipzig Debates (1519)

Luther enjoyed relative freedom and protection throughout Germany, and he continued to teach and to preach. Meanwhile, as his popularity grew, so did the challenges to his theories, philosophy, and theology. At least Luther had succeeded where many other priests and theologians had failed: he forced the Roman Catholic establishment to confront the integrity of its fundamental beliefs and practices. Unlike many of the heretics and martyrs who came before him, Luther was able to summon the leading theologians, philosophers, and intellectuals throughout all of Christendom—such leading men as Henry VIII, Sir Thomas Moore, and Desiderius Erasmus—to theological debate on the Seven Sacraments, the Sacred Scriptures, and other related topics. There was something unique about Luther.

Luther’s writings and lectures now expanded beyond the practice of indulgences. Whether through open-air debate, such as the famous Leipzig University Debate of 1520, or in his writings, Luther suddenly opened up his entire treasure chest of theological opinion and ideas regarding the Christian faith and the Church. Perhaps by then he believed that his fate was sealed and that capture, trial, execution, and martyrdom were assured.

And so between 1518 and 1520, Luther fearlessly published his entire catalogue of theological views:

- The foundations of the papacy were in serious question. Luther published his Resolution on the *Thirteenth Thesis Concerning the Power of the Pope*.⁶⁸
- The Pope (i.e., Bishop of Rome) had been declared “supreme” only during the previous four hundred years (i.e., from the 1100s to the 1500s); the existence of the Eastern Orthodox Church mitigated

⁶⁸ Eric Metaxas summarizes Luther’s opinion on the papacy as follows: “He was sure the papacy was not against God’s will, but neither did he think it was ordained by God, as the church now maintained. All he read made ti clearer and clearer that it was a human institution. It was not possible from Scripture to find any evidence that it had been divinely ordained. This was the issue, and by declaring otherwise, the current pope... had put the papacy on impossibly rotten foundations. If one loved the church, one must fix this, and Luther would do so. That month seems to have been a turning point for Luther. It was on March 13 that he whispered..., “I know not whether the pope is the Antichrist himself or whether he is his apostle, so miserably is Christ (that is, the truth) corrupted and crucified by the pope in the decretals.’... He came to see that the Roman church, while certainly an institution of God, could not plausibly claim utter authority as it had been doing for four hundred years.” Ibid., p. 168.

against the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome; and neither the Pope or the ecumenical councils were infallible.⁶⁹

- The true church had been “in a kind of Babylonian captivity, just as Israel had been” inside of the Roman Catholic Church, and needed to be extracted out from it.⁷⁰
- The doctrine of Purgatory is antichristian and unbiblical.
- The Holy Eucharist should not be restricted to deacons, priests, and bishops; but the entire laity should take the bread and the wine in the Holy Eucharist.
- There was a “priesthood of all believers,” and not just of the “ordained” clergy.
- There were only two Sacraments: baptism and holy communion. The other five Sacraments—extreme unction, confirmation, holy orders, marriage, and penance—could not be justified as “sacraments” in the Sacred Scriptures.
- The Catholic canon law should not be treated as equivalent to the Sacred Scriptures.
- The Bible must supersede the power and authority of the Roman Catholic Church (i.e., the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*).
- Justification comes through being “born again” (i.e., an internal change of the heart, through faith alone which leads to charitable works) and not through the Sacrament of Penance, including the system of confession and indulgences and “works” of the canon law.

It should be noted, here, that Luther was also politically astute and leveraged the political climate to his advantage. He certainly recognized who his temporal friends were in Germany, such as Frederick the Wise and the nobility. “[H]e brilliantly played to the concerns of the German nobles that the pope and the Italians in Rome, with their typical cunning, were stealing what rightly belonged to Germany and tyrannizing over the German faithful. And Luther called upon these nobles to ‘take back their country,’ as it were, to establish Germany as a sovereign nation—or something like it—so that the blubbery maw of Roman bureaucracy that had been feeding on their money would wither and die. With typical creativity, Luther denounced the vast money-hungry bureaucracy of papal officials as ‘a crawling mass of reptiles’ and said that they knew that the Germans had no choice but to put up with them.”⁷¹ What was crystal clear to Martin Luther is that the natural flow of the text of the Sacred Scriptures not only leads to spiritual freedom

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 174-175.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 185.

in Christ, but also, as a direct consequence, to economic and political freedom in the present world. The success of Luther's reformation movement also proved to him that God was, in fact, with him, directing his every move, every decision, and every step. For this reason, Luther would later counsel disgruntled German peasants just before the Peasant's Rebellion of 1524-25 to not take up arms against the German nobility because non-violence was the Christian method of political and social action and change.

On 15 June 1520, Pope Leo X "warned Luther with the papal bull (edict) *Exsurge Domine* that he risked excommunication unless he recanted 41 sentences drawn from his writings, including the Ninety-five Theses, within 60 days."⁷² It was about this time that Luther began the publications of some of his most important polemics against the Church and the papacy.

D. The Sermons and Written Works of Martin Luther (1519-1524)

We should take note of the fact that Martin Luther preached many of his sermons underneath a papal death warrant. This means that he stood ready, and was prepared, to give his life for what he preached. Not many clergymen today can make the same claim, but world history is filled with thousands of similar stories all around the world. For this reason, Luther's sermons also offer us insights into his revolutionary Christian spirit. Luther's views of Christianity, the papacy, the church, secular law, and government were freely expressed throughout his sermons as well as his written treatises, pamphlets, and letters.

Most of Luther's preaching focused on reforming Roman Catholic liturgy and in explaining the true meaning of certain rites and discarding others. In other words, Luther wanted his listeners to come away from his sermons with the understanding that true holiness does not equate with simply following Roman Catholic teachings and practices.

1. Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520)

In *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520)*, Luther set forth a most persuasive argument for political revolution in Germany and throughout the Holy Roman

⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther

Empire. It turned the status-quo on its head, making the “first, last,” and the “last, first”; elevating the common man to the spiritual estate of “priest, bishop, and pope”; and reducing the priest, bishop and pope to the temporal estate of the common man. Luther wanted the Bible to be translated from Latin in to the German language so that the common German man could read and interpret it for himself.⁷³ Luther’s new theology was understandably a dangerous one for both Prince and Bishop, and for both Emperor and Pope. His logic naturally threatened not simply the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, but it also threatened the monarchical system, the doctrine of “divine right” of kings, and the economic feudalism which sustained these institutions. In England, King Henry VIII was perhaps the first to recognize Luther’s threat to the secular sociopolitical establishment. As discussed below, Henry VIII vehemently opposed Luther’s theology from the beginning.

In the *Open letter to the Christian Nobility*, Luther opened his seminal work stating that the Romanists had built three walls around themselves in order to preserve their unlimited, unchecked authority. First, they argued that no temporal authority (e.g., king or emperor) had jurisdiction over the pope. Second, they argued that only the Pope had final authority to interpret the Sacred Scripture and that, in matters of faith, his interpretation was inerrant. And, third, they held that no ecumenical council could be held, unless the Pope summoned it. In the *Open Letter*, Luther emphatically rebutted these three tenets, stating:

First, when pressed by the temporal power, they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but, on the other hand, that the spiritual is above the temporal power. Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they raise the objection that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the pope. Third, if threatened with a council, they answer with the fable that no one can call a council but the pope....

⁷³ This world view as to the sole authority of the Pope, the Bishops, and the Curia to interpret the Sacred Scripture has not changed since the days of Pope Leo X and Martin Luther. See, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 247-249 (“...’the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.”); and pp. 34-35 (“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others’.... The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.”)

Thus I hope that the false, lying terror with which the Romans have this long time made our conscience timid and stupid, has been allayed. They, like all of us, are subject to the temporal sword; they have no power to interpret the Scriptures by mere authority, without learning; they have no authority to prevent a council or, in sheer wantonness, to pledge it, bind it, or take away its liberty; but if they do this, they are in truth the communion of Antichrist and of the devil, and have nothing at all of Christ except the name.⁷⁴

Specifically, with respect to the papacy's first tenet, to wit, that the temporal power could have no authority over the Pope, Luther rebutted by stating that the Romanists had fraudulently created two distinct classes of Christians: the *laity* (i.e., the Temporal Estate) and the *clergy* (i.e., the Spiritual Estate).⁷⁵ They then elevated the clergy far above the laity, making the clergy exempt from secular, temporal laws, even when they commit crimes (i.e., the criminal clergy exemption).⁷⁶

Luther held that "all Christians" are members of the "Spiritual estate."⁷⁷ The only difference between the clergy and the laity was their status as "office-holders." A bishop who is deposed is no longer a clergyman, but a layman. A carpenter or a book-maker who answers a calling to the ministry, is no longer a layman but a clergyman. There is no "spiritual" estate and no "temporal" estate, but one body of Christ. Together, Christians played different roles, but just as Richard Hooker's *Law of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Luther believed the "church" and "state" were but two sides of the same coin. Luther went on to thus explain:

It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the 'spiritual estate'; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the 'temporal estate.' That is indeed a fine bit of lying and hypocrisy. Yet no one should be frightened by it; and for this reason -- viz., that all Christians are truly of the 'spiritual estate,' and there is among them no difference at all but that of office, as Paul says in I Corinthians 12:12, We are all one body, yet every member has its own work, where by it serves every other, all because we have one baptism, one

⁷⁴ *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate* [unpublished essay of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Gospel, one faith, and are all alike Christians; for baptism, Gospel and faith alone make us 'spiritual' and a Christian people.

But that a pope or a bishop anoints, confers tonsures; ordains, consecrates, or prescribes dress unlike that of the laity, this may make hypocrites and graven images, but it never makes a Christian or 'spiritual' man. Through baptism all of us are consecrated to the priesthood, as St. Peter says in I Peter 2:9, 'Ye are a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom,' and the book of Revelation says, Rev. 5:10 'Thou hast made us by Thy blood to be priests and kings.' For if we had no higher consecration than pope or bishop gives, the consecration by pope or bishop would never make a priest, nor might anyone either say mass or preach a sermon or give absolution. Therefore when the bishop consecrates it is the same thing as if he, in the place and stead of the whole congregation, all of whom have like power, were to take one out of their number and charge him to use this power for the others; just as though ten brothers, all king's sons and equal heirs, were to choose one of themselves to rule the inheritance for them all, - they would all be kings and equal in power, though one of them would be charged with the duty of ruling. To make it still clearer. If a little group of pious Christian laymen were taken captive and set down in a wilderness, and had among them no priest consecrated by a bishop, and if there in the wilderness they were to agree in choosing one of themselves, married or unmarried, and were to charge him with the office of baptizing, saying mass, absolving and preaching, such a man would be as truly a priest as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. That is why in cases of necessity any one can baptize and give absolution, which would be impossible unless we were all priests. This great grace and power of baptism and of the Christian Estate they have well-nigh destroyed and caused us to forget through the canon law. It was in the manner aforesaid that Christians in olden days chose from their number bishops and priests, who were afterwards confirmed by other bishops, without all the show which now obtains. It was thus that Sts. Augustine, Ambrose and Cyprian became bishops. Since, then, the temporal authorities are baptized with the same baptism and have the same faith and Gospel as we, we must grant that they are priests and bishops, and count their office one which has a proper and a useful place in the Christian community. For whoever comes out the water of baptism can boast that he is already

consecrated priest, bishop and pope, though it is not seemly that every one should exercise the office....

On this account the Christian temporal power should exercise its office without let or hindrance, regardless whether it be pope, bishop or priest whom it affects; whoever is guilty, let him suffer. All that the canon law has said to the contrary is sheer invention of Roman presumption. For Thus saith St. Paul to all Christians: Roman 13:1, 4 "Let every soul (I take that to mean the pope's soul also) be subject unto the higher powers; for they bear not the sword in vain, but are the ministers of God for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." St. Peter also says: 1 Peter 2:13, 15 "Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for so is the will of God" He has also prophesied that such men shall come as will despise the temporal authorities; and this has come to pass through the canon law. So then, I think this first paper-wall is overthrown, since the temporal power has become a member of the body of Christendom, and is of the "spiritual estate," though its work is of a temporal nature. Therefore its work should extend freely and without hindrance to all the members of the whole body; it should punish and use force whenever guilt deserves or necessity demands, without regard to pope, bishops and priests,-let them hail threats and bans as much as they will.⁷⁸

The Lutheran Christian commonwealth thus ensured that "a Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone."⁷⁹ And, similar to Richard Hooker's ideal Christian commonwealth, as stated in *On the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Luther believed that the Church, as a vital part of the Christian commonwealth, was responsible for administering the Sacred Scriptures and the sacraments, but that the civil magistrate, as a vice-regent of the Church, was responsible for administering the secular, temporal law. For Luther, as with Hooker, the "church" and "state" were two sides of the same coin.

2. On the Freedom of the Christian (1520)

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "On the Freedom of the Christian," [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

In 1520, Luther defended his theological position regarding the true nature of Christian conversion and holiness in a treatise titled *On the Freedom of the Christian*,⁸⁰ which was dedicated to Pope Leo X. Luther sent to Pope Leo X a letter, dated September 6, 1520, and attached a copy of his treatise to the letter. Luther opened this letter to Pope Leo X with great obeisance and respect for the Pope.

In this letter, Luther allowed the Pope the opportunity “to save face” by separating himself from church history and from the corrupt cardinals and bishops who may have been misleading him. And Luther assured the Pope that he had no bad motives or intentions against either the papacy or the church, and that he had at all times wished to edify and to save the church from very grievous errors.⁸¹ The letter is powerful, erudite, cogent, very spiritual, and very heartfelt—it is obvious that Luther had laid everything out before the Pope, in one last-ditch effort to save the Roman Catholic Church from schism. At the same time, Luther was very forthright with the Pope, and he was also very firm in his assessment of the dire and grim situation confronting the Roman Catholic Church:

I have truly despised your see, the Roman Curia, which, however, neither you nor anyone else can deny is more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom ever was, and which, as far as I can see, is characterized by a completely depraved, hopeless, and notorious godlessness. I have been thoroughly incensed over the fact that good Christians are mocked in your name and under the cloak of the Roman church I have resisted and will continue to resist your see as long as the spirit of faith lives in me. Not that I shall strive for the impossible or hope that by my efforts alone anything will be accomplished in that most disordered Babylon, where the fury of so many flatterers is turned against me; but I acknowledge my indebtedness to my Christian brethren, whom I am duty-bound to warn so that fewer of them may be destroyed by the plagues of Rome, at least so that their destruction may be less cruel.... The Roman Curia does not deserve to have you or men like you, but it should have Satan himself as pope, for he now actually rules in that Babylon more than you do.... Allow

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ “To enlarge upon this,” Luther wrote, “I never intended to attack the Roman Curia or to raise any controversy concerning it. But when I saw all efforts to save it were hopeless, I despised it, gave it a bill of divorce [Deut. 24:1], and said, “Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy” [Rev. 22:11]. Then I turned to the quiet and peaceful study of the Holy Scriptures so that I might be helpful to my brothers around me.” “On the Freedom of the Christian,” [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

me, I pray, most excellent Leo, this once to plead my cause and to indict your real enemies.... Allow me, I pray, most excellent Leo, this once to plead my cause and to indict your real enemies.⁸²

Attached to this letter to Pope Leo X was Luther's treatise, titled *On Christian Liberty* or *On the Freedom of the Christian*, in which he discussed various delicate theological subjects, including:

Thesis. In *On the Freedom of the Christian*, Luther's thesis was: "***A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.***" He then develops his arguments in support of this thesis.

Religious ritualism. Luther asserted that there were two basic components to human beings: the spiritual (inner or inward) component and the physical (outward) component. The primary objective of the Christian faith was to transform the spiritual (inward) component of human beings. For this reason, Luther forewarned Pope Leo X against mistaking holiness and salvation with the Catholic rituals that were performed by the priest. Not that these rituals were bad; but because rituals—including all of the Seven Sacraments-- could be performed by hypocrites, and did nothing to change the inward heart, Luther insisted that the Church shift its focus to transforming the inner or inward heart of all Christians. Once this is done, good deeds and good works would flow naturally from these born-again Christians.

Necessity of the Word of God. Luther next contended that the only thing that was necessary to transform the inward spirit was the "Word of God." Luther stated:

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11[:25], "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live"; and John 8[:36], "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"; and Matt. 4[:4], "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of

⁸² Ibid.

God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing....⁸³

Of course, Luther asserted that the Roman Catholic Church was not preaching or teaching the “Word of God” to the Christian faithful and had, in fact, substituted the “doctrine of works and indulgences” in substitution for the doctrine of faith.⁸⁴

What or Who is the “Word of God.” Luther felt the need to explain further regarding what and who is the “Word of God,” so that the Roman Catholic Church would have no reason to remain in error. He wrote:

You may ask, “What then is the Word of God, and how shall it be used, since there are so many words of God?” I answer: The Apostle explains this in Romans 1. The Word is the gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies. **To preach Christ means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching. Faith alone is the saving and efficacious use of the Word of God,** according to Rom. 10[:9]: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Furthermore, “Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” [Rom. 10:4]. Again, in Rom. 1[:17], “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” The Word of God cannot be received and cherished by any works whatever but only by faith. **Therefore it is clear that, as the soul needs only the Word of God for its life and righteousness, so it is justified by faith alone and not any works;** for if it could be justified by anything else, it would not need the Word, and consequently it would not need faith.

Luther observed that the Roman Catholic Church had it all backwards: it had substituted the “Word” for a series of “works” (i.e., the canon law, the decretals, the sacraments). As a result, Catholics were excellent at performing Catholic rituals but they actually lacked the Christian faith; that is to say, they lacked holiness and were thus unholy. Luther wrote that persons who believe “that they

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

are fulfilling the law by doing the works of chastity and mercy required by the law (the civil and human virtues) might not be saved. They are included under the *sin of unbelief* and must either seek mercy or be justly condemned.”⁸⁵

Faith is necessary to fulfill the Law. Luther argued that the laws of nature, such as the Ten Commandments, as found in the Law of Moses, simply show human beings that they are really sinners. They are shown what they simply are unable to do, due to the sin the reigns within them. Therefore, human beings are simply doomed, because God’s law cannot, and will not fail. As Jesus stated in Matthew 5:18: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one. tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

Therefore, Luther concluded that no amount of works—whether through the Sacraments of Penance, confession, charity, indulgences, etc.--- would ever merit salvation. Human beings simply could not, through the Catholic system, work their way to heaven. Luther had tried to do this as a monk, but he could not; sinful thoughts still reigned inside of him, and he had not relationship with Christ, did not know what the Holy Spirit tasted or felt like, and God’s love was difficult to ascertain or understand. Luther felt that the Roman Catholic system had led him to this awful spiritual state within his Christian journey. Something was sadly missing in Luther’s spiritual life. The inner spirit within Luther needed to be connected directly to Christ, through the preaching and believing in the Word of God. This “believing in the Word of God” is what Luther called “faith,” and so he concluded that *faith alone* was necessary to achieve salvation. Luther wrote that faith “unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom.”⁸⁶ He further explained:

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel; for his righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, his life stronger than death, his salvation more invincible than hell. Thus the believing soul by means of the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ its bridegroom. So he takes to himself a glorious bride, “without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word” [Cf. Eph. 5:26–27] of life, that is, by faith in the Word of life, righteousness, and salvation. In this way he marries her in faith, steadfast love, and in mercies, righteousness, and justice, as Hos. 2[:19–20] says.” *On the Freedom of the Christian*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

Should you ask how it happens that faith alone justifies and offers us such a treasure of great benefits without works in view of the fact that so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed in the Scriptures, I answer: First of all, remember what has been said, namely, **that faith alone, without works, justifies, frees, and saves**; we shall make this clearer later on. Here we must point out that the entire Scripture of God is divided into two parts: commandments and promises. Although the commandments teach things that are good, the things taught are not done as soon as they are taught, for the commandments show us what we ought to do **but do not give us the power to do it**. They are intended to teach man to **know himself**, that through them **he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability**. That is why they are called the Old Testament and constitute the Old Testament. For example, **the commandment, “You shall not covet” [Exod. 20:17], is a command which proves us all to be sinners**, for no one can avoid coveting no matter how much he may struggle against it.

Therefore, in order not to covet and to fulfil the commandment, a man is compelled to despair of himself, to seek the help which he does not find in himself elsewhere and from someone else, as stated in Hosea [13:9]: “Destruction is your own, O Israel: your help is only in me.” As we fare with respect to one commandment, so we fare with all, for it is equally impossible for us to keep any one of them. Now when a man has learned through the commandments to recognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law—since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope—then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved.

Here the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God which declare the glory of God, saying, **“If you wish to fulfil the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you. If you believe, you shall have all things; if you do not believe, you shall lack all things.”** *That which is impossible for you to accomplish* by trying to fulfil all the works of the law—many and useless as they all are—***you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith***. God our Father has made all things

depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing. “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all,” as it is stated in Rom. 11[:32]. Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfil what the law prescribes so that all things may be done alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments. He alone commands, he alone fulfils. Therefore the promises of God belong to the New Testament. Indeed, they are the New Testament.⁸⁷

Luther believed that it was impossible to please God without faith, and he quoted St. Paul’s use of Abraham’s belief of God, which was accounted to him as righteousness.

Freedom of a Christian. Whenever a man is given the power to fulfill these laws of nature (e.g., the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments), he no longer needs those laws, and he attains his freedom. The faith that is inside of him—through Christ Jesus—removes the temptation to commit sins or the desires to have sin or the fruits of sin. For this reason, the law is for the unrighteous, but to the faithful the law is obsolete because the “inward” man is now dead to sin and been set free.

Luther believed that the true nature of Christian freedom is that, upon baptism, the Christian becomes both *priest* and *king*. This is a “priesthood of all believers”⁸⁸ in Christ; and the kingly power stems from the believers’ power to quell sin and unrighteousness. Luther set forth the theological position for this belief as follows:

That we may examine more profoundly **that grace which our inner man has in Christ**, we must realize that in the Old Testament God consecrated to himself **all the first-born males**. The birthright was

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “You will ask, ‘If all who are in the church are priests, how do these whom we now call priests differ from laymen?’ I answer: Injustice is done those words ‘priest,’ ‘cleric,’ ‘spiritual,’ ‘ecclesiastic,’ when they are transferred from all Christians to those few who are now by a mischievous usage called ‘ecclesiastics.’ Holy Scripture makes no distinction between them, although it gives the name ‘ministers,’ ‘servants,’ ‘stewards’ to those who are now proudly called popes, bishops, and lords and who should according to the ministry of the Word serve others and teach them the faith of Christ and the freedom of believers. Although we are all equally priests, we cannot all publicly minister and teach. We ought not do so even if we could. Paul writes accordingly in I Cor. 4 [1], ‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.’” *On the Freedom of the Christian*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

highly prized for it involved a twofold honor, that of priesthood and that of kingship. The first-born brother was priest and lord over all the others and a type of Christ, the true and only first-born of God the Father and the Virgin Mary and true king and priest, but not after the fashion of the flesh and the world, for his kingdom is not of this world [John 18:36].

He reigns in heavenly and spiritual things and consecrates them—things such as righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, salvation, etc. This does not mean that all things on earth and in hell are not also subject to him—otherwise how could he protect and save us from them? — but that his kingdom consists neither in them nor of them. **Nor does his priesthood consist in the outer splendor of robes and postures like those of the human priesthood of Aaron and our present-day church; but it consists of spiritual things through which he by an invisible service intercedes for us in heaven before God, there offers himself as a sacrifice, and does all things a priest should do, as Paul describes him under the type of Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews [Heb. 6–7].**

Nor does he only pray and intercede for us but he teaches us inwardly through the living instruction of his Spirit, thus performing the two real functions of a priest, of which the prayers and the preaching of human priests are visible types. Now just as Christ by his birthright obtained these two prerogatives, so he imparts them to and shares them with everyone who believes in him according to the law of the above-mentioned marriage, according to which the wife owns whatever belongs to the husband. Hence all of us who believe in Christ are priests and kings in Christ, as I Pet. 2[:9] says; “You are a chosen race, God’s own people, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The nature of this priesthood and kingship is something like this: First, with respect to the kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm.

As a matter of fact, **all things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation.** Accordingly Paul says in Rom. 8[:28], “All things work together for good for the elect,”

and in I Cor. 3[:21–23], “All things are yours whether ... life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ’s...”
This is not to say that every Christian is placed over all things to have and control them by physical power—a madness with which some churchmen are afflicted—for such power belongs to kings, princes, and other men on earth. Our ordinary experience in life shows us that **we are subjected to all, suffer many things, and even die.**

As a matter of fact, **the more Christian a man is, the more evils, sufferings, and deaths he must endure**, as we see in Christ the first-born prince himself, and in all his brethren, the saints. **The power of which we speak is spiritual. It rules in the midst of enemies and is powerful in the midst of oppression.** This means nothing else than that “power is made perfect in weakness” [II Cor. 12:9] and that in all things I can find profit toward salvation [Rom. 8:28], so that the cross and death itself are compelled to serve me and to work together with me for my salvation. **This is a splendid privilege and hard to attain, a truly omnipotent power, a spiritual dominion in which there is nothing so good and nothing so evil but that it shall work together for good to me, if only I believe.** Yes, since faith alone suffices for salvation, I need nothing except faith exercising the power and dominion of its own liberty. Lo, this is the inestimable power and liberty of Christians.

Not only are we the freest of kings, we are also priests forever, which is far more excellent than being kings, for as priests we are worthy to appear before God to pray for others and to teach one another divine things. These are the functions of priests, and they cannot be granted to any unbeliever. Thus Christ has made it possible for us, provided we believe in him, to be not only his brethren, co-heirs, and fellow-kings, but also his fellow-priests. Therefore we may boldly come into the presence of God in the spirit of faith [Heb. 10:19, 22] and cry “Abba, Father!” pray for one another, and do all things which we see done and foreshadowed in the outer and visible works of priests.⁸⁹

Faith leads to Good works. Luther believed that it was important to discuss the role of “works” within his “doctrine of faith.” Luther believed that “Good

⁸⁹ Ibid.

works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works.”⁹⁰ But Luther fell short in asserting that the Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church constituted “good works,” even for a “born-again” believer. For Luther, “good works” need not be confined to Church-sanctioned rituals or duties, but may include “charitable” works in general. But for Luther, the primary “works” of true believers is “holiness,” that is to say, the on-going and constant struggle to tame the temptations of the flesh and to subject them to Christ’s moral law:

Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day even to the future life; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. **In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check.**

The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained. While he is doing this, behold, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to serve the world and seeks its own advantage. This the spirit of faith cannot tolerate, but with joyful zeal it attempts to put the body under control and hold it in check, as Paul says in Rom. 7[:22–23], “For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin,” and in another place, “But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” [I Cor. 9:27], and in Galatians [5:24], “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” **In doing these works, however, we must not think that a man is justified before God by them, for faith, which alone is righteousness before God, cannot endure that erroneous opinion.**

⁹⁰ Ibid.

We must, however, realize that these works reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts, and our whole purpose is to be directed only toward the driving out of lusts. Since by faith the soul is cleansed and made to love God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be purified so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God. **Hence a man cannot be idle, for the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection. Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God,** whom he would most scrupulously obey in all things.⁹¹

Luther recognized a particular parable of Christ that his followers will be known based upon the “fruit” that they bore, to wit:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Matt. 7:16-20.

For this reason, Luther conclude that “we do not reject good works...” but “we condemn the belief in works.”⁹² “Good works,” concluded Luther, are the fruits of Christian living, but “good works” are not the source of Christian salvation.⁹³ Only faith alone (i.e., the inner renewal of the heart) can justify and save.

3. Christ’s Holy Sufferings: The True and the False Views of Christ’s Sufferings (1519)

In his sermon, *Christ’s Holy Sufferings: The True and the False Views of Christ’s Sufferings (circa 1519)*, for instance, Luther insisted that simply going to Mass each Sunday, without carefully and sincerely contemplating on the meaning of Christ’s sufferings was a serious mistake that many Christians make. Luther

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

insisted that “Christ’s sufferings should be an example for your whole life.”⁹⁴
Luther offers this interesting advice to his fellow Christians:

If you must do or leave undone what is distasteful to you: think, how Christ was led hither and thither, bound and a captive. Does pride attack you: behold, how your Lord was mocked and disgraced with murderers. Do unchastity and lust thrust themselves against you: think, how bitter it was for Christ to have his tender flesh torn, pierced and beaten again and again. Do hatred and envy war against you, or do you seek vengeance: remember how Christ with many tears and cries prayed for you and all his enemies, who indeed had more reason to seek revenge. If trouble or whatever adversity of body or soul afflict you, strengthen your heart and say: Ah, why then should I not also suffer a little since my Lord sweat blood in the garden because of anxiety and grief? That would be a lazy, disgraceful servant who would wish to lie in his bed while his lord was compelled to battle with the pangs of death.⁹⁵

Luther also reminds us in this sermon that our own sins crucified Christ! Nobody is innocent. We are all guilty of the crucifixion. Therefore, we should solemnly contemplate how Christ took away our sins through his own suffering and death on the cross. This is the real meaning and purpose of the Mass (i.e., Holy Communion).

4. Enemies of the Cross of Christ & the Christian’s Citizenship in Heaven (1521)

In his sermon, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ & the Christian’s Citizenship in Heaven (circa 1520)*,⁹⁶ Luther preaches on St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, which states:

Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, **live as enemies of the cross of Christ.** Their end is destruction, **their god is the belly, and they glory in**

⁹⁴ *Christ’s Holy Sufferings: The True and the False Views of Christ’s Sufferings* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1519].

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Enemies of the Cross of Christ & the Christian’s Citizenship in Heaven* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1519].

their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.⁹⁷

Luther advances the proposition that “righteousness of the law is vain.” But, interestingly, Luther addresses the “righteousness” of human law as well as the “righteousness” of divine law. Here, it will be helpful to recall St. Thomas Aquinas’ systems of law, to wit:

St. Thomas Aquinas’ Theory of Law	Martin Luther’s Sermon in “Enemies of the Cross of Christ”	Martin Luther’s Thesis
Eternal Law -- God’s will, the first cause of existence	—	—
Divine Law —the Sacred Scriptures (Old and New Testament)	The Church/ Clergy (i.e., the Roman Catholic Church, Pope, the papacy)	“Righteousness of divine law is vain”
Natural Law —the laws of nature; the sciences	—	—
Human Law —secular law, civil laws, human government	Secular Government/ Civil Magistrates/ secular civil society	“Righteousness of human law is vain”

Luther argued that the “righteousness of the law opposes the cross” and applied this thesis to both the church and the state. He did not believe that the secular government and secular society was exempt from this general rule: without Christ in the heart, human nature being what it is, cannot do anything good. Luther thus explained:

So human nature ever does. The world cannot conduct itself in any other way, when the declaration comes from heaven saying: ‘True you are a holy man, a great and learned jurist, a conscientious regent, a worthy prince, an honorable citizen, and so on, but with all your authority and your upright character you are going to hell; your every act is offensive and condemned in God’s sight. If you would be saved you must become an altogether different man; your mind and heart must be changed.’ Let this be announced and the fire rises, the Rhine is all ablaze; for the self-righteous regard it an intolerable idea that lives so beautiful, lives devoted to praiseworthy callings, should be publicly censured and condemned by the objectionable preaching of a

⁹⁷ Philippians 3:17-21.

few insignificant individuals regarded as even pernicious, and according to Paul, as filthy refuse, actual obstacles to eternal life....

But you may say: ‘What? Do you forbid good works? Is it not right to lead an honorable, virtuous life? Do you not acknowledge the necessity of political laws, of civil governments? That upon obedience to them depends the maintenance of discipline, peace and honor? Indeed, do you not admit that God himself commands such institutions and wills their observance, punishing where they are disregarded? Much more would he have his own Law and the Ten Commandments honored, not rejected. How dare you then assert that such righteousness is misleading, and obstructive to eternal life? What consistence is there in teaching people to observe the things of the Law, to be righteous in that respect, and at the same time censuring those things as condemned before God? How can the works of the Law be good and precious, and yet repulsive and productive of evil?

I answer, Paul well knows the world takes its stand on this point of righteousness by the Law....

Similarly does Paul speak concerning the righteousness of all the Jews and pious saints who are not Christians. His utterance is bold and of certain sound....

Here on earth it is truly a priceless distinction, an admirable and noble treasure, a praiseworthy honor, to have the name of being a godly and upright prince, ruler or citizen; a pious, virtuous wife or virgin. Who would not praise and exalt such virtue? It is indeed a rare and valuable thing in the world. But however beautiful, priceless and admirable an honor it is, Paul tells us, it is ultimately condemned and pertains not to heaven.⁹⁸

In other words, Luther treated “worldly success” and “worldly virtue” to be no different than the useless Catholic practice of “outward holiness,” such as the sale and purchase of indulgences. Both “worldly success” and “outward holiness” were empty promises, no different than filthy lucre. In fact, Luther considered all human

⁹⁸ Ibid.

righteousness to be “idolatrous.”⁹⁹ Luther makes this point very clear and drives it home, to wit:

The apostle makes his accusation yet more galling with the words ‘whose god is their belly.’ Thus you hear how human righteousness, even at its best, extends no higher than to service of the sensual appetites. Take all the wisdom, justice, jurisprudence, artifice, even the highest virtue the world affords, and what are they? They minister only to that god, carnal appetite. They can go no farther than the needs of this life, their whole purpose being to satisfy physical cravings. When the physical appetites of the worldly pass, they pass likewise, and the gifts and virtues we have mentioned can no longer serve them. All perish and go to destruction together—righteousness, virtues, laws and physical appetites which they have served as their god. For they are wholly ignorant of the true and eternal God; they know not how to serve him and receive eternal life. So then in its essential features such a life is merely idolatrous....

God will suddenly bring to an end the world with its governments, its jurists and authorities, its conditions of life; in short, he will utterly abolish earthly righteousness, destroying physical appetites and all else together. For every form of human holiness is condemned to destruction.... Much less will worldly honor avail with God in the case of individuals who, being called honorable, pious, honest, virtuous—lords and princes, wives and husbands—boast of such righteousness. ... Outwardly, then, though your righteousness may appear dazzlingly beautiful before the world, inwardly you are but filth....

We who are baptized and believe in Christ, Paul’s thought is, do not base our works and our hope on the righteousness of this temporal life. Through faith in Christ, we have a righteousness that holds in heaven. It abides in Christ alone; otherwise it would avail naught before God. And our whole concern is to be eternally in Christ....

We are baptized and made Christians, not to the end that we may have great honor, or renown of righteousness, or earthly dominion, power and possessions. Notwithstanding we do have these because they are

⁹⁹ Ibid.

requisite to our physical life, yet we regard them as mere filth, wherewith we minister to our bodily welfare as best we can for the benefit of posterity.¹⁰⁰

Hence, Luther would not endorse a religious program, secular philosophy, or public policy that substitutes “Christian holiness” for vocational or collegiate excellence, political power, fame, favoritism, and wealth. According to Luther, a person may be excellent in every conceivable aspect of their lives, and yet, without “Christ in the heart,” that same person will be hopelessly lost and incapable of achieving inner peace, inward virtue, and inward justification. Luther stressed the “born-again” criteria of virtue, whereby a person cleaves to truth and love through total surrender to Christ.

It is likely that St. Augustine would have agreed with Luther’s assessment. Indeed, Luther’s description of the worldly honors and virtues corresponds perfectly with St. Augustine’s description of the “city of man” in his seminal work *The City of God*. In his sermon “Enemies of the Cross of Christ,” Luther says: “All perish and go to destruction together—righteousness, virtues, laws and physical appetites which they have served as their god. For they are wholly ignorant of the true and eternal God; they know not how to serve him and receive eternal life.” Here, Luther is talking about the highly-respected, laudable, and powerful persons who govern the secular state but who do not know Christ.

Similarly, St. Augustine makes a similar assessment of this class of persons in *The City of God*, where he writes: “[b]ut the worshippers and admirers of these gods delight in imitating their scandalous iniquities, and are nowise concerned that the republic be less depraved and licentious. Only let it remain undefeated, they say, only let it flourish and about in resources; let it be glorious by its victories, or still better, secure in peace; and what matters it to us? This is our concern, that every man be able to increase his wealth so as to supply his daily prodigalities.... If such happiness is distasteful to any, let him be branded as a public enemy; and if any attempt to modify or put an end to it, let him be silenced, banished, put an end to.”¹⁰¹

Without Christ—without a true commitment to justice, righteousness, virtue—Luther’s secular state (i.e., St. Augustine’s “city of man”), and the secular leaders within the secular state, simply cannot prevent demonic imperfections from

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *The City of God*, pp. 59-60.

ultimately corrupting the entire body-politic. This same principle applies to the achievement of worldly power and worldly success, without Christ in the heart, or without Christ at the foundation. For this reason, Luther concluded that the righteousness of worldly success, without Christ, is “filth.” St. Augustine, in *The City of God*, agrees with Luther’s assessment, to wit:

[N]o man acts rightly save by the assistance of divine aid....¹⁰²

Whoever, then, has *Christ in his heart*, so that no earthly or temporal things—not even those that are legitimate and allowed—are preferred to Him, *has Christ as a foundation*. But if these things be preferred, then even though a man seem to have faith in Christ, yet Christ is not the foundation to that man; and much more if he, in contempt of wholesome precepts, seek forbidden gratifications, is he clearly convicted of putting Christ not first but last, since he had despised Him as his ruler, and has preferred to fulfil his own wicked lusts, in contempt of Christ’s commands and allowances. Accordingly, if any Christian man loves a harlot, and, attaching himself to her, becomes one body, he has not now Christ for a foundation. But if any one loves his own wife, and loves her as Christ would have him love her, who can doubt that he has Christ for a foundation? But if he loves her in the world’s fashion, carnally, as the disease of lust prompts him, and as the Gentiles love who know not God, even this the apostle, or rather Christ by the apostle, allows as a venial fault. And therefore even such a man may have Christ for a foundation. For so long as he does not prefer such an affection or pleasure to Christ, Christ is his foundation, though on it he builds wood, hay, stubble; and therefore he shall be saved as by fire....¹⁰³

Hence, the “great and learned jurist, a conscientious regent, a worthy prince, an honorable citizen, and so on,”¹⁰⁴ as referenced in Luther’s sermon *Enemies of the Cross of Christ*, are often caught up in the lust of pride, wealth, and power, and do not have Christ as their foundation. In such a chaotic state as this, simply achieving worldly praise and worldly success cannot merit St. Augustine’s or Luther’s conception of Christian holiness and salvation. “We are baptized and made Christians,” Luther insists, “not to the end that we may have great honor, or

¹⁰² *The City of God*, p. 711.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 801.

¹⁰⁴ *Enemies of the Cross of Christ & the Christian’s Citizenship in Heaven* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1519].

renown of righteousness, or earthly dominion, power and possessions. Notwithstanding we do have these because they are requisite to our physical life, yet we are to regard them as mere filth....”¹⁰⁵

Insofar as the secular government is concerned, Luther seems to imply that it makes no difference whether the magistrate is pagan, Islamic, Jewish, barbarian, or Christian—*since all government is ordained by God and given to the secular powers by God alone*. “True, law and government,” Luther explained, “are essential in temporal life, as Paul himself confesses, and God would have everyone honor and obey them. Indeed, he has ordained their observance among Turks and heathen.”

This is a *fundamentally “Protestant” conception of the secular, civil government*—a conception that is distinguished from the Catholic view of the secular governor as a “vice-regent” of the Church. Luther, however, removed the civil magistrate from underneath the canon law or other ecclesiastical laws of the Christian Church. In Luther’s scheme, the church and the state were to remain separated out from each other; the church would administer the sacraments and the Gospel; the state would bear the civil sword, keep the peace, and establish justice; and the civil magistrate would function as a “vice-regent” of God (i.e., eternal law, natural law) but no longer served as “vice-regent” of the Church (i.e., divine law, the Bible). That is, under Luther’s scheme, the secular governor is equal to the church, but nevertheless subject to God, as God’s vice-regent. The Church, which is separate from the state, is also God’s vice-regent. Luther believed that the Church retained its authority to chastise the State for wrongdoing and injustice, and vice versa.

Luther also believed that since the converted Christian—even the common man—becomes both “priest” and “king,” he had the authority from God to hold both ecclesiastical and secular rulers accountable for establishing righteousness and justice.

St. Thomas Aquinas’ Civil Magistrate was subjected to Four Laws	Eternal Law (i.e., God’s will; divine providence)	Divine Law (i.e., the Sacred Scriptures (Old & New Testament))	Natural Law (the laws of nature; science)	Human Law (the civil magistrate; secular government)
Martin Luther’s Civil Magistrate was subjected to	Eternal Law (i.e., God’s will; divine providence)	—	Natural Law (the laws of nature; science)	Human Law (the civil magistrate; secular)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Indeed, under Luther's scheme, a "Turk and heathen" could legitimately exercise secular governmental authority. (Indeed, Pilate, who was the pagan Roman governor who authorized the crucifixion of Christ, was deemed to have held legitimate government power by Christ himself). But Luther nevertheless charged that all secular governments remained under the divine providence of God, and that they, as God's "vice-regents," have a duty to do justice, equity, and judgment. Thus, Protestant "secularity" was ordained by God and remained subservient to His Providence.

The Protestant Reformation was inaugurated by Martin Luther (1483-1546) of Wittenberg in his famous posting of the Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 and his burning of the canon law and confessional books in 1520.... The early Protestant reformers... all taught that salvation comes through faith in the Gospel, not by works of the law. Each individual stands directly before God, seeks God's gracious forgiveness of sin, and conducts life in accordance with the Bible and Christian conscience. To the Protestant reformers, the medieval Catholic canon law obstructed the individual's relationship with God and obscured simple biblical norms for right living. **The early Protestant reformers further taught that the church is at heart a community of saints, not a corporation of politics. Its cardinal signs and callings are to preach the Word, to administer the sacraments, to catechize the young, to care for the needy.** To the reformers, **the Catholic clergy's legal rule in Christendom obstructed the church's divine mission and usurped the state's role as God's vice-regent....The church must critique legal injustice and combat political illegitimacy. But, according to classic Protestant lore, law is primarily the province of the state not of the church,** of the magistrate not of the minister.¹⁰⁶...

[Martin] Luther and his followers regarded the local magistrate as God's vice-regent called to elaborate natural law and to reflect divine justice in his local domain. The best source and summary of natural law was the Ten Commandments and its elaboration in the moral principles of the Bible. The magistrate was to cast these general

¹⁰⁶ John Witte, Jr., *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 15-16

principles of natural law into specific precepts of human law, designed to fit local conditions.¹⁰⁷ ...

These twin metaphors of the Christian magistrate—as the lofty vice-regent of God and as the loving father of the local community—described the basics of Lutheran legal and political theory for the next three centuries. **Political authority was divine in origin, but earthly in operation.** It expressed God’s harsh judgment against sin but also his tender mercy for sinners. It communicated the Law of God but also the lore of the local community. *It depended upon the church for prophetic direction but it took over from the church all jurisdiction....* These ideas were central to German and Scandinavian law and politics until modern times.”¹⁰⁸

At the same time, Luther felt that Christians had a duty not to sit still and permit governmental injustice, but rather Christians must hold the secular government accountable for wrongdoing. Luther had once wrote that:

Christ has instructed us preachers not to withhold the truth from the lords (rulers) but to exhort and chide them in their injustice. Christ did not say to Pilate ‘You have no power over me.’ He said that Pilate did have power, but he said, ‘You do not have this power from yourself. It is given to you from God.’ Therefore he upbraided Pilate. We do the same, we recognize the authority, but we must rebuke our Pilates in their crime and self-confidence. Then they say to us, ‘You are reviling the majesty of God’ to which we answer, **‘We will suffer what you do to us, but to keep still and let it appear that you do right when you do wrong, that we cannot and will not do.’** We must confess the truth and rebuke the evil. There is a big difference between suffering injustice and keeping still. We should suffer, we should not keep still. The Christian must bear testimony for the truth and die for the truth. But how can he die for the truth if he has not first confessed the truth? Thus Christ showed that Pilate **did exercise authority from God** and at the same time **rebuked him for doing wrong.**

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Hence, Luther's belief that all secular authority derived their authority from God is a fundamental Christian doctrine. See, e.g., John 19:10-11 ("Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.") This Christian doctrine defines "justice" as the fundamental purpose of human government.

Human governmental authority, therefore, comes from God alone, who, as St. Augustine says in *The City of God*, is "the fountain of all justice."¹⁰⁹ In the practical sense, "justice" is further broken down into concepts such as "equity," "the fundamental law" and "due process of law." This idea of "justice" implies that all secular government exists to do good (i.e., God's pre-ordained will) and to establish justice; the breach of which, entitles those who are governed to petition the government against wrongdoing and injustice. This was Luther's fundamental theological position and view of the role of the secular government. And when we connect this idea of the secular government, with Luther's idea of the "priesthood of all believers," we thus find the very blueprint of modern Western democratic government.

5. *Christ Our Great High Priest (1521)*

In his sermon *Christ Our Great High Priest*, Luther analyzes Hebrews 9:11-15, to wit, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building...." Here, Luther preaches that Christ, as high priest, replaced the priesthood of Aaron, and offered, not goats, calves, birds, etc., but rather his own flesh and blood on the cross for the remission of sins. "Christ offered himself in the heart before God. His sacrifice was perceptible to no mortal. Therefore, his bodily flesh and blood becomes a spiritual sacrifice. Similarly, we Christians, the posterity of Christ our Aaron, offer up our own bodies (Rom. 12:1).

And our offering is likewise a spiritual sacrifice, or, as Paul has it, a 'reasonable service': for we make it in spirit, and it is beheld of God alone."¹¹⁰ Luther concluded that the "Jewish priesthood" and the "Papal priesthood," therefore, did not have the power or the authority to replace Christ, to grant absolution to render a person inwardly holy and just before God—only Christ

¹⁰⁹ *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America), p. 27.

¹¹⁰ *Christ Our Great High Priest* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1519].

himself could do that.¹¹¹ All the Church has authority to do is punish evil-doers and mete out church discipline; but even the punishment of excommunication, according to Luther, could *not* separate a person's heart from Christ or the soul from ultimate salvation.¹¹²

6. *On Faith & Coming to Christ (1522)*

In Luther's sermon *On Faith & Coming to Christ*,¹¹³ he analyzes John 6:44-55, to wit, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."¹¹⁴ While delivering this sermon, Luther rejects the power of reason alone to lead mankind to virtuous actions and righteousness. "Here the great master Aristotle is put to shame, who proclaimed that reason strives for the best and always follows after the good. Christ says to this: No; if the Father comes not first and draws men, they must forever perish."¹¹⁵ Luther's analysis is technically correct, but when one considers St. Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle, one cannot resist the conclusion that Aristotle is also correct, since "reason" is "*Logos*," which, according to the *Gospel of John* is also Christ.

But the chief point that Luther intends to make is that nobody can do good without God (i.e., Christ in the heart). This, St. Augustine also confirms in *The City of God*, to wit, "no man acts rightly save by the assistance of divine aid...."¹¹⁶ God draws us to Christ, through giving us the *power of reason*, (i.e, the power of free will), wherein is Christ (i.e., logos, or right reasoning unaffected by desire or sin). The ability to do good (i.e., to exercise right reason unaffected by desires) is not inherently within us, but a gift from God, which is grace.

For this reason, both Luther and the Greeks (e.g., Aristotle, St. Thomas, Desiderius Erasmus, and the humanists) are correct, since, as stated in the *Gospel of John*, the divine logos of Greco-Roman philosophy is indeed the Christ. (In fact, Luther's disciple John Calvin would stress this very point that Christ is the *Logos*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *On Faith & Coming to Christ* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *The City of God*, p. 711.

in Book I of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.) This conclusion not even the great Luther, and his doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, can resist. Luther concludes: “Here all men must confess their incapacity and inability to do the good. Should one imagine he is able to do anything good of his own strength he does no less than make Christ the Lord a liar; he would rudely and defiantly come to the Father and in all rashness ascend to heaven. Therefore, where the pure and plain Word of God goes, it breaks into pieces everything that is exalted of man....”¹¹⁷

But again, Luther’s own doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, must compel him to accept the doctrine of St. Paul in Romans 2:14-15: “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)....” And who are the Gentiles but men such as the ancient Ethiopian-Egyptian priests, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, the Stoics, and the countless other philosophers around the entire world, who sought through reason (i.e., the divine Logos, who is, according to the Gospel of John, Christ) to do what is right and just? Did Luther intend to say that men may not have “Christ” without the literal name, “Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God”? An early Church Father Justin Martyr certainly did not think so, and coined the idea that there may have been “Christians even before the time of Christ.” It is not likely that Luther, being the great theologian that he was, would have reached such a conclusion: clearly the Augustinian sect to which he belonged held that the entire Old Testament, which does not contain the words “Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God” does explicitly mention Christ and prophesy of his ministry, so that Christ remains the entire theme of the Old Testament. In addition, Luther’s disciple John Calvin reached this very conclusion in Book I of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, that is to say, that Christ was with God even from the beginning of creation, and that where God speaks and acts in the Old Testament, we must attribute these actions to Jesus Christ. For this reason, I conclude that Luther was not technically incorrect, but his reading of Aristotle and St. Thomas are far too narrow.

7. *Of The Office of Preaching* (1522)

In his sermon *Of The Office of Preaching*,¹¹⁸ Luther lays the foundation for church democracy and, thereby, western democracy and the democratic, secular

¹¹⁷ *On Faith & Coming to Christ* [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

¹¹⁸ *Of The Office of Preaching*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

state. For it must be remembered that the 16th century world in which Luther lived was both hierarchical and feudal, with the Pope and the Emperor reigning over the various classes of nobles, yeoman, serfs and peasants. There was no true separation of Church and State, since there were integral and overlapping jurisdictions of both of these powerful institutions.

The Church exercised governmental functions; and the State administered “the law of Christ” in various ecclesiastical functions. The social structures of both Church and State were very undemocratic. Along comes Martin Luther during the early 16th century, preaching a doctrine of papal accountability, the “priesthood of all believers,” and the right of all Christians to read the Sacred Scriptures for themselves, and to judge whether their pastors were sincere preachers of the Word of God. The implications of Luther’s doctrine were readily apparent to the princes, kings, the Pope and to the papacy: under Luther’s doctrine, the papal curia would lose all authority over men’s souls. Therefore, Luther was dangerous and had to go. When the German peasants got word of Luther’s revolutionary preaching, they took his doctrine a step further: if the Pope and the papacy should be held accountable to the “Law of Christ,”¹¹⁹ then so should the Holy Roman Emperor, the princes, viscounts, dukes, and landlords also be held accountable to the “Law of Christ.”¹²⁰ The German peasants would the “Law of Christ” to be applied in their everyday lives—social, economic, political, and ecclesiastical.

In *Of The Office of Preaching*,¹²¹ Luther focused on the qualifications of pastors and ordination. He believed that “the office of preaching is second to one in Christendom.”¹²² He noted that within the Roman Catholic Church, the unfortunate practice of “purchasing” a clerical office was rampant.¹²³ Consequently, many Roman Catholic clergymen were corrupt. As Luther explained: “[f]or the bishops in our day press into their offices by force, and those who have the power of preferment are influenced by friendship and rank.”¹²⁴ To stress the point, and to clarify Luther’s objections to the current practices of the 16th century papacy, consider the following biography of Pope Leo X:

¹¹⁹ The Law of Christ is to “love ye one another” (John 15:12); to do justice and judgement (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21: 1-3); to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24); and to do justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:2-3).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Of The Office of Preaching*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

The pope who reigned during the time of Luther’s approach to writing his Ninety-five Theses—and up through his subsequent appearance at the Diet of Worms in 1521—was Leo X, whose story is more something like a tale out of Baron Munchhausen than the papal chronicles.

Born Giovanni di Lorenzo de’ Medici, the child who would one day rise to become Leo X was set apart for the church at a very early age by his father, although what was meant by that in those days is a far cry from what it would mean to us today. Little Giovanni was tonsured at the age of seven and through his father’s impertinent wheedling was given an archbishopric just a year later. The idea of an eight-year-old archbishop can and should be curious, but it further reveals how the papacy had become as much like a secular government as imaginable. One might imagine an eight-year-old prince or an eight-year-old duke, so in thinking of the ecclesiastical titles of that day, we must understand we are essentially and practically talking about titles that correspond to aristocratic secular titles. That said, Giovanni was made a cardinal at age thirteen. As some kind of concession to the idea of what a cardinal is supposed to be, this was awarded only *in pectore* (literally, in the bosom, which is to say, hidden), and three years later, when he was a seasoned and mature sixteen-year-old, it was made *flagrante*, at which point Giovanni could blaze publicly in his full red-hatted splendor as a teen-aged prince of the church.¹²⁵

Giovanni’s clerical career and rise to become the Pope was not unusual. There are many cases of teenaged bishops and cardinals, and outright simony, throughout the history of the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason, in *Of the Office of Preaching*, Luther insisted that pastors must be called by God and, secondly, that the Church congregation retained the right to judge whether or not those pastors were, in fact, called by God.¹²⁶ Needless to say, this was revolutionary and radical.

In the New Testament, in John 10:1-11, Jesus is reported to have said “the sheep hear his voice... for they know his voice.” Luther relied on this passage to support his claim that the common Christian who reads and understands the Sacred

¹²⁵ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), p. 88.

¹²⁶ *Of The Office of Preaching*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

Scriptures could rightly judge whether or not a pastor had been called to preach.¹²⁷ To be sure, Luther's doctrine ran counter to the very foundations of the Roman Catholic Church. In his sermon, *Of the Office of Preaching*, Luther said:

Now the papists object to judgment being passed upon any of their works; for this reason they have intruded and taken from us the sword which we might use for such a purpose. Also, they dictate that we must accept, without any right of judgment, whatever they propose. And it has almost come to such a pass that whenever the pope breathes they make an article of faith out of it, and they have proclaimed that the authorities have the right to pass such laws for their subjects as they desire, independent of the judgment of the latter. These conditions mean ruin to the Christians, so much so that a hundred thousand swords should be desired for one pope. This they know very well, and they cling hard to their laws. If they would permit unbiased judgment, their laws would be set aside and they would have to preach the pure Word; but such a course would reduce the size of their stomachs and the number of their horses.¹²⁸

Luther's insistence that individual Christians maintained the right to select their own pastors and bishops, and to judge for themselves whether they be true apostles or not, laid the foundation for democratic freedoms throughout Europe. Luther's translation of the Greek New Testament and the Latin Vulgate Bible into the German vernacular language, so that the common man could read them for himself, was the cornerstone of that democratic foundation.

8. *The Twofold Use of the Law & Gospel: 'Letter' & 'Spirit' (1522)*

In his sermon, *The Twofold Use of the Law & Gospel: 'Letter' & 'Spirit'*,¹²⁹ Luther made clear his views that the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, together with the Pope's other letters, encyclicals, decretals, etc., were mere substitutes for the old Law of Moses, which the New Testament Gospel transcends. According to Luther, the Roman Catholic doctrine constituted the "Letter" which "killeth," as per Second Corinthians 3:4-11. Luther preached that "'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'"¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ *The Twofold Use of the Law & Gospel: 'Letter' & 'Spirit'*, [unpublished letter of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, circa 1521].

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Luther did not think that there was any “spirit” in the Seven Sacraments as administered by the Roman Catholic Church of his day. He believed that this Church killed the spirit, and inhibited the faithful Christians from entering into God’s grace. “In popedom,” wrote Luther, the doctrine of the spirit “remained quite unapprehended.”¹³¹ Instead, the Roman Catholic Church used the canon law to impose “work-righteousness.”¹³² As Luther recalled:

For this reason they are blind fools of first magnitude and dangerous characters who would boast of their grand performances, and think that the people are served when they preach their own fancies and inventions. It has been the practice in the Church for anyone to introduce any teaching he saw fit; for example, the monks and priests have daily produced new saints, pilgrimages, special prayers, works and sacrifices in the effort to blot out sin, redeem souls from purgatory, and so on. They who make up things of this kind are not such as put their trust in God through Christ, but rather such as defy God and Christ. Into the hearts of men, where Christ along should be, they shove the filth and write the lies of the devil. Yet they think themselves, and themselves only, qualified for all essential teaching and work, self-grown doctors that they are, saints all-powerful without the help of God and Christ.¹³³

Luther is careful to point out the real distinction between “letter” and “spirit.” He understood “letter” to be the Sacred Scriptures themselves; but “spirit” is the quality and content of the heart (i.e., to be “born again” in the spirit is to have the “letter” written inside of the heart).¹³⁴ These essential points the Roman Catholic Church had obscured and led men and women astray, said Luther.¹³⁵

9. *On the Bondage of the Will* (1523)

Europe’s two great intellectuals of the 16th century had become Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation, and Desiderius Erasmus, the Catholic prince of the humanists. Erasmus had defended Luther prior to 1520. But following Luther’s publication of the *Babylonian Captivity*, the two men parted ways. Henry

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

VIII next asked Erasmus to get into the fight against Luther. Erasmus had remained reluctant.

Although Erasmus believed that the Roman Catholic Church needed to be reformed, he also believed that the Church should be reformed from within and that the Protestant Reformation had gone too far,-- especially Luther's decimation of the Seven Sacraments. One particular point caused a final severance of Luther's friendship with Erasmus, and that was Erasmus' defense of the papal position on grace and free will. Erasmus contended that there was an element of "free will" involved in grace; that men and women had freedom of choice, and thereby could perform charitable works, as allotted through God's grace.

In his seminal and greatest work, *Of the Bondage of the Will*,¹³⁶ Luther found Erasmus' position to be a grievous error! Not only this position an error, but the matter went to the very heart of the Christian faith: there could be no "choice" outside of God's divine providence; for Luther, there really is no "choice," because there is only God (i.e. life), or else there is Satan (i.e., death). This had been the entire theme of the Law of Moses and Old Testament. In the New Testament, Luther argued, that the "grace of God" is presented in the man Christ Jesus; and so, there is no "choice," but only God's "grace," who is Christ. Luther contended that the great St. Augustine of Hippo supported his position on "free will."¹³⁷ In *On the Bondage of the Will*, Luther wrote:

DO you see, friend Erasmus, that by this definition, you (though unwittingly I presume,) betray yourself, and make it manifest that you either know nothing of these things whatever, or that, without any consideration, and in a mere air of contempt, you write upon the subject, not knowing what you say nor whereof you affirm? And as I said before, you say less about, and attribute more to 'Free-will,' than all others put together; for you do not describe the whole of 'Free-will,' and yet you assign unto it all things. The opinion of the Sophists, or at least of the father of them, Peter Lombard, is far more tolerable: he says, " 'Free-will' is the faculty of discerning, and then choosing also good, if with grace, but evil if grace be wanting.' He plainly agrees in sentiment with Augustine, that 'Freewill,' of its own power, cannot do any thing but fall, nor avail unto any thing but to

¹³⁶ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (2011 Legacy Publications).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25 ("...although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side...").

sin.’ Wherefore Augustine also, Book ii., against Julian, calls ‘Free-will’ ‘under bondage,’ rather than ‘free.’...¹³⁸

Luther was very concerned that Erasmus, and his other Roman Catholic friends, had held to the belief that “Free-will” can, “by its own power, **without grace**, both apply itself unto good, and turn itself from evil.”¹³⁹ Luther was not about to permit the notion that a man or woman could be good, or do good, without God’s grace (i.e., Christ); for to admit that goodness could exist outside of God (i.e., Christ), was in Luther’s mind, really and truly anathema to the Christian faith, if not altogether the antichrist.

Stated differently, Luther argued that a man or woman can do no good without Christ in the heart; for to hold otherwise, would be to undermine the whole edifice of the Christian faith, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as the central fact of all human history. To sum up Luther’s thesis in *On the Bondage of the Will*:

- There is no “Free-will,” only God’s Grace (i.e., Christ);
- God’s Grace is **Life**; the rejection thereof, is **Death** (i.e. “**bondage to sin**”);
- In our present lifetimes, **Death** takes on many forms: deception, pride, avarice, lust, greed, theft, envy, covetousness, adultery, fornication, heresies, licentiousness, false witness, murder, arrogance, quarrels, dissension, schism, hatreds, conspiracies, skirmishes, litigations, wars, etc., etc., all eventually leading to God’s Final Judgment. This sad state of the human condition actually constitutes a form of “**bondage to sin.**”

For this reason, Luther’s Protestant idea could not conceptualize a secular civil state where secular humanism (i.e., “human virtue” and “human goodness”) existed outside of Christ and God’s providence. Consequently, Luther said himself that *On the Bondage of the Will* was his greatest theological work, thanks in large measure to his old friend Desiderius Erasmus.

10. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church. A Prelude (1520)*

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church. A Prelude*, which was also published in 1520, Luther made a clean break from Roman Catholic ideology and officially rescinded several of his older positions whereby he expressed tolerance and acceptance for certain Roman Catholic practices, such as “indulgences,” “penance,” and the “Seven Sacraments.” Luther began this essay by asserting:

Some two years ago I wrote a little book on indulgences, which I now deeply regret having published. For at the time I still clung to the Roman tyranny with great superstition and held that indulgences should not be altogether rejected, seeing they were approved by the common consent of men. Nor was this to be wondered at, for I was then engaged single-handed in my Sisyphean task. Since then, however, through the kindness of Sylvester and the friars, who so strenuously defended indulgences, I have come to see that they are nothing but an fraud of the Roman flatterers by which they rob people of their faith and fortunes. I wish I could convince the booksellers and all my readers to burn up the whole of my writings on indulgences and to substitute for them this proposition: INDULGENCES are a Swindler's Trick of the Roman flatterers.¹⁴⁰

Sacrament of Alter (Holy Eucharist). In 1520, when Luther published his treatise *Babylonian Captivity*, the Roman Catholic Church relied on various Scriptures to deny or to refuse issuing the wine to the laity. Only the priests were allowed to receive and to consume the wine. There was some argument over whether the laity could take the bread. But Luther argued that if the laity was entitled to received the bread, then it must also be accepted that they laity had the right to received also the wine. Luther believed that this practice of denying the bread and wine to the laity to be preposterous, and so he rejected it outright.

Sacrament of Baptism. Luther believed that baptism was a form of penance. In fact, baptism is the first and last act of penance that is necessary. Luther believed that when a baptized Christian commits since, he or she need only recall the glory of their baptism and give thanks to God, as a form of

¹⁴⁰ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church: A Prelude*, [unpublished essay of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

penance. For this reason, Luther did not believe that there was a need for separate “Sacrament of Penance.” He concluded that penance is nothing but “a return to baptism.”

Sacrament of Penance. Since Luther believe that baptism is a form of penance, and penance a return to baptism, that there was no need for a separate Sacrament of Penance. In the Roman Catholic Church, this Sacrament had been abused with the use of indulgences and fraud. Therefore, Luther rejected the Sacrament of Penance.

Sacraments of Confirmation. Luther believed that “Confirmation” should be down-graded from a sacrament. This process typically included initiating new members into the Church through the laying on of hands, as was frequently done in the New Testament. But Luther reasoned that if everything that the apostles did was a “sacrament,” then there could be no end to the number of “sacraments.” In short, Luther did not condemn this practice, but instead held that in order to be classified as a “sacrament,” there had to be a divine promise attached to it, such as with the “Sacrament of the Alter” and the “Sacrament of Baptism.” Luther did not believe that a divine promise had been attached to the “Sacraments of Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, or Extreme Unction (the last rite of the dying).”

Sacrament of Marriage. Luther believed that the Roman Catholic Church had over-stretched its jurisdiction by extending the relationship of Christ and the Church (i.e., the sacrament of Divine Marriage) to the union between a man and a woman. Luther explained:

[A] sacrament is a mystery, or secret thing, which is set forth in words and is received by the faith of the heart. Such a sacrament is spoken of in the verse before us – “They shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament” (Ephesians 5:31 f.) – which they understand as spoken of marriage, while Paul wrote these words of Christ and the Church, and clearly explained his meaning by adding, “But I speak in Christ and in the Church.” Yes, how well they agree with Paul! He declares he is setting forth a great sacrament in Christ and the Church, but they set it

forth in a man and a woman! If such wantonness be permitted in the Sacred Scriptures, it is small wonder if one find there anything one please, even a hundred sacraments.¹⁴¹

Interestingly, Luther did not believe that a divine promise had been attached to the “Sacrament of Marriage,” because Christ never conditioned salvation upon taking part in marriage.

Sacrament of Ordination. Luther rejected the Roman Catholic Church’s creation of the Spiritual estate (i.e., Pope, bishops, priests, etc.) and the Temporal estate (i.e., the laity). The current Roman Catholic viewpoint has not changed.¹⁴² Luther believed in the “priesthood of all believers.” For this reason, Luther did not believe that the rite of ordination of the clergy should be elevated to the status of a “Sacrament.” Luther wrote:

Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the pope's church. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not the least mention of it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God that which cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. I do not hold that this rite, which has been observed for so many centuries, should be condemned; but in sacred things I am opposed to the invention of human fictions, nor is it right to give out as divinely instituted what was not divinely instituted, lest we become a laughing-stock to our opponents. We ought to see to it that every article of faith of which we boast be certain, pure, and based on clear passages of

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 247-249 (“...’the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.”); and pp. 34-35 (“‘It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others’.... The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.”)

Scripture. But that we are utterly unable to do in the case of the sacrament under consideration.¹⁴³

Sacrament of Extreme Unction. This is the “last rites” administered by the priests to those who are at the point of dying. As Luther recounts events, this Sacrament grew out of a New Testament passage, as follows:

For does not James say: (James 5:14 f.) ‘Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.’ There, say they, you have the promise of the forgiveness of sins, and the sign of the oil.

But I reply: If ever there was a mad conceit, here is one indeed. I will say nothing of the fact that many assert with much probability that this Epistle is not by James the Apostle, nor worthy of an apostolic spirit, although, whoever be its author, it has come to be esteemed as authoritative. But even if the Apostle James did write it, I yet should say, **no Apostle has the right on his own authority to institute a sacrament, that is, to give a divine promise with a sign attached; for this belongs to Christ alone.**¹⁴⁴

It has been said the Luther’s rejection of the entire Seven Sacraments in the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* effectively ended any chance at reconciliation. After 1520, Luther made himself clear, time and time again, that he was not about to recant any of his theological positions, unless they were clearly shown to be in error of the Sacred Scriptures. Luther’s position, of course, ran afoul of the Catholic Church’s entire world view.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church: A Prelude*, [unpublished essay of Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, 1520].

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ This world view as to the sole authority of the Pope, the Bishops, and the Curia to interpret the Sacred Scripture has not changed since the days of Pope Leo X and Martin Luther. See, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 247-249 (“...’the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.’”); and pp. 34-35 (“‘It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others’.... The task of interpreting the Word of God

In England, Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and attack on the Seven Sacraments prompted Henry VIII to fire back with the publication of his book, *Defense of the Seven Sacraments* (1521).

The *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* (in Latin: *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*) is a theological treatise published in 1521, written by King Henry VIII of England, allegedly with the assistance of Thomas More. The extent of More's involvement with this project has been a point of contention since its publication. Henry started to write it in 1519 while he was reading Martin Luther's attack on indulgences. By June of that year, he had shown it to Thomas Wolsey, but it remained private until three years later, when the earlier manuscript became the first two chapters of the *Assertio*, the rest consisting of new material relating to Luther's *De Captivitate Babylonica* [i.e., *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*]. It is believed that Thomas More was involved in the composition of the piece. Author J. J. Scarisbrick describes the work as "one of the most successful pieces of Catholic polemics produced by the first generation of anti-Protestant writers." It went through some twenty editions in the sixteenth century and, as early as 1522, had appeared in two different German translations.

It was dedicated to Pope Leo X, who rewarded Henry with the title *Fidei Defensor* (Defender of the Faith) in October 1521 (a title revoked following the king's break with the Catholic Church in the 1530s, but re-awarded to his heir by the English Parliament).¹⁴⁶

For the next several years, Martin Luther and Henry VIII would go at each other like warring tigers. There was no love lost between them. King Christian II of Denmark tried to mediate the conflict in an effort to persuade Henry VIII to come to the Protestant side.

In 1526, Luther drafted an apology that was sent to Henry VIII, but Henry VIII humiliated Luther in his response. Henry VIII had accused Luther of "deflowering a nun,"—referring to Luther's wife, who was a former nun; and

authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.")

¹⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_of_the_Seven_Sacraments

shouldered the blame for the Peasant's War of 1524-25 on Luther. As a consequence, on New Year's day, 1527, Luther responded by calling Henry VIII a "Satan worshipper,"¹⁴⁷ and saying "[t]hese tyrants have weak, unmanly, and thoroughly sordid characters that make them unworthy of serving any but the rabble.... I disdain them and their god Satan."¹⁴⁸

The Church of England under Henry VIII would remain within the Catholic fold and anti-Protestant. When England finally broke away from Rome in 1534, Henry VIII had not intentions of embracing Lutheranism and maintained that his new Church of England would retain its Catholic rites and traditions. Luther's ideas, however, permeated England. And there were other native-born English Protestants, such as William Tyndale (1494-1536), whose English publication of the New Testament resulted in his execution and martyrdom in 1536.

In Rome, Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* was not well-received, to say the least. "That autumn, Johann Eck proclaimed the bull in Meissen and other towns. Karl von Miltitz, a papal nuncio, attempted to broker a solution, but Luther, who had sent the Pope a copy of *On the Freedom of a Christian* in October, publicly set fire to the bull and decretals at Wittenberg on 10 December 1520, an act he defended in *Why the Pope and his Recent Book are Burned and Assertions Concerning All Articles*. As a consequence, Luther was excommunicated by Pope Leo X on 3 January 1521, in the bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem*.¹⁴⁹

E. The Diet of Worms (1521)

By this time, almost three years had passed since the Diet of Augsburg, which had been presided over by Cardinal Cajetan. Now, the Pope dispatched the Emperor himself, Charles V, to the town of Worms, to preside over the hearing whereby Luther would be brought up on formal charges and sentenced. The Diet of Worms was held in 1521. And it was here where Luther made his famous stand that sent shock waves throughout Europe:

Since then your serene majesties and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, plain and unvarnished: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the scriptures or clear reason, for I

¹⁴⁷ Metaxas, p. 378.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther

do not trust in the Pope or in the councils alone, since it is well known that they often err and contradict themselves, I am bound to the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. God help me. Amen.¹⁵⁰

The hearing officers were deadlocked. The emperor could not persuade all of the German princes to convict Luther of heresy. Luther's benefactor, Frederick the Wise, would not vote to convict Luther, because he did not think that Luther had a fair hearing.

On Luther's journey back from Worms to Wittenberg, he was kidnapped and taken hostage by friendly forces, and tucked away safely at the Wartburg Castle, where he camouflaged himself as a knight and remained for nearly a year under the code-name Junker George. All of Europe was held in suspense! What had really happened to the firebrand Martin Luther? Had the Pope had him killed?

Over the next several years, from 1521 to 1530, it was clear that the Edict of Worms could not be enforced. Pope Leo X died in 1521. He was succeeded by Pope Adrian VI, who died in 1523. The next pope was Pope Clement VII, who did not get along with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Charles V was at war with France, but Pope Clement VII sided with France. Charles V also needed help from Germany with fighting the Islamic Turks, and this is the major reason why Luther remained alive and Charles V really lost interest in enforcing the Edict of Worms.

Negotiations between Emperor Charles V and the German princes led to a measure of religious freedom and autonomy in Germany. A Diet of Augsburg was summoned by Charles V in 1530, and formal negotiations commenced. Luther and his colleagues prepared the *Augsburg Confessions*, in which they outlined their Protestant faith. The matter was not finally resolved until twenty-five years later at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.¹⁵¹ Hence, after 1555, there were only two

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 216.

¹⁵¹ "The Peace of Augsburg, also called the Augsburg Settlement, was a treaty between Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor (the predecessor of Ferdinand I) and the Schmalkaldic League, signed in September 1555 at the imperial city of Augsburg. It officially ended the religious struggle between the two groups and made the legal division of Christendom permanent within the Holy Roman Empire, allowing rulers to choose either Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism as the official confession of their state." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire

officially recognized religions in the Holy Roman Empire: Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism.¹⁵²

In Switzerland, Luther's Protestant contemporaries continued their struggle, with John Calvin taking the lead during the late 1500s. In 1648, at the Peace of Westphalia, the Holy Roman Empire finally recognized Calvinism as the third official religion in the empire. In England, the struggles and wars on the continent (i.e., the ideas of Lutheranism and Calvinism) would have a significant impact on the Church of England, because the Scottish Presbyterians and the English Puritans had direct theological ties to Calvinism and Lutheranism.

F. The Peasants' War of 1525

On the one hand, Luther had to contend with the foreign occupation of the Italians, the Roman church, and the Holy Roman Empire. On the other hand, within Germany itself, Luther had to contend with the growing conflict between the German peasants and the German nobility. Some of his closest allies in the Protestant Reformation, such as Thomas Muntzer and Andreas von Karlstadt, accused Luther of siding with the German nobles against the German peasants.

But to Luther, this simply was not the case; Luther saw himself as siding with justice, non-violence and the preservation of a German Christian commonwealth. In his essays *To the Christian Nobility* and *Against the Murdering and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*, Luther opined that God had ordained government, law, and order, and that the secular, civil magistrate was indeed God's vice-regent who bore the sword to keep peace, establish justice, and preserve order. Indeed, Romans 13:1-10 states:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for

¹⁵² "Lutheranism was officially recognized in the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, and Calvinism in the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. Those two constituted the only officially recognized Protestant denominations, while various other Protestant confessions such as Anabaptism, Arminianism, etc. coexisted illegally within the Empire." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire

he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.... Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

However, Luther also acknowledged that the struggling German peasants had been mistreated and abused by the German socioeconomic order and had valid grievances. He felt that the German nobles should redress their grievances. After all, these nobles had a fundamental duty, as Christian ministers, to do justice, equity, and judgment on behalf of the German peasants.

On the other hand, Luther did not believe in violence and concluded that a peasant war against the nobility was far worse and more sinful than the injustices which they had endured. He counseled the German peasants to endure their afflictions but to nonviolently redress their grievances. It is not certain how much Luther knew about the conditions on the ground, or whether the peasants even got news of Luther's admonitions. Events evolved so rapidly that by the time Luther's essays went to the press, the conditions on the ground had grown far worse than his initial assessment. In 1525, hundreds of German peasants had resorted to savage butchery of scores of German nobles. This carnage led Luther to call for the violent suppression of the German peasant rebellion, since such suppression was the righteous judgment of God against the peasants' demonic cruelty.

The peasants looked to Martin Luther for guidance and leadership. They believed that Luther's theology and leadership in the Church symbolized their just demands and struggles against various injustices. The peasants thus mandated accountability not only within the Church but also within the secular State (i.e., the secular, socioeconomic realm).

In February 1525, they drew up "The Twelve Articles," Table 3, which not only set forth their main grievances and concerns, but also defended their Christian motives, objectives, and goals, as follows:

Table 3. The Twelve Articles

THE TWELVE ARTICLES (Germany, February 1525)

Peace to the Christian Reader and the Grace of God through Christ. There are **many evil writings put forth of late which take occasion, on account of the assembling of the peasants**, to cast scorn upon the gospel, saying: Is this the fruit of the new teaching, that no one should obey but all should everywhere rise in revolt and rush together to reform or perhaps destroy altogether the authorities, both ecclesiastic and lay?

The articles below shall answer these godless and criminal fault-finders, and serve in the first place to **remove the reproach from the word of God** and in the second place to give a Christian excuse for the disobedience or even revolt of the entire Peasantry. In the first place the Gospel is not the cause of revolt and disorder since it is **the message of Christ, the promised Messiah, the Word of Life, teaching only love, peace, patience and concord**. Thus, **all who believe in Christ should learn to be loving, peaceful, long-suffering and harmonious**. This is the **foundation of all the articles of the peasants** (as will be seen) who accept the gospel and live according to it.

How then can the **evil reports declare the Gospel to be a cause of revolt and disobedience**? That the authors of evil reports and the enemies of the Gospel oppose themselves to these demands is due not to the Gospel, but to the Devil, the worst enemy of the Gospel, who causes this opposition by raising doubts in the minds of his followers, and thus the word of God, which teaches love, peace and concord, is overcome. In the second place **it is clear that the peasants demand that this Gospel be taught them as a guide in life and they ought not to be called disobedient or disorderly**. Whether God grant the peasants (earnestly wishing to live according to His word) their requests or no, who shall find fault with the will of the Most High? Who shall meddle in His judgments or oppose his majesty? Did he not hear the children of Israel when they called upon Him and saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh? Can He not save His own to-day? Yea, he will save them and that speedily. Therefore, Christian reader, read the following articles with care and then judge. Here follow the articles:

The First Article.— First, it is our humble petition and desire, as also our will and resolution, that in the future we should have **power and authority so that each community should choose and appoint a pastor**, and that we should have the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly. **The pastor thus chosen should teach us the Gospel pure and simple**, without any addition, doctrine or ordinance of man. For to teach us continually the true faith will lead us to pray God that through his grace this faith may increase within us and become a part of us. For if his grace not within us we remain flesh and blood, which availed nothing; **since the Scripture clearly teaches that only through the true faith can we come to God**. Only through his mercy can we become holy. Hence such a guide and pastor is necessary and in this fashion grounded upon the Scriptures.

The Second Article.— According as the just thing is established by the Old Testament and fulfilled in the new, **we are ready and willing to pay the fair tithe of grain**. The word of God plainly provides that in giving according to right to God and distributing to his people the services of a pastor are required. We will that for the future our church provost, whomsoever the community shall appoint, shall gather and receive this tithe. From this he shall give to **the pastor, elected by the whole community**, a decent and sufficient maintenance for him and his (im und den seynen) **as shall seem right to the whole community** [or, with the knowledge of the community]. **What remains ever shall be given to the poor of the place**, as the circumstances and the general opinion demand. Should anything farther remain, let it be kept, lest anyone should have to leave the country from poverty. Provision should also be made **from this surplus to avoid laying any land tax on the poor**. In case one or more villages themselves have sold their tithes on account of want, and the village has taken action as a whole, the buyer should not suffer loss, but we will that some proper agreement be reached with him for the repayment of the sum by the village with due interest. But those who have tithes which they have not purchased from a village, but which were

appropriated by their ancestors, should not, and ought not, to be paid anything farther by the village which shall apply its tithes to the support of the pastors elected as above indicated, or to solace the poor as is taught by the scriptures. **The small tithes, whether ecclesiastical or lay, we will not pay at all, for the Lord God created cattle for the free use of man. We will not, therefore, pay farther an unseemly tithes which is of man's invention.**

The Third Article.—It has been the custom hitherto **for men to hold us as their own property, which is pitiable enough, considering that Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, without exception, by the shedding of his precious blood, the lowly as well as the great.** Accordingly, it is consistent with Scripture that **we should be free and wish to be so.** God does not teach us that **we should lead a disorderly life in the lusts of flesh,** but that we should love the Lord our God and our neighbor. We would gladly observe all this as God has commanded us in the celebration of the communion. **He has not commanded us not to obey the authorities, but rather that we should be humble, not only towards those in authority, but towards everyone. We are thus ready to yield obedience according to God's law to our elected and regular authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian.** We, therefore, take it for granted that you will **release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the Gospel that we are serfs.**

The Fourth Article.—In the fourth place it has been the **custom heretofore, that no poor man should be allowed to touch venison or wild fowl or fish in flowing water,** which seems to us **quite unseemly and unbrotherly as well as selfish and not agreeable to the word of God.** In some places **the authorities preserve the game** to our great annoyance and loss, recklessly permitting the unreasoning animals to destroy to no purpose our crops which God suffers to grow for the use of man and yet we must remain quiet. This is neither godly nor neighborly. **For when God created man he gave him dominion over all the animals, over the birds of the air and over the fish in the water.** Accordingly it is our desire if a man holds possession of waters that he should prove from satisfactory documents that his right has been unwittingly acquired by purchase. We do not wish to take it from him by force, **but his rights should be exercised in a Christian and brotherly fashion. But whosoever cannot produce such evidence should surrender his claim with good grace.**

The Fifth Article.—In the fifth place we are aggrieved in the **matter of wood-cutting, for the noble folk have appropriated all the woods to themselves alone.** If a **poor man requires wood he must pay double for it** [or perhaps the text means: two pieces of money]. It is our opinion in regard to a wood which has fallen into **the hands of a lord whether spiritual or temporal,** that unless it was duly purchased it should revert again to the community. **It should, moreover, be free to every member of the community to help himself to such firewood as he needs in his home.** Also, if a man requires wood for carpenter's purposes he should have it free, but with the knowledge of a person appointed by the community for that purpose. Should, however, no such forest be at the disposal of the community **let that which has been duly bought be administered in a brotherly and Christian manner.** If the forest, although unfairly appropriated in the first instance, was later duly sold let the matter be adjusted by a friendly spirit and according to the scriptures.

The Sixth Article.—Our sixth complaint is in regard to **the excessive services demanded of us** which are increased from day to day. We ask that this matter be properly looked into so that we shall not continue to be oppressed in this way, but that some gracious consideration be given us, since our forefathers were required only to serve according to the word of God.

The Seventh Article.—Seventh, we will not hereafter allow ourselves to be further oppressed by our lords, but will let them demand only **what is just and proper according to the word of the agreement between the lord and the peasant.** The lord should **no longer try to force more services or other dues from the peasant without payment, but permit the peasant to enjoy his holding in peace and quiet.**

The **peasant should, however, help the lord when it is necessary**, and at proper times when it will not be disadvantageous to the peasant and for a suitable payment.

The Eighth Article.—In the eighth place, we are greatly burdened by holdings which cannot support the rent exacted from them. The peasants suffer loss in this way and are ruined, and we ask that the lords may appoint persons of honor to inspect these holdings, and **fix a rent in accordance with justice**, so that the **peasant shall not work for nothing, since the laborer is worthy of his hire**.

The Ninth Article.—In the ninth place, we are burdened with a great evil in the constant making of new laws. We are not judged according to the offence, but sometimes with great ill will, and sometimes much too leniently. In our opinion **we should be judged according to the old written law so that the case shall be decided according to its merits**, and not with partiality.

The Tenth Article.—In the tenth place, we are aggrieved by **the appropriation by individuals of meadows and fields which at one time belonged to the community**. These we will take again into our own hands. It may, however, happen that the land was rightfully purchased. When, however, the land has unfortunately been purchased in this way, **some brotherly arrangement** should be made according to circumstances.

The Eleventh Article.—In the eleventh place **we will entirely abolish the due called Todfall [i. e., heriot] , and will no longer endure it**, nor allow **widows and orphans to thus be shamefully robbed against Gods will**, and in violation of justice and right, as has been done in many places, and by those who should shield and protect them. These have disgraced and despoiled us, and although they had little authority they assumed it. God will suffer this no more, but it shall be wholly done away with, and for the future no man shall be bound to give little or much.

Conclusion.—**In the twelfth place it is our conclusion and final resolution, that if any one or more of the articles here set forth should not be in agreement with the word of God, as we think they are, such article we will willingly recede from when it is proved really to be against the word of God by a clear explanation of the Scripture. Or if articles should now be conceded to us that are hereafter discovered to be unjust, from that hour they shall be dead and null and without force.** Likewise, if more complaints should be discovered **which are based upon truth and the Scriptures** and relate to offences against God and our neighbor, **we have determined to reserve the right to present these also**, and to exercise ourselves in all Christian teaching. For this we shall pray God, since He can grant these, and He alone. The peace of Christ abide with us all.

These demands were reasonable and Luther pleaded on behalf of the peasants. At the same time, Luther stressed the way of the Lord and of the true Christian was that of nonviolent, peaceful protest—not violence; and that the true Christian must during the meanwhile submit to lawful governmental authority. So long as these peasant movements were peaceful and conducted in a Christian manner, Luther supported them. For it was clear that these peasants were asking

that the Reformation's principles (i.e., the "Law of Christ")¹⁵³ be logically extended to the problems and plight of the German peasants. But the radical element within the German peasantry was impatient, unholy, and irrational. They took up farm tools and converted them into weapons of war.¹⁵⁴ It is unfortunate that the peasants, who were hopelessly out-generaled by the German army, did not succeed; and that some 80,000 peasants died in their struggle for freedom.¹⁵⁵

On May 27, 1525, fifty-four of the peasant leaders were beheaded. "Their heads and bodies were impaled upon pole staffs, where they remained to grimly decorate the outside of Muhlhausen's city walls for years."¹⁵⁶ The Roman Catholic Church, in its defense of the Catholic position against the Protestant Reformation, has since charged Martin Luther with full responsibility for deaths of these peasants. Despite Luther's efforts to quell the violence, the Peasants' War of 1525 would tarnish his image and that of the Protestant Reformation during the next several decades.

G. The Protestant Reformation Comes of Age, 1525-1546

From between 1525 and 1546, the year of his death, Luther continued to promote the ideas of the Reformation, to publish his works, and to debate theological subjects. In 1525, he married a former nun, Katherine von Bora. In 1526, his son Johannes "Hans" Luther was born; in 1527, his daughter Elizabeth is born, but dies in 1528 after seven months; in 1529, a second daughter, Magdalena, is born; in 1531, a third son, Martin, Jr., is born; and in 1533, son Paul is born.

Although Luther was still an out-law of the empire, by 1530, the tide had turned; the Protestant rebels were actually winning; Emperor Charles V and the new Pope Clement VII were in disagreement, and Charles V was eager to negotiate a resolution that would enlist Germany as an ally in his wars with France and the Muslim Turks. Meanwhile, Luther remained a towering figure, although he took a back seat to the younger Protestant leaders. For example, when Charles V had agreed to meet with the Protestant leaders in Augsburg, Germany in 1530, Luther was disinvented. In other words, no negotiations could take place with Luther's attendance. Therefore, Luther provided logistical assistance from the rear. He was

¹⁵³ The Law of Christ is to "love ye one another" (John 15:12); to do justice and judgement (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21: 1-3); to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24); and to do justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:2-3).

¹⁵⁴ Eric Metaxas' work, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York, N.Y.: Viking Press, 2017), pp. 325-337.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

instrumental in drafting the *Augsburg Confession*, which set form the Protestant leaders' demands for reform.

During the 1530s, Luther reopened his line of communications with the English Protestants. England's King Henry VIII's position had changed dramatically since 1521-27, when Luther and he were exchanging acrimonious letters and communications. Henry VIII's views had softened, as he was now looking to break from the Roman Catholic Church. How far Henry would go in that direction was unclear. In 1534, England finally severed its ties to Rome; Henry VIII declared himself the "Supreme Head of the Church of England"; the monasteries were confiscated and abolished; and Catholic dissent was crushed.

During this period, Thomas Cromwell, the second-most powerful man in England, opened a line of communication with Luther. Cromwell was more sympathetic to Luther's brand of Protestant theology and aimed to persuade Henry VIII to join "the Schmalkaldic League so that England could stand with it against the pope and the emperor."¹⁵⁷ Luther wrote to Cromwell, saying: "Doctor Barnes has... made me extraordinarily happy in telling me of Your Lordship's earnest and determined will... by which you are cable of accomplishing very many things through the whole kingdom and with the Most Serene Lord King.... I do pray and I shall pray to the Lord to strengthen abundantly his work, begun in Your Lordship, to his glory and the salvation of many. Amen."¹⁵⁸

But King Henry VIII of England was "Catholic" at heart and had no intention of changing basic liturgy or fundamental beliefs of the Church of England. He cracked down on the English Protestants. William Tyndale was arrested, strangled, and burned. Queen Ann Boleyn fell out of favor with the king, and was executed. Cromwell also fell out of favor, and was executed. Henry VIII had empowered many of the same men who had persecuted English Lutherans prior to the English Reformation. Therefore, Martin Luther and the Germans (i.e., the Schmalkaldic League) concluded that England would not be joining them, as originally planned.

By the late 1530s and early 1540s, Luther's public life receded as his health declined. But his fame continued to spread, and so did the Reformation. In 1539, Luther was honored with the publication of book, in German, of all of his writings. He continued to preach whenever he could. By then, he was the married father of

¹⁵⁷ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World*, p. 412.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

three teenage boys (his daughter Magdalena having died at age 13 several years earlier). In 1546, Martin Luther died in his sleep while at his home in Wittenberg.

In 1555, at the Peace of Augsburg, almost ten years after Luther's death, the Holy Roman Empire officially recognized Lutheranism as an official religion—alongside Roman Catholicism-- throughout its realm.

CONCLUSION

In *On Grace and Free Will*, Saint Augustine of Hippo, a doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, sets forth a simple and cogent argument for the doctrine of “justification through faith alone, and not works.” This argument was embraced by Martin Luther and utilized in his famous *Ninety-Five Theses*, which launched the Protestant Reformation in Europe. Soon thereafter, two of the Protestant Reformation's greatest leaders, Martin Luther and John Calvin, incorporated St. Augustine's theology on ecclesiology, law, and the doctrine of justification through faith alone into their polemics which they used as the basis for separation from the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵⁹ This movement to democratize the Roman Catholic Church laid the foundation for democratic government and theory in Europe.

Indeed, when Luther sought to democratize the Roman Catholic Church, with theories such as the “justification by faith alone,” “the priesthood of all believers,” “Sola Scriptura,” “the right of the Christian faithful to judge and select pastors and bishops,” etc., he unwittingly laid the foundations for the modern Western democratic nation-state and modern-day constitutional law. Without Martin Luther, many of the freedoms that we today take for granted—freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and press, and the separation of church and state—would either not exist or would have come into existence much later in history.

¹⁵⁹ As St. Augustine has stated in *The City of God*, the true church is hidden both within and outside of organized, man-made churches. The “true church” is actually immersed inside of all church denominations. And so, too, is “church corruption, heresy, and schism” equally immersed inside of all church denominations. For this reason, this essay should not be construed as anti-Roman Catholic; for what happened inside of the Roman Catholic Church during the 15th and 16th century has, and can, occur inside of every church denomination and every secular, non-sectarian organization.

In England, where the Anglican Church retained intact nearly all of Church of Rome's liturgy and dogma, the influence of Martin Luther and John Calvin would have a significant impact upon the English Protestant dissenters throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. In America, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution would later trace their origins in the English Protestant Reformation. Anglo-American constitutional law thus owes a great debt to the life and works of the German monk Martin Luther.

THE END

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APPENDIX A

THE WORLDWIDE IMPACT OF LUTHERANISM

Lutheranism (Demographics) Continent¹⁶⁰

Continent	Lutherans ^[2]
Europe	34,689,040
Africa	23,053,980
Asia	11,835,834
North America	3,879,793 ^[b]
Latin America & the Caribbean	784,215
Total	74,242,862

Countries with more than 1 million Lutherans

Country	Lutherans ^[2]
 Germany	11,787,811
 Ethiopia	7,886,595
 Tanzania	6,531,336
 Sweden	6,300,000
 Indonesia	6,046,321
 Denmark	4,400,754
 India	4,042,543
 Finland	4,031,235
 Norway	3,857,463
 United States	3,765,362 ^[c]
 Madagascar	3,000,000
 Nigeria	2,321,000
 Netherlands	1,969,755
 Papua New Guinea	1,349,869

¹⁶⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism_by_region

APPENDIX B

“A Protestant Perspective of the Roman Catholic Church”

by

Roderick O. Ford, D.Litt.

In January 2015, I published *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity*, in which I set forth my current viewpoint on Christian ecclesiology and the Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther’s large and pervasive shadow, his doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers,” and his doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* (i.e., the Sacred Scriptures alone are the sole infallible rule of Christian faith and practice) are readily apparent throughout the pages of the text of *Jesus Master of Law*. The text of this book also memorialized my life-long spiritual journey into whether I needed to *formally join* the Roman Catholic Church in order to reach the kingdom of heaven or to attain Christ’s eternal salvation.

Sometime around the year 2010, I finally concluded that I did not need to convert to Roman Catholicism in order to attain Christ’s everlasting salvation. Nor could I whole-heartedly reconcile my Protestant instincts with the Roman Catholic doctrine on the Magisterium,¹⁶¹ Indulgences,¹⁶² and Purgatory.¹⁶³ I could not in good faith convert to the Roman Catholic faith,

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 247-249 (“...’the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.’”); and pp. 34-35 (“It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others’.... The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.”)

¹⁶² The current viewpoint on “indulgences” and “purgatory” of the Roman Catholic Church has not significantly changed since the days of Pope Leo X and Martin Luther during the 16th century. This current viewpoint is stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 411-413 (“The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance. What is an indulgence? ‘An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints.’ ‘An indulgence is a partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.’ The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.... The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the ‘old man’ and to put on the ‘new man’.... An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishment due for their sins. Thus the Church

with these outstanding theological matters weighing down my conscience. Luther's theology on the freedom of the Christian ultimately seemed most aligned to the Sacred Scriptures and reasonable, but I also maintained that high-quality, well-trained theologians are essential to the Christian faith. In reaching this conclusion, I realize that many in the Roman Catholic Church will unwittingly conclude that I have joined Luther, Calvin and the Protestant Reformation. I admit that had I lived during the 16th or 17th centuries, I certainly would have joined the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, had I reached this same theological conclusion that membership in the Roman Catholic Church was unnecessary, prior to the 18th century, I would have been branded a "heretic" and likely executed!

Today, however, we are witnessing signs that the Roman Catholic Church is actually preserving the very best of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and other Protestant Reformers—and that is heritage of the early apostolic, holy, catholic church (e.g., the church of the Apostles, Clement, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Ambrose, Augustine, Eusebius, and others) ---whereas today's heirs of the old mainline Protestant faith have more and more succumbed to the gospel of secular materialism, having removed their secular constitutions, laws, and governments from underneath God's providence. When I was in law school at the University of Illinois during the early 1990s, I found Catholic Neo-Thomism to be more aligned with classical Anglo-American jurisprudence and correlated best with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Christian philosophy of non-violent, social engagement to meet the challenges of injustice. Conversely, I did not find the same level of intellectual energy among mainline Protestant legal practitioners or academics. Moreover, I have not concluded that practicing the Seven Sacraments and voluntary submission to the authority of the Bishop of Rome, in and of themselves, will disqualify a Christian from salvation. Indeed, a person may attain "justification through faith alone" (i.e., be truly "born again) and, simultaneously, be a good practicing Catholic—the one does not necessarily exclude the other. At the same time, I do not believe that one needs to be a Roman Catholic in order to attain "justification through faith alone." My view is that the Roman Catholic faith can be "supplementary" and conducive to good Protestant practice.

For this reason, I have never entertained the idea of relinquishing my continuing fellowship and ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholics. I did not reach the final conclusion that membership within the Roman Catholic Church was not necessary until around 2010, and this long period of time (i.e., 1989-2010) was due in large measure to the lack of a meaningful theoretical presence of mainline Protestant thought within the American legal academy or legal profession. I still find Catholic Neo-Thomism to be at the forefront of American legal thought, and I believe that it is leading the way forward.

does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity. Since the faithful departed now being purified [in Purgatory] are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.")

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

Hence, I continue to treat the Roman Catholic Church as the “mother church” for all Western churches; I continue to study the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and believe it to be authoritative; and I continue to believe that most of the Roman Catholic Church’s teachings (e.g., the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo) are superior to Protestant teachings due to the sheer depth and antiquity of its sources. At the same time, I continue to revere Luther, Calvin, Williams, Wesley, and many other Protestant theologians.

My interest in the Roman Catholic faith is not an academic interest; nor is it in preparation to earn a theology degree. But, rather, my interest in the Roman Catholic faith is through a deep and personal commitment to serve Christ and to attain eternal salvation—and for no other reason. Although Protestant, I am most certainly a fellow “catechumen within in the Roman Catholic Church,” and I continue to seek answers to very important theological questions from Roman Catholic priests and laity.

The culmination of my life-long, spiritual investigation into the Roman Catholic Church, I think, is fairly accurately memorialized in my book *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity*, wherein I wrote:

§ 2.12. Law of the Church

Whether denominational church law has the power to condemn souls to heaven or hell is a question that has been debated since the founding of the organized church. Thus considering the many schisms within the Christian church, and the historical experience of religious factionalism within Christianity, I have concluded that the organized church constitutes a mere fraction of the whole and entire body of Christ—the true church, or *ecclesia*, is much more expansive than any organized Christian denomination. I like to think of the ‘true church’ as comprising an interfaith ‘congregation of the righteous.’ Organized Christian churches are in general ‘ordained’ by God; nevertheless, the Holy Scriptures simply do not support the conclusion that denominational Christianity represents the sum total of what may be referred to as the ‘body of Christ’ or the ‘kingdom of God.’ So where does all of this leave the binding force of ‘Church law,’ ‘canon law’ or ‘ecclesiastical law?’”

Jesus spoke very little of whether his intention and purpose was to found a new religious sect that was separate and apart from conventional Judaism. ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law [of Moses], or the prophets,’ Jesus taught, ‘I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’ Further, when Jesus spoke of the ‘kingdom of God’ or the ‘kingdom of heaven’—which appears to have been his central purpose and objective—he very rarely, if ever, discusses any requirements for joining a ‘church’ in the conventional sense of that term. Jesus himself often taught in the Jewish synagogue and practiced Judaism. In the *Book of Luke*, Jesus

is described as first launching his formal ministry by going into a synagogue on the Sabbath day, in Nazareth, where he had lived since his childhood. In the *Book of John*, Jesus answered one of the Jewish high priests, saying, 'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in secret have I said nothing.' And in the *Book of Matthew*, Jesus is described as having gone 'about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people'....

Given that Judaism rejected Jesus' teachings, the followers of Jesus could not feel comfortable remaining within conventional Judaism—they needed to form their own religious sect or communities. But Jesus said nothing specifically about how such sects or communities would be managed and governed? According to Roman Catholic tradition, Jesus himself authorized the universal Catholic Church, when "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Borjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' This is the Catholic Church's reasoning for placing church authority in the Pope. However, the history of Christianity appears to belie Catholic tradition, given that St. Paul's influence far outstripped St. Peter's, in terms of defining conventional Christianity, and the numerous other Christian Churches which may have pre-dated the Roman Catholic Church, including the Ethiopian church, the Alexandrian Church, and various other Christian communities stemming from the religious communities that formed around John the Baptist who baptized believers both prior to and during Jesus' earthly ministry. It appears that such 'wild-cat' or 'maverick' Christian communities spread and hundreds of persons believed that he was the Messiah and the Son of God. Not only were some of these persons converted, but they appear to have been vested with Jesus's spiritual power to heal and to cast out devils. In the *Book of Matthew*, for example, the disciple John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us, and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, than can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.' For whomsoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.' Who are 'these little ones' to whom Jesus was referring

to, except those believers who were not officially associated with the twelve disciples or officially called as an apostle? ‘These little ones,’ at least from my perspective, certainly invest ‘church authority’ into the hands of non-Catholic churches. Obviously, the man who started preaching and casting out devils, had not been formally called by Jesus to serve as an apostle or disciple; but rather, this man had merely heard about Jesus and believed on Jesus’ name. He apparently did not rush to go and join the twelve apostles, but thus believing on Jesus’ name, he simply went into the ministry and started casting out devils in the name of Jesus! When Jesus heard about what this man was doing, Jesus not only prohibited this twelve disciples from stopping this man from casting out devils in his name, but he went so far as to say ‘whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.’ This teaching is consistent with Jesus’ concern with ‘religious substance,’ rather than ‘religious form.’ Jesus cares very deeply for all those persons who believe on him and who carry out his commandments, even though they are not officially appointed by him or amongst the original apostles. In other words, Jesus is very interested in ‘street-corner’ ministries, even though they may not be formally authorized by the Roman Catholic church or other mainstream or conventional church denominations. In fact, Jesus not only appears to have invested St. Peter with church authority and leadership, but he also appears to have invested all true believers with the same authority, where he says, ‘[v]erily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, *That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*’ This passage certainly appears to place church authority in non-Roman Catholic churches....

Even more radical, Jesus of Nazareth does not appear to ever require ‘church membership’ in order to be a true believer, follower, and child of God. His compassion is so tremendous, and his influence into the depths of the human soul so pervasive, that human-made religious symbolism and convention simply cannot provide adequate definition or containment....

In conclusion, Jesus has authorized the ‘church,’ but he did not restrict the church to a particular liturgy, set of administrative rules, denominational doctrine, structure, or form—the kingdom of God can not be so constricted or confined. There appears to be more than one church, but all comprising a single body of Jesus Christ. The fundamental requirement for ‘church membership’ is that a person be truly ‘born again.’ In other words, one must have the Law of Moses

inside of the heart. For as Jesus himself said, ‘[v]erily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....’

Specific Christian church denominations are, nevertheless, beautiful cultural expressions and reflections of the Christian faith. Their rules of discipline are in most cases pragmatic guidelines for following the Christian faith and efficient methods for carrying out the church mission. The ‘kingdom of Heaven’ or the ‘kingdom of God,’ however, ought not to be confused with conventional denominational or even non-denominational Christianity. The former is more expansive and eternal and cannot be harnessed or organized into a human institution in the present temporal world, as the Roman Catholic Church seems to purport; while the latter constitutes communities of Christians who aspire to fulfill Jesus’ mission and commandment to ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ These Christian communities are ordained. They are very pragmatic and useful tools. Their laws, rules, and ordinances—i.e., ecclesiastical or canon laws—are laudable, insofar as they promote advancing the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, according to Jesus’ own teachings, church membership and (or) obedience to ecclesiastical or canon laws [Footnote in original text]¹⁶⁴ simply do not appear to be mandatory requirements for reaching entrance into the kingdom of God.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ “FN 1483 I refer here to ecclesiastical or canon laws which merely implement Church administration or procedures and which do not correlate or relate to mandatory Divine laws, such as Jesus’ admonition against blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁶⁵ Roderick O. Ford, *Jesus Master of Law: A Juridical Science of Christianity and the Law of Equity* (Tampa, FL.: Xlibris Pub., 2015), pp. 349-359.