

# The Enlightenment – Good and Bad News for the Church

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 November 2012

Preacher: Shelagh Westberg

[ 0 : 00 ] I want to just say just a few very short words of introduction, preparatory words, and then a word of prayer.

I'll get into the meat of this. I hope there is some meat in it from my perspective. I know there will be from my esteemed colleague. I was told that the order would be Harvey and then Sheila, and I was thinking about this this morning.

I should let my mind wander like this during church. I was at the 7.30. Now you know what's Harvey thinking about during that set-apart time over there. And as you will know, again, I'm speaking first, then Sheila.

I was thinking, you'll know, I don't know, Jim Packer would know, but other people in the room would know. I think it was bishops, church leaders, church teachers around the years, maybe 100 and into the second century had to sometimes admonish Christians not to seek out martyrdom. And so I might be guilty of that this morning, speaking first, then having Sheila point out my many errors. But there you go.

[ 1 : 18 ] I was sharing with Sheila on Tuesday. We did, we were talking about, we won't let this become a brawl. We can't let it get out of hand.

There'll be no fighting or anything. The Christian courtesy will, of course, dominate. I'm reminding Sheila of this now. And I shared with her a lovely anecdote.

It's dangerous to share a historical anecdote with Sheila, as you'll know, because you're liable to start it and then she'll finish it for you. Take it somewhere where you didn't want to go with it.

But I did share with Sheila. I read recently that Luther's brilliant. He was brilliant. His colleague, his younger colleague. He with, I like to call him, he with the unpronounceable name.

Philip Melancthon. That's a go at his name. I'm sure you've read about him. He, late in his life, I think he may even have been on his deathbed. Literally, he wrote a meditation about, about as he looked forward to eternity and meeting the Lord.

[ 2 : 20 ] And he apparently, I'm not sure if he said this with a twinkle in his eye or if he was completely serious, maybe a bit of both. But he did say that one of the joys of heaven, again, that he was looking forward to, is that there he would be delivered from the, and this is his phrase, he'd be delivered from the fury of theologians.

You know, he had spent, in the 16th century, he probably couldn't escape the fury of theologians. So, again, I was warning Sheila that there'd be no fury in our exchange of ideas about the enlightenment.

Anyway, there's some background and some, a bit of background. And you're not in for a brawl, but hopefully some sharing about the issue of how Christians ponder the past, specific things about the past.

It's a big topic. But I think it's, as I get older, thinking about the past becomes more important.

Everything's past, in a sense. So, just before we begin, let me say a word of prayer.

Lord, thank you that you've given us the gospel of Jesus Christ to think about in so many ways. It's so rich and amazing. It's a transforming power in the world.

[ 3 : 37 ] And we would ask that, in your grace and mercy, that you'll give us a greater grasp of it as we ponder important things, things that ultimately impact the gospel that is our life and health and joy.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. My current, I want to call her my current intellectual mentor, who I spoke about in this place a few weeks ago, I was going to call her my intellectual

girlfriend, is one Marilyn Robinson, a great American novelist and thinker.

The more I read her, I read her and reread her these days. She simply amazes me with her insight and seems to me her insight about the human condition and the Christian gospel.

She notes, this wonderful woman, I don't apologize for praising her highly. She notes and ponders, and this is in some lectures she gave at Yale a few years ago, the Terry lectures they're called.

She notes and ponders in those lectures, and I'm sure she's not the first to do this, but I've never heard it done more eloquently than by this woman. She notes and ponders what she calls, it's an interesting word, she calls something threshold-ism.

[ 5 : 03 ] Threshold-ism. Threshold, we don't know what a threshold is. She wants to talk in these lectures a bit about threshold-ism. All or much modern thought, she claims, thrives on threshold-ism.

The belief to define threshold-ism, the belief that, and you hear this all the time, and when I first read this I started pondering it. She's a wonderful thinker, she makes you think, what else is a thinker supposed to do?

I realize how often in my own life I do this, almost automatically, without really thinking about what I'm doing too much. Threshold-ism, it is again the belief that a major something has happened, or a major something has been thought, and since then, everything is different.

Threshold-ism. Something's been thought, something's happened, now everything's different.

Threshold-ism. You know, you've heard it.

Since Freud, maybe in conversation you have heard this rather sharply from some people. Maybe a relative, Christmas dinner. Since Freud.

[ 6 : 29 ] Since Darwin. Since Marx. Since the rise of modern science. I'm sure you've heard that one. And in some contexts, have you heard this? She doesn't list these, by the way, I'm doing it for her.

Since the rise of critical, biblical scholarship. Since then. Since then. Yes, we hear about it all the time. Since some event, perhaps.

Since the French Revolution. Since the American Revolution. You see, in threshold-ism, some definitive something is crucial.

Yes. Before, therefore, is somehow in the shadow now. It's discredited. Yes. Behind us. After we move into a new, and usually always an enlightened time.

Yes. This is modern thought. Happens all the time. Threshold-ism, she calls it. This, and I think we can safely call it this progressivist view of history, may be, after all, simply true.

[ 7 : 40 ] Or, it may be, as we describe the past, it may be unavoidable to fall into this way of thinking.

After all, it may be true again. Things do happen in history, and things have happened, and things do change. There's no question about that. If I understand Marilynne Robinson, she, in these wonderful Yale lectures, is very concerned to highlight what she considers this to be, and she considers it to be a very dangerous rhetorical strategy.

She thinks this devastates a lot of thought. This is no little thing, as Marilynne will tell you. This devastates a lot of modern thought.

Makes it, in fact, nonsense. This threshold-ism. What, after all, has been overcome? What has been established by this great new threshold authority since Darwin?

Since Freud? Since the rise of modern science? Since, since, since, since. You know? Does threshold-ism, she speculates, and she believes, obviously, does not threshold-ism really just establish what she would consider to be, and she thinks that modern thought is summed up by this in a lot of ways, catastrophic intellectual laziness.

[ 9 : 18 ] We are all the victims of it, and we believe nonsense for a lifetime because of our catastrophic intellectual laziness coming to fruition in this, into expression in this, what she decides to call threshold-ism.

Since Freud? Since Darwin? Since Marx? Since the rise of modern science? Since, since, since. I would, just in passing, you know, we Protestants have a bad habit of doing this.

Since the Reformation, you know, some Protestants don't think anything happened in the Church of value in the Middle Ages. Church fathers don't know a thing about it, don't want to. Since the Reformation, we got it.

Threshold-ism. It's there, it's everywhere. Brad Gregory, speaking of the, a great historian of the Reformation, a historian at Notre Dame, at the high privilege of hearing him lecture on, back in this early spring.

He speaks of history as the story of, and his key words are, again, I know this isn't new with Brad Gregory, but he says it so brilliantly, it seems to me, so clearly.

[10:29] History is the story of retentions, and rejections, and transformations. The past, he quotes, right off the bat in one of his wonderful books, he quotes William Faulkner, the genius, his novelist.

Faulkner said, the past is never dead. It isn't even past, said Faulkner. This, you see, as opposed to the decisive end of something at a threshold.

You see, there's two distinct views of the past that work here. Thresholdism is one very popular modern strategy for thinking about the past, as opposed to this, I would call it, much more nuanced, much more realistic picture of history as retentions, we hold on to things, rejections, some things are challenged, and apparently put aside, and then transformations.

Just an aside here, in case this does seem a bit abstract, I think it's very real, it is abstract, oh, I know. Just an aside again, when reading the Bible, say, as a whole, think how relevant it seems to me this is.

Reading the Bible as a whole, as a divine totality, as a, as a heaven-breathed salvation narrative, and I take it all mature Christians want to get to the place where they so read the Bible, as a totality.

[12:05] It isn't just, oh, something's gone away, I don't read the Old Testament anymore, it's gone, it's over. No, we read it as a totality, again, one heaven-breathed salvation narrative.

We see, in the unfolding of Holy Scripture, Genesis through the Pentateuch, through the wisdom literature, through prophets, through gospel, and epistle, through apocalypse, through all of that drama, that totality, that divine drama, do we not see there, retentions, and we see rejections, of a sort, and transformations?

We do. My psalm this morning, just happened to be Psalm 110, where there's a passing reference, to a chap named Melchizedek. Ah, yeah, and that takes you back to Genesis, and it takes you forward, to the letter to the Hebrews.

Melchizedek, you know, was this pagan priest, who falls into the narrative of salvation, very strangely, and then, in a sense, he's set aside, but then he's transformed, into a picture, of a genealogy-less one, who is a priest, who is Jesus.

Oh, how strange is scripture, in its, retentions, its rejections, its transformations. Good way to look at history, good way to look at scripture.

[13:33] Very, and if you, and when you come to the gospels, ah, there is someone, there, isn't there, who talks about things old, and things new, and one must be wise, in dealing with them, things old, and things new.

Rabbi Jesus, tells us, get good at thinking, about things old, and things new. Tells us that. Coming then, right to this morning's issue, I can't be too long, this morning.

The enlightenment, the enlightenment, has been presented, I would think, I don't want to be unfair to it, as I'll define it in a minute, as I understand it.

The enlightenment, has been presented, as a chief, perhaps as the chief watershed, the biggest threshold, ever.

The enlightenment, enlightenment, even what it calls itself, is pure thresholdism. I wish Margaret, Marilyn, Margaret, Marilyn Rumson, would talk more about this.

[14:40] She leaves thresholdism behind. I wish she would talk about it, in terms of the enlightenment, but surely, here we have a threshold thing, for sure. Oh, how large it looms, in the modern narrative, of thresholdism.

The enlightenment. Or, to use Gregory's language again, the enlightenment view, of the world, is one complete, rejection, of the past.

You can find, enlightenment thinkers, Thomas Jefferson, and others, who will let loose, and literally say things like, I, hate, the past. There, and the French Revolution, there were many thinkers, philosophy, those famous philosophy guys, who, contributed to the, the great thought, that came from the French Revolution, who spoke of the past, just with utter contempt.

It was something just to be. It was a disgrace, the past. A shameful thing. The many evils became, just a byword, for that which was execrable.

Shameful. A shameful time. Man was growing up now, getting over it. A great threshold had arrived. So one of the French guys said, Jesus is not the light of the world, we are.

[16:05] Again, Gregory's language helps us here, it seems to me, this rejection of the past, is that live and well, the enlightenment.

Retentions are minimal, if they're there at all, and if they're there, they're regarded as unimportant. Now, the enlightenment project, the enlightenment project, as Alastair McIntyre calls it, in his book, of a generation ago, he, the enlightenment project, steps forward, to transform everything, and everything that comes before, is just, hardly worth, one's attention.

There it is. The enlightenment project, I'm sure, is real, and powerful, in our midst. It may be, I don't know, I, my own conviction is, just, I think it's the biggest idol, in western, or even world history, enlightenment.

An idol, as you know, is the dynamic, of the non-existent. Even if it is a fantasy, this enlightenment thing, even if it never happened, it is powerfully believed in, in our culture.

The non-existent, may have great power. I must move along here. The enlightenment, very swiftly, as I understand the matter, here's a kind of snapshot, a medley of people, events, and attitudes, that it is, and that it commends to us.

[17:32] Very briefly. Do not live by, if the enlightenment was a person, if I was the enlightenment, and addressing you this morning, I would say things like this. Do not live by, or under any received authority.

Yeah, get rid of it all. Reason, and reason alone, must rule in our midst. So says, the enlightenment. There is, by the way, a pure reason, and a practical reason, and if you want to know, how to work all that out, just read the books, of Immanuel Kant.

Trouble is, no one's ever understood, a word he wrote. Well, that's an exaggeration, but boy, I don't think he understood, a word he wrote. The French, this is very powerful stuff, in some ways, I don't know, the French, and the American revolutions, have demonstrated, that all the established orders, may be, indeed should be challenged, and overthrown.

The enlightenment had lots, to go on, lots of material, to work with, in real, concrete, historical terms. There have been, long standing, established orders, in the world, and look, they can be overthrown.

That was, Don Lewis will tell you, Don Lewis speaking, that's what he said, he'll tell you, how biblical exegesis, changed, after the French revolution. It so shook up, human beings.

[18:56] What kind of a world, do we live in? Is nothing established? Is nothing anchored? Is nothing for sure? When, when old, institutions are overthrown, it really shakes up, shakes up human beings.

The enlightenment, didn't happen by accident, it said, wow, the world can be remade. We can get rid of churches, get rid of kings, get rid of priests, get rid of these people.

The Puritans, had chopped off, the head of a king, let's try a republic. Let's try something new. The history has, these times of, big change. The enlightenment, makes us focus on that, and ponder, what that might be about.

Attitudes about the world in the 18th century, were of course, where a lot of the enlightenment thinking is concentrated, were of course various, but what came to be called the enlightenment view, which again, I think, in some ways, still dominates us in our time.

It all shared, I think, a family resemblance. Yes, there are variations on the theme of enlightenment, but in France, in Scotland, Scots were involved in this enlightenment thing.

[20:04] Think of David Hume. Think of Voltaire. In central Europe, think again of Immanuel Kant, there was a sensibility that began to be, began to spread through Western, the Western world, its thinking, its institutions.

There was definitely a kind of hard, hard enlightenment and a soft enlightenment, just in passing. I think Bertrand Russell was an inheritor of what you might call the hard enlightenment.

He really didn't like, he once would say, he would be, he was happy to say, the world would be better off without any religion. He wished, he just wished the world would get rid of all religion.

But then you think of a man like the famous Matthew Arnold. He also recognized what he thought was the death of faith in his culture, the death of Christianity.

But for him, it was a something to lament, something sad, something was, was being lost, that you want, you know, old ruins of churches sort of moved his soul.

[ 21 : 14 ] So there's a hard enlightenment and a soft enlightenment. You can't, the enlightenment is something that has to be looked at in some, with some care. The enlightenment, again, real or imagined, happened in Europe.

On one view, and here I'm sort of stealing an idea from Brad Gregory again. He might not quite agree with this. Maybe I'm extending an idea of his too far.

But it gives you an idea of how you might understand the enlightenment. The enlightenment might be called an intensification. This is, Gregory loves to think about this kind of thing.

The enlightenment might be really an intensification of the radical reformation. So the kind of thing Gregory would ask you to think. The attitudes of tearing down, of I'm an authority, I've got the Bible, I'll establish the truth, my little group, we don't need a magisterium, we don't need big churches, we don't need hierarchies, we don't need priests, I can know God, I've got a Bible, that kind of me, me, me.

That attitude, if you intensify it, it becomes, in fact, when it's full blown, it becomes the enlightenment. If, this enlightenment thing, as I draw to a close, rejects, and yet retains, a kind of radical reformation sensibility.

[ 22 : 39 ] I am the one who decides, no authority instructs me. That's a kind of, there's a kind of family resemblance at a deep, deep level, perhaps, with the radical reformation, and the enlightenment.

From a Quaker to Emmanuel Kant, there may not be a big difference. A lot of these guys have genealogies that go back to pietist roots. It's probably not an accident.

History is a strange drama, isn't it? So, just a few observations where I sit down and we get to the truth of the matter. Surely, the Christian can say that the self should be strong and assured in the world.

That's what the enlightenment at its best wanted for people. Out from under oppressive authority, let's stand up and be fully human. Yes, the self should be strong and assured.

The Christian, after all, we're told by our mainstream Christian for sure, the Christian is a free lord of all, subject to none. That's Luther. But the Christian, Luther also said, is a servant of all, subject to all.

[ 23 : 53 ] Luther had a more subtle and deep understanding of the self in the world than I think the enlightenment has ended up with. Yes, let's all be strong, but who wants to use their strength in the service of others, as did Jesus Christ, the one asleep in the boat.

He was strong and he used it in the service of those who were afraid in the world. Tis excellent to have a giant strength, said Shakespeare.

Tis tyrannous to use it like a giant. That's a Christian attitude. Enlightenment has some, a trajectory towards some very good things. I think it's stolen Christianity whenever you find something good there.

Our faith, I would think, our faith, I must close, our faith, I would hope, has the power in it, has the power always in it to heal.

Christianity can heal the enlightenment. The hard modern view, as we may call it, as we may call it, and here I summarize Marilyn Robinson, will tell us, just think of it, this is where the enlightenment view goes.

[ 25 : 04 ] And I'm back to Marilyn Robinson as I close here. The modern view will tell you that, and she says this with some passion, Marilyn Robinson, the modern view, she's angry about the modern view now, which contains the enlightenment.

It will tell you that Palestrina and Bach and Rembrandt and the book of Job and Sophocles were not about what they thought they were about.

They may be reduced and decisively without remainder be explained in terms of economics, sexual dynamics, and biological substructures.

The reason Bach wrote his music, he was probably looking for a mate, Freud would tell you. And we laugh, but that's what the modern view is.

That's what the modern view has become. That's economic dynamics, sexual dynamics, biological substructures in some forms of aggressive Darwinism.

[ 26 : 10 ] That can explain away the whole past. Oh, what a threshold we've reached. Now we know that Palestrina and Bach and Rembrandt and whoever wrote the book of Job and again Sophocles, the list goes on.

Now they didn't know what they were talking about, but the moderns do. Oh, Marilyn Rums has such contempt for these people. We have become, she thinks, a contemptible civilization and we don't know it.

We are contemptible. The modern view is contemptible. The Enlightenment view spawns a contemptible view of the world. No, says Marilyn Robinson, no, and no, says our faith.

We are created, we've got to find a way to say this again as Christians in the public space of the world. We are created in God's image. We have to say that again.

If we forget how to say that, we lose. We are created in God's image. We are created to know and to enjoy God forever. A good Calvinist like Marilyn Robinson would say amen to that.

[ 27 : 20 ] We live by faith. We live by faith and by faith, by faith, we seek understanding. There is no understanding of the world without faith.

The Enlightenment is raw. And we were brought up in the midst of these lies. We've absorbed them into our bloodstream. We're all threshold people.

We've absorbed it. We've got it into us. Let's get rid of it somehow. Thresholdism, a postcard, I'm going to sit down. Yes. Yes.

Yes. There was, there is one moment in history when thresholdism was established as true. You can read it in 1 Corinthians 15.

That's when God decisively changed everything. Everything before the resurrection is one thing, after it is another. There is the threshold to hold on to. Christ is risen.

[ 28 : 19 ] He is the light of the world, not the Enlightenment. Christ is the light of the world. There's a few words about the Enlightenment. I hope that's helpful.

It's awfully short. It's awfully broad, dealing with a lot of material. And I know we're going to discuss, after Sheila, we're going to have discussion time too. We can fill out these things and there you go. Yay and amen.

Thank you, Lord. And now, thank you for listening. Thank you.

for listening to I hope you don't mind that.

I always learn new words when I listen to Harvey. Thresholdism. I can use that, Harvey. Thanks a lot. It was in our other building, but in Learner's Exchange, that I first heard that the Enlightenment was a bad thing.

[ 29 : 47 ] from a Regent College student. And I thought, oh gosh, he's not getting an A for that paper. But then when I heard it a second time, I thought, what are they teaching out there?

Because I thought, you know, do they ever look at what historians say about the Enlightenment?

Now, I know that Harvey wants to make thresholds throughout history and he's probably right.

And St. Marilyn, we're going to be hearing more from, I'm sure. But Harvey and I have agreed to an entente cordial for today.

And we are... Haven't we? Yes. So he has introduced us to some Enlightenment ideas and I wish to go a little bit further into certain of these and also to describe the Enlightened society that arose during this period that we call the Enlightenment.

And I'll nail it down a little bit more as we go on. We accept that this period was characterized by skepticism toward church doctrines, individualism, which Harvey has mentioned, belief in the value of science and the experimental method, the use of reason that is incidentally another way of arriving at truth, the use of education as a catalyst for social change and the demand for political representation.

[ 31 : 23 ] While there are examples of these ideas being explored prior to the Enlightenment, the pace of change and the outcomes for societies of the European world and its colonies was unstoppable.

In other words, it gained momentum as it went on and for very good reasons. Challenges to authority in its various manifestations is a theme that runs through Enlightenment thinking.

If we look at those characteristics which I've just mentioned, skepticism toward the church, the church had been a considerable authority. The Catholic church had been an authority for 1,500 years in Europe and very powerful because it had control of heaven or hell and therefore it trumped the power of kings and princes.

So, that kings and princes were another form of authority that everybody was used to and suddenly these things began to be questioned in some quite dramatic ways.

Individualism. Collectivism, the strong sense of community had characterized the Middle Ages which Harvey referred to and much of the Renaissance as well and suddenly first person singular became to be much more important.

[ 32 : 47 ] This wasn't a new idea during the Enlightenment. It was just an idea that gained momentum. It was, after all, Martin Luther that sort of said, you know, we are important as individuals and why not?

If God sees the little sparrow fall, is he not going to care about what happens to me? If he clothes the lilies of the field, is not this also evidence of how important I am to God?

What's wrong with standing up in saying that? Belief in the value of science and the experimental method. Scientists had had a very difficult time in the pre-Enlightenment period.

When you think about it, and I'm dashing over some centuries here, Copernicus died badly. Galileo didn't, but it took 400 years to get that far.

If you were a scientist, if you were carrying on experiments, there was a time when you could be accused of witchcraft, sorcery, and all those other nasty things. So people that wanted to use science as a way of finding truth didn't get a whole lot of help doing that because the spirit of the times was against them.

[ 34 : 03 ] The use of education as a catalyst for social change. If education had been universal, it would have been. And that idea of a universal education was part of enlightenment as well.

We'll discuss that in a minute. Education had always been attached to a certain class of people, the clergy, even though there were plenty of them that did not actually have theological training. Anybody who could mumble their way through the mass could usually be attached to a parish at some point in time. But the idea that everybody should be educated was certainly something that was gaining ground during the enlightenment.

And that this could be a catalyst for social change. It was educated people that led the march toward this. Harvey, I thought Harvey was going to talk about philosophers today.

We didn't consult about this talk. So I have left out Diderot, Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau, et cetera, thinking that Harvey was going to mention them.

[ 35 : 08 ] But these were people whose ideas went into print and were circulated. Men who never took up a sword, men who did not participate in revolutions actually did ignite the fire of revolution and social change.

So while there were ideas being explored prior to the enlightenment, everything changed, really, in terms of momentum. Now, it was not, it had not been an easy journey to get to this point.

If we take as a rough guide that this period covered the years, Harvey's going to hate this bit, maybe the rest of you will too, 1642 to 1799, we go from the death of Galileo to the end of the French Revolution.

And the French Revolution is frequently referred to as a culmination of the Enlightenment period. You don't have to believe that if you don't want. The years immediately before were some of the bloodiest that Europe had ever seen.

And England too. Bear in mind that ours is a made-in-England church. Not a made-in-England faith, but a made-in-England church.

[ 36 : 25 ] So obviously, our church was going to be affected by this. England was not exempt from trouble. England was often excluded from European troubles by virtue of being an island.

You know, geography plays a big part in history. It's almost like Fortress UK, you know. The water was a wall until the channel was built that protected England in some cases from the skirmishes on the continent.

But this was a period when both of them had wars going on at the same time. And both of them were separate and distinct wars. Here we go. During the early 1600s, England, where there was no separation of church and state, Henry VIII had made himself the head of the church.

It is still true that England has no separation of church and state. They had had a civil war and killed a king. Oh, gulp, gasp, regicide.

All the way back to Greek tragedies, 500, 600 years BC, the death of a king, the killing of a king, was a signal of chaos. Chaos always ensued, the killing of a king.

[ 37 : 41 ] And here, the English had done it. The English had killed a king. And it became a republic, but after 11 years of Cromwell, decided that it would be nice to have the monarchy back, but let's limit its powers a bit.

I think Cromwell, you know, succumbed to, Harvey will know, I don't, who was it, said, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Well, Cromwell did the same thing that Charles I had done. He disbanded parliament and ruled on his own. And curfews, you know, closing the theatres, it didn't appeal to a fun-loving English group. They wanted, they wanted a king that really knew how to celebrate decadence. And they got him back. But the armies of that civil war were largely Puritans, middle-class people against C of E, aristocratic people.

So that the established church, it was actually a political and social and religious war. Meanwhile, across the channel, Europeans were engaged in the longest lasting religious war in history.

[ 38 : 55 ] 30 years. Catholics and Protestants fighting it out over France, Germany, Belgium, all the way to the north. Everything north of the Alps was at war for 30 years.

We don't often think about the total devastation economically and socially that that made in those countries. But just as a sidebar here, the pair that wrote Les Mis, the musical, has written another musical called Martin Gore, which is about a man who comes back from the 30 years war and isn't recognized by his wife.

Yes, I mean, it kind of brings it down to your neighbors when you hear about something like that. It also made a huge dent in the Holy Roman Empire, which had had religious control to that point.

Excuse me. Now, I know that some of you don't like dates, but think about the threshold. Thank you, Harvey. That is being described here.

Follow me through this. Dates are really just pegs to hang events on, so here are the events. That war, the 30 years war, ended in 1648. The next year, England killed a king, 1649.

[ 40 : 17 ] Galileo was born a little while before that, in 1642, and Isaac Newton was born in 1642. Doesn't that sort of have the quality of passing on the torch to it?

I like that bit because it seems as if science is not going to die. Another greater than Galileo is coming along. Philosophers, meanwhile, back at the ranch, were busy describing and discussing the ideas that shaped and propelled the movement.

They helped people understand what the stakes were and what it would take to make changes.

Here, the French philosophers made a really great contribution. Any of you who want, I'm not going to go into detail about this, but if you want to Google the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which was a French document, a philosophic document, that outlined the kinds of freedoms that you and I take for granted, a document that is worthy of anything that the UN has produced.

Really, a very forward thinking document. In a France, you know, where Louis XV was bankrupting the Republic and no chance of putting some of these ideas into immediate practice, but the thought went before the action and we owe them quite a bit.

France was thought of as a safe place for these ideas to be discussed because there was no real capability of putting them into action. Thomas Paine, an Englishman, who wrote, and really a fairly profound atheist, if you want to see the worst effects of the Enlightenment, on a man who didn't just lose faith, I mean, he actually became very, very antagonistic.

[ 42 : 12 ] Thomas Paine had to seek refuge in France because he couldn't get his documents published in England. The French said, we'll publish your book, but when they saw what he had written, they refused to publish a second one.

The English had found these ideas quite shocking and later the French found them unacceptable too. So then he moved on to the English colonies in America.

These colonies, and they loved him, they loved him. The colonies had been a refuge for several kinds of Christians. In the early days of settlement, one could see, for instance, Roman Catholics joining Lord Baltimore to form a colony in Maryland.

Roger Williams took the Baptists to Rhode Island. The Puritans settled in Massachusetts. And Anglicans readily populated Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

So we had these pockets of Christians, and the only record I could find of any actual conflict was when Quakers tried to go to Massachusetts.

[ 43 : 14 ] They were whipped and sent out of the colony by the Puritans, and the two that returned were hanged. Now, Puritans who had been badly treated in other parts of the world seemed to be awfully good at badly treating others when they got the chance, and that is not in any way to their credit.

All of these religious groups, with that exception that I have mentioned, were able to practice their faith in different ways without conflict with others. That is really remarkable when you consider the background I have just described to you.

religious wars in England and the continent long lasting, full of animosity. This kind of pluralism would not have been possible for them in Europe of this period.

They were also far away from the government in London and began to develop their own political institutions while remaining colonies of the crown. Thomas Paine, incidentally, fascinating guy, stayed in the United States, what we now call the United States, for a long time.

He was actually buried there, although his body was moved after his death and I think at least some of it went back across the water. But in the colonies, several of them had representational government before the War of Independence.

[ 44 : 39 ] Representational government. You know, you can elect the people you want ruling you. Brand new idea put into practice, an enlightenment idea.

I think Virginia may have been the first. They had a house of burgesses, but two other colonies also had their own governments and these had to be accommodated in a way when the Constitution was written.

The American Revolution gave these former British colonists a state that was secular, where pluralism was tolerated, where church and state were separated, and where, believe it or not, the Almighty was acknowledged on the coinage, which still reads, in God we trust.

There's kind of a paradox there that nobody has ever successfully explained to me. It enshrined Christian doctrines and principles in its legal and educational systems in ways that have not been seriously challenged until recent decades.

They succeeded, I think, in establishing a Christian country without establishing a theocracy.

Theocracies really don't work. Cromwell tried it.

[ 45 : 53 ] Calvin tried it in Geneva. It has been a truly noble experiment in putting Enlightenment ideas into practice. I think it might also be fair to say that it is still identifiable as a Christian country, even though there are perceivable cracks in the structure.

At the beginning, the religious configuration of the colonies was a patchwork of religious practice. Some colonies, New York, Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, had state-supported Anglican or C of E churches, and Congregationalists were also state-supported.

However, a governor of New Jersey in the late 1600s, in the mid-1600s, wrote that where salaries of ministers were paid by the colony, they didn't make many converts.

Whereas, where there was no such act in place, there were four times as many churches.

Interesting. On the eve of the Revolution, the American Revolution started in 1776, there was one church for every 650 inhabitants.

nearly everyone professed to be a Christian, but only about 20% belonged to a specific congregation. I would put that statistic together with the westward expansion of the American colonies.

[ 47 : 21 ] There would be lots of people who would be living a very mobile kind of life while pushing westward, and the idea of identifying with one church might have been difficult for them.

You might be interested in some statistics, which is why I borrowed Harvey's glasses. All right, the number of congregations in the 13 colonies by denomination in 1776.

Congregational, 668. Presbyterian, 588. Baptist, 497. Episcopal, Church of England, 495.

Quakers, 310. German Reformed, 159. Lutheran, all synods, 150. Methodist, oh, Dutch Reformed, 120.

Methodist, 65. Roman Catholic, 56. Moravian, 31. Separatist and Independent, 27. Dunker, not quite sure what that is, 24.

[ 48 : 35 ] Mennonite, 16. Huguenot, these would be French Protestants, 7. And Sandemanian, someone's going to have to explain that word to me, 6.

Jewish, 5. That's at the time that the revolution started. there is nothing, there was nothing like these to compare in the other colonies in North and South America.

So, in the Western world, the United States, newly formed little country, was actually unique in being able to use the principles of the Enlightenment, what we call the Enlightenment period.

It has always been a mystery to me how many people have been hung up about Genesis when it comes to understanding our world. Why scientific knowledge got such a bad rap among certain

groups of Christians?

I mean, think about it. God made this world for us. Why would he not want us to understand and enjoy it better? why would he not want that?

[ 49 : 49 ] And yet, and I actually blame the Church for not responding to that kind of thinking appropriately. I mean, all right, they were still struggling with how to train the clergy in the 16th, 1700s.

There was no standard training for clergy people at that time. But there is a response to that. Just as a sidebar here, because we still have Anglicans that are mixed up about this, about once a month I go and see a massage therapist.

It keeps me walking, actually. And this man is, I've had him for 12 years. We've discussed politics, we've discussed investments, we've discussed everything. Suddenly, a month ago, I am face down on a table with a hole in the middle of it, naked to the waist, when he says, ah, Sheila, well, you're a well-read sort of person, aren't you?

And I said, thank you. And he said, do you believe in evolution? And I said, of course. And he said, oh, well, but then what about the Bible?

You know, and I said, yeah, what about it? Well, here we got in, I mean, this man is a baptized Anglican, among all those other things that he is.

[ 51 : 06 ] and he didn't know the answer to that question. What about the Bible? So, of course, we got into as much of a discussion as I could carry on without being able to eyeball the man.

You know, it was an awkward situation to be in. One down, definitely one down. But we, the church did not respond appropriately to some of these ideas and lost some good people, educated people, that needed some help to understand the ideas that the Enlightenment was producing and also the later people, much later than the Enlightenment that Harvey referred to, Marx and Darwin and so on, Freud.

These are Victorians, you know. I think the idea of freedom of will, for instance, you know, sometimes poets, Tennyson is the man that I'm thinking of, really described that more beautifully than anything else I've heard.

One of my favorite poems of his is actually sort of a pan to God. And one of, two of the lines say, our wills are ours, we know not how, our wills are ours to make them thine.

That is the authority that should have been okay to articulate during the Enlightenment. Yes, if you want to argue about the church organization and how that's structured and how they did this and not that, go ahead and do it.

[ 52 : 36 ] But really, it is a voluntary authority that we are putting ourselves under when we become Christians. This is what we mean when we talk about our Lord.

Our Lord is the person who owns our loyalty. One other thing about the American revolution and the Enlightenment idea.

I mentioned education earlier and how the idea of universal education had come about. The Americans did establish this as early as 1636 in the colonies and some of their first and still prestigious universities have been religious foundations.

Harvard was a congregational foundation in 1636. William and Mary, founded by Episcopalians in 1693. Yale, 1701, again congregational.

The Moravians established one. Princeton was Presbyterian, 1746. Pennsylvania was non-sectarian but established 1751.

[ 53 : 44 ] Columbia, Episcopalian, 1754. Brown and Rutgers, a few years later, Baptist and Dutch Reformed and Dartmouth which was again congregational.

Now, when they talked about universal rights in the American Constitution, all men are created equal. We hold it as a universal truth that all men are created equal but they did leave out the slaves.

We know that. We know how long it's taken the black Americans to achieve where they are today. and they have not gone as far as they would like to go, I'm sure.

But I think that in terms of how could we define the Enlightenment ideas as having been articulated in a workable form, the American Republic is the first one that actually put most of these into practice and showed us that it could be done.

The problem for them is going to be hanging on to that because there certainly will be challenges in this century and we can see that happening already from other places, from other faiths.

[ 55 : 01 ] And so we need to look very carefully at what those freedoms, what those challenges were that we actually espoused, that we overcame as a result of Enlightenment thinkers and look at how do we proceed, how do we hold on what is dear and accommodate different ideas as they come across our borders.

So let's pray and there, yes, I want to hear from you. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the benefits that the thinkers and doers of the Enlightenment period gave us.

They have challenged our thinking and we know that there is ground there to reclaim. we also know that it is our job to do that, that you have left us with your word, you left us with your son, and from this point we need to help people understand that our God is an enlightened God.

These things we ask in Jesus' name. My question for you. buying him back, he took him to my ■