Art and the Reformation

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[0:00] Well, good morning. It is good to be with you all this morning. This past April, I had the pleasure of sharing with you about Jonathan Edwards, and we talked about the way he understands beauty and creation and seeing God in creation.

And this morning, we're going to turn back the clock another 200 years or so, and we're going to go back to that time of tremendous political, social, and above all, religious change known as the Reformation.
500th anniversary coming up, so lots of festivity and fanfare, and I know that Sheila, I believe, will be presenting on Luther in the coming weeks. So this is but a prelude to hopefully more Reformation studies happening here at Learners Exchange.
When you hear the Reformation, what comes to mind? Martin Luther. Iconoclast.
Iconoclast. What does that mean? Iconoclast. We'll talk about that this morning, actually.
[1:17] It's one of our topics. Other things that come to mind? King James Bible. King James Bible. Cranmer. Cranmer. My children being at Catholic school and me being told I was not allowed to talk about the printing press and the invention.

In a kindergarten class. By a lovely Scottish Catholic teacher. Oh my. My children was serious. Wow.
Okay, so these are fraught topics. There's a lot going on in this period. And our topic, Art and the Reformation, what I used to lure you here, that's an excessively broad topic.
And so we're going to narrow in on something a bit more manageable this morning. We'll be looking specifically at how religious art in churches changes during the Reformation.
There's a lot more that could be said about this topic. And I know we have artists and art historians and other folks in the room. And I do hope we can broaden things out a bit when we get to the Q&A.;
[2:18] But for now, we'll be looking specifically at how the visual experience of church changes during the Reformation. In his new and quite large book, this is one of the recent tomes about the Reformation that everyone's publishing.

Someone can help me with this man's name. Eire? Carlos Eire? E-I-R-E. You always read these things and don't have to say them out loud.
And suddenly you're mispronouncing someone's name. Carlos Eire, in his recent book, this just came out a couple months ago, he says of the Reformation, no Westerner can ever hope to know him or herself or the world he or she lives in without first understanding this crucial turning point in history.
Now, that's a big claim and not one that I'm going to defend this morning.
But if we take Carlos at his word, in some ways our time this morning is a small beginning, perhaps, toward knowing ourselves and our world a bit better.
[3:38] And more specifically, towards understanding one particular aspect of our religious world, the decoration of our churches. Because even though the Reformation is 500 years distant, and there are many later ideas and developments, which we could talk a lot about, that shape our churches, what happens in the Reformation does establish really significant trajectories.

So what we discover when we look at this period, is that there is a general move away from what are perceived to be the aesthetic and spiritual excesses of the late medieval world, towards something simpler and more doctrinally pure.
So we're going to see a move away from aesthetic and spiritual excess, at least as it's perceived, toward simplicity and doctrinal purity. This movement will take markedly different shapes, depending on how doctrinal purity is understood.

And this morning we'll consider the religious aesthetic setting of the late medieval world, and then we'll look at three different Reformation responses. We'll see that the Lutheran strand of the Reformation does, in fact, primarily reform religious imagery.
The Calvinist or the Reformed strand is going to relocate religious imagery. And the Roman Catholic or Tridentine strand will militate religious imagery.
[5:12] So we have the Lutherans reforming, the Calvinists relocating, and the Roman Catholics militating religious imagery.

At each point along the way, we will observe that the Reformation ideals governing each of these responses are, in fact, inseparable from other social and political changes.
Many times these religious ideals give birth to social and political change. Other times they're supported by social and political change. In this, we will be reminded that the Reformation is indeed a theological phenomenon, but it is not exclusively so.
Now, you may be asking, where are the Anglicans? This is Lerner's Exchange, that's one of the pillars, Anglicanism. What we say about the Reformed strand will have significant crossover with much that happens in England, because Calvin's ideas do so thoroughly inform Puritan theology. But the English situation is so different, politically and otherwise, it really does require its own lecture to do it justice. Hopefully we can talk a bit more about this in the Q&A;, but for now we'll just be looking at these three strands, and then perhaps in the Q&A; having inclinations towards the Anglican implications.
[6:38] So first we're going to begin with the religious and aesthetic setting of the late medieval world. This is well illustrated by this work of art, the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece.

It was painted between 1440 and 1445, and it depicts the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, ordination, marriage, and the last rites. These sacraments were understood as means of grace to the believer. Moments when the common person, through the mediation of a priest, encountered God in words, water, oil, bread, and wine.
Now this grace began in the earliest days of a Christian's life, as we see in the depiction of baptism in the bottom left corner. Let's see. No, we're just going to go across.
I have greater empathy for all my professors who use PowerPoint, and I watch them struggle, and now I know what it's like. So we're going to kind of arch our way around. So we start with baptism, and I do commend this image to you.
[7:52] At some point on your own, there's lots of different, you can find it online quite easily. But there is so much in this picture that we can just learn a lot about how Catholic spirituality was understood at the time.

So we start with baptism, and then all the way on the other side, we have the last rites. So there's someone in their sickbed there, receiving the last rites.
And then everything in between. We have confirmation, holy orders or marriage, yearly confession, and in the center, a commemoration of the week in and week out aspect of grace, the Mass.
And in this Mass, Christ's body is mystically present in a piece of bread. The centrality of transubstantiation is underscored by its prominent position in the center of the painting.
So actually, the primary thing that we see is Christ dying, not in fact, the offering of bread. The actual sacrament is back here.
[8:58] It's this priest lifting the host. So that's, the actual moment is quite tiny, and Christ is very largely present into this. Each time the bread is consecrated, Christ dies again.

The altarpiece is a compelling piece of evidence for how the medieval church understood its social role, encompassing all of human life. The painting is also a good window into the visual dynamics of worship at this time.
We get a sense of the vastness of the Gothic cathedrals, the pointed arches, the towering columns, vaulted ceilings, ornate wood and stonework.
The windows in this center panel, towards the back, suggest the splendor of stained glass. We have the priest presiding over the Eucharist at a high altar, situated in front of a screen adorned with carvings of the saints.
And the screen separates the nave, where the whole congregation is gathered, from the choir, where the monks and priests chant the mass, and the reserve host is stored.

[10:06] So there you can see the priest in the back. And so here is a floor plan. So the screen would be right here where this red line is.

This cruciform floor plan is probably familiar to you from art history or visiting other cathedrals. I'm trying to remember if the Catholic cathedral downtown has this floor plan. Pretty much.
Yeah. Yeah. So this is probably familiar to you. So that's the structure happening there. And then two of the most important details in this painting for us are, in fact, the least noticeable.
In the far background of this, in the deep, deep, far reaches of this panel, there's a scalloped altar. It's an additional altar. So we have the main high altar that we sort of saw in the back. And then there's this tiny one here. Late medieval churches were filled with altars, sometimes forming a ring around the entire periphery of the church.
[11:14] And you've probably been to some cathedrals where you've seen this. Lots of different chapels. These were typically dedicated to different saints and became sites for their veneration. And although the presence of just one additional altar in this picture makes it seem like this wasn't that big of a deal, or maybe it's just something the artist was less interested in, the worship of the saints or the cult of the saints and their chapels were a huge part of late medieval worship.

So much so that oftentimes people were worried that they usurped the role of the cross. So journeying with the saints and veneration of the saints became a bigger deal than the cross. During this time, the saints became regarded as powerful helpers and healers. It's a dangerous world. We need folks to support us. And this led to sometimes a transactional relationship between the Christian and the saint.
Prayers and offerings were given in exchange for protection and blessing. And individuals would frequently bequeath money or possessions, such as jewelry or rosaries or fabrics, to provide for the ornamentation of a saint's altar.
And there typically would be an image or picture of the saint there at the altar. One of the parish churches in Moorabath, England, raised funds to make a silver shoe for the statue of their saints.
[12:37] So there really is this sense of adorning. And it would not be uncommon for someone to, their most prized possession, their rosary, for instance, would be given to the church to create a garment for the statue of a saint or some other prized thing.

These donations accomplish two purposes. They increase the religious merit of the donor, simultaneously elevating his or her social standing in the congregation.
So we now see, oh, this is this garment that this person has endowed or, you know, not unlike endowing academic buildings. And we have this that happens today.
It's happening within the church at the time. And we even see this within the seven sacraments altarpiece. The crests at the right and center, right and left of the center panel, commemorate the family that commissioned the work.
So I don't, I don't, I don't, so we have to go back. And it's a little difficult to see, but there's these crests that indicate who made this, who paid to have it made.
[13:45] And art historians have discovered that many of the faces in the painting correspond with local town dignitaries. So there is this sense of advancing our social presence through this.

Donations of this magnitude, of course, were restricted to the very wealthy. Most people can't do this. But even the lower class often made the donations, frequently paying for candles to burn before the saints or other small things.
Rich and poor alike would offer prayers at these altars, asking the saints for their favor. And officially, the Roman church described this action as veneration. It distinguished between worship due only to God from veneration of images.
So these are two separate things. Now, the other important detail for our discussion today is the person standing by the right pillar in the center panel, right here.
Again, it's rather difficult to make out. Though it is difficult to see, the column displays a tablet with prayers that pilgrims, like the one in our image, can pray to receive an indulgence for themselves or a loved one in purgatory.
[14:52] Now, the prayer tablet is spatially distant from our altar. Those are quite far away from each other in the picture. But the cult of the saints and pilgrimage were inseparable.

The more famous the saint, the more compelling the shrine, the more pilgrims come to pay homage and receive indulgences. Relics increased the shrine's prestige.

And these were sometimes a scrap of cloth, a tooth, perhaps a few drops of Christ's blood. In point of fact, the cult of saints was a huge moneymaker for the church.
In addition to the many bequeathals for the saints' altars, pilgrims brought in quite a bit of money, and pilgrimage is a huge deal in the late medieval period. This frequently led to feigned miracles and false relics, many of which were only discovered once the Reformation was really rolling.
Now, in our detailed reading of this painting, we might accidentally miss one of its more self-evident, but equally essential qualities.
[15:55] This is an altarpiece. So it gives us a lot of evidence, but it's also its own thing. It portrays a church, but it also belongs in a church. And it would be hung over the altar that it's helping to explain.

In its explication of the seven sacraments, the altarpiece confirms what Pope Gregory I said in the 6th century. Images are the books of the unlearned.
Any late medieval believer could walk into this church, look up at this, and be impressed with the power and reality of mediated grace. They could see their whole life being swept up into the life of the church.
This is the world that the Reformation speaks into. But before we do that, we are going to take a brief three-minute stretch break, which is less compelling now that there are no longer snacks in this room.
I forgot that we had moved them. But if you need a bit of water or chat with your neighbor about the seven sacraments, you can even come up, actually, and take a look at it a bit better if you like.
[17:00] So the world of the seven sacraments altarpiece is a world on the brink of Reformation. It's a world that Martin Luther was born into and the world that is 95 theses challenged.

Nevertheless, Luther was not overly concerned about religious imagery, at least not initially. Andreas von Karlstadt, one of Luther's colleagues at Wittenberg University, would actually launch the first significant Protestant attack on religious art and imagery.
And there he is looking very robust. While Luther was in hiding at Wartburg Castle, Karlstadt penned, On the Abolishing of Images and that there should be no beggars among Christians.
It's a very snappy title. On the Abolishing of Images and that there should be no beggars among Christians. In it, he established a strong dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual.
He argued, Accordingly, religious imagery that claims to convey spiritual truth is dangerous and deceptive.
[18:21] Karlstadt uses the image of taking a knife out of a child's hand to describe how religious images should forcibly be removed for the good of Christians.

You wouldn't let a child run around with a knife. You won't let a Christian run around with a religious image. His preaching against images was so sustained and so fervent that iconoclasm erupted in Wittenberg.
And we used that word earlier, iconoclasm. This is not just any mob violence. When we talk about iconoclasm, we're talking about the destruction of religious objects for primarily religious reasons.
On January 11th, 1522, Karlstadt led a group of Augustinian monks in what they called reforming their chapel. They removed all of the altars except for one.
Remember, those are the altars for the saints. They smashed statues, burned paintings. This would have been absolutely startling. These monks were turning against the building that had sheltered their religious life.
[19:27] Now, in an attempt to regain control and prevent further social upheaval, the Wittenberg City Council steps in and they say all the images will be removed by the magistrates.

But the mob says, nope, we're doing it first. And they just go out and they take them all. And this rupture of social order is what brings Luther out of hiding and he denounces Karlstadt and his iconoclastic followers.
The posture that Luther develops towards religious imagery differs from Karlstadt's in three primary ways. And we'll hopefully take a look at Luther. There he is.
First, Luther does not propose a dichotomy of the physical and the spiritual, but rather of faith and works. It's his dichotomy, faith and works.
Physical matter can convey the divine. Although Luther rejects transubstantiation, that doctrine at the heart of the seventh sacraments altarpiece, he continues to uphold the sacraments as means of grace with a telling difference.

[20:32] It is the word preached that makes the sacraments alive to the believer, just as it is the word preached that brings meaning and vitality to religious imagery.

It is the preached word that brings meaning. Second, because Luther understands freedom as essential to the Christian life, he maintains that only those things that are expressly forbidden by the Bible should be forbidden.
Luther thought that Karlstadt had fallen back into law and legalism. Religious imagery, writes Luther, quote, is neither here nor there, neither evil nor good.
We may have them or not as we please. So there's freedom. Finally, Luther's position on images is more socially conservative.
This makes sense when we remember that he is dependent upon civil rulers for his survival. After Worms, Luther is a wanted man, but Frederick the Wise continues to keep him safe.
[21:37] The religious images that Karlstadt destroyed were primarily the gifts of nobles and other civil leaders. And Luther worried about the upheaval this would create and that this iconoclasm would, quote, secretly accustom the peasants to revolution.

And we will maybe hear more about this when Sheila shares with us. When the images are removed, Luther insists that it's the magistrates that need to do so.
And this simultaneously promotes religious change and confirms the social order. Nevertheless, Luther does share some of Karlstadt's pastoral concerns.
As the 95 Theses reveal, Luther despises the exploitation of the poor. He was also very concerned about those who engaged with images in a way that he thought was idolatrous.
But he argues that preaching, not iconoclasm, is the best way to remove such images. Like removing poison from a snake. So where Karlstadt says you have to forcibly remove the knife from the child's hand, Luther says you need to slowly and carefully extract the poison after someone's been bitten.
[22:46] So for Luther, there is no dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual. There is freedom to have or not have images. And preaching, not socially disruptive iconoclasm, is the best way to remove corrupted images.

Gradually, a Lutheran aesthetic takes shape as established church architecture and imagery are adapted and reformed to meet distinctly Lutheran needs.
And this conservatism is pretty indicative of the larger Lutheran project. The first Lutheran chapel was built in 1544, but until then, Lutheran Protestants met in former Catholic churches.
You just started a new movement, you don't have a building, what do you do? You take over someone else's building. And you have to make it work for you. So like Karlstadt, the first thing that they do is actually take down all of the altars except for one.
This simplifies the worship space and it also gets rid of that cult of saints that everyone's really worried about. They add pews so that people can be encouraged to listen attentively to the sermon.
[23:59] And the entire space is oriented toward the pulpit. Really, today's Protestant church architecture and arrangement, this is where it comes from.

but it has more of a theater quality compared to what people were used to encountering in their churches. Now Lutherans preferred middle-sized churches because they had better acoustics and sight lines.
Got to make sure everyone can see and hear. And Luther actually described cathedrals as inconvenient for preaching. And this is a pretty huge critique because most medieval towns were competing to have the biggest and best and most opulent churches to get people to come and visit.
And Luther says, no, you can keep your fancy spires, your huge cavernous spaces. It's the word preached and heard, not the splendor scene that's important.
And so we see these changes in the castle church of Toregal, the first church built for a Lutheran congregation. Wow.
[25:02] Whoever took these photos was leaning a bit, but this is, there aren't many photos that you can find of this online.

So this is the first church built for a Lutheran congregation. The pulpit and the altar are the focal points. So we have the altar and the pulpit here. Preaching is elevated so that everyone can see and hear.
The floor plan is rectangular rather than cruciform, so it doesn't really go out to the sides or go farther back. And it is modest in size so that we can hear and see.

Now, removing all of the extra altars did simplify the worship space quite a bit, but it had some unexpected social implications. How will the nobility distinguish themselves without altars to endow?
Does anyone know how they solve this problem? Boxes for their stained glass. Not stained glass. [26:07] Close to boxes. Chairs. Chairs for your family to sit in. So they endow these special chairs. Problem solved. This practice is going to continue for centuries.

It's going to make it over to colonial America. People are going to be paying for pews and places for people to sit. But the chairs were often so ornate and large that parishioners would complain that they couldn't see.
So as a result, many churches passed seating ordinances. They established maximum chair heights so your chair can be no taller than this. So it's one thing to reform church architecture.
It's quite another thing to reform social and economic norms. That takes more work. So we have church architecture that's adapted to suit Lutheran ends.
And the same thing happens with religious imagery. In his later years, Luther increasingly believed that religious art served a helpful pedagogical purpose. But the content differed from the Catholic art in a number of ways.
[27:10] Luther thought that art should be drawn from scripture and history. Things that happened. Saints' lives and other fanciful pictures were not true and therefore weren't helpful.

He also proposed a number of new subjects to take the place of established ones. He suggests that the Lord's Supper paintings of that are especially appropriate for altar pieces.
Which we would think, of course, but not necessarily. This is a bit of an innovation. And that is what we see in the Wittenberg altarpiece. right here.
This was constructed in 1547 for the Wittenberg City Church. It is very similar in shape to the Seven Sacraments altarpiece, but it proclaims a distinctly Lutheran message.
We still have a crucifix in the center, but Christ let's get a little closer here. we see Christ positioned between Luther who's preaching and his congregation.
[28:20] So this suggests that Christ's death is made actual in preaching, not in the Mass. This is what makes Christ present. in accordance with Luther's suggestion, the Last Supper occupies the largest portion of the altarpiece, and we have Luther receiving the cup.

It's a bit dark, it's difficult to see that, but Luther's the one receiving the cup, and this perhaps alludes to the Lutheran practice of offering communion in both the bread and the wine to the lady. So they're making a statement about how we're doing things differently. The left panel shows Melanchthon, another Lutheran leader, presiding over a baptism, so we have the baptismal font right up there, and then we have the right panel depicts John Buchenhagen, he's the pastor of City Church, and he's hearing confession over there.
He's depicted holding the keys of St. Peter, which directly challenges the Roman Church's assertion of papal authority. In all of this, we see how traditional art and imagery were used to advance a distinctly Lutheran message.
These forms were not abolished, but rather they repurposed and revised them. And as a result, we can speak of Luther's approach to images as primarily reformist. We see something much more dramatic happening in the Calvinist Reformation.
[29:52] When you hear Calvin and art, what comes to mind? laughter. Okay. What else? Lack of ornamentation.

Lack of ornamentation. All like a Presbyterian turkey. Okay, a lot of cringing. What was that? Whitewash.
Whitewash. Yes. Okay. So, whereas Luther reforms religious images, Calvin relocates them. So, we have Luther reforming and Calvin relocating them. For Calvin, the threat of idolatry is too grave for religious images of any kind to remain in the church.
Consequently, art moves out of the church and into the homes. And just as we had instances of iconoclasm with Carl Statt, we see very similar things happening with Calvin.
Before Calvin gets to Geneva, actually, Geneva's already been cleaned out of all of its images by Zwingli. Zwingli. And we won't go into all that Zwingli does, but he has a very strong dichotomy between the invisibility of faith and the visibility of unbelief.
[31:06] So, faith is invisible and unbelief is visible. So, if you're dependent upon images and preoccupied with those things, that's a manifestation of your lack of belief.

But true belief is invisible and exists on this other plane. Zwingli preaches so fervently, as Karlstadt, that iconoclasm does break out.
And there are just some vivid descriptions of what happens. In one city, a commentator looked out and described looking upon a scene that, quote, resembled a battlefield after a war.
The images lay everywhere in and about the churches, some with heads missing, others with hands, arms, or legs lopped off. And you'll visit places where you can still see sculptures and statues that have been harmed in these ways.
But not everyone was sad about this. There's lots of folks who were very excited about this, partially because for them, the imagery was connected with this social-religious structure that they found oppressive.
[32:19] And they welcomed the overturning of that. And in many places, iconoclasm was associated with getting the Catholic Church Council to go along with your Protestant demands.

We're just going to destroy everything and eventually people will give in and let us do what we want. There were a number of folks, obviously, if we think about if you're a Catholic in these cities when this is happening, this is, of course, horrifying.
one woman who is the abbess of St. Clara's convent in Nuremberg reported, quote, each day we heard such deplorable, terrible things, how the peasants destroyed so many monasteries and drove the inmates of the convents away in misery from all they had.
Stones were thrown into our choir and the windows broken in the church. I think this is just a really interesting time period. But we also have children in Geneva who, after all this happens, they reportedly pick up the crushed statues and carry them out into the street and they said, here, we have the gods of the priests, would you like some?
Just mocking. So it is this very difficult time and there is a lot. Sides are being drawn considerably.
[33:39] All of this is happening before Calvin shows up. But it's important for us to know about because a decade or so later, similar iconoclasm is going to rock Scotland and the Netherlands and it's going to be done in Calvin's name.

This will happen in England in some ways as well. And this is because Calvin, like Zwingli, is vehemently opposed to religious images. Let's take a look at Calvin here.
Oh, sorry. There's, sorry. There we go. That's one of the, um, some, so that's, that's going to be like a Pieta that has, um, been attacked.
I mean, they really are quite stirring in some ways. Um, and it, it's important to remember that these people aren't attacking objects that we would necessarily think of as, like, oh, aesthetically beautiful, someone's harmed.
It's like, it's not like going into an art museum and just kind of wreaking havoc. Um, but these are religious images of Christ and Mary and the saints. And, um, so here we have John Calvin.
[34:49] Um, like Zwingli, Calvin is vehemently opposed to religious images. For Luther, images were a thing indifferent, but not so for Calvin.

Religious imagery is central to his theological project. This is because worship and not freedom is one of his primary ideas. Worship, not freedom.
Luther was all about the freedom of the Christian. Calvin, worship. According to Calvin, worship is, quote, the soul which animates the body, renders it lively and active, and, in short, makes it not be a dead carcass.
Worship is the soul which animates the body, renders it lively and active, and, in short, makes it not be a dead carcass. Now, I don't know about you, but that's not typically what I think about when I come to church.
This worship is what's keeping me from being a dead carcass. But, Calvin understands that our worship spaces and worship practices frame our vision of God.
[36:00] The prayers we pray, the songs we sing, the rituals we observe and the images we adore, all shape how we understand God. If our practices are false or misleading, we will find ourselves worshiping not the living God, but an idol of our own making.

Or, he might say, an idol of Rome's making. Calvin writes to his Catholic opponents, quote, There is nothing more perilous to our salvation than a preposterous and perverse worship of God.
To combat this preposterous and perverse worship of God, Calvin changes both the way churches are decorated and how congregations use these churches.

First, Calvin banishes all images from the church. We were hearing echoes of this earlier when I asked you what you think of when you think of Calvin and the arts. Calvin believed that fallen people were unavoidably drawn to idolatry.
He writes, For idolatry is a general vice for all people and is deeply rooted in human hearts. Until men are completely renewed, they will find it impossible to resist idolatry.
[37:18] Idolatry is a general vice for all people and is deeply rooted in human hearts. So, Calvin thinks it is absurd for Rome to suggest that there is a real difference between worship of God and veneration of images.

People won't be able to help themselves. And he says it is impossible that such subtle distinctions, as he calls them, could ever be apparent to the common worshiper. So, theologians might be aware of this, but anyone on the ground in a church in front of an altar with images and candles, there is no way they are able to distinguish between veneration and worship.
So, to eradicate this idolatry and confusion, Calvin replaces the altars, the images, the candles, the fabrics, all of that with a simple communion table and clean white walls, which we heard Bill mention.
So, this is an artistic impression of the sort of space. In terms of the sparseness, this is obviously a later piece, but we get a sense of the just very, very white and empty.
There is a piece there in a way though that can be quite, quite moving. What are the things on the ground people kneeling? They are people kneeling. The only decoration might be the Ten Commandments painted on a wooden panel.
[38:43] That's where you would see that. So, we see a removal of imagery changing the way the church looks, but even perhaps as interestingly, perhaps even more interestingly, Calvin's concern about idolatry prompts him to lock the church when the congregation isn't meeting together.

So, previously you would have had a church that people could come in and out of pretty much at all times and medieval churches were in fact used for all kinds of things, meetings, there's accounts of people conducting business in the aisles, but Calvin says no.
When the congregation isn't here, the building is closed. And that's to keep people from using it suspiciously. He doesn't want people to come in and maybe find themselves praying and being confused about things.
These locked doors communicate a pretty powerful Reformed trousseau because God's presence builds the whole earth so we don't need to pray in any particular place. That's a lot of why he does this.
And in fact it's Calvin's commitment to the goodness of creation and God's presence in all the world that allows him to call for non-religious use of the visual arts.
[39:59] So Calvin gets rid of all the images in the church but he says, hey, there's still a place for this. We can still have some art. He is in fact a joyful supporter and enjoyer of God's beauty and creation and this is where Edwards actually, if you were here with me when we were talking about Edwards, this is where Edwards gets a lot of his appreciation of creation.

It's from Calvin. Calvin talks about God's creation as the glorious theater of God and a mirror for God's glory. And it's because he has this high view of God's glory in creation that he's able to affirm human creativity.
Now we may still want him to have more affirmation but this is where what he has comes from this place. He writes in the Institutes, I am not gripped by the superstition of thinking absolutely no images permissible.
But because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each. Lest those things the Lord has conferred upon us for his glory and our good be not only polluted by perverse misuse but also turned to our destruction.
I seek a pure and legitimate use of each. Lest those things the Lord has conferred upon us for his glory and our good be not only polluted by perverse misuse but also turned to our destruction.
[41:34] Those are strong words. Perverted by perverse misuse turned to our destruction. The pure and legitimate use that Calvin advocates is the imitation or copying of the good creation made by God.

So for Calvin we should only create what we can see. Should be no fancy, no imagining things. the best art is going to follow nature.

And this creates a double standard in Calvin's thinking that we may find strange or even troubling. On the one hand he's saying yes, sculpture, painting, media, these are good.
But also we're so idolatrous that we can't have any of those things in our church. They can only exist outside of our church. But he has to do this because he's so convinced of the reality of human sinfulness.
He says that if you were to walk through a painter's workshop or a carpenter's workshop and see something there, you might notice, oh, that looks nice. But the moment it gets put in a church and there's some sort of ritual to place it in the church, all of a sudden you might be compelled to worship it.
[42:49] So lest people make that mistake, we can't allow things to go into the church. They'll completely forget that they saw it in the workman's shop and thought it was just a nice thing.

But now that it's in the church, they'll be compelled to worship it. This obviously has major implications for the artistic culture in Geneva because most of the art at the time was religious. And so most of the artists in Geneva were out of work. They just don't really have much that they can do, at least initially. When reformed art does emerge, it's primarily in the domestic sphere, not in the church.
Can't have art in the church, where does it go? Into the home. This had both positive and negative social functions. First, the absence of art and decoration in reformed churches circumvented the impulse to assert social status in these places.
We saw this with Luther. You get rid of the altars, people will bring in chairs. But there's really not much of that happening in these churches. And so it's possible that the absence of these social signals in reformed churches is partly why Calvinist reform was freighted with such revolutionary fervor.
[44:11] There's a flattening economically that is symbolized in these churches that isn't present with Luther. The reformed sanctuary speaks against that kind of strayation of poverty, piety.

But this also means that art does increasingly retreat into the private reserves of wealthy individuals. Before, a rich person or a poor person could walk into the church and see art.
But only the wealthy can commission artists like Rembrandt to paint their portraits. And so we see here that images which were religious become de-religious and they're relocated from church and society to the home.
So we have Luther reforming the image with a new focus on simplicity and correct doctrine. Calvin echoes these concerns but he further relocates the image moving it outside of the church.
And in our last movement here we'll see how the Catholic Reformation militates the image to counter the heresy of Protestantism.
[45:21] Now, nearly a quarter of a century after the Catholic Church condemned Luther at Worms, the Council of Trent convenes in 1545.

There they are. This photograph was taken at the time. Now, this Council had two primary goals. They needed to define doctrine and reform practice.
And the reforms coming out of this we often do call the Tridentine reforms. Now, it takes them a while to get around to religious imagery. They don't get to that until session 25. This was long. Council met year on, year off. War interrupted it for a while. It was relocated a couple times. A lot of things happened. But finally, in 1563, the Council addresses the questions of religious imagery that were so central to so much of the Reformation.
And the Council acknowledges that some things have not been going well. And so they prohibit images that inspire false doctrine. They admonish artists to avoid impurities.
[46:27] And lastly, they call for a new art to teach and inspire piety through simple, straightforward, and accurate representation of Christian doctrine and church history.

So they're calling for a new art to teach and inspire through simple, straightforward, and accurate representation of doctrine and church history.
Now you might be hearing some echoes of Luther here. We want to have a focus on history, accurate representation of scripture. We may even hear a bit of Calvin, simple, straightforward depictions, not being fanciful.
Above all, though, we should hear a resounding affirmation of Gregory's view that images can educate and inspire piety. When we were back in our medieval world section, he's the one who says, hey, they're the books of the unlearned.

Art is useful. And the Tridentine reforms confirm this. In many ways, this tension that we see, they're acknowledging the shortcomings, but resolving them through self-consciously Catholic means, nicely captures the essence of what happens at Trent.
[47:43] And it provides a counterpoint to what we see happening with Luther. He uses traditional religious imagery to advance his doctrinal aims, and a similar thing happens with Trent.

They're using their own religious imagery to continue to advance their anti-Protestant aims. Trent's decrees on art were taken quite seriously, and they did have significant impact on the visual arts. Not even famous artists could escape these strictures. characters. An artist you may be familiar with. Michelangelo, The Last Judgment. This was strongly criticized for its nudity and the fact that it mixed fantastical elements with scriptural truth.
This is what Trent was trying to get away from. Twice during Michelangelo's lifetime, popes commissioned artists to paint clothing on the naked figures, and Clement VIII almost had the whole thing erased.
So they really are concerned with trying to tighten the reins and have art work for them. The new Catholic art style that emerges out of these concerns is called the Baroque.
[48:54] Probably familiar with this. Unlike the Renaissance that's frequently using classical or mythological themes, the Baroque emphasizes realism. realism.

But it's not just realism. It's realism infused with the supernatural. So we see recognizable human bodies and things that we can relate to, but they still convey the reality of the spirit's power in their lives.
And the Ecstasy of St. Teresa is a somewhat later work, but it exemplifies what one historian has described as, quote, the hyper-reality of the suffering and redemption of human flesh that characterizes the art of this period.
Teresa's shown in a moment of rapture. Her earthly heart is pierced by the mystical love of God. This is a very lifelike image. The tip of her head, we have the movement of her robes, the slightest movement of her fingertips.
It is art that actively protests against Protestant assertions that spirit and flesh can't meet in the saints. Now, in addition to this Baroque style, the subjects of Tridentine art further underscore the combative function of art in this period.
[50:16] Transubstantiation, purgatory, the papacy, aspects of Catholicism most attacked by Protestants are increasingly depicted. Mary also gets a makeover in this period.

So, um, you know, remember, so here she is in the seven sacraments altarpiece. She's fainting at the feet of Christ. Um, unfortunately, I don't, I wasn't able to find an image of her in this period, but in one church, she's pictured crushing the serpent of heresy.
So, like, Mary goes out on, on the charge. Um, this chapel was erected to celebrate the victory of Catholic forces over Protestants. So, in this church that was created to commemorate that, they have Mary crushing the serpent of heresy.
And in another chapel of that same period, um, we see depictions of the death of various iconoclastic emperors in times past.
So, there is definitely this sense that, hey, people who are opposed to images and people who are opposed to our cause, Mary's going to come after you and we're going to depict these things in, in fairly dramatic ways.
[51:21] Um, lastly, so in addition to this, this new style and the new subject matter, the Tridentine reforms prompt a new simplified style of architecture.

This is, um, a Jesuit church in Rome, consecrated 1584. These new churches had lower, flatter roofs to provide better acoustics for the clear articulation of Catholic doctrine.
And this is similar to what we saw happening in the Lutheran churches. Um, these churches also shift away from the cruciform orientation in favor of a larger hall that removes visual barriers to participation in the mass.
Perhaps most significantly, the architectural plans abolished that screen that we saw in our cruciform pattern, that red line. Um, Trent rejects Luther's priesthood of all believers, but embedded in the removal of this screen is some sort of affirmation of lay involvement.
We've literally taken a wall down. Um, but lest we think, oh, they're coming around to Protestant ways of doing things, that shift actually facilitates an attempt to more aggressively shape Catholic identity through effective instruction and liturgical practice.

[52:45] So we're taking this down so that people can be better trained and inspired to be good Catholics, not because we think the Protestants, priesthood of all believers, is the way to go. So we have images reformed by Luther, images relocated by the Calvinist reformers, and images militated, taken out on the charge by the Catholics.

This is a broad brushstroke account of what happens during this period. There's a lot more that we could say about it, and I hope we will do so in the Q&A; in a moment.
But I do want to first briefly return to that assertion at the beginning that understanding ourselves today requires us to reckon with the Reformation.
Reformation. What can we learn from this journey through the past? How might it help us to live and worship well? And I would like to suggest two things, although there are many others that we could suggest as well.
First, our physical worship surroundings do matter. To say this is not to turn ourselves into aesthetes, more preoccupied with style than with substance.
[53:57] This was the charge leveled at so many churches in the late medieval world, often with justification. But neither can we suggest that style is unimportant.

Whether Lutheran, Reformed, or Tridentine, each of these movements insists that the way we decorate our corporate worship spaces does matter. To walk into one of their sanctuaries is to encounter a particular image of reality.
who God is, how he speaks to us, and how we are to respond. And I realize that for some of us this conversation about church architecture and spaces and decoration can be quite sensitive.
My first Sunday at St. John's was our last Sunday in the old building, so I barely know what was lost. But I do know that it was an important, beautiful space that was important to many of you, and that it did indeed convey a particular image of reality.
And it may be difficult for you to worship here in this space that can feel quite different and can seem to communicate very different sorts of things architecturally. But I also imagine there are some of us here who come from traditions that haven't been overly concerned with spaces and decorations.
[55:18] I come from one of those traditions, which is why I wanted to study this. I wanted to figure out where those ideas came from. The church where I served before I came to Vancouver has a sanctionasium.

That is a combination sanctuary and gymnasium with basketball goals on either side. And this is in Kansas City.
And there are probably a number of good reasons that a church could make that kind of design choice. But if we listen to the reformers, we will learn that spaces are not neutral. They aren't just spaces.
They communicate. They shape our ideas, our imaginations, and our communities. They may also convey, however unintentionally, whose gifts are useful to the church and whose are not.
If teaching is prioritized, can artists bring their gifts as well? If artistry is foremost, is there also room for preaching, service, and teaching? Second, our flyover tour of the Reformation, I think, can remind us that theology is never disembodied from history, politics, and culture.
[56:29] This has been a subtle theme this morning, but I think it is important. It can be easy to think of theology as the abstract musings of great men and women. They go into a closet and think about the great deep things, and perhaps they read other people's musings on great deep things.

And certainly, careful thought and genuine intellectual wrestling are essential to the theological enterprise. But theology always has social and political dimensions, and it's sometimes more messy than we would like.
Karlstadt and Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and the Council of Trent all work out their ideas about worship and imagery in the midst of what is happening in the 16th century.
The good, the bad, the ugly, the downright strange. While it would be dangerous to say that theological reflection begins with culture, it always contains and responds to it.
At its very best, theology transforms culture and us. May we be emboldened by these reformers to press into our own world, seeking to model and proclaim the truth and beauty of God.
[57:43] Thank you. So, I would love to open it up and hear from you all.

There's a lot that we could talk about. You might want to bring up some of the Anglican folks that we neglected or other elements that you were wanting to ask or comment on.

Yes? The red line that you talked about that was taken out, that's the rude screen. Yes. And that separates the holy from the rude.
And we are the rude. That is true. Rude is actually a word for cross. Yeah. Yes. But it's also for the rude. Of course.
No, it's... Because we were rude. And that becomes increasingly important after the the Lateran Council of 1215. That's the council that establishes officially the doctrine of transubstantiation.
[58:41] So, it is at that point where these rude strains start going up because if Christ is present in the host once consecrated, we have to become quite worried about what might happen to the bread when it's unattended.

And so, putting up these screens is a way of protecting. There could be other... There's obviously other things happening as well, but it's a practical concern, at least initially. That's why these things start going up. Yes, back here.
Yeah. Yes, would you repeat that quote that starts, Worship is the means and finishes with dead carcass? Oh. That's Calvin.
I will... I'll get that to you afterwards unless anyone else wants me to repeat it. Because it might take me a moment to find it. Olaf. Yeah, so that was brilliant, Megan. Thank you very much.
And you asked us to reflect on how it tells us about ourselves. And I can't help but see my own spiritual pilgrimage in exactly the two-thirds of what you told us about, brought up in the Lutheran context and then moved to a Plymouth Brethren context, which of course is to the left or to the right.
[59:50] Not anything that you said. We didn't even get to the Radical Reformation, right? So, the interesting thing, as I reflect on it, is that the ugliness of the context that the Plymouth Brethren meeting was was something that appalled me.

And I didn't realize how much appalled I was until I came into in fact an Anglican context. So, not only can images be a source of idolatry, but ugliness can be regarded as a virtue, which is in fact an idolatrous thing.
So, thank you for that presentation. Thank you. In what you said about Calvin and locking the church, I was quite struck by the contradiction, and I would like to see if you have anything to say about this.
Okay. We lock the church because prayer and worship can happen anywhere, but at the same time, we cannot bring images into the church because it is a sacred space.
Not because it's a sacred space. Well, in a sense it is, if we can't do this. It's not that it's a sacred space per se. Calvin, so I first researched this for a history class, and then went back and did some more work with Calvin for a theology course, because it just felt like there's too much happening in theology.
[61:33] I hadn't quite gotten my head around. And Calvin is just very much a man of his own time. So, idolatry is this huge deal for him, and it's partly informed by all that's happening in this period.

But he also is a bit of a theological pragmatist, I think, in that he, were there not such gross abuses of these images and things like that, I don't think he would have had to be as extreme in his theologizing.
And I don't think his theology bears out all the positions that he takes. So he, I think he really is, at the end of the day, has a pastoral heart and is quite concerned about what he sees as just corruption.
And he's like, hey, these people, I need to help them. They have an incorrect idea of God. And the only way that's ever going to be fixed is if we get the images out of here. Because the moment they come in, they're just so accustomed to praying to these images in certain ways and worshiping them that, like, it just can't happen.
If he were, it would be interesting to sit down and chat with Calvin today. Because for him, he's like, as long as art is out in the public sphere, it's safe. He's not anticipating what we have, you know, centuries later, where people go to, you know, art museums to have, like, a worship experience.
[62:57] Like, there's idolatry there. So he then would be like, we've got to get it out of the museum and get it back in the church. He just doesn't want people to have a wrong idea about God.

Because for him, if you read the first bit of the Institutes, knowledge of God and knowledge of self are just these two major themes. And if you have a wrong idea about God, you're basically damned.

Like, correct thinking about God is what saves you in a lot of ways. And so if, because if you're worshiping the wrong God, you're going to, things are going to be really bad.
So he has to, he's trying to help people be safe. Harvey. Calvin, correct me if I'm wrong. Calvin believes that human beings are glorious. When you see a human, there's God's image.
A life of anything is very beautiful, but it's not a human being. Humans are the glory of God. And so I think he protects that. Wrongly or right, he wants to protect that.
[63:56] Is that correct? You'll have to speak to that, Harvey. I'm well-schooled in book one of the Institutes, but there's a lot more. And, no, but that, I mean, Marilyn says that.

So if Marilyn says it, it's probably... She probably gets it from Calvin. Sorry, I'm here.
I also grew up in a tradition where church buildings are very plain. It was a Mennonite tradition, and, I mean, that picture of the Calvinist sanctuary was very ornate.
Right, things get more severe, yes. Which were basically four white plaster walls, and if there was any decoration, it would be a scripture verse painted across the front.
But what I noticed about the Calvinist church, and which was also true of Mennonite churches, is that they were very bright. The white plaster walls and the clear windows, and there were usually quite a lot of windows, really let in a lot of light.
[65:04] And we have an architect friend who has designed a lot of churches, and comes from an Anabaptist background as well, and he says, I will not design a church that does not have windows. If someone just wants a performance space with no windows, find another architect.

Because God is light, and the church has to reflect that. So, do you have any comment on... Because medieval churches were often very dark. Yeah, that's... The darkness of the medieval churches is, for many years, just a practical concern.
Like, they're quite old. So, given what you're building with, and you just don't have the option of windows very much. So, you have the earlier Romanesque cathedrals that later turns into the Gothic.
And so, the seven sacraments altarpiece is the Gothic with the pointed spires. And the flying buttress is what allows them to take some weight off the inside of the church and open up things and get rid of some of the central supporting and have more fancy windows and whatnot.
So, I think part of it is the time period in which some of these buildings are constructed. By the time we get to the Reformation, we're using a lot of different building materials. We're also not necessarily interested in building something that's going to last centuries.
[66:16] And so, those materials are lighter and that opens up some space. I even found our old building, St. John's the building, kind of dark. To be dark. But I will... I find this building dark because it doesn't have enough windows.

No, it doesn't. I will say within Kelvin, because he is so interested in the glory of God and is so captured by that and his radiance. It's not surprising to me that in some of these other traditions, we would have a visual representation of that in the presence of windows and lots of light.
Yes. Catholics aren't always as Catholic as we think. I know a very Italian Roman Catholic woman and her dad just became a priest and she said with this thick Italian accent, why do you have to talk to a priest when you can talk person to person?
But the thing is, the Catholics have to. But with reforms, I've heard the same Lutheran wins. Sometimes people can't figure things out on their own. They have to talk with somebody.
Like I deal with customer service and there are people, you have to do it with them. They can't do it on their own. Then with the Anglican Church, with the Lord's Prayer, when I went to St. James, the Lord's Prayer would end at a certain point, deliver us from evil.
[67:29] And the rest, why don't they say they're rather awkward? It's a doxology. That's scripture from the Old Testament and it's adapted. But the Roman Catholic, the Hail Mary, Full of Grace, that's praying scripture.

But the other Holy Mary, Mother of God, is that a doxology? It's probably not. It's probably a prayer they added on. And then with the Holy Rotary Cathedral, if you go downtown, that's English Gothic, English Roman Catholics.
The bell tower, I've been inside, when it stops, it's upside down. That's English. And also the big high altar, they lowered it. So that's a little bit on the Reformed side. So Catholics aren't always as Catholic as we think they are.

No, and there's, I mean, a lot, and Catholic architecture continues to change. And obviously when you get into Vatican II, that's even changing, you know, the way altars are, they get rid of the high altar and those sorts of things.
But yes. Yes. Yeah. Thanks so much, Becky. Really, really wonderful talk, as usual. I really enjoyed it very much. And just to speak to the reality of being a Protestant artist, who was raised by a Mennonite mother, yeah, who was sort of like delighted and appalled at the same time when I started exhibiting artistic talent.
[68:44] You know, she went, oh, what do we choose to make her images? Oh, what are we going to do now? So it's always been, there's been an uneasiness for me from the word go, because I was raised, I was raised Anglo-Catholic initially, and they're a bit softer on it, but I then became much more of a church.

You know, at St. John's, I've been here for almost three years. And there's always been this kind of unease about artists in our tradition. And, you know, as though if you're an accountant or you're a doctor or a lawyer or a theologian, you know, there's sort of acceptable ways of being.
And art isn't right up there in the top ten, right? It makes people very uneasy. Almost the first question anybody would ask me, a co-religionist, what do you do?
What do I recognize as this art? You know, that's the whole contemporary art thing. But it's interesting. I've got a friend who decorates Catholic churches. And he's never, you know, from being very young, he was always encouraged in his talent.
He was encouraged by the brothers. Oh, you've got a great gift. Great. We can use this. You can do an altruist. You can do a stained glass window. You know, never had any kind of dichotomy.
[70:05] Never any nervousness. But I think, so what you're describing reverberates to this age. For sure. Especially for those of us who are now in a low church, worshiping and being part of that community.

I think there's a certain unease of it about artists. And about what they do. And power that might be theirs that might not be quite right or might be used for the wrong purpose.
And so I think those unease venuses during the Reformation currently reverberate to this day at hundreds of years. For sure. Yeah. Yeah.
Sheila, do you have one last? Well, just to follow up what Colleen has said, it's a record, what the unease that you're describing, Colleen, is an indication of the power of art.
And I think that's what you reflected with the medieval art. The power of visual learning as opposed to looking at a printed page which wouldn't have been available to them anyway.
[71:06] The church recognized this and encouraged it that this we can use to promote the teaching of the church, stretch the ideas a bit further and direct their worship.

Yeah. No, and there is a complex relationship between word and image that develops in this period and it's too easy to say, oh, Catholics are image, Protestants are word.
Like, that's just, it's not quite that simple and one thing that we didn't talk about is all of the, like, woodcuts and other, like, popular images that are happening in this period that Protestants use quite a bit.
But, generally speaking, the image always goes alongside the word and, or rather, the word goes alongside like, yeah, the image goes alongside the word.
There we go. Which one's first? And, and the, they use a word to illuminate and explain the image so that you're not ever going to be confused and maybe get the wrong idea. And we definitely, I'm sure as a Christian artist, you're used to that sort of thing where people are like, well, what does it mean?
[72:11] and do you want a title or something that can put it in a box and explain? So, yeah. On behalf of whomever I can speak, on behalf of artists, we need you and I'm glad you're here and please keep creating.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank Becky so much for being here. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.