

Tomorrow will mark the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's publication of his 95 Theses, the event that effectively inaugurated the Reformation. With this event, as the German philosopher Hegel put it, Luther "raised the last banner around which the nations gather—the banner of the free spirit." What Hegel meant with this remark is very complicated and obviously impossible to explain or justify in this talk. Suffice it to say, however, that at its core of this assertion is the claim that Luther's publication of the 95 theses was a manifest rejection of the notion of the collective authority of the Church and the Church fathers that had shaped Christianity for more than a thousand years in favor of individual judgment and individual conscience. In his view this provided a new basis for human life and this new basis as he saw it was the essential starting point of the modern world.

While we cannot fail to honor Luther for elevating the banner of freedom that does indeed remain a central value for our age, we should not forget that in inaugurating this transformation, Luther also set loose a latent fanaticism that played itself out in over the next 150 years in wars of religion that reduced the European population by 25-30%. Luther's new idea of freedom was thus as disastrous for early modern Europe as the Black Death had been for the late Middle Ages and, to bring the point home, more catastrophic than the first and second World Wars put together.

The advent of this new notion of freedom was then also the advent of a dangerous religious enthusiasm that valued the possibility of salvation more highly

than the preservation of life in this world. That said, it would be a mistake to imagine that this fanaticism was confined to Luther and his followers or that Luther promoted such violence or did not try to restrain it. In fact it spread quickly beyond his control both among many inspired by him and among many Catholics as well.

Ironically, more than 100 years later it was the revulsion in the face of this violence and fanaticism that led John Locke, to lay out the grounds of limited government that would allow for at least limited religious toleration and at the same time preserve individual liberty and rights. This is the system we now generally recognize as classical liberalism. The liberty that we enjoy thus is both the fulfillment of an idea that Luther gave voice to and a reaction to the violence that his proclamation helped spawn. John Locke in this sense is an heir to Luther's notion of freedom but at the same time helps us understand how to avoid the dangers this idea also engendered. It thus seem especially appropriate that at a talk at the John Locke Foundation today we focus on the legacy of Martin Luther.

This legacy, as you will perhaps have already gathered from my introductory remarks, is extraordinarily complex, much too complex to do it justice in a volume let alone in a short talk. When we think about the legacy of Luther we almost inevitably focus on the history of magisterial Protestantism and its institutionalization in the Lutheran church and the Churches founded on the models of John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli. These Churches today make up what we generally consider mainline Protestantism. What I want to do in this talk, however,

is not merely to describe the development of this magisterial Protestantism, which played an important role in the development of both liberalism and America, but also and perhaps more importantly to describe a less well known pathway to a secular liberalism within what is typically called the Radical Reformation that owes its beginnings to Luther but also went beyond him, drawing on the thought of Erasmus and other Christian humanists to develop a notion of individual human freedom. Coming to terms with these developments will, I believe, give us a better understanding not only of the theological underpinnings of contemporary notions of liberalism but also help us to understand the inevitable confrontation between evangelicalism and secularism in our own time.

But first I must go into a bit more detail about Luther. Emphasizing the absolute power of God like many of his nominalist predecessors and convinced of the utter fallness of human beings, Luther rejected both the notion of natural reason that had characterized the Aristotelian/Thomistic thinking of scholasticism and the notion of the freedom and creativity of the individual that had characterized humanist thought from Petrarch to Erasmus. In his view freedom belonged to God alone. Man himself had once been free but had lost that freedom through his disobedience in the Garden and thereby had fallen completely under the sway of Satan. Indeed, for contemporary humanity there was no such thing as an individual free will—man in Luther’s view was an ass ridden by either God or Satan. When ridden by Satan man was completely dominated by the sin of pride and thought not

of the good of others but only of his own self-interest. And from this bondage to Satan and sin, man could not escape except by the power of God, who could and would displace Satan from those who were his elect, those chosen for salvation. In freeing individual human beings from Satan's power, however, God did not free them to themselves, did not free them to live as they chose, but literally possessed them and rode upon them, replacing their wills with his own so that their desire to advance their self-interest was displaced by the divine desire to serve the good of their neighbors. Becoming a Christian then literally meant to be born again not just *in* Christ but *as* Christ, to become the vessel of God on earth.

This idea of the radical omnipotence of God and the utter incapacity of man to do anything on his own to win salvation was the powerful core of the Reformation, a thought that radically transformed Christianity from an institutionalized religion characterized by correct practice, the sacraments, and good works, into an evangelical religion rooted in faith, grace, and scripture.

Luther's reformation of Catholicism was revolutionary in many respects but in other ways it built upon ideas of such Northern humanists as Desiderus Erasmus and Thomas More. The humanists since Petrarch and Boccaccio had recognized that much in the Church needed to be reformed but imagined that this could be achieved gradually by education. Luther by contrast was convinced that the end of times was quite near and that the moment of decision for humanity was imminent. Thus there was no time for gradualism. This apocalyptic vision meant that the humanist

project which relied upon the long term transformation of humanity through moral education was untenable.

Moreover, the humanists believed that human will matters and could be redirected by such education. To deny free will, as Luther did, meant, they believed, that God was responsible not only for all the good in the world but also for all of the evil. This also meant that those chosen for salvation and damnation were not chosen on the basis of anything they did in life but merely according to God's arbitrary will. Or to put the matter more simply, if there was no human freedom, there was no divine justice.

Erasmus tried to find a middle position that would enable Luther and the Pope to reconcile and avoid the split in Christianity that Erasmus believed was otherwise inevitable. He thus argued that while Luther was correct that man was saved by grace alone, humans also played a role in this process since when God's grace was offered they could either accept or reject it. While Luther vehemently rejected this view, Erasmus's alternative was of immense importance for the future of Christianity. Luther's view generally prevailed among the magisterial reformers and was dominant for the succeeding century, but thereafter Erasmus's view came gradually to moderate both Protestantism and Catholicism especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also still today.

The history of the Reformation period, as it is generally understood, is the story of the struggle between the followers of the magisterial Protestantism of

Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the Catholic Church originally dominated by the curia but soon and importantly led by the Jesuits who served as the shock troops of the Church as it sought to beat back the Reformers. The history of this period is also the story of European state formation and the struggle between different forces in each of the European regions for domination. This mixture of religion and politics proved to be toxic and catastrophic and led to a hundred years of internecine warfare that was resolved only by the Treaty of Westphalia and the Glorious Revolution in England which gave birth to the notion of limited government and classical liberalism as we know it.

As interesting and important as this story is, it is generally well known, and in the rest of this talk I want to focus instead on the much less well-known history of what is called the Radical Reformation. It is the story of religious groups that developed beneath the surface and in odd places around Europe but that ultimately came to have a powerful impact on European and American history.

The Radical Reformation owes its origin to Luther but took Luther's thought much further than he or the other magisterial reformers were willing to go. While Luther for example spoke of the priesthood of all believers, he was aghast at the consequences when people took this idea seriously. For him it was still necessary that there be an authoritative interpretation of scripture and the idea that each individual, however ill-prepared, might understand the word of God was unthinkable. But it was precisely this point that many of the radical reforms saw as

essential to their project. For them the truth was available to all. Each individual could read the Bible and understand the word of God and know how to live his or her life. Or even more radically each of them might have the word of God already inscribed in their hearts as a result of personal revelation, or in their conscience, or as an inner light, or even most radically as reason. If this were the case then there was no need for a hierarchical priesthood that had to mediate between them and God, nor a need for political leaders to tell them how to act with respect to one another. They could live as they best thought fit.

It will come as no surprise to you when I say that this liberal democratic view of the individual and his or her capacity to make essential decisions about the course of his or her life was anathema to both the Catholic Church and the magisterial reformers, as well obviously as the princes who ruled their states and the nobles who held many of the peasants in fief. In the view of all of these traditional authorities, such a notion of individual freedom fatally undermined their authority and opened the flood gates to chaos.

The Peasants Rebellion of 1524-1525 was the first and one of the most disastrous consequences of this encounter of the Radical Reformation and the Church and state authorities. It frightened many, including Luther, and alerted them to the dangers of such a doctrine. This event, however, was only the beginning of a struggle between those inspired by the Radical Reformation and traditional authorities. The long running struggle to repress the Anabaptists was another, as

was the princes' efforts to repress the pacifistic sects since these sects threatened to deprive states of the human resources they needed to man their armies and navies.

For our purposes, one of the principal consequences of this widespread effort to quash the Radical Reformation was the flight of many members of these dissenting sects from place to place to escape prosecution and of course the place that many of these groups ended up was in America which became the bastion of religious diversity and toleration. Given the diversity of the groups within the Radical Reformation and the variety of their paths of development, I cannot give you a comprehensive account of this development and instead will try to give you a description of the development of a single group that was particularly important for understanding the development of secularism.

This is not to discount what is obviously the most well known story growing out of the Reformation, that is, the development of modern evangelical thought. Modern evangelical Protestantism and many forms of fundamentalism as well reject the denigration of human freedom by the magisterial reformers, recurring instead to Erasmus notion of a limited human freedom. The crucial turning point in this development was the work of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were convinced that the absolute power of God meant that humans had no role in determining whether or not they were damned or saved. This led them to support the doctrine of double predestination, that is, that some were selected by God for salvation and some for damnation from all eternity, but that

their own choices played no role in their fate. Deeply influenced by Erasmus, Arminius simply could not believe that human will and choice played no role in determining salvation. He thus broke with Calvin and claimed that while salvation was offered by divine grace, humans could accept or reject it. While this notion was famously rejected by Dutch Calvinists at the Synod of Dort, it became increasingly important in England and ultimately America. In seventeenth century England under Charles I and Archbishop Laud it came to play a central role in Anglican theology and, while it was rejected by many of the Puritans during the English Civil War, it increasingly came to play an important role in further transformations of English theology after the Restoration, not only within Anglicanism but also in Methodism under the guidance of John and Charles Wesley both of whom were inspired by Ariminius. They along with George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards brought this doctrine to America during the eighteenth century and their evangelizing led to what has been called the first Great Awakening.

In conjunction with the Baptists this doctrine also played an important role in the revivalist “come to Jesus movement” of the Second Great Awakening and remained at the core of the fundamentalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and indeed is one of the distinctive features of American evangelicalism day. While this story is important for understanding the role of religion and politics in America, it is relatively well known and does not need to be detailed here.

I want to focus for rest of this talk on another strand of this story, one that is less well known and one that has in fact remained almost invisible historically, that is, the development of secularism out of the Radical Reformation and the way in which secularism remains Christian at its core. When we generally think of secularism we are prone to conceive of it as irreligious or atheistic. Indeed, secular liberalism is often simply referred to by religious conservatives as atheistic humanism. Now, to be fair, many secular liberals see themselves as atheists and humanists. In what follows, however, I hope to show why both sides in this debate are mistaken, and how we misunderstand secularism and liberalism when we fail to see them as forms of Christianity. The failure to understand this connection has enormous consequences not just in America but also in our relationship to the rest of the world.

To understand how this can be the case though, we need to go back beyond Luther to the great events of 1492 that were so portentous for Europe and for America. I want to mention one and focus on the other. Both had their origin in Spain. The first and certainly most famous of these was the voyage of Christopher Columbus and his “discovery” of the new world. I will not rehearse the immense consequences for good and ill that this event entailed.

The second and much less well recognized event was the forced conversion of the Jews and Muslims in Spain. This event had less immediate importance for the political and economic development of Europe and America than the other, but

it was ultimately of much greater spiritual and moral significance. Let me then try to explain how and why this second event played such a crucial role in the development of the secular notions of morality, beginning with Christian humanism, passing through the murky underground of anti-Trinitarianism, and reemerging in the thought of such prototypical moderns as Hobbes, Locke, and Newton, before coming to America where it had a profound impact on founders such as Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington.

The forced conversion of Jews and Muslims in Spain in fact led many of the members of these religious groups to leave the country for other parts of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Among those that stayed some simply concealed their true beliefs while superficially conforming to Catholicism. This was not easy, because the Spanish Inquisition went to considerable pains to ferret out such dissimulation. Others, however, truly converted to Christianity but interpreted Christianity in keeping with their older beliefs more as a monotheistic rather than a Trinitarian religion. At its core this meant that they understood the relationship between the father, the son, and the holy spirit not as a unity but as a hierarchy, and insofar as they understood the relation between God and Christ as separate they were also able to understand the relation between Christ and man and thus man and God in a new way. Indeed, as Christ was seen as ever more human, human beings could be understood as ever more godlike, not as fallen creations of a distant and omnipotent father but as brothers and sisters of Christ.

The preeminent critic of Trinitarianism was Michael Servetus, the grandchild of conversos, who studied with the Erasmian Juan de Valdez. Servetus's doubts about Trinitarianism arose early and were in large part a consequence not merely of his more monotheistic outlook but of his doubts about the traditional Trinitarian reading of scripture. This reading relied heavily on a passage in first John which Erasmus had left out of his Greek edition of the New Testament because he could not find it in any of the available Greek manuscripts. While there was a great deal of debate about this at the time, we know now that he was correct, that this passage was almost certainly added by St. Jerome in his definitive Latin translation of the original Greek text.

The discovery of this forgery was especially important because it confirmed for many in the Radical Reformation what they had long believed, that the Catholic Church from the beginning had distorted and in their view corrupted original Christianity in the interest of strengthening the Church's spiritual authority and temporal power. This suspicion was already widespread as a result of the antecedent discovery that the so-called Donation of Constantine giving the Pope temporal power in Italy was in fact a forgery.

In his first work, *The Errors of the Trinity*, Servetus pointed out the problems with considering Christianity as a Trinitarian religion both textually and historically. While this early work was initially quite popular among the young reformers, it was soon declared anathema by both the magisterial reformation and by the Catholic

Church. As a result Servetus was forced to go into hiding, adopting a new name Michel de Villeneuve, and entering the Sorbonne where he studied medicine and edited books on geography. His brilliance shone through in this place as well. He was the first person to correctly determine the true source of the circulation of the blood, and played a principal role in the invention of modern geography, all the while pretending to be a loyal and pious Catholic physician.

During this period, however, he was also secretly writing what came to be seen as the most heretical book of the Reformation, *The Restitution of Christianity*, in which he further criticized the Trinitarian doctrines not merely of the Catholic Church but also of Luther and Calvin too, suggesting as well as alternative forms of belief and practice. He unfortunately made the mistake of sending a copy of the manuscript to Calvin whom he imagined would find it edifying. In fact Calvin, who never took criticism well anyway, was aghast at what he saw as a dangerously heretical doctrine and did something he had never done before and that contradicted all of his talk of toleration—he revealed Servetus's true identity to the Catholic Inquisition in France and facilitated his arrest. Although he was briefly imprisoned, Servetus was able to escape but while en route to Italy he was arrested, tried, and put to death by Calvin while passing through Geneva.

Not only was Servetus burned at the stake, Calvin and the Catholic authorities also sought to destroy every copy of *The Restitution of Christianity*. The consequences of such vicious treatment, however, did not have the desired effect.

In fact the treatment of Servetus provoked renewed and widespread interest in his thought and his Anti-Trinitarian doctrine became more widespread than ever especially among the followers of Erasmus in Italy.

Many of these men were connected to Isabella Sforza the matriarch of a princely family in Italy. This was of considerable importance because they were able to follow the family and obtain its protection when she married her daughter Bona to the elderly king of Poland, who in turn married her oldest daughter to the prince of Transylvania. When we think of Transylvania today we are likely to think of it as the home of Count Dracula or of Vlad the Impaler but in the sixteenth century it was the country with the greatest religious liberty in all of Europe and for this reason attracted many members of the Radical Reformation and home of the printing presses that spread their works over much of the rest of Europe. This was due to two factors, the impact of the Sforza women all of whom were Erasmians and the fact that the country was under the suzerainty of Turks. The leader of the Turks at the time was Suleiman the Magnificent, one of the most tolerant and cosmopolitan of the world's leaders. and while he insisted that taxes be paid, he was indifferent to religious conflicts and indeed saw them as impeding stable government. He thus protected the people of the country from the Inquisition of the Catholic Church and the repression of the ultra-Catholic Hapsburgs.

This was particularly important since Transylvania provided refuge to two of the most important Italian Antitrinitarians, Gorgio Biandrata and Faustus Socinus,

who along with the native Ferenc David were the leading Anti-Trinitarians in the country. They helped shape not merely the thinking of the people and the clergy but also served as advisers to the Queen regent and as tutors to the young king. As a result Transylvania became the first place in Europe to promote toleration. First the mother and then the son held a series of religious debates and at the end of them issued the Edict of Torda (1568), the first edict of toleration in modern Europe, recognizing Lutheranism, Calvinism, Catholicism and Unitarianism as official religions and unofficially tolerating Judaism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Armenianism. The young King himself converted to Unitarianism. Unfortunately with the death of first the mother and then the King a few years later as well as turmoil in the further reaches of the Turkish empire that called Suleiman elsewhere Transylvania again fell under political sway of the Hapsburgs and the repression of the Catholic Church.

As a result, most of the leading Anti-Trinitarians and many of their followers were forced to flee to Poland which had been governed for years by the son of Bona Sforza and had recently passed to Stephen Báthory. The united Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania was at the time the largest country in Europe and had been strongly impacted by the Reformation with perhaps a majority of the non-Orthodox Christians having converted to some form of Protestantism. During the period it was known both as “the jewel of religious freedom” and “the haven of heretic.” It is thus not surprising that it was hospitable to what was generally seen as another

Protestant sect. Indeed, the Unitarians in the country who were sometimes referred to as the Polish Brethren and the Socinians, were officially known as the Reformed Church Minor.

In Poland Antitrinitarianism eventually came to be identified with Faustus Socinus, the Italian who had earlier had an impact in Transylvania, and as a result generally became known as Socinianism. Antitrinitarianism was also sufficiently organized and widespread that they were able to produce an actual expression of their beliefs, the Racovian Catechism. In this context they defined themselves as Unitarian but also stated they were a Christian sect (which by the way is still true of Unitarianism in Transylvania today). This emphasis is clear in the fact that they declared as heretical a position they identify as rationalist Unitarianism, which denies the divinity of Christ and later came to be characterized in some measure as Deism.

Unfortunately, while the King of Poland believed in Religious toleration, he also also a Catholic and believed that the Catholics needed more support in his state. As a result he invited the Jesuits to return and evangelize among his people. This was the beginning of the re-Catholicization of Poland which gradually but inevitably became less tenable as a home for any non-Catholic sects. As a result the Socinians were forced to flee to other countries and particularly to England where they arrived during the English Civil War. At first they were welcomed by the leading Independents and invited to join them but when their Catechism was

translated into English they were increasingly subject to repression. Many as a result were drawn over time to a more rationalist position. This was especially the case among those who were evangelized by the Socinians and particularly their leader David Crell. Unitarianism had already had an impact upon Hobbes but under Crell's leadership had a profound impact upon two men who became his good friends, Isaac Newton and John Locke. This is especially clear in Locke's notions of freedom and reason and helps to explain his doctrine of religious toleration. Locke thus believes that while God does much that is mysterious, he does nothing that is contrary to reason. While scripture is important if we look to God's creation and into ourselves we will be able to understand how we ought to live. Locke thus can claim in the famous sixth chapter of the *Second Treatise of Government* "On Property" that whether we look to revelation or to reason we come to the same conclusion about the nature of rights. This view is similarly reflected in Locke's work *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Here then we begin to see the origins of a secular outlook in the development of this strain of the Radical Reformation.

But let us examine a little more carefully how Antitrinitarianism lead to this conclusion? The core of Christianity has always revolved around the idea of Christ, in the belief in a God who becomes an incarnate human being and who sacrifices himself to redeem human beings from their sins. What remains mysterious in this original story, however, is the relationship between God and Christ. What should we make of the claim that Christ is the son of God, begotten by the Holy Sprit, and

born unto the virgin Mary. We have heard this story so often that it is difficult for us to experience the mystery that these claims represented for early Christians. This was especially true in the swirling mix of religiosity that characterized the spiritual world of the Eastern Roman Empire. As Christianity grew almost every fundamental disagreement within Christianity and thus almost every heresy turned on finding the right or at least the majoritarian answer to this question. Within early fourth century Christianity the principal division among Christians was between Arianism and Trinitarianism, between those primarily in the Western portion of the Empire who believed that while Christ was clearly a superhuman being he was subordinate to God in the same way that Apollo was imagined to be subordinate to Zeus and those predominately in the Eastern section of the Empire who believed that God and Christ had been one from all eternity. This dispute was decided at the Council of Nicaea in favor of those who believed in the unity of the two but not because there were a majority of bishops in favor of that position but because it was supported by the Emperor Constantine. This decision apparently rested on Constantine's conviction that such a view helped to support imperial power and was more in keeping with the Eastern notion of god-kings, or god-emperors than Western notions that tended to view rulers as merely human.

Consequently, the more Christ came to be seen as human or even superhuman as opposed to one with God, the more individual human beings could be conceived of as at least potentially Christlike, that is as free and independent individuals who

could in some measure determine their own moral stance. Such a notion of human individuality first appeared in the West in the thought of Petrarch who built upon the theological work of his contemporary William of Ockham. This notion of individuality became essential to humanism and had a powerful impact upon both Luther's notion of the role of individual conscience and Erasmus's notion of individual freedom vis-a-vis God. The Radical Reformation in general followed this path and we see this particularly in the path of the Antitrinitarians. In this way they are able to gradually dissociate Christ the son from God the father. He is initially imagine to be co-eternal with God, then to come into being with the creation of the world. He is later imagined to come into being when the holy spirit enters Mary's womb. Thereafter he is seen as an extraordinary human being whose basic nature owes more to Mary than to God. Then he is thought to be a wholly human being who is selected to be the vessel of divine will, and then as an exemplary human being who can be a model for moral emulation. When one asks what makes him exemplary one is then drawn to his concern with the well-being and preservation of others, thus as the advocate of peace, and consequently as a thoroughly rational being. To emulate Christ is then to live according to the law of nature, i.e., to be a Lockean. Or to go one step farther toward Immanuel Kant it is to treat men as ends in themselves with an innate human dignity. It is thus to imagine that everything Christianity claimed about the fallness of man and original sin was misguided. If this is the case, then the need for redemption and the need for

Christ the redeemer disappears. Each human in this sense is created in the image of God and with Godlike powers is able to live a good life without anyone else's assistance.

Locke was thus not an atheist but like his Socinian predecessors recognized the innate human capacity to understand and do the right thing. Indeed, for him, to be a human being at all meant to have such a capacity and if it were lacking, no matter how much one looked like a human being, one was in fact merely a beast, a tiger or a bear.

Such a Christianity without Christ, however, seemed suspect to many of the Locke's English brethren and became even less acceptable after the passage of the Test Act and Corporation Acts which restricted the rights of dissenters. The resistance to Unitarianism was also further exacerbated by the stance of many Unitarians in favor of the American and later the French Revolutions. Perhaps the most prominent of these Unitarians was the famous scientist and Unitarian minister Joseph Priestly, the discoverer of oxygen, who argued against the Scottish philosopher David Hume that materialism was perfectly compatible with Christianity. Despite this fact, and in part because of his religion and his support for the Americans and the French, a mob burned down his home and laboratory in Birmingham and threatened his family. As a result Priestly moved to America where Unitarianism was more widely accepted. His American friends included Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and even George Washington all of whom

were clearly influenced by him. This was particularly true of Jefferson whose Christianity as reflected in his reworked edition of the Bible was deeply impacted by Unitarianism in general and Priestly in particular.

In the period before Priestly came to America, Unitarianism had already come to predominance in New England and when Priestly founded another Unitarian Church in Pennsylvania, Unitarianism began to grow in other parts of the country as well, making strides as far south as Baltimore. Its impact was particularly evident in the thought of American transcendentalists such as Emerson who was a Unitarian but also had a wider impact beyond the educated elite. Indeed, in reflecting on America many European intellectuals at the time imagine that the country would essentially become a Unitarian or Deistic nation.

That this did not occur probably had less to do with the virtues of Unitarianism than it did with the advent of the Second Great Awakening. Beginning in the 1790s but actually taking off in the 1820s the Second Great Awakening was part of a larger Romantic rejection of rationalism and Deism in favor of a new emotionalism. It was led by Baptists and Methodists and was more prominent in the West and South than in the Northeast. At its core was a new enthusiasm fostered by the preaching of circuit riders in camp meetings, ministers who preached the word in tents on the frontier and in the less developed backcountry.

The theology of the Second Great Awakening was rooted in an Arminian belief in the efficacy of the human will but was fortified by the expectation of the imminence of the Second Coming. In this sense it was animated by the same kind of fervor and expectation that characterized the period of the early Reformation.

The development of Protestantism in the United States was perhaps thus destined to become a continuing competition between secularism and evangelicalism. This disagreement is at heart at least as old as the debate between Luther and Erasmus and perhaps rooted even more deeply in the origins of Christianity itself. If we are concerned with human freedom and rights and if we value limited government and moral responsibility we are inevitably caught up in this dispute. It is perhaps then fitting that after 500 years we recognize our continuing debt to Martin Luther and begin to understand the way in which he and his progeny have helped shape the world in which we live and the questions that we must confront.