



Carter Lindberg

The European Reformations

Second edition

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

Contents

List of Figures

Preface to the Second Edition

Preface to the First Edition

List of Abbreviations

**Chapter 1 History, Historiography,
and Interpretations of the
Reformations**

History and Historiography

Interpretations of the Reformations

Suggestions for Further Reading

**Chapter 2 The Late Middle Ages:
Threshold and Foothold of the
Reformations**

Agrarian Crisis, Famine, and Plague

Towns and Cities: Loci of Ideas and Change

The Printing Press

Of Mines and Militancy

Social Tensions

The Crisis of Values

Anticlericalism and the Renaissance Papacy

Suggestions for Further Reading

[*Electronic resources*](#)

[**Chapter 3 The Dawn of a New Era**](#)

[*Martin Luther \(1483-1546\)*](#)

[*Theological and Pastoral Responses to Insecurity*](#)

[*Theological Implications*](#)

[*Indulgences: The Purchase of Paradise*](#)

[*The Squeaky Mouse*](#)

[*Politics and Piety*](#)

[*From the Diet of Worms to the Land of the Birds*](#)

[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[*Electronic resources*](#)

[**Chapter 4 Wait for No One: Implementation of Reforms in Wittenberg**](#)

[*In the Land of the Birds*](#)

[*Melanchthon: Teacher of Germany*](#)

[*Karlstadt and Proto-Puritanism*](#)

[*Bishops, Clerical Marriage, and Strategies for Reform*](#)

[*The Gospel and Social Order*](#)

[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[**Chapter 5 Fruits of the Fig Tree: Social Welfare and Education**](#)

[*Late Medieval Poor Relief*](#)

[*Beyond Charity*](#)

[*The Institutionalization of Social Welfare*](#)

[*Bugenhagen and the Spread of Evangelical Social Welfare*](#)

[*Education for Service to God and Service to the Neighbor*](#)

[*The Catechisms and Christian Vocation*](#)

[*Was the Early Reformation a Failure?*](#)

[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[*Chapter 6 The Reformation of the Common Man*](#)

[*“Brother Andy”*](#)

[*Thomas Müntzer*](#)

[*The Revolution of the Common Man, 1524-1526*](#)

[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[*Chapter 7 The Swiss Connection: Zwingli and the Reformation*](#)

[*The Affair of the Sausages*](#)

[*Zwingli’s Beginnings*](#)

[*Magistracy and Church in Zurich*](#)

[*Zwingli’s Reform Program*](#)

[*Excursus: Medieval Sacramental Theology*](#)

[*The Marburg Colloquy, 1529*](#)

[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

Chapter 8 The Sheep against the Shepherds: The Radical Reformations

The Anabaptists

Excursus: Reformation Understandings of Baptism

Zurich Beginnings

Anabaptist Multiplicity

The Münster Debacle

The Subversive Piety of the Spiritualists

Suggestions for Further Reading

Chapter 9 Augsburg 1530 to Augsburg 1555: Reforms and Politics

The Trail of Worms

The Diet of Worms

The Diet of Speyer, 1526

The Diet of Speyer, 1529

The Diet of Augsburg, 1530, and the Augsburg Confession

The Right of Resistance to the Emperor

Reformation Ecumenism, War, and the

Peace of Augsburg

Suggestions for Further Reading

Chapter 10 “The Most Perfect School of Christ”: The Genevan Reformation

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Journey to Geneva

The Reformation in Geneva

[*Sojourn in Strasbourg*](#)
[*Geneva under Calvin, 1541-1564*](#)
[*Calvin's Consolidation of his Authority*](#)
[*The Servetus Case*](#)
[*Protestant Mission and Evangelism: The*](#)
[*"International Conspiracy"*](#)
[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[*Chapter 11 Refuge in the Shadow of*](#) [*God's Wings: The Reformation in*](#) [*France*](#)

[*The Shield of Humanism*](#)
[*Evangelical Progress and Persecution*](#)
[*Calvin's Influence in France*](#)
[*The Colloquy of Poissy, 1561*](#)
[*The Wars of Religion, 1562-1598*](#)
[*The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre*](#)
[*"Paris is Worth a Mass"*](#)
[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

[*Chapter 12 The Blood of the Martyrs:*](#) [*The Reformation in the Netherlands*](#)

[*"La secte Lutheriane"*](#)
[*Dissident Movements*](#)
[*The Rise of Calvinism and the Spanish*](#)
[*Reaction*](#)
[*A Godly Society?*](#)
[*Suggestions for Further Reading*](#)

Chapter 13 The Reformations in England and Scotland

Anticlericalism and Lutheran Beginnings

The King's Great Matter

Passions, Politics, and Piety

Edward VI and Protestant Progress

Mary Tudor and Protestant Regress

Elizabeth I and the Via Media

Mary Stuart (1542-1587) and the Reformation in Scotland

Suggestions for Further Reading

Chapter 14 Catholic Renewal and the Counter-Reformation

Late Medieval Renewal Movements

The Index and the Inquisition

Loyola and the Society of Jesus

The Council of Trent, 1545-1563

Suggestions for Further Reading

Electronic resources

Chapter 15 Legacies of the Reformations

Confessionalization

Politics

Culture

The Reformations and Women

Toleration and the "Other"

Economics, Education, and Science

Literature and the Arts

***Back to the Future: The Reformations and
Modernity***

Suggestions for Further Reading

Electronic resources

Chronology

Genealogies

Maps

Glossary

***Appendix: Aids to Reformation
Studies***

Bibliography

Index

Praise for The European Reformations

“Derived from a lifetime of engagement with issues in Early Modern European history and written in an eminently readable style, Professor Lindberg’s *The European Reformations* will open up to student and scholar alike the fascinating world of the sixteenth century. Not only does Lindberg place the religious movements of the time in their political and, especially, social context, but his knowledge of the theological debates provides the reader with succinct, clear explanations of the theological substance that gave rise to the great variety of the age’s ‘Reformations’.”

Timothy J. Wengert, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

“Carter Lindberg has written a compelling narrative regarding the emergence and development of the various ‘Reformations’ of the sixteenth century. Lindberg gives a fascinating view of the Reformations primarily from a theological and religious perspective, in concert with others like Heiko Oberman and Brad Gregory, even as he enriches this perspective with the contributions of social historians. Lindberg does especially well in focusing on the reform of the liturgy from “the cult of the living in the service of the dead” designed to free departed loved ones from Purgatory, to a form of worship that led directly to the service of the living, especially the sick, the poor, and the needy. He also shows how the reform movements were strengthened and spread by the singing of hymns and psalms by the women and men who joined these movements. This is an insightful and cogent analysis of the complex of movements we call the ‘Reformations’ of the sixteenth century.”

Randall Zachman at University of Notre Dame

The European Reformations

Second edition

Carter Lindberg

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

To Rod, Tina, and Gary

This Second edition first published 2010

© 2010 Carter Lindberg

First published 1996 by Blackwell Publishing

Reprinted 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 (twice) 2001, 2002
(twice), 2004 (twice)

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in
February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been
merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical
business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate,
Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19
8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer
services, and for information about how to apply for
permission to reuse the copyright material in this book
please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Carter Lindberg to be identified as the author of
this work has been asserted in accordance with the
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in
any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted
by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without
the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lindberg, Carter, 1937-

The European Reformations/Carter Lindberg. – 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4051-8068-9 (hardcover: alk. paper) – ISBN 978-1-4051-8067-2 (pbk.: alk. paper) 1. Reformation. 2. Church history–15th century. 3. Counter-Reformation. 4. Reformation–Great Britain.

I. Title.

BR305.3.L54 2010

274'.06–dc22

2009000000

List of Figures

- [1.1](#) "Dr Martin Luther's Glorification," by Johann E. Hummel, 1806
- [1.2](#) Phrases from Müntzer's "Princes' Sermon" and the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic, Allstedt Castle
- [2.1](#) "Pilgrimage to the 'Beautiful Mary' in Regensburg," by Michael Ostendorfer, 1520
- [2.2](#) "Death and the Maiden," Heidelberg Dance of Death
- [2.3](#) "The Big Fish Eat the Little Fish," by Pieter Bruegel the Elder
- [2.4](#) "Passional Christi et Antichristi," by Lucas Cranach the Elder
- [3.1](#) Christ as judge, Wittenberg parish church
- [3.2](#) "A Question to a Minter," by Jörg Breu, ca. 1530
- [3.3](#) "The Fuhrwagon," by Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1519
- [4.1](#) (a) "Lament of the Poor Persecuted Idols," ca. 1530; (b) Fall of Lenin
- [5.1](#) "All Kinds of Beggars' Tricks," by Hieronymus Bosch
- [5.2](#) The Wittenberg common chest
- [6.1](#) "Ständebaum," ca. 1520
- [7.1](#) "The Godly Mill," 1521
- [8.1](#) "The World Turned Upside Down," 1522
- [11.1](#) "St Bartholomew's Night," by François Dubois d'Amiens
- [14.1](#) "Ignatius of Loyola," by Claude Mellan, ca. 1640
- [15.1](#) "Liberæ Religionis Typus," ca. 1590
- [15.2](#) (a) "Jew Sow"; (b) Holocaust memorial
- [15.3](#) "The Law and the Gospel," by Lucas Cranach the Elder, ca. 1530
- [15.4](#) "The Light of the Gospel Rekindled by the Reformers," ca. 1630

Preface to the Second Edition

It is both a privilege and a great challenge to revise this textbook. It is a privilege to thank all who have contributed to keeping the text in print far longer than I ever expected – all you students and colleagues who by choice or assignment bought the book. The revision, however, has turned out to be a great challenge. With Robin Leaver (2007: ix), I now more fully appreciate Luther's comment: "He who does not know writing thinks it requires no effort. Three fingers write, but the entire body is at work" (WA TR No. 6438). When I wrote the preface to the first edition, I cited A. G. Dickens' words to the effect that writing synthetic texts "must form challenges to write better ones." I had no idea at the time that so many "better ones" would appear! In English alone, we now have a range of perspectives from such scholars as Scott Hendrix (2004a), Hans J. Hillerbrand (2007), R. Po-chia Hsia (2004), Diarmaid MacCulloch (2003), Peter Matheson (2007), Andrew Pettegree (2000; 2002a), Alec Ryrie (2006a), and Merry Wiesner-Hanks (2006). Obviously, Reformation studies is alive and well! It will be obvious that I do not have enough space, let alone time and expertise, to carry on an extended conversation with these many fine scholars, not to mention the explosion of scholarly studies on the sixteenth century.

Revision is perhaps too strong a word for what follows, because I am not "re-visioning" the narrative of my text. I remain convinced of the "truism" expressed so succinctly by Heiko Oberman (1994b: 8): "[W]ithout the reformers, no Reformation. Social and political factors guided, accelerated and likewise hindered the spread and public effects of Protestant preaching. However, in a survey of the age as a whole they must not be overestimated and seen as causes of the Reformation, nor as its fundamental preconditions." So, while my rewrite begins with the original preface, my narrative remains basically the same. What I have done is

more supplementary in the sense of expanding the narrative to include more material on the British Isles, Roman Catholic reforms, and women. The following expansion is very modest, for the field of Reformation studies has exploded in the decade and a half since the first edition. Merry Wiesner-Hanks (2008: 397) notes that just in the field of women and the Reformation: "It is now nearly impossible to even know about all the new scholarship, to say nothing of reading it." Add in the resources available on the World Wide Web and there is more than enough material for a lifetime let alone a semester course! The massive growth in scholarship on the Reformations is a cause for excitement, but at the same time the growing concentration on microstudies threatens to replace the forest with detailed studies of every tree in it. "How is one to teach a subject that finds itself in that condition? If Reformation Studies are to enjoy any continuing vitality, there must be more to them than the ever-closer scrutiny of the religious entrails and financial dealings of the weighty parishioners of MuchBinding-in-the-Marsh" (Collinson 1997: 354). Yet, as noted above, there are a number of texts to guide us through this forest of new growth, as well as summaries of the state of the field such as the splendid volume edited by David M. Whitford, *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research* (2008) that includes web resources along with bibliography. Additional material that follows and supplements the narrative of my text is available in my edited volumes *The European Reformations Sourcebook* (primary sources, 2000a) and *The Reformation Theologians* (chapters on Humanist, Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic, and "Radical" theologians, 2002).

The title of this text again speaks of "Reformations." As far as I know, my use of the plural "Reformations" was unique when my text first appeared. Some recent texts continue this usage (Ryrie, 2006a; Matheson, 2007: 7 (subtitle:

“Reformations, Not Reformation”) while others take sharp issue with it. Hillerbrand (2003: 547) judges it “quite wrong;” but in his later volume (2007: 407) states: “Neither historically nor theologically was there ever a single Reformation movement; rather, there were several, prompting recent scholars to speak pointedly of plural ‘Reformations.’” Hendrix (2000: 558; 2004a: xv, xviii, 1) also thinks my title is less than helpful for it obscures the coherent Reformation movement “to Christianize Europe.” While this discussion may seem like so much antics with semantics, it has occupied a number of historians in recent years. For example, in the mid-1990s, the leading church historians, Berndt Hamm, Bernd Moeller, and Dorothea Wendebourg debated the issue. Wendebourg (Hamm, et al., 1995: 31-2; Lindberg 2002a: 4-9) referred to an early seventeenth-century engraving titled “The Light of the Gospel Rekindled by the Reformers” (see figure 15.4). She commented that while it is a beautiful image of unity and harmony, the reality was conflict, especially in light of the so-called “Left Wing” reformers who are not included in the engraving. Wendebourg’s point is echoed more recently by Brian Cummings. His summary of Reformation scholarship (2002: 13) merits extensive quotation: “[I]t is significant that one of the main efforts in such scholarship in recent years has been to argue the ‘Reformation’ out of existence. Some historians have attempted to avoid historical determinism by emphasizing continuities in a longer sequence. Others have deflected it by distinguishing a plurality of reformations, catholic as much as protestant, in a larger process of religious culture. As in other areas of academic study, an artful use of the plural form has been used to settle the case. Yet whatever revision of historiography is thought necessary, it must respect the fundamental dissentiousness of sixteenth century religion. The religious culture of this period, catholic as well as protestant, identified itself through division.” While the

debate is ongoing, I continue to view the Reformation era as a period encompassing plural reform movements.

As always, I am grateful for the support given by the editors at Blackwell, not least Rebecca Harkin who encouraged me to undertake this revision. On a personal note, I am delighted to add that the original dedicatees have given us five grandchildren - Emma, Caleb, Nathan, Teddy, and Claudia. Their parents are thankful that their gestation was far briefer than that of this revision.

Preface to the First Edition

Human life without knowledge of history is nothing other than a perpetual childhood, nay, a permanent obscurity and darkness.

Philip Melancthon

I hope that this textbook will contribute to the perennial discovery of who we are and how we got this way. The “we” here is meant globally. Such a goal of course smacks of delusions of grandeur or at least an overestimation of the influence of the Reformations of the sixteenth century. But no historian of whatever persuasion thinks he or she is an antiquarian studying the past “for its own sake” as if understanding it did not contribute to understanding ourselves. This is illustrated by citing just two major Reformation historians. Steven Ozment (1992: 217) concludes one of his books on the Reformation: “To people of all nationalities the first Protestants bequeathed in spite of themselves a heritage of spiritual freedom and equality, the consequences of which are still working themselves out in the world today.” And William Bouwsma (1988: 1) begins his study of Calvin with a litany of his influences: “Calvinism has been widely credited - or blamed - for much that is thought to characterize the modern world: for capitalism and modern science, for the discipline and rationalization of the complex societies of the West, for the revolutionary spirit and democracy, for secularization and social activism, for individualism, utilitarianism, and empiricism.” If Ozment and Bouwsma are anywhere near the mark, it behooves us to reflect on our roots.

The influence of the Reformations has extended beyond Euro-American cultures to the wider world. Scholars have pursued the influences of Calvinism on social conditions in the Republic of South Africa and of Lutheranism on modern developments in Germany and the course of Judaism; the

once Eurocentric International Congress for Luther Research now includes participants from the so-called “Third World” who are concerned not only about the ecclesial applicability of Luther’s theology but its relevance to liberation and human rights. The global nature of Reformation research is evident in the translation of writings of the Reformers into various Asian languages and the existence of scholarly endeavors everywhere, including the People’s Republic of China; not to mention the impact on ecumenical dialogues among Christians and with disciples of other world religions. The Reformations continue to be seen as too important to contemporary life to be left to antiquarians and those whom Carlyle termed “dryasdust” historians.

Why one more textbook on the Reformations? There is of course the personal factor: I suspect that nearly every teacher wishes to tell the story his or her own way. I am no different; and have been stimulated in this endeavor by the occasional student question, “Why don’t you write your own text?” Such obviously brilliant and insightful students wise to the utilitarian value of such a question should not however be blamed for this project. Rather, the rationale for sacrificing more trees to the textbook trade is to incorporate aspects of the burgeoning field of Reformation studies into a text that interprets these contributions from a historical-theological perspective. Hence major attention will be directed to what the Reformers and those who received their messages believed to be at stake – literally as well as figuratively – for their salvation. The thread – with all its kinks and knots – running throughout this story is their struggle to understand and to apply to society the freedom and authority of the gospel.

What will this orientation bring to this text? I have already suggested the global impact of the Reformations on contemporary identities. Scholarly fascination with the influences of the Reformations has grown to the point where

major historiographical studies are devoted to it. The initial chapter on history and historiography will illustrate that it is not only church historians and theologians who have commitments. All historians are also interpreters; thus any and all suggestions that if you can only shed theological (or political, or Marxist, et al.) convictions you will be scientifically “objective” or “value free” are suspect.

I view the Reformation era as a time of plural reform movements. This approach has significance for interpretation and definition that will be explored throughout the text. For now, the use of the plural reminds us that even commonly used terms such as “Reformation” carry within them subtle or not so subtle value judgments.

I will also attempt to incorporate into this text the research that has mushroomed so recently under the general rubric of social history. Here there is specific attention to the marginalized (the poor, women), minorities, popular culture in terms of context and reception, the development of modern traits (individualism, rationality, the secular), and the modern state-building process called confessionalization. Every work of synthesis inevitably carries within it seeds (and sometimes full-grown weeds!) of misunderstandings and all too many omissions. I hope the chronology, maps, genealogical tables, bibliography, and suggestions for further reading will ameliorate to some extent the disjointedness of this synthetic narrative and its lack of discussion of the Reformations in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Textbook authors have the temerity angels eschew. This being the case, I take heart from Luther’s dictum to “sin boldly” as well as from the words of a great English Reformation scholar, A. G. Dickens (1974: 210): “In short, synthesis must involve writing books which form challenges to write better ones, books which will inevitably be replaced, attacked and patronized by others which climb upon their shoulders.”

I am pleased to dedicate these efforts to our new sons and daughter who, even after marrying our children, still listen patiently to dinner discourses on the Reformations and provide wry comments. I wish to thank the many students of my “Reformations” course whose lively questions and arguments over the years have frequently redeemed what began as “dryasdust” lectures. My “thorn-in-the-flesh” colleague, J. Paul Sampley, has rendered a similar service in and out of the classroom. Finally, my thanks to Alison Mudditt, Senior Commissioning Editor of Blackwell Publishers, who initiated and shepherded this project to conclusion, to Gillian Bromley, Desk Editor, whose sharp eye caught many an error, and to Sarah McKean, Picture Researcher at Blackwell, for obtaining the illustrations.

List of Abbreviations

- ARG *Archive for Reformation History/Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
- BC *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000
- CH *Church History*
- CHR *Catholic Historical Review*
- CO *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. C. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reiss. Brunswick/Berlin: Schwetschke, 1863–1900 (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vols 29–87)
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum*. Berlin/Leipzig, 1811–1911
- CTM The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer, tr. and ed. Peter Matheson. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988
- CTJ *Calvin Theological Journal*
- CTQ *Concordia Theological Quarterly*
- HJ *Historical Journal*
- LQ *Lutheran Quarterly*
- LW *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. St Louis: Concordia/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–86. [References in text are to volume and page, thus 31: 318 = vol. 31, p. 318]
- NWDCH *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, vol. 1, ed. Roberto Benedetto. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- MQR *Mennonite Quarterly Review*
- PL *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina*, ed. J-P. Migne, 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1844–1900
- PP *Past and Present*
- SCJ *Sixteenth Century Journal*
- StA *Martin Luther: Studienausgabe*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Delius, 6 vols. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979–99
- TRE *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1976–
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. J. K. F. Knaake, G. Kawerau, et al., 58 vols. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–
- WA Br *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel*, 15 vols. Weimar: Böhlau, 1830
- WA TR *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–21
- Z *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke*, ed. F. Egli et al. Berlin/Leipzig,

1905- (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vols 88-101); repr. Zurich:
Theologischer Verlag, 1982-

ZKG *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*

ZRG *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Kanonische
Abteilung*

ZThK *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Chapter 1

History, Historiography, and Interpretations of the Reformations

We are like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants; thanks to them, we see farther than they. Busying ourselves with the treatises written by the ancients, we take their choice thoughts, buried by age and human neglect, and we raise them, as it were from death to renewed life.

Peter of Blois (d. 1212)

History and Historiography

Peter of Blois penned this famous aphorism almost exactly three centuries before Luther's "Ninety-Five Theses" rocked Europe. A major study of the historiography of the Reformation (Dickens and Tonkin 1985: 323) concludes that it is "a window on the West, a major point of access to the developing Western mind through the last five centuries. ... By any reckoning, the Reformation has proved a giant among the great international movements of modern times." On its shoulders we can look farther and deeper in both directions; that is, we can peer into both the medieval and contemporary worlds.

History provides a horizon for viewing not only the past but also the present and the future. The philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975: 269, 272) argued that a person

without a horizon will overvalue what is immediately present, whereas the horizon enables us to sense the relative significance of what is near or far, great or small. "A horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand - not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion." In other words, "far away facts - in history as in navigation - are more effective than near ones in giving us true bearings" (Murray 1974: 285). Even novice sailors know it is foolish to navigate by sighting your prow rather than by sighting the stars or land.

Historical distance, by providing a focus beyond what we take for granted, can be a surprising component of contemporary comprehension. The analogy of living in a foreign city illustrates this. If you live in a foreign city for a year, you will not learn a great deal about that city. But when you return home you will be surprised by your increasing comprehension of some of the most profound and individual characteristics of your homeland. You did not previously "see" these characteristics because you were too close to them; you knew them too well. Likewise, a visit to the past provides distance and a vantage point from which to comprehend the present (Braudel 1972; Nygren 1948). So, L. P. Hartley began his novel *The Go-Between* with the memorable sentence: "The past is another country; they do things differently there."

Memory also illustrates perspective. "Memory is the thread of personal identity, history of public identity" (Hofstadter 1968: 3; Leff 1971: 115). Memory and historical identity are inseparable. Have you ever been asked to introduce someone and suddenly forgotten his or her name? At worst this common human experience is a temporary embarrassment. But think what life would be like if you had no memory at all. We all have heard how terribly difficult life is for amnesiacs, and about the tragic effects of Alzheimer's

disease upon its victims and their families. The loss of memory is not just the absence of “facts;” it is the loss of personal identity, family, friends, indeed, the whole complex of life’s meaning. It is very difficult if not impossible to function in society if we do not know who we are and how we got this way. Our memory is the thread of our personal identity; our memory liberates us from what Melanchthon, Luther’s colleague, called perpetual childhood. Without our past we have no present and no future.

What about our national and religious community identities? Are we amnesiacs, are we children, when it comes to identifying who we are in relation to our communities? What if we had to identify ourselves as an American or a Christian? Suppose someone asked why we are Protestant or Roman Catholic. Beyond referring to our parents or a move to a new neighborhood, could we explain why we belong to Grace Lutheran by the gas station instead of St Mary’s by the grocery store?

I once asked a French friend to explain German-French relations. He began by referring to the ninth-century division of Charlemagne’s empire! Most of us do not go that far back to answer contemporary questions, but his response illustrates that if memory is the thread of personal identity, history is the thread of community identity. These tenacious threads of community identity also have a dark side when they are not critically examined. This is painfully evident in the eruption of historical ethnic conflicts such as those in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union as well as in the Middle East. If we do not know our personal and community histories we are like children who are easily manipulated by those who would use the past for their own purposes.

Memory and history are crucial to our identity, but they are not easily conceptualized in relation to their origins and goals. Here I take comfort in the comment of the great African theologian, St Augustine (354-430), who in

discussing time wrote: "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one that asks, I know not" (*Confessions*, Book XI). This most influential Western theologian was struggling to relate to his Hellenistic-Roman culture the Christian conviction that the identity of the community is rooted in history rather than in philosophy and ethics. This conviction had already been clearly stated in the historical shorthand of the Christian creeds, which confess faith in the historical person of Jesus who was born, suffered, and died. Christians put a unique spin on history when they also confess that this Jesus was raised from the dead and will return to bring history to completion. Thus, from an insider's perspective, the Christian community's identity is formed by both the historical past and the historical future. Without sensitivity to this theological claim, it will be difficult for us to fully realize the power in the Reformations of apocalyptic views of history or such works as John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. This sense of the historical past, present, and future identity of the church, expressed in the third article of the creeds by the phrase "communion of saints," was so palpable to the medieval that the English Roman Catholic historian John Bossy (1985) makes it the theme of his study of the Reformation. As we shall see, the historical identity of the communion of saints became a central controversial issue in the Reformation era.

Sociologists of knowledge make a similar point about historical identity rooted in community. Historical identity is passed on to us through our conversations with the mothers and fathers who have gone before us. In this sense, church historians take seriously the fourth commandment of the Decalogue: "Honor your father and mother." We know, of course, from even limited family experience that when we no longer talk to our parents and children we begin to forget who we are. This is not to say that conversation between generations is always pleasant, but to say that it is

important for learning how we got this way. Without such conversation we are condemned to “presentism,” a fancy term to describe the solipsism of a continuous “me generation.” Thus the postwar German phrase *Welt ohne Vater* is shorthand for the loss of roots and the authority crises suffered by the generation whose fathers fell in the war. Lord Acton stated this elegantly: “History must be our deliverer not only from the undue influence of other times, but from the undue influence of our own, from the tyranny of environment and the pressure of the air we breathe. It requires all historic forces to produce their record and submit it to judgment, and it promotes the faculty of resistance to contemporary surroundings by familiarity with other ages and orbits of thought” (Pelikan 1971: 150).

Until recently the collectors and tellers of the family conversations of Christianity were nearly all insiders. Thus the subject matter and the discipline of its telling fell under the rubric of “church history.” For a variety of reasons today, persons outside the Christian churches are also interested in presenting the history of Christianity. There is, to paraphrase an old maxim, the sense that the telling of the story of Christian contributions to contemporary identity is too important to be left to the Christians. The field of Reformation studies is a marked example of this recent development.

Awareness of the distinct perspectives of church historians and historians of Christianity will be useful in terms of reading both contemporary textbooks and the historical sources. We shall get to other perspectives later, but for now we may remind ourselves that interpretations of the past are not value free. Indeed, Heisenberg’s “indeterminacy principle” applies as much to historical studies as it does to subatomic physics: what is observed is influenced by the observer. “It is paradoxical, in fact, that nature seems more unambiguously susceptible to human understanding and