



Peter Marshall

THE REFORMATION

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction

VERY SHORT INTRODUCTIONS are for anyone wanting a stimulating and accessible way in to a new subject. They are written by experts, and have been published in more than 25 languages worldwide.

The series began in 1995, and now represents a wide variety of topics in history, philosophy, religion, science, and the humanities. The VSI library now contains over 200 volumes—a Very Short Introduction to everything from ancient Egypt and Indian philosophy to conceptual art and cosmology—and will continue to grow to a library of around 300 titles.

Very Short Introductions available now:

AFRICAN HISTORY
John Parker and Richard Rathbone
AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES
AND ELECTIONS L. Sandy Maisel
THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY
Charles O. Jones
ANARCHISM Colin Ward
ANCIENT EGYPT Ian Shaw
ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY Julia Annas
ANCIENT WARFARE
Harry Sidebottom
ANGLICANISM Mark Chapman
THE ANGLO-SAXON AGE John Blair
ANIMAL RIGHTS David DeGrazia
ANTISEMITISM Steven Beller
THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS
Paul Foster
ARCHAEOLOGY Paul Bahn
ARCHITECTURE Andrew Ballantyne
ARISTOTLE Jonathan Barnes
ART HISTORY Dana Arnold
ART THEORY Cynthia Freeland
ATHEISM Julian Baggini
AUGUSTINE Henry Chadwick
AUTISM Uta Frith
BARTHES Jonathan Culler
BESTSELLERS John Sutherland
THE BIBLE John Riches
BIOGRAPHY Hermione Lee
THE BRAIN Michael O'Shea
BRITISH POLITICS Anthony Wright
BUDDHA Michael Carrithers
BUDDHISM Damien Keown
BUDDHIST ETHICS Damien Keown
CAPITALISM James Fulcher
CATHOLICISM Gerald O'Collins
THE CELTS Barry Cunliffe
CHAOS Leonard Smith
CHOICE THEORY Michael Allingham
CHRISTIAN ART Beth Williamson
CHRISTIANITY Linda Woodhead
CITIZENSHIP Richard Bellamy
CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY
Helen Morales
CLASSICS
Mary Beard and John Henderson
CLAUSEWITZ Michael Howard
THE COLD WAR Robert McMahon
COMMUNISM Leslie Holmes
CONSCIOUSNESS Susan Blackmore
CONTEMPORARY ART
Julian Stallabrass
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
Simon Critchley
COSMOLOGY Peter Coles
THE CRUSADES
Christopher Tyerman
CRYPTOGRAPHY
Fred Piper and Sean Murphy
DADA AND SURREALISM
David Hopkins
DARWIN Jonathan Howard
THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS
Timothy Lim
DEMOCRACY Bernard Crick
DESCARTES Tom Sorell
DESIGN John Heskett
DINOSAURS David Norman
DOCUMENTARY FILM
Patricia Aufderheide
DREAMING J. Allan Hobson
DRUGS Leslie Iversen
THE EARTH Martin Redfern
ECONOMICS Partha Dasgupta
EGYPTIAN MYTH Geraldine Pinch
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN
Paul Langford
THE ELEMENTS Philip Ball
EMOTION Dylan Evans
EMPIRE Stephen Howe
ENGELS Terrell Carver
ETHICS Simon Blackburn

THE EUROPEAN UNION
John Pinder and Simon Usherwood

EVOLUTION
Brian and Deborah Charlesworth

EXISTENTIALISM Thomas Flynn

FASCISM Kevin Passmore

FASHION Rebecca Arnold

FEMINISM Margaret Walters

THE FIRST WORLD WAR
Michael Howard

FOSSILS Keith Thomson

FOUCAULT Gary Gutting

FREE WILL Thomas Pink

FREE SPEECH Nigel Warburton

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
William Doyle

FREUD Anthony Storr

FUNDAMENTALISM
Malise Ruthven

GALAXIES John Gribbin

GALILEO Stillman Drake

GAME THEORY Ken Binmore

GANDHI Bhikhu Parekh

GEOGRAPHY
John Matthews and David Herbert

GEOPOLITICS Klaus Dodds

GERMAN LITERATURE
Nicholas Boyle

GLOBAL CATASTROPHES
Bill McGuire

GLOBAL WARMING Mark Maslin

GLOBALIZATION Manfred Steger

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE
NEW DEAL Eric Rauchway

HABERMAS James Gordon Finlayson

HEGEL Peter Singer

HEIDEGGER Michael Inwood

HIEROGLYPHS Penelope Wilson

HINDUISM Kim Knott

HISTORY John H. Arnold

THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY
Michael Hoskin

THE HISTORY OF LIFE Michael Benton

THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE
William Bynum

THE HISTORY OF TIME
Leofranc Holford-Strevens

HIV/AIDS Alan Whiteside

HOBBS Richard Tuck

HUMAN EVOLUTION Bernard Wood

HUMAN RIGHTS Andrew Clapham

HUME A. J. Ayer

IDEOLOGY Michael Freeden

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY Sue Hamilton

INTELLIGENCE Ian J. Deary

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
Khalid Koser

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Paul Wilkinson

ISLAM Malise Ruthven

JOURNALISM Ian Hargreaves

JUDAISM Norman Solomon

JUNG Anthony Stevens

KABBALAH Joseph Dan

KAFKA Ritchie Robertson

KANT Roger Scruton

KIERKEGAARD Patrick Gardiner

THE KORAN Michael Cook

LAW Raymond Wacks

LINCOLN Allen C. Guelzo

LINGUISTICS Peter Matthews

LITERARY THEORY Jonathan Culler

LOCKE John Dunn

LOGIC Graham Priest

MACHIAVELLI Quentin Skinner

THE MARQUIS DE SADE
John Phillips

MARX Peter Singer

MATHEMATICS Timothy Gowers

THE MEANING OF LIFE
Terry Eagleton

MEDICAL ETHICS Tony Hope

MEDIEVAL BRITAIN
John Gillingham and Ralph A. Griffiths

MEMORY Jonathan K. Foster

MODERN ART David Cottington

MODERN CHINA Rana Mitter

MODERN IRELAND Senia Pašeta

MODERN JAPAN
Christopher Goto-Jones

MOLECULES Philip Ball

MORMONISM
Richard Lyman Bushman

MUSIC Nicholas Cook

MYTH Robert A. Segal

NATIONALISM Steven Grosby

NELSON MANDELA Elleke Boehmer

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS
LITERATURE Kyle Keefer

NEWTON Robert Iliffe

NIETZSCHE Michael Tanner

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN
Christopher Harvie and
H. C. G. Matthew

NORTHERN IRELAND
Marc Mulholland

NOTHING Frank Close
NUCLEAR WEAPONS
Joseph M. Siracusa
THE OLD TESTAMENT
Michael D. Coogan
PARTICLE PHYSICS Frank Close
PAUL E. P. Sanders
PHILOSOPHY Edward Craig
PHILOSOPHY OF LAW
Raymond Wacks
PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE
Samir Okasha
PHOTOGRAPHY Steve Edwards
PLATO Julia Annas
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
David Miller
POLITICS Kenneth Minogue
POSTCOLONIALISM Robert Young
POSTMODERNISM Christopher Butler
POSTSTRUCTURALISM
Catherine Belsey
PREHISTORY Chris Gosden
PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY
Catherine Osborne
PSYCHIATRY Tom Burns
PSYCHOLOGY
Gillian Butler and Freda McManus
PURITANISM Francis J. Bremer
THE QUAKERS Pink Dandelion
QUANTUM THEORY
John Polkinghorne
RACISM Ali Rattansi
THE REFORMATION Peter Marshall
RELATIVITY Russell Stannard
RELIGION IN AMERICA Timothy Beal
THE RENAISSANCE Jerry Brotton
RENAISSANCE ART
Geraldine A. Johnson
ROMAN BRITAIN Peter Salway
THE ROMAN EMPIRE Christopher Kelly
ROUSSEAU Robert Wokler
RUSSELL A. C. Grayling

RUSSIAN LITERATURE Catriona Kelly
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION
S. A. Smith
SCHIZOPHRENIA
Chris Frith and Eve Johnstone
SCHOPENHAUER
Christopher Janaway
SCIENCE AND RELIGION
Thomas Dixon
SCOTLAND Rab Houston
SEXUALITY Véronique Mottier
SHAKESPEARE Germaine Greer
SIKHISM Eleanor Nesbitt
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
ANTHROPOLOGY
John Monaghan and Peter Just
SOCIALISM Michael Newman
SOCIOLOGY Steve Bruce
SOCRATES C. C. W. Taylor
THE SOVIET UNION Stephen Lovell
THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR
Helen Graham
SPINOZA Roger Scruton
STATISTICS David J. Hand
STUART BRITAIN John Morrill
SUPERCONDUCTIVITY
Stephen Blundell
TERRORISM Charles Townshend
THEOLOGY David F. Ford
TRAGEDY Adrian Poole
THE TUDORS John Guy
TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITAIN
Kenneth O. Morgan
THE UNITED NATIONS
Jussi M. Hanhimäki
THE VIKINGS Julian Richards
WITTGENSTEIN A. C. Grayling
WORLD MUSIC Philip Bohlman
THE WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION Amrita Narlikar
WRITING AND SCRIPT
Andrew Robinson

Available soon:

THOMAS AQUINAS Fergus Kerr
DESERTS Nick Middleton
THE NORMAN CONQUEST
George Garnett

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY
Eric H. Cline
THE REAGAN REVOLUTION
Gil Troy

For more information visit our web site
www.oup.co.uk/general/vsi/

Peter Marshall

THE
REFORMATION

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States

by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

© Peter Marshall 2009

The moral rights of the author have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2009

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,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose the same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India

Printed in Great Britain by

Ashford Colour Press Ltd, Gosport, Hampshire

ISBN 978-0-19-923131-7

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

In memory of Trevor Johnson (1961-2007)

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of illustrations xi

Introduction 1

1 Reformations 11

2 Salvation 42

3 Politics 60

4 Society 76

5 Culture 93

6 Others 110

7 Legacy 129

Chronology 137

Further reading 143

Index 147

This page intentionally left blank

List of illustrations

- 1 Lucas Cranach's portrait of Martin Luther, 1520 **14**
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Felix M. Warburg, 1920 (20.64.21). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- 2 Portrait of Calvin at age 53, 1562 **26**
© Roger-Viollet/TopFoto.co.uk
- 3 Engraving of the Council of Trent in session, 16th century **34**
Private Collection © The Bridgeman Art Library
- 4 Allegory of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1686 **40**
The Huguenot Society
- 5 Opening of St John's Gospel from Tyndale's bible of 1526 **49**
© The British Library/HIP/TopFoto.co.uk
- 6 Adrien Ysenbrandt's *The Mass of St Gregory*, 1532 **55**
© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
- 7 English woodcut showing Protestant men and women at communion, 1570s **56**
© The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Tanner 285, fol. 41v)
- 8 Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts on the Apocalypse, 'The Battle of the Angels' **58**
- 9 Map showing the religious complexion of Europe c. 1600 **67**
© From Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (OUP, 1990). By permission of Oxford University Press
- 10 François Brunel, *Procession of the French Catholic League*, 1590 **74**

- © Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes, France/Lauros/Giraudon/The Bridgeman Art Library
- 11 Anthonius Claessins's *A Family Saying Grace before a Meal*, c. 1585 **84**
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
- 12 Egbert van Heemskerck, engraving showing a woman preaching at an English Quaker meeting, 17th century **88**
© 2004 Fotomas/TopFoto.co.uk
- 13 Hans Sebald Beham, *The Dance of the Noses*, 1520 **90**
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford
- 14 Franciscan friars burning pagan 'idols' in 16th-century Mexico **99**
By permission of Glasgow University Library, Special Collections Department
- 15 Interior of the church of the Gesù, Rome **101**
© Fondo Edifici di Culto, Min. dell'Interno. Photo: © Scala, Florence
- 16 Rembrandt, *Belshazar's Feast*, c. 1636–8 **103**
© The National Gallery, London/2006 TopFoto.co.uk
- 17 Woodcut from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* of Protestants burned at Smithfield in 1556 **112**
The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (Douce F.subt 2. p. 1451)
- 18 Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci, missionary to China, in Oriental dress **124**
© The Granger Collection/TopFoto.co.uk
- 19 Woodcut of a diabolic baptism, from Francesco Maria Guazzo's *Compendium maleficarum* (1626) **127**
© Art Media/HIP/TopFoto.co.uk

Introduction

The Reformation created modern Europe, and left an indelible mark on the history of the world. But what was the Reformation, and was it a force for progress, liberty, and modernity, or for conflict, division, and repression? Is it history's premier example of religion's ability to inspire selfless idealism and beneficent social change, or a cautionary tale of fanaticism and intolerance in the name of faith? Was it actually about religion at all, or should we see it as the historical instance par excellence of spiritual motivations being cynically invoked to legitimate economic and political changes?

Scholars used to know the answers to these questions, though different scholars knew quite different answers, the Reformation having been as divisive for subsequent historians as it was for those who lived through it. This is because it has always seemed a foundational moment, raising questions of origins and parentage, the culturally and politically contentious issues of who we are and where we come from. Millions of Protestants across the world still look to events in the 16th century as inspiration, as the beginning of their story. It is a story of spiritual liberation, of people casting aside the shackles of theological and moral servitude. The movement initiated by the renegade German friar Martin Luther brought an end to corrupt and oppressive rule by

the clergy of an institutional Church, a Church that had maintained its power by imposing superstitious and psychologically burdensome beliefs on ordinary (lay) worshippers. It was also a return to the pure sources of Christianity, after centuries in which the stream was polluted by the dripping pipe of man-made traditions. The bible, the Word of God, was restored to its rightful place as the rule and arbiter of Christian life. In vernacular translations of scripture, lay readers met the person of Jesus Christ, bypassing the clerical mediators who, like officious secretaries, had kept medieval petitioners from direct contact with the boss.

There is a related version of this story, allowing secular liberals to claim the Reformation as part of their heritage too. Luther's protest was a first strike against authoritarianism in many areas of social and intellectual life, a hammer blow against the kind of religion that 'tells you what to think'. Modern individualism has its origins in the unfettered bible-reading the Reformation encouraged; modern capitalism in the industriousness and initiative of Protestant merchants; and modern science in the refusal of deference to ancient authorities. New and potentially liberalizing forms of political organization emerged from the revolt against Rome. The 'problem' with contemporary Islam, newspaper pundits often solemnly assure us, is that it can't produce an Enlightenment, having never had a Reformation. Less fashionable now, though still sometimes touted, is a Marxist view that the Reformation was an example of an 'early bourgeois revolution' to overthrow feudal aristocracy – a vital historical precondition for the later revolution of the proletariat.

There are alternative versions. The 1520 papal bull condemning Luther likened him to a wild boar crashing around in the vineyard of the Lord, and that is how he, and the movement he unleashed, have seemed to many Catholics over the centuries. The Victorian Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins echoed the papal condemnation in his masterpiece *The Wreck of the Deutschland*,

where Luther appears as the 'beast of the waste wood'. Wherever the Reformation triumphed, it ruthlessly destroyed a priceless artistic and cultural inheritance. It also brought down precious structures of community. No longer sustained by a communal, interconnected world of guilds, brotherhoods, and collective rituals, the individual now stood alone as an adherent of the Church and a subject of the state. There are secular variants of this story too. Was the Protestants' insistence on the plain, unvarnished truth of scripture, and on the literal meaning of its text, not the foundation stone of modern fundamentalism and illiberalism? Some modern feminists, in unholy alliance with regretful Catholics, have suspected the Reformation of being bad news for women, reinforcing patriarchal authority in the home, and closing off the career path represented by convents. Meanwhile, modern Christian ecumenists suggest that the whole thing may have been an unfortunate mistake, that Luther and his opponents were really saying the same thing in the course of their ferocious debates about salvation.

These are all myths, which is not to say they are completely untrue. Myths are not lies, but symbolically powerful articulations of sensed realities. It is probably safer to believe that all the myths about the Reformation are true, rather than that none of them are. The goal of producing a totally unmythologized account of the Reformation may be an unachievable, or even an undesirable, one. Nonetheless, this little book – drawing on the best, not always impartial, modern scholarship – will attempt to explain what sort of phenomenon the Reformation was, to assess its impact across religious, political, social, and cultural areas of life, and the character of its legacy to the modern world.

First off, a pretty basic question: was there actually such a thing as 'the Reformation', an expression nobody used in our commonly accepted sense until long after the events it was meant to describe? The call for 'reform' within Christianity is about as old as the religion itself, and in every age there have been urgent attempts to

bring it about. Historians have identified a '10th-century reformation' in the English Church, associated with the renewal of Benedictine monasticism, as well as a 12th-century reformation, directed by the papacy, that succeeded in imposing clerical celibacy across the Christian West. The 'Great Schism' of the later 14th century, which produced two (and at one point three) rival claimants to the papal throne, produced an intense desire for *reformatio* in the following century. Reformation in the 15th century had both an official and an unofficial face. Leading churchmen sought to end the crisis of leadership and prevent the scandal of disunity by regularizing the government of the Church through General Councils. Such august bodies met at Pisa (1409), at Constance (1414–18), at Pavia and Siena (1423–4), and at Basle and other sites (1431–49). This 'conciliar' approach to reform died out once the papacy was again strong enough to impose its authority. But in the meantime still more far-reaching reform movements had been set in motion. In England, the theologian John Wyclif (d. 1384) formulated an astonishingly radical critique of the Church of his day, substituting the supreme authority of scripture for that of the pope, and arguing that clergymen should exercise no worldly authority. Wyclif's followers were driven out of the universities, but managed to lay the foundations for an underground heretical movement (the 'Lollards') in the country at large. At the other end of Europe, in the kingdom of Bohemia, another radical priest, Jan Hus, inspired a national revolt against foreign overlordship and Roman jurisdiction. The Hussites also demanded that lay people should receive wine, as well as bread, in the communion at mass. The aims and priorities of reform movements were not always compatible – Hus was burned as a heretic by the Council of Constance – but collectively they give the lie to any suggestion that torpor and complacency were the hallmarks of European religious life in the century before Martin Luther. In the light of so many previous attempts at reformation, why does the one associated with Luther deserve the definite article and the capital letter?

There are strong arguments for saying it shouldn't. Older textbooks on the Reformation typically began the story with Luther's protest in 1517 and wrapped it up not much more than a decade after his death in 1546. The Reformation seemed a fundamentally German event (though there were important reverberations in off-stage places, like England), and it had a neat and clean narrative shape: causes and progression of Luther's break with the Roman Church, and subsequent establishment, against the wishes of the Catholic German emperor, of Protestant state churches. The Reformation was Protestant, it was political, and (given the disordered state of the pre-Reformation Catholic Church) it was predictable.

Neither the chronology nor the geography of this Reformation seems convincing any more. And the assumption that the Reformation was 'inevitable' looks, at the very least, debatable, in the light of new research emphasizing the flexibility and spiritual vigour of late medieval Catholicism. Most significantly, there is now a widespread acceptance that what once seemed the alpha and omega of 16th-century Reformation – the Lutheran movement in Germany – was only one part of a much greater whole. Reformation is giving way to plural reformations: multiple theological and political movements with their own directions and agendas. There were distinct national, regional, and local reformations, not all Lutheran, and not all successful. Dogging the steps of Lutheranism was an ambitious rival brand of Protestant Christianity, often called in theological short-hand 'Calvinism', though 'Reformed' Protestantism is the more correct label. It is sometimes also referred to as the 'Second Reformation', though many places in Europe experienced it as the first alternative to the old faith of Catholicism. Not all the religious experimenters of the age followed the lead of Luther, Calvin, or other 'magisterial' reformers, who taught from a position of authority and allied themselves with secular magistrates. There was also a disparate, bottom-up 'Radical Reformation' of groups and individuals who imagined an entirely different social order, and dared to rethink

some basic premises of Christianity that magisterial reformers still took for granted. One of the most important reformations took place within not outside of the Catholic Church, or, as we can begin to call it after serious rivals emerged, the Roman Catholic Church. It has long been recognized that Rome rallied its forces and reordered its ranks in the face of Luther's and Calvin's challenges. In a formula popularized by German Protestant historians of the 19th century, this was dubbed the 'Counter-Reformation', a negative and essentially reactive response. Earlier histories of the Reformation (and a surprising number of current ones) either omit this view from the Tiber or squeeze it into an appendant chapter at the back of the volume. Yet what is increasingly coming to be known as 'The Catholic Reformation' or 'Catholic Renewal' was much more than retrenchment in the face of the enemy. New spiritual and reforming energies within Catholicism predated the Protestant revolt; some were diverted into it, but others not. Catholic reform was naturally shaped by an ongoing confrontation with Protestantism, just as Protestantism defined itself throughout its history in relation to a Catholic, or 'papist', other. It makes little sense to consider the Catholic and Protestant Reformations separately from each other, and their contrasting, and sometimes converging, trajectories are treated side-by-side in this book.

The doctrinal teachings of Protestant and Catholic reformers were inimical and anathema to one another. But their broader aims and aspirations could at times look remarkably similar. Both hoped to create a more spiritual Church, and a more godly, disciplined, and ordered society. And both confronted similar obstacles, in the ignorance, apathy, or sheer bloody-mindedness of local communities who might see little reason to change their ways at the behest of high-minded idealists. Perhaps the most significant change in the study of the Reformation over the past few decades has been the realization that the subject encompasses more than changes in theology and the consolidation of new church structures. Or, to put it another way, church history is too important to leave to the church historians. An expansive 'social

history' of the Reformation now grapples with questions of both cause and consequence in relation to the experiences and expectations of ordinary folk. Asking why lay people rallied to the Reformation, abandoning traditional and inherited beliefs, is to open a crucial historical window on their deepest priorities and concerns. Unsurprisingly, investigators have found that these concerns were not identical to those of educated reformers. Common folk in 1520s Germany selected and adapted aspects of the reforming programme that spoke to their needs, demonstrating in the process a capacity for 'agency' which an older tradition of scholarship was not always prepared to allow them. The Reformations affected everyone's eternal destiny – the rules for getting to heaven were revised, refined, or reinforced, and people were expected to know what they were. But they also impacted on virtually all aspects of existence in the meantime, from the political structures under which people lived to the small rituals of everyday life. The artistic and cultural landscape of Europe was reconfigured, as was the intimate environment of marriage, the family, and gender relations. One result of this broadening vision of the Reformation's impact is that a quick sprint from the indulgences controversy of 1517 to the closing of the Council of Trent in 1563 is hardly an adequate frame for making sense of the phenomenon. The forces which the Reformation set in motion were working themselves out for decades, even centuries. No two historians' reformations will be exactly the same length, but my perception is that *circa 1700* is an appropriate point to pause and take stock.

A long Reformation is by necessity a wide one. The stone may have dropped in Luther's Germany but its ripples were felt much further afield. The Reformation was not quite ubiquitous in the Christian world. Half a millennium earlier, Christian Europe had divided along the fault-line between the Eastern and Western halves of the old Roman Empire. Western 'Latin' or Catholic Christendom acknowledged the authority of the pope; the Eastern or 'Orthodox' churches sought leadership from a variety of patriarchs, the

pre-eminent of whom was based in Constantinople, a city falling under the sway of Muslim Turks in 1453. The Reformation was an episode within Latin Christianity; the Orthodox were present as neighbours, and occasional objects of conflict and conversion, rather than as full participants. Nonetheless, the Reformation was a far from narrowly West European event. Since the Iron Curtain came down, and the archives of former Eastern bloc countries have opened up, the extent of religious ferment in Hungary, Bohemia, the Baltic states, and Poland has become clearer. It was by no means a certainty in the 16th century that the latter would end up a citadel of Catholicism. And at almost exactly the same time that the Catholic Reformation was getting its act together in Poland, the foundations for another 21st-century bastion of Roman Catholicism were being laid – in the Philippines. The two centuries of Reformation ferment in Europe saw the first significant European expansion beyond Europe. The connection was partly fortuitous, partly not. The discovery of a ‘New World’ in the Americas, and the intensification of European contacts with the ancient civilizations of Asia, offered undreamt-of opportunities for evangelization. At the very moment its unity was cracking in its European heartlands, Christianity was able to become a truly world religion for the first time in its history. Conflict in Europe drove that process forward, and in due course its religious divisions were exported globally, with profound consequences for the modern world.

All of this serves to make the point that, contrary to the way it is sometimes taught in schools and universities, the Reformation was much more than an event in ‘religious’ history. Yet it should not become an exercise in the historical ordering of carts and horses. Traditional ecclesiastical historians insist on the primacy of ideas, the real transformative power exercised by new theologies and ways of seeing the world. By contrast, Marxists, as well as subscribers to trendy sociological and literary theories, instinctively want to ‘deconstruct’, to discern the ‘real’ political, class-based or economic motivations behind assertions of religious

principle or forms of ritual action. The truth is that any approach which begins with a rigid – and fundamentally modern – distinction between the religious and the secular is unlikely to get us very far. For most people in the 16th and 17th centuries, daily life was heavily sacralized and religion was thoroughly secularized – it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to strain off ‘religion’ from separate notions of ‘social’, ‘political’, or ‘economic’ behaviour and motivation. Indeed, it is the interaction between all these categories that makes the Reformation a crucial transformative moment in history.

But – to return to an earlier niggle – if Reformation was multiple interlocking reformations, and the sum of political, social, and religious interactions in Europe and the wider world over the course of two centuries, does the concept of ‘The Reformation’ really stand up? Has the label simply become a cover-all blanket for a convenient era of history, an alternative to that still woollier historical coverlet, ‘early modern’? This book stands by the usefulness of the term, for a simple but crucial reason. ‘The Reformation’ designates both the period and the process through which a key principle established itself at the heart of European culture: the formation of identity by means of division and conflict. During this era, markers of religious difference sprang up across innumerable aspects of life. For the moment, one example, though an important one, will suffice. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII drew on the latest scientific advice to decree a reform of the ancient Julian Calendar, which had made the year slightly too long. Catholic Europe quickly adopted the ‘Gregorian’ Calendar, but Protestant states were deeply suspicious, most only abandoning the Julian reckoning around 1700, and Britain and Sweden holding out till the 1750s. The Reformation had politicized time itself.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Reformations

A German event

It starts in a thunderstorm in the summer of 1505. On the road near Erfurt, in the Germany principality of Saxony, a young law student is caught in the downpour, and fears for his life amidst the ferocious strikes of lightning. He prays to St Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, offering a bargain: if she will spare his life, he will become a monk. A fortnight later, he bangs on the door of the Erfurt house of the reformed Augustinian friars, one of the strictest of all the religious orders.

Martin Luther told the story about himself, decades later, and it may not have happened that way. But everything about the tale is significant: the intensity of the medieval cult of the saints, the combined quest for material and spiritual salvation, the setting in Germany. Asking why the Reformation started in Germany is a bit like asking why the Communist Revolution started in Russia, or the telephone was invented in America – it happened there because it happened there. Some important ‘preconditions’ seem absent. In contrast to Hussite Bohemia, or Lollard-flecked England, Germany was pretty much a heresy-free zone in the decades around 1500, with little formal challenge to the authority of the Church. What was distinctive was its political structure. Unlike the emergent national monarchies of France, England, and

sample content of The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction

- [read online Guerras sucias: El mundo es un campo de batalla Â-Estado y Sociedad](#)
- [click Startup Flow here](#)
- [Galapagos Regained: A Novel online](#)
- [download online Red Star Rising \(Charlie Muffin, Book 14\) pdf](#)
- [read online Understanding Agency: Social Theory and Responsible Action for free](#)
- [Affordable Excellence: The Singapore Healthcare Story pdf](#)

- <http://www.netc-bd.com/ebooks/Troubleshooting-CentOS.pdf>
- <http://dadhoc.com/lib/Thanksgiving--How-to-Cook-it-Well.pdf>
- <http://test.markblaustein.com/library/Bride-of-Ice---New-Selected-Poems.pdf>
- <http://schroff.de/books/Posters-of-the-First-World-War.pdf>
- <http://ramazotti.ru/library/Knife-Edge--Young-Sherlock-Holmes--Book-6-.pdf>
- <http://aseasonedman.com/ebooks/Affordable-Excellence--The-Singapore-Healthcare-Story.pdf>