This book recasts the story of the Reformation by bringing together two histories: the encounter between Europe and the western hemisphere beginning in 1492 and the fragmentation of European Christendom in the sixteenth century. In so doing, it restores resonances to “idolatry,” “cannibal,” and “barbarian,” even as it moves past such polemics to trace multiple understandings of divinity, matter, and human nature. So many aspects of human life, from marriage and family through politics to ways of thinking about space and time, were called into question. Debates on human nature and conversion forged new understandings of religious identity. Debates on the relationship of humanity to the material world forged new understandings of image and ritual and of physics. By the end of the century, there was not one “Christian religion” but many, and many understandings of the Christian in the world.

The Reformation

Towards a New History

LEE PALMER WANDEL

University of Wisconsin
Contents

List of Figures and Maps  page vii
Preface  ix

Introduction  1

PART I: BEGINNINGS

1 Christianity in 1500  17
2 “The New World”  39
3 “The Word”  63

PART II: FRAGMENTATION

4 The Word of God and the Ordering of the World  89
5 The Ties That Bind  117
6 Boundaries  147

PART III: RELIGION RECONCEIVED

7 Christians  175
8 Things and Places  201
9 Incarnation  226

Conclusion  255

Selected Bibliography  265
Index  269
List of Figures and Maps

Figures

1.1. Floor plan of Notre Dame, Paris.  page 23
1.2. Pieter Neefs the Elder, Church interior.  26
1.3. Anonymous, 15th century, The Mass of Saint Gregory. Oil on wood, 60 × 39 cm.  29
1.4. Rosary bead.  33
2.1. Ptolemy’s world map (around 140 CE); copy Ulm edition of 1486.  41
2.2. Martin Waldseemüller, World Map, 1507.  43
2.3. Rumoldus Mercator, after Gerardus Mercator, *Orbis terrae compendiosa descriptio*, 1587.  44
2.4. Genesis. Frontispice Depicting the Creation, Luther Bible, first edition, 1534.  47
3.1. First page of the Gospel of John, *Novum Instrumentum*, Erasmus of Rotterdam, editor.  75
3.2. Bible, Polyglot (Complutensian).  77
3.3. Saint Paul, Letter to the Romans, New Testament, Martin Luther, translator.  79
4.1. Hans Holbein the Younger, Sir Thomas More, 1527.  115
5.1. Hieronymus Bosch, The Seven Deadly Sins.  120
5.2. Lodovico Carracci, The Apparition of the Virgin and Child to Saint Hyacinth.  129
List of Figures and Maps

5.3. Lucas Cranach the Younger, “The Difference Between True Religion and False,” called “The Holy Communion of the Protestants and Ride to Hell of the Catholics.” 134

5.4. “A Seven Headed Martin Luther,” 1698. 136


6.1. Jan Luiken, The Burning of Dutch Heretics by the Spanish Inquisition. 152

6.2. Torture and Execution of Catholics in the Netherlands. 153

6.3. Jacques Tortorel, Massacre at Vassy, 1 March 1562, 1570. 162

7.1. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, The Syndics of the Amsterdam Drapers’ Guild (‘The Staalmeesters’). 1662. 182

7.2. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Martin Luther preaches before the Crucifix. 1540. 183

8.1. The Breaking of Images by Calvinists in the Netherlands, 1566. 203

8.2. Correggio (Antonio Allegri), Noli me tangere. 209

8.3. Anonymous, 15th century, The Mass of Saint Gregory. 211

8.4. The Protestant Church in Lyon, called “The Paradise.” 213

8.5. Pieter Jansz Saenredam, St. Katherine’s Church, Utrecht. 217

8.6. Giovanni Paolo Pannini, Interior of Saint Peter’s Basilica. Ca. 1750. 218

8.7. Giovanni Paolo Pannini, The Outing of the Duc de Choiseul (1719–1785) on St. Peter’s Square in Rome. 1754. 219

8.8. Antwerp Confessionals. 221

C.1. Rumoldus Mercator, after Gerardus Mercator, Orbis terrae compendiosa descriptio, 1587. 257

Maps

1.1. Christian Europe in 1500. 2

4.1. Churches 103

6.1. The Netherlands, 1559 159

6.2. Religious Minorities 164
Preface

I grew up in California, in a landscape dotted with the missions established by Junipero Serra, eighteenth-century Franciscan settlements that did not figure in my elementary school’s textbooks, with their narratives of the westward expansion of a Protestant nation. Those material presences of a different Christianity on the west coast of North America invite us to consider how the history of the Reformation has been told, how the histories of the western hemisphere and of Christianity have been cast, and the implications of those histories for how we see ourselves today. Histories of Protestant triumph or the “westward expansion” of Anglophone churches speak from only one of many understandings of Christianity, one that was forged in the sixteenth century and itself claimed the triumph that now shapes so many of the histories we tell.

This book began with one invitation. In 2004, Bethel College invited me to give the Menno Simons Lectures. I am especially grateful to my host, Mark Jantzen, to Keith Sprunger and the other members of the Lecture Committee, and to the students of Bethel, who offered me a gentle and generous environment in which to begin rethinking how we have told the story of the Reformation. And it was realized in another. In 2008, Cambridge University Press invited me to write a short history of the Reformation. I am grateful to Beatrice Rehl, my editor, for the opportunity to think through what we have learned and to recast the narrative.

The Bibliography is at once an invitation to further reading and an introduction to some of the work that informs these pages. Steve Cantley, Erin Lambert, Robert D. Sack, Domenico Sella, and Lindsay Starkey have been the best of readers. My conversation with tms is older than this book and informs every page. Even more than for his willingness to read infinite drafts, I am grateful for his thinking and his acute listening.

This book, the history it seeks to tell, is for my students.