

1517-2017: An Ecumenical Reflection on What We Are Commemorating
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2017 will be a year of significant historical and ecumenical commemoration, but just what are we commemorating? What in fact happened? Can Catholics and Protestants answer that question together in agreed detail? In this presentation, I have been asked to address these two questions. First, what happened? And second, can Catholics and Protestants give a shared description of those events? My task is thus focussed. I am not going to discuss the larger question of the commemoration - Kathryn Johnson is addressing that question in a workshop being offered here.

From the start, historical accounts of the Reformation tended to be polemical. Neither side in the 16th century debates accepted that the other was acting in good, if erroneous, faith. Catholic accounts of the Reformation were often attacks on Luther's personality. The Catholic Heinrich Denifle's 1904 study of Luther included such chapter titles as "The Duping of Nuns by Luther", "Luther's Sophisms and Distortions," and "Luther's Buffoonery" (Denifle 1917). And Denifle was not a crude polemicist without regard for history, but a prominent and well-respected medieval historian, who conducted extensive archival research (it was Denifle who found Luther's early Roman lectures in the Vatican Archive) and was on his way to Cambridge to receive an honorary doctorate when he died in 1905.

Protestant historians often placed Luther and the Reformation in the opposite light. In the 19th century, the German Protestant Leopold Ranke insisted that history is not about fables, but about "what really happened," *was eigentlich geschehen ist*, but in his *History of the Reformation in Germany*, but he opens his account of the events of the Reformation with the statement: "Was not the Gospel itself kept concealed by the Roman church? . . . It was necessary to clear the germ of religion from the thousand folds of accidental forms under which it lay concealed, and to place it unencumbered in the light of day," which task, in Ranke's view, the Reformation accomplished (Ranke 1966, 1, 121). Even in the mid-20th century popular biography of Luther, Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand*, a book assigned to me in college, there can be no doubt who are the good guys and the bad guys.

The last fifty years have seen important changes. Historians without a confessional axe to grind have become deeply involved in Reformation history. In the 1930s a school of Catholic Reformation scholarship developed which, while clearly Catholic in various ways, opened up a much better picture of the Catholic reaction to Luther, investigated without prejudice the problems of the late-medieval church, and recognized what, by Catholic standards also, was an authentic evangelical core to Luther's teaching. Protestant scholars appropriated and added to the new work by non-confessional and Catholic scholars. Polemical or hagiographical accounts are still to be found (and new ones will undoubtedly be written in the next few years), but we now can speak of a common, ecumenical exploration of what are rightly called the Reformations of the sixteenth century, reformations that left no strand of Western Christianity unchanged.

A task for all of us in the lead-up to the 2017 events should be some engagement with this historical work. The international Catholic-Lutheran dialogue has put together a solid summary in its recent text *From Conflict to Communion*. Here one can find both an account of the most important events of the Reformation and a summary of the most important aspects of Luther's theology, put together by a team of Lutheran and Catholic scholars. That such a text could be written is itself a sign that times have changed. The text can be downloaded for free. If one is interested in the larger history of the Reformation, in its political and cultural as well as its theological and ecclesial aspects, I would heartily recommend Diarmaid MacCulloch's *The Reformation*. MacCulloch is somewhat weak on theology, but he tells a lively story which summarizes recent studies and includes a full picture of the Reformation beyond the usual focus on Luther and Calvin, especially highlighting the reforms that had begun prior to Luther in

areas that remained Catholic, e.g., Spain and Italy. Macculloch packs a great deal of learning into what is almost a take-to-the-beach book (or at least, a take-to-the-beach book for dedicated ecumenists). An eminently readable and quite brief introduction Luther and his theology can be found in Scott Hendrix's *Martin Luther: A Very Short Introduction*, which includes an extensive bibliography for those who want to read further.

All of this is not to say that all historical disputes have disappeared in a puff of consensus. Some questions of fact remain unsettled and, unless new documents are found, are probably unanswerable. At least for the popular mind, the most prominent such question is whether Luther did or did not actually nail the 95 Theses on the Power of Indulgences to the door of the Castle Church on Oct 31, 1517. The earliest account that he did so comes from the early 1540s, 25 years after the event. We have no statement from Luther or from any eyewitness that he did so. Evidence can be cited that would lead one to think he did or that he didn't. Scholars still disagree on the question. although we know for certain that he wrote a letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Magdeburg, protesting the indulgence campaign, on October 31st and that Luther himself later cited October 31st as the day on which his protest had begun.

Apart from a few such details, however, we have a fairly good picture of who did and said what when in the Reformation. Historians today paint a far more variegated picture of the Reformation than was the case even fifty years ago. I will here go on using the term "the Reformation," but the question must be asked whether there was such a singular phenomenon. Carter Lindberg titled his recent textbook *The European Reformations*, in the plural, distinguishing not only the different strands of Protestant reformation, but also the thoroughgoing reform that took place in Catholicism. We also today have a much richer picture of what the Reformation meant for art, family, politics, and economics. (A strength of the Macculloch volume I mentioned is bringing out these wider aspects of the Reformation.)

The present historical problem in a sense comes from this richness. How do we fit it all together into a single coherent picture? Reformation studies has itself become a field that is difficult to grasp as a whole. Arguments are not, however, confessional. The various sides in scholarly debates today cannot be identified as Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, or Anglican. Nevertheless, one's larger theological judgments do make some difference when one moves from readily describable, even if complex, events to assessment. Was the Reformation a triumph or a tragedy? And if in some sense both, in just what sense both? Was division the virtually inevitable result of an evangelical theology that was at its basis incompatible with any recognizable form of what Western Catholicism had become, or was reconciliation a possibility for years and even decades after 1517? If so, what blocked reconciliation? Blame is certainly shared by all sides, but blame for what? Theological blindness? Financial or political self-interest? Personal stubbornness or vainglory?

These are the questions of historical assessment that need to be addressed as part of the commemoration of the beginning of the Reformation. Let me focus for most of the rest of this presentation on what we can agree occurred at the Reformation's beginning, the events unleashed by Luther's protest of Oct 31, 1517, whether that protest was nailed, or merely mailed. I use the word 'unleashed' deliberately, for a certain mismatch of action and effect occurs. An unknown professor of theology at an undistinguished university circulates some theses for debate to his colleagues and sends them also with a cover letter to one or more bishops - and the unity of Western Christendom collapses. Now, I have always thought very highly of the world-historical importance of the ideas put forward by theology professors, but something here calls for explanation. How did such a small, even trivial occurrence have such consequences? Obviously, more was going on than meets the eye. Somehow, Luther's protest was like a snowball at the top of a snow-covered slope, which, rolling down the slope, sets off an avalanche.

On the hand out {also on this blog, under 'Reformation Timeline'}, I have given you a detailed chronology of the events stretching from October 1517 through early 1519 (at which point, a brief pause occurred in developments). During those 16 or so months, events happened quickly, especially in light of the uncertain and often slow communications of the time. Behind the events stand two trajectories which came into decisive collision.

On the one hand, the evolution of indulgences had reached an inflationary stage in Luther's time. Indulgences, technically put, the remission of the penitential satisfactions that must be completed even for forgiven sins, had a complex history, about which research over the last century has laid much bare. Indulgences were not a static reality in the medieval church, but had undergone significant evolution, and were evolving further in the early 16th century. From a limited and extraordinary concession in the early high middle ages, associated with the crusades and jubilee years in Rome, they had undergone two major expansions. During the Great Schism of the late 14th century, one of the competing popes, Boniface IX, extended indulgences associated with certain sites or shrines (for example, the Portiuncula indulgence associated with St. Francis' church in Assisi) to chosen churches throughout Europe (or at least those parts of Europe that recognized his papacy). A cross and the papal coat of arms would be erected in a local church and a visit to that church on certain days would gain the same indulgence as a pilgrimage to Rome during a jubilee year. Indulgences thus became far more available to a wide swath of European Christians.

More importantly, in 1476 an even greater expansion occurred. Pope Sixtus IV, in a bull declaring an indulgence associated with a church in France, explicitly stated that an indulgence acquired could be applied to the dead in purgatory. This view had been put forward by various persons earlier, but had not received official approbation prior to 1476. In addition, the bishop associated with this particular church in France, Cardinal Raymund Peraudi, organized the promotion of the indulgence with the skill of a highly successful modern fundraiser. Peraudi was a true believer in indulgences as a wonderful outpouring of grace. They should be offered enthusiastically and dramatically. Peraudi became the master of the indulgence campaign, a series of sermons and liturgies carried out during a specified period in a territory, associated with good works for some cause, such as funding defense against the Turk or rebuilding a church. As had become common, among the good works that could be done to acquire the indulgence was a financial contribution, and this good work became the predominant form of good work associated with the indulgence. While it does not appear that Peraudi was himself driven by an interest in financial gain, his high-powered campaigns turned out to be lucrative (not, it should be noted, so much for the papacy, as for the local officials who always received a major portion of money donated). The turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century saw an indulgence boom. In the fifteen years prior to 1517, 7 major indulgence campaigns were carried out in Germany: to fund a crusade against schismatic Ruthenians; to rebuild the cathedral in Konstanz, the Dominican church in Augsburg, and a church in Br ux; to restore the cathedral in Trier; to repair dikes in the Netherlands; and, famously, to build a new St. Peter's in Rome, the indulgence campaign against which Luther protested. Scheduling and geographically limiting each campaign so it would not compete with others became a headache and there is some evidence that financial returns were beginning to diminish, stimulating even greater efforts. [It should be noted that Luther's protest was effective in this regard, that the St. Peter's indulgence campaign was the last major indulgence campaign aimed at fundraising. The practice died. For the history outlined in this paragraph, see Moeller 1989.]

These often crude campaigns highlighted an ambiguity that lay within indulgences. Indulgences were (and I would note still are) special events in which the faithful are called to acts of penance and self-reflection, with which the Church as a whole, Christ and the saints, join in solidarity, offering their works in prayer for divine assistance in that penance. Indulgences were originally understood as an aid to penance, an aspect of the reality that the penitent is not alone but is aided by his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, including Christ himself. In the indulgence campaigns of Luther's time, indulgences had clearly become not an aid to penance, but a substitute for penance. Inner penitence and the external act required for the indulgence had become separated; one could obtain an indulgence to be applied to someone in purgatory without oneself going to confession (an innovation criticized by some at the time). That the good work associated with the indulgence had become for most persons a financial contribution to a specific good cause made the matter seem all the more like a strictly external transaction unrelated to inner transformation.

This evolution of indulgences encountered a second reality in transition, the developing theology of Martin Luther, in 1517 an unknown, Augustinian canon (to be precise, not a monk). The modern reader can trace Luther's development through the manuscripts of his classroom lectures, first on the Psalms from 1513 to 1515, then on Romans from 1515 to 1516 and on Galatians from 1516 to 1517. We also have letters and a few sermons. The interpretation of the evolution of Luther's thought in this period is a matter of controversy. A good deal of ink was spilled in the mid-20th century over attempts to specify just when Luther made his "Reformation breakthrough" and left behind the medieval theology in which he had been schooled. My sense is that most interpreters today have abandoned the idea that there was some single moment of insight in which the scales suddenly fell from Luther's eyes. Rather, his ideas developed gradually, with stops and starts and occasional retreats.

How to read this development will always, I think, be a matter of dispute, for any reading is also an interpretation of Luther's theology, a judgment about what were its central points and inner logic. I think most would agree that during the period 1515 through 1517, Luther had developed an outlook that focussed intensely on inner penitence and humility. Any righteousness of one's own works, even works aided by grace, will always be radically inadequate before the judgment of God. The Christian can, however, be penitent, condemning his or her own sins. In the process, one aligns oneself with the righteousness of God and is, in an odd sense, by penitent self-condemnation, righteous. Thus, in his Romans lectures, Luther can refer to "total humility both against God and against man, that is, complete and perfect righteousness" (p. 183) and can say "the only complete righteousness is humility" (p. 441).

Especially for Luther in 1517, the Christian life was about penitence. Thus, the famous first thesis of the 95: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Penitence is not a burden the Christian should seek to escape; it is our participation in the cross of Christ, the medicine of salvation. "A Christian who is truly contrite seeks and loves to pay penalties for his sins. (Thesis 40)." One can see why a theology and practice of indulgences in which as external a work as a financial contribution can substitute for true works of penitence would be more than a mere abuse for Luther; it would cut the heart out of the Christian life. Luther did not understand his protest against indulgences as parallel to, say, a criticism of the venality or immorality of the Renaissance papacy. His was a theological protest and for him the gospel was at stake.

The origin of Luther's protest lies thus in this collision between developments in the theology and practices of indulgences in the late 15th and early 16th centuries and the particular stamp of Luther's theology at the time. By we still have our question: how can this have set off an event as large as the Reformation? Much of Luther's critique of indulgences can be found throughout the late middle ages (though generally as a criticism of the multiplication of indulgences, rather than of indulgences themselves). The saying "Repentance is better than indulgence" can be found among various late medieval authors.

Luther was never one to stay rigorously on topic, however, and the 95 Theses also contain various statements about the limitations of papal power in relation to purgatory and comments on the nature of confession and absolution. If Luther were only concerned with indulgences, then the entire discussion might have been a minor episode in the history of a minor aspect of Christian life. But the concern with indulgences was a manifestation of Luther's larger engagement with the topics that would be at the center of the Reformation: the nature of authority in the Church and the nature of the Christian's salvation. I have provided a somewhat detailed timeline for the first phase of the Reformation, through early 1519, the period when indulgences were at the center of the discussion. What at the beginning was an academic debate about indulgences was on the way to becoming the wider movement we call the Reformation. Let me make six comments about this history.

First, while the 95 Theses might seem to us dense and academic, they excited great interest. We know of four printings that occurred by the end of 1517, from Leipzig in the east to Basel in the west. Most of these printings occurred at the initiative of others, not Luther. The theses were translated into German and thus reached a much wider lay audience.

Second, the public Catholic response, which begins in January 1518, focused less on indulgences themselves than on papacy and authority. Luther knew of papal statements on indulgences, but he understood them to be exhortations for the faithful to receive the indulgences, not normative teaching about indulgences and thus, by the standards of the time, not dogmatically binding. He insisted he was debating a doctrinally open question. His opponents contended that the papal bulls were in fact doctrinally normative. As a result of this focus of his opponents, the emphasis in the debate quickly shifted away from indulgences themselves to questions of authority. A significant question of historical interpretation is whether the logic of Luther's theology implied from the start a radical criticism of Catholic structures of authority, a criticism that would inevitably have emerged as the argument proceeded, or whether Luther was forced in this direction by his critics, who, it should be noted, made claims for papal authority that were extreme for their time and go well beyond present Catholic teaching, e.g., that the pope stood above scripture. I would add that almost all commentators agree that, with an exception I will note in a moment, the Catholic cause was not well served by those who wrote against Luther in these first years. They fed Luther's emerging view that his opponents were knaves, fools, or, in many cases, both.

Third, already in March 1518, a decisive intervention occurred. Luther is taken under the protective wing of his prince, the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise. When Luther is called to Heidelberg by his order, Frederick permits him to go, but insists that Luther be returned, blocking any action to hold him in custody for examination or punishment. Frederick was decisive later in 1518 in having Luther heard by a papal official in Germany rather than in Rome. The power of secular princes within the Church had expanded during the Great Schism and the conciliar controversy of the late 14th and 15th centuries, so that Frederick's action should perhaps not be seen as that unusual. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Frederick's actions in 1518 both preserved and transformed the nascent Reformation. From this point on, the Reformation will be entwined with political considerations and interests. Church and state were so interwoven in the Holy Roman Empire that any church reform movement had to engage political affairs. The alliance with supportive princes and town councils may have been a blessing, curse, or both, but it was almost certainly a condition of survival for the Reformation.

Fourth, it is difficult to deny that there was a rush to judgment on the part of Roman authorities. Albrecht sent the 95 Theses to Rome for investigation almost immediately. As the timeline indicates, in February 1518, Pope Leo instructed the Augustinian order to have Luther silenced. When that attempt fails, an official investigation is opened in Rome in May 1518. The papal official most engaged in the investigation, Sylvester Prierias, Master of the Papal Palace, quickly publishes a text denouncing Luther as a heretic. Luther complained, rightly enough, that prosecutor, judge, and jury had spoken before he had been heard. Fatefully, in early August of 1518, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian complained to Rome that Luther's views were having noxious effects in Germany and their circulation needed to be stopped. [The issue here was not the 95 Theses, but an anonymous summary of a sermon by Luther on the limits of the Church's power of excommunication. That Luther's sermons were being summarized by hearers and widely distributed is a sign of the interest his critique had aroused.] In response to the imperial complaint, in mid-August 1518 a summary judgment was made in Rome, declaring Luther an open and pertinacious heretic. He was not to be given a hearing, but confronted with the judgment and given the choice of recanting or being condemned. This declaration was not made public, but rumors quickly spread.

Luther's demand, from 1518 until his final condemnation by the Empire in 1521, was that his errors be shown from Scripture, right reason (or the Fathers). The rapid negative judgment, prior to such a hearing, was meant, in the view of those who made it, to nip a potential schismatic movement in the bud. In that intention, the rapid denunciation most obviously failed. Would events have turned out differently if matters had been handled with more deliberation? Or, was division preprogrammed in the conflict between the theology and practice of the late medieval Catholic Church and the theology already implicit in Luther's writings of 1517 and 1518? Here lies one of the tantalizing 'what if's of the Reformation.

The greatest possibility for such a ‘what if’ lies in the fifth aspect of this timeline I want to stress, the interview Luther had with Cardinal Cajetan in Augsburg on October 12-14, 1518. Cajetan was by far the best theologian engaged in the Catholic argument with Luther in these first years. His commentary on Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae* was of great historical importance. He was perhaps the most important scholastic theologian of his generation. Ironically, he was himself disturbed by inaccurate claims being made for indulgences and had written a memo on the subject in the fall of 1517, at about the same time as Luther must have been writing the 95 Theses.

At the Elector Frederick’s request, Cajetan met with Luther and discussed the accusations against him. To do so, he got permission from Rome not to immediately enforce the summary judgment. The meeting with Luther centered on two topics: the authority of the papal statement that indulgences draw on the merit of Christ and the saints and a new topic that had emerged in the summer of 1518, Luther’s assertion that the forgiveness of sins in confession is effective only if the person forgiven is certain that he or she has been effectively forgiven.

The meeting with Cajetan was either the great missed opportunity to achieve reconciliation before the momentum toward division had become overwhelming or the demonstration that authentic reconciliation was already impossible. Cajetan made a genuine effort to understand Luther. His personal memos on Luther’s theology written at this time make fascinating reading. Without doubt, he fit Luther’s often paradoxical assertions into the framework of the scholastic theology of the time and thus tended to miss their point. Jared Wicks, the best contemporary commentator on this encounter, refers to “a tragic difference in the levels of discourse” between Luther and Cajetan (Wicks 1992, 176). Nevertheless, Cajetan wrote a memo at the time proposing a solution to the question of the certainty of salvation much like that of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.

By the end of the encounter, Cajetan made only one demand: that Luther accept the authority of the papal bull *Unigenitus* which described indulgences as distributing to penitents the merits of Christ and the saints (without, it should be noted, making any mention of the application of indulgences to those in purgatory). This Luther did not believe he could do in good faith. As he wrote a month later: “It has long been believed that whatever the Roman church says, damns, or wants, all people must eventually say, damn, or want, and that no other reason need be given than that the Apostolic See and Roman church hold that opinion. . . . If that is what is involved in the revocation that is demanded of me, I foresee nothing else than that one revocation will be followed by another and so *ad infinitum*. For if I should answer one of [Cajetan’s] statements with a skill equal to his, he would quickly conjure up against me another idol out of his imagination (for Thomistic theology is remarkably fertile in producing subtle distinctions, a veritable Proteus)” (Luther 1957, 276f).

As that quotation makes clear, Luther’s trust was not high. The day after the interview, he learned of the rumors about the Roman summary judgment against him. On Oct 17 and 18, he wrote to Cajetan, offering a moratorium on writings on indulgences (if his opponents also were silent), but again refusing a revocation. He received no answer to these letters (why Cajetan did not respond, we do not know) and he left Augsburg on the night of Oct 20.

As noted, the discussion with Cajetan came to focus on the authority of the papal bull *Unigenitus*. At least some of the time, Luther argued that this bull was not in fact a binding teaching document. After Luther’s departure, Cajetan moved to clarify the situation by drafting a new papal statement, *Cum postquam*, which would unambiguously be official teaching. Pope Leo X immediately proclaimed this statement on November 9, 1518. When Luther received this statement in early 1519, his dissent was now much more straightforward.

I have gone through this history in what I hope is not too boring detail because it will undoubtedly come up in the commemorations of the next few years. This is not a pretty story. It is important to remember that we know far more about what was occurring than anyone actually involved at the time. Those involved suffered from the ecclesiastical equivalent of the fog of war. The Catholic opponents based their understanding of Luther on only a few texts. Even Cajetan, who made the most conscientious effort of the opponents to collect and read Luther’s published statements, did not have the lecture notes which now form so important a

part of our understanding of Luther at this point in his career. Luther, on the other hand, did not know that Archbishop Albrecht and the Emperor had denounced him to Rome. He thought it had been Dominicans who had denounced him (both Tetzel and Prierias were Dominicans). Part of Luther's suspicions of Cajetan were based on Cajetan's being a Dominican. He was being persecuted by a Thomist cabal, he thought, who did not respect Scripture and the Fathers. In addition, while Luther repeatedly insisted that the 95 Theses were statements meant to initiate debate, not assertions that he was personally committed to when he wrote them, they do not read that way and most definitely were not read that way, either by their supporters or their opponents.

Early 1519 saw a pause in the public debate. At the end of this part of the story, lines of opposition had been clearly drawn. Ominously, the focus of the debate had expanded and shifted. Already in November 1518, Luther wrote that the dispute over indulgences was not that central. Questions of authority and the nature of salvation, questions that had already surfaced in the hearing with Cajetan, were far more important. By early 1519, Luther's own theological development had reached the stage that almost all interpreters today agree that, whatever may have been true in Oct 1517, in 1519 he held a genuinely Lutheran understanding of justification, one significantly different from that of any medieval school. I think it also needs to be mentioned that in late 1518 Luther starts to describe the conflict with Rome in apocalyptic terms, as a conflict with Antichrist, and with Antichrist there is no compromise.

A sign of contemporary hope, perhaps, is that Protestants and Catholics can tell this story together. Whether Luther is hero or villain (or some complicated mix of the two), I think most historians and theologians would tell the story in pretty much the way I have described. I certainly would have told the story the same way as a Lutheran as I do now as a Catholic. The major point of interpretive dispute, as I have noted, is the degree to which reconciliation was a real possibility at this early stage. For the most part, that question turns on how one reads Luther's theology of this time. Did it already demand a radical break with the received tradition or was that theology compatible with a reform of that tradition? The dispute on that point is not, however, a Catholic/Protestant argument. There are Protestants as well as Catholics on both sides of that question.

Let me close with two cautionary notes. First, in commemorations, too much emphasis should not be placed on these early events. They may have been historically important, but they do not constitute, I believe, present divisions. Catholics and Protestants could agree on the issues raised in the indulgence controversy and perhaps still be divided. A full understanding of what broke Humpty Dumpty might be fascinating, but it would not put Humpty Dumpty back together again. As has been noted, the commemoration plans of the Lutheran World Federation are focussing, and rightly so, on other matters than this history.

Second, the location of the difference in how Catholic and Protestant tell this story is not so much at the detailed level I have presented today, but at the level of the larger narratives we tell about the last seven or eight hundred years of Christian history. The famous Reformation monument in Geneva Switzerland, with large, imposing statues of Calvin and other worthies, has above it the motto: *Post tenebras lux*, after darkness light. That slogan implies a narrative: a period of benighted obscurantism was replaced by evangelical clarity. Few scholars would explicitly sign on to that narrative today, but it is striking how it lives on in new forms. Already in the Geneva monument itself, the Reformation is equated with the growth of freedom of conscience, a historically complex idea, at best. The recent tagline of the Evangelical Church in Germany, "Kirche der Freiheit", church of freedom, plays off this narrative, I think, and the growing divergence between mainline Protestants and Catholics on some ethical questions presents a temptation to develop new forms of that story.

A mirror image narrative can be found among some Catholics (and even others). At least since the early 20th century, the narrative has been put forward that after the grand synthesis of Aquinas, a decline set in with the logic chopping of Scotus and the (alleged) semi-Pelagianism of Ockham, which obscured true Catholicism and thus make possible the deeper errors of the Reformation, which in turn destroy the unity of Western Christendom and lead to the relativism, individualism, and secularism of the modern world, with all of their attendant

troubles. One might call this the 'Scotus to Stalin' line and has been repeated with vigor recently in Brad Gregory's book *The Unintended Reformation*.

The last hundred years have seen the growth of a truly common scholarly enterprise of investigating and understanding what we now must see as the comprehensive reformations, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, and otherwise, of the 16th century. The difficult question that remains is fitting that detailed account into our larger understanding of the course of modern Western history. We need to make sure that arguments over that larger understanding are also ecumenical.

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