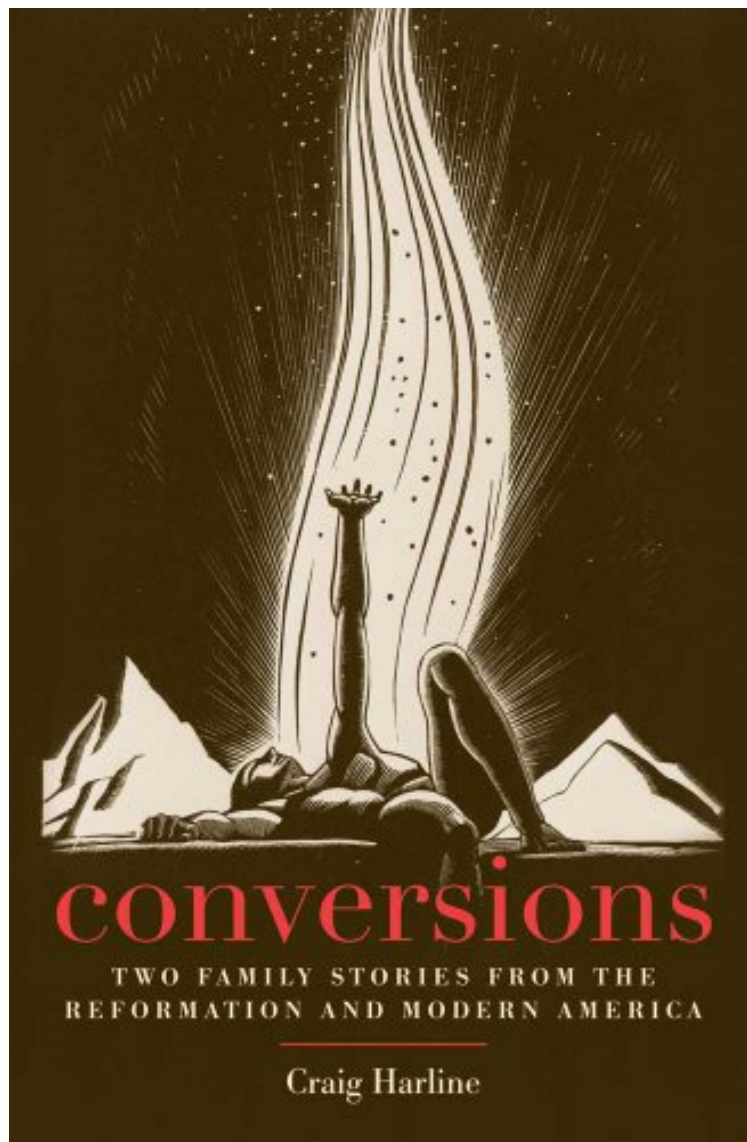


(Download free pdf) *Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America (New Directions in Narrative History)*

## **Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America (New Directions in Narrative History)**

*Craig Harline*

*DOC | \*audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#1486424 in Books 2013-03-29 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .85 x 5.78l, .95 #File Name: 0300192444320 pages | File size: 52.Mb

**Craig Harline : Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America (New Directions in Narrative History)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America (New Directions in Narrative History)*:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Two gripping tales masterfully intertwined By Linda Gibbs To write

about history in an engaging and informative way is one thing but to then mine that history for meaning that has profound personal implications and addresses modern themes is yet another. Both are deftly accomplished by Craig Harline in his superbly written *Conversions, Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America*. Harline tells two compelling stories about the struggles of an individual to sacrifice familial harmony in order to embrace religious convictions that run counter to their upbringing. One is the tale of a young Dutchman in the seventeenth century who seeks to return to the Catholicism that his Protestant parents and other progenitors rejected. The other recounts the journey of a young man in recent history who jeopardizes his relationship with his parents in order to convert to Mormonism. This latter individual, upon coming to terms with his sexual orientation, ultimately chooses to leave his new-found religion and yet again risk rejection from his family in order to live a fulfilling life as a gay man. Most impressive is the ability with which Harline sheds the comfortable realm of the academic authorial voice to write the latter portion of the book in the first person with honesty and forthrightness. A personal friend of the contemporary individual, he lays bare his own struggles to reconcile his Mormon faith with what he had learned about his friend. This book will add significantly to the dialogue surrounding this issue and all others that involve the chasm between gay men and women and their search to embrace their sexual orientation while being observant in their various religious faiths. At the core of the book is the broader underlying issue of treating everyone with respect and validation, regardless of race, religion, politics, gender, or orientation. Like any great work, *Conversions* transcends time and place and is ultimately about self-determination - the challenge each one of us faces to decide for ourselves what ideological paths we will take in life - and about self-invention, the brave and creative ways in which we can bring into harmony our inner selves and the outer manifestations of our lives.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Making history relevant By BHodges If you've ever experienced the pain of watching a loved one depart from your faith, you're certainly not alone. Conversion can hurt as well as heal. Craig Harline's new book can provide some perspective and catharsis for this touchy subject. The book is history written as "creative nonfiction," which includes "significant scholarly contributions while also embracing stylistic innovation [through the] classic techniques of storytelling" (ii). Harline employs storytelling techniques to draw you in and to bridge the past and present. Jacob Rolandus's daring night escape from his Reformed home to Catholicism in 1654 is narrated in the present tense: "And now the field at last! But here more disappointment: the horse still hasn't arrived, and the friend waiting with the bag says that he can't make the journey either, because he has a bad foot" (5). In contrast, Michael Sunbloom's family reacted to his conversion to Mormonism in the past tense: "When the cousin started asking about Mormonism, and what in the world had moved Michael to convert, Michael hesitated, stepped as far into the hallway as he could [to avoid letting his parents overhear], and took the risk of answering. Big mistake" (76-77). These two stories are told alternately, one chapter relating Jacob's tale, the next, Michael's. This back-and-forth, "too be continued" construction naturally pulls readers to the next episode. Unlike most history books, Harline puts himself directly into the story. By alternately centering Jacob, Michael, and himself as the main protagonist, Harline's book inhabits a borderland between academic excellence and dangerous self-disclosure/didacticism. The idea of "conversion" itself is the conceptual bridge between radically different times, circumstances, motivations, characters, and outcomes. The heartrending interpersonal conflicts involved in each story tie each narrative to the others, and--more importantly, Harline might hope--ties these narratives to the heart of the reader. Such use of history is certain to make some readers squirm, not least of all any historians who believe it blurs the lines between history and propaganda. But by comparing these stories Harline is simply doing the sort of implicit work a lot of us do when we read history. Certainly this is what Yale University Press's "New Directions" series is aiming for by presenting books which are "intended for the broadest general readership," which explains the lack of footnotes and index, although he snuck in a very detailed bibliographical essay at the end (273-298). In addition to popular accessibility, the series aims to "speak to deeply human concerns about the past, present, and future of our world and its people" (ii). Harline might be criticized from a variety of perspectives. In the postscript, he describes worrying about what his fellow historians might think of his so explicitly tying the past to the present, his decision to stress "the psychological sameness of the past rather than its otherness" (267). He worries that "fellow Mormons...might dislike my sympathetic treatment of homosexuality," (after all, he's a professor of history at Brigham Young University), "while critics of Mormonism might dislike my sympathetic treatment of Mormonism," (after all, he's a professor of history at Brigham Young University). Not to mention what his parents, friends, Protestants, Catholics, and others might think (268). Whatever the obstacles, he reports, "I wanted to try anyway" (272). He tried, and I really appreciate the effort. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and I strongly recommend it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating comparison. By E.W. LeRoy I really liked the book, but about 2/3 the way through it is was so intrigued by each story that I had to leave the side by side comparisons of the two stories and follow each one separately to the end. In today's world we need more stories like this that help us see people not as others but like ourselves. I would especially recommend it to Mormon readers who struggle to understand gays.

This powerful and innovative work by a gifted cultural historian explores the effects of religious conversion on family relationships, showing how the challenges of the Reformation can offer insight to families facing similarly divisive

situations today. Craig Harline begins with the story of young Jacob Rolandus, the son of a Dutch Reformed preacher, who converted to Catholicism in 1654 and ran away from home, causing his family to disown him. In the companion story, Michael Sunbloom, a young American, leaves his family's religion in 1973 to convert to Mormonism, similarly upsetting his distraught parents. The modern twist to Michael's story is his realization that he is gay, causing him to leave his new church, and upsetting his parents again but this time the family reconciles. Recounting these stories in short, alternating chapters, Harline underscores the parallel aspects of the two far-flung families. Despite different outcomes and forms, their situations involve nearly identical dynamics and heart-wrenching choices. Through the author's deeply informed imagination, the experiences of a seventeenth-century European family are transformed into immediately recognizable terms.

"An absorbing, creative book... it will definitely become a go-to book for readers interested in the history and psychology of conversion."--Lauren Winner, author of "Girl Meets God: A Memoir"--Lauren Winner "An unexpected joy. . . . A compelling, insightful examination. . . . "Conversions" is a journey well worth taking."--Gerald S. Argetsinger, "Affirmation.org"--Gerald S. Argetsinger "Affirmation.org ""Will appeal to lovers of history, Christians, and religious enthusiasts alike."--Rhett Wilkinson, "Deseret News"--Rhett Wilkinson "Deseret News ""A beautiful and moving book. Harline is a master at narrative and at making the most painstaking research look effortless. These two unconnected stories required very different approaches, yet Harline's writing binds them together with an odd, yet arresting symmetry, overflowing with integrity and insight."--Carlos Eire, Yale University--Carlos Eire Selected as a "Choice Academic Title 2012 for Religion within the Humanities category.--Outstanding Academic Title "Choice" (05/24/2013) About the Author Craig Harline is professor of history at Brigham Young University.