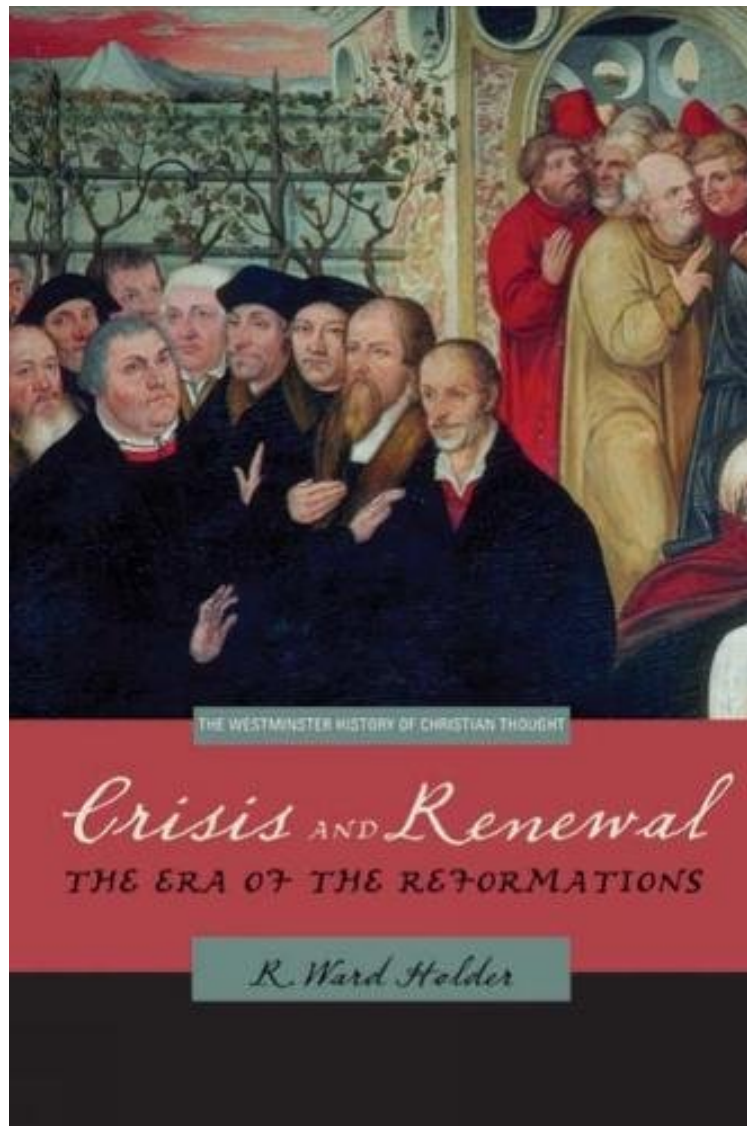


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Crisis and Renewal: The Era of the Reformations (Westminster History of Christian Thought) (Westminster Histories of Christian Thought) (The Westminster History of Christian Thought)

R. Ward Holder

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R. Ward Holder : Crisis and Renewal: The Era of the Reformations (Westminster History of Christian Thought) (Westminster Histories of Christian Thought) (The Westminster History of Christian Thought)

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Crisis and Renewal: The Era of the Reformations* (Westminster History of Christian Thought) (Westminster Histories of Christian Thought) (The Westminster History of Christian Thought):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Accurate chronology, but oversimplified and unbalanced. An exciting topic made dull again. By J.M.K. Bottom line up front: a chronologically accurate, if oversimplified and unbalanced, overview of the Reformation era. At pains to represent itself as "non-confessional", it also injures its subject in its clumsy attempts to "simplify academic jargon". The Kindle edition lacks a functioning TOC in the navigation bar, which greatly hampers usability. *Crisis and Renewal* does provide a correct timeline consisting of events that actually happened, but that is about all I can say in its favor. The author claims in the first chapter that: "this volume will attempt to avoid the confessionalism that has marred some of the past efforts to understand the time of reform. It has been rather well documented that one of the most significant keys to reading histories of the Reformation in prior times has been knowing the confessional placement of the author... There were 'good guys' and 'bad guys' for such an approach to the history of the time." Without going a page further, the astute reader will ask why, at the very outset, the author is at such pains to disclaim any confessional affiliation? The answer is that he protests too much: knowing that Professor Holder is a Calvin scholar will give readers from diverse theological traditions a much better understanding of this book, and will bring clarity at the moments when the author skirts dangerously close to some of the more egregious Sunday School romanticisms about the era. I would have given this book a much more favorable review (although I probably would not have read it) if its author had stated forthrightly that it was written from a distinctly Calvinist viewpoint. Its false insistence that it is confessionally unbiased leaves a bad taste. Professor Holder's attempt to simplify theological language, while admirable, also does little to provide clarity, while contributing greatly to common misunderstandings of the subject matter. He states in the Introduction that undergraduates are the primary intended audience, but his presentation of the Reformation period is a vast oversimplification for a college-level course. Particularly egregious are some of his definitions of theological terms, which often account accurately only for the Reformers' (or certain Reformers') definitions while failing to provide accurate statements, or providing misstatements, of Catholic doctrine. The section on justification, for instance, relies on a simplistic assertion about Luther's interpretation of Romans that implies Luther's is the only possible interpretation. Certainly this is not the case, even today, and many respected scholars suggest that Luther's understanding of Romans is based at least in part on a translation error. Such definitions were the objects of the Reformation era's most heated contests, and inadequately defining them holds the reader back from developing a complete and unbiased understanding of the events. This text falls short as well in discussing the roots of the Reformation era beyond just Erasmus and the Humanists. It makes scant mention (in all fairness there is a partial sentence here and there) of pre-Reformation reforms or scholarship. The atmosphere of medieval scholasticism as a contributor to the essential controversies of the Reformation era is almost entirely overlooked here. I would have liked to see an entire chapter on the early church Fathers, particularly Augustine, and another on the medieval Scholastics, to round out discussion of the Humanists and the roots of the Reformation. I would have also expected at least some mention of the Second Vatican Council in the last chapter when the author mentions developments in ecumenism and current relations between Protestant and Catholic Christianity. I would recommend this text only if balanced by another text, such as "The Unintended Reformation" by Brad Gregory which, although overly-lofty in its academic vocabulary, provides a balanced viewpoint against this text. The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation should be required on the bookshelf of anyone who studies the Reformation, although it may be a bit daunting (and pricey) for the casual undergraduate student. A collection of primary sources would also be in order, such as Denis Janz' "A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts and Introduction", or the complementary "The Protestant Reformation" by Hans Hillerbrand and "The Catholic Reformation" by John Olin. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By MeEasy read for academic writing

This latest volume in the Westminster History of Christian Thought series introduces readers to the events and ideas that propelled the various religious reformations of sixteenth-century Europe. A splendid introduction to this momentous period, *Crisis and Renewal* examines the historical and theological developments that dramatically changed the religious landscape of Europe and continue to have important effects today. Discussion questions and other aids make this an excellent book for classroom use. Designed particularly for undergraduate courses in theology and religion, the Westminster History of Christian Thought series offers reliable and accessible introductions to Christian thought for each major period in Christian history--the early church, the medieval era, the Reformation, the modern age, and the contemporary period--and concludes with a volume on American religious thought.

About the Author R. Ward Holder is Associate Professor of Theology at St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. He is the author of *John Calvin and the Grounding of Biblical Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries*.