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History

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Matthew Lundin received a B.A. in History and Literature from Wheaton College and an A.M. and Ph.D. in Early Modern European History from Harvard University. His interests include the German Reformation, the history of memory, the history of autobiography and private writing, and the early modern city. His work seeks to recover the lived experience of structural change in early modern Europe—to show the ways in which men and women adapted to the new forms of communication, information exchange, identity, and religious practice that followed in the wake of the printing press and the Protestant Reformation.

Lundin's doctoral dissertation—"The Mental World of a Middling Burgher"—explores the ideas and attitudes of sixteenth-century Germany's most prolific Catholic diarist: Cologne lawyer Hermann Weinsberg (1518-1597). While several historians have mined Weinsberg's voluminous and exceptionally detailed writings for facts about the sixteenth-century city, Lundin's thesis reads Weinsberg's work as a complex instance of the growing self-consciousness and historical awareness of sixteenth-century burghers. Disoriented by the "great transformations" of his day, Weinsberg, a Catholic lawyer, desperately sought to write his own "middling" family into history; he systematically explored the possibilities of self-representation that print and writing opened up to commoners. An avid reader of chronicles and news-sheets, Weinsberg grappled with several of the most pressing questions of his day, including the status of commoners, the relationship between laity and clergy, the power of writing, the nature of memory, and the future of Christendom. As a Catholic, he struggled to make sense of his age's religious upheaval, penning a candid and unusual Catholic lay response to the Protestant Reformation. By closely examining Weinsberg's arguments and perceptions, Lundin's dissertation offers a unique perspective on sixteenth-century bourgeois mentalities and reveals complex and personal thinking behind seemingly formulaic notions of patriarchal order and corporate identity.

Lundin's thesis recently won the Harvard History Department's Gross Prize—an award given to the dissertation "demonstrating the greatest promise of a distinguished career of historical research." Lundin has received fellowships from the Pew Younger Scholars and Javits Programs, presented papers at the Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference and the Harvard Early Modern History Workshop, and written several reviews for Books and Culture. In addition to revising his dissertation for publication, Lundin is currently researching the theme of memory in the German Reformation, exploring the ways in which the Protestant culture challenged and reworked the complex memorial traditions of the Middle Ages.

