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On Brad S. Gregory's The Unintended Reformation

The following review essay addresses an important new interdisciplinary book from Brad S. Gregory and the intellectual debates surrounding the work. His book deals with the legacy of the Reformation and its influence on the modern Western world. The work is first introduced with a brief overview. Following this, some of the critical reviews of the book and his responses are addressed. A question is then raised regarding one of Gregory's theses about the relationship between the Reformation and the "control of human bodies," before finally speaking to the importance of Gregory's overall question. This is an important debate especially given the fact that we are coming closer to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

1. Introduction

Brad S. Gregory has offered a significant contribution to the debate about the relationship of the Reformation to the modern Western world in his book *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (2012).[1] Gregory is Professor of Early Modern European History at the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA). The 570 page book and its many controversial theses have been widely discussed since its publication in 2012. While some have been critical of his conclusions, Gregory has provided an occasion for a good conversation about the relationship between the 16th and the 21st century. The "Unintended Reformation" of Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation* is what he calls the secular "hyperpluralist" modern society of the contemporary

[1] Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge: Belknap Pr. of Harvard Univ. Pr., 2012).

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Western world. He sees this as having its primary roots in the Reformation era developments which abandoned the relative unity of the Middle Ages and its unique ecclesial and political constitution. His book attempts to establish this claim with view to the history of philosophy, theology, politics, morality, economics and the university. In every one of these realms, Gregory seeks to show how the Reformation era impulses led to the modern Western world. Gregory remarks about his book in response to a review: "I sought to explain […] the formation of the West's hyperpluralism […]."[2] He is also very skeptical about the future of the modern Western world as he claims that it is "failing." Gregory's *The Unintended Reformation* tends to view the theological and religious content of the Reformation primarily through the lens of the socio-economic and political issues. Intellectually, the late medieval theological conflicts are addressed in the larger narrative of "Reformation as prehistory" to the early modern period. Gregory tends to see it as the formation of a new version of Western Christianity but does, on occasion, include the Roman Catholic Church in the broader reforms. He focuses on the phenomenon of Reformation fragmentation. He views the conflicting Reformation era teachings under the broader unity of a kind of relative agreement about the rise of subjective authority. This subjective authority determines the answers to the most important questions in life, what he calls the "Life Questions." This new account of authority is first grounded in Scripture, then, later in the modern period, it is grounded in reason and then finally in our modern world it is grounded in a fully "hyperpluralist" subjectivism. While it would also have been possible to emphasize those points in the Reformation that were resistant to humanism in the early modern period (such as Luther's challenge to Erasmus), theologically, he presents the Reformation as a break with the traditions of Christianity and the relatively harmonious "playground," as

[2] Brad S. Gregory, "Responses to the reviewers," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 429-436, here: 434.

he likes to refer to it, of the Middle Ages – but not as a new religion. Gregory does not entertain any "great men" theories. There is not really a grand overarching Zeitgeist guiding the way either, but rather a sort of fragmented disarrangement stumbling forward into the unintended future of the modern West with its many new problems. He finds the roots of many contemporary problems of the modern West in and following upon the Reformation, but his work is especially aimed at contributing to a specific view of the Reformation.

Gregory's work is best understood as following other recent "histories of emergence" (*Entstehungsgeschichten*) of secularism in the British and American context. He essentially attempts to locate the roots of secularization immediately before, around and in the Reformation. Gregory is critical of these developments. If the reader shares Gregory's perspective, the book could be read as a "history of decline" (*Verfallsgeschichte*). Yet if the reader happens to find these matters, or at least some of them, to be principally good, then the same book could be read as an unusual apology for the Reformation. Gregory's primary context for the narrative of the Reformation's afterlife is the modern American context. In effect, for Gregory, the modern Western world, its basic political order, philosophical approach, conception of the good and its economic system are all latter day mutations of 16th century Protestantism. More specifically, it was the Reformation-era conflicts themselves which brought the modern world about; Gregory writes:

> "the conflicts between (especially magisterial) Protestants and Catholics in the Reformation era, both doctrinal and concretely political and military, were the principal precipitants of the long-term transformations […]."[3]

While Gregory claims that the rise of modern secularism and "hyperpluralism" was unintended, the Reformation is the

[3] Brad S. Gregory, "Historical arguments and omissions," Feb., 2014, *The Immanent Frame*: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2014/02/07/historical-arguments-and-omissions/.

"most important distant historical source for contemporary Western hyperpluralism with respect to truth claims about meaning, morality, values, priorities, and purpose."[4] For the most part, however, it is not just the Reformation which Gregory has in view, but the more general "late medieval and Reformation-era developments." (Ibid., 383.) In fact, on many occasions Gregory presents the magisterial Reformation in relative continuity with the medieval church because it secured a unified collaboration of politics and religion and thus slowed the process of fragmentation.[5] The magisterial Reformation is really only the midwife for what was to come, a radical pluralization and fragmentation in the Radical Reformation and in the early modern period and modern period. These, and the magisterial Reformation before them, are all, however, examples of the consequences of the new conception of authority in the Reformation, as explicated in the Protestant emphasis on Scriptural authority against an ecclesial office or established tradition.

Gregory is deeply critical of "modern claims about the supersessionist triumph of secular reason over religion". (383) He begins his account, like Charles Taylor and others, before the Reformation and sees elements around and within the Reformation that contributed to the conditions which enable the possibility of the emergence of the modern age. He does not shy away from pointing out the corruptions of power in the medieval church. Gregory makes it clear that the medieval church actually failed in living up to its ideals. On multiple occasions, he points to the medieval "conundrum of caritas and coercion." (373) He does seek to establish, however, an almost causal link between the late medieval and Reformation-era developments and modern secularism and presents

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4 Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 369.

5 In Gregory's assessment, the "magisterial Protestants, like medieval and early modern Catholics, saw in hierarchy God's providential structuring of society and a potential instrument through which redemptive power might be exercised to further the kingdom of God." Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 156.

this as a larger decline and fall story. For example, in the first sentence of the concluding chapter he writes:

> "Judged on their own terms and with respect to the objectives of their own leading protagonists, medieval Christendom failed, the Reformation failed, confessionalized Europe failed, and Western modernity is failing" (365).

In what follows some of his central arguments will be presented.

2. Overview of The Unintended Reformation

In Chapter One ("Excluding God"), Gregory makes an argument that has been popularized in contemporary theological discourse by authors from the Radical Orthodoxy group. He points to the shift in ontology with Duns Scotus (1265-1308), a shift in describing God as "existing" (analogically) to existing (univocally).[6] Gregory parts ways with a few generalizing statements in the Radical Orthodoxy group when he argues that "Protestantism as such did not disenchant the world." Nevertheless, the Protestant

> "departures from the traditional Christian view seem to have implied univocal metaphysical assumptions in ways that probably did contribute to an eventual conception of a disenchanted natural world." (Ibid., 41.)

He sees this as having contributed to, as he draws upon Radical Orthodoxy, the loss of a sacramental view of the world and, as he draws upon Amos Funkenstein, the rise of scientific naturalism. (55) He holds that this resulted in the eventual exclusion of God from intellectual discourse.

In Chapter Two ("Relativizing Doctrines") Gregory argues that with the Reformation came a push towards the pluralization of Western society. A central argument of the book is found in this chapter. It will therefore be addressed more extensively than the other chapters. Before the Reformation,

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[6] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 37.

Gregory describes the situation as a tension between unity and diversity. He states:

> "References to medieval 'Christianities' that downplay the common beliefs, practices and institutions of Latin Christendom are as distorting as older, facile exaggerations about the Middle Ages as a homogeneous 'age of faith.'"

Gregory sees it rather as a "combination of unity and heterogeneity" that was "variegated and diverse." He claims that "nearly all theologians were Augustinian in their basic outlook," while "most were also Scotists or Occamist nominalists, others were Thomist realists, and still others blended nominalism and realism." He also points to those who were interested in humanism. He claims that "exaggerating either the diversity or the unity of late medieval Christianity distorts its character. The medieval church was a large playground, but one enclosed by forbidding fences" (84).

Gregory introduces the idea of "Life Questions" early in this chapter and returns to this theme throughout the book. He describes these as "serious questions about life, with important implications for life." For example, "the sort of person one *should* become and the sort of life one *should* lead, concerning what one *should* value and what one *should* prioritize." (74) These also "involve doctrinal claims" (75) that affirm things to be true and other things to be false. Gregory sees the medieval world as essentially organized around a more or less common view of these "Life Questions." Gregory holds that the medieval world was an

> institutionalized worldview, a many-layered combination of beliefs, practices, and institutions built up over many centuries. Deeply embedded in social life, political relationships, and the wider culture, Christianity had as its ostensible, principal raison d'être the sanctification of the baptized through the practice of the Christian faith, such that they might be saved eternally when judged by God after death. [...] medieval Christianity's central truth claim was that the same transcendent God of love who was metaphysically distinct from the universe he had created ex nihilo had become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth for the salvation

> of human beings. The church, established by Jesus himself, was said to be the continuing instrument for the achievement of God's plan of salvation for the human race after Jesus's ascension that followed his crucifixion and resurrection. (83)

With this conception in the background, the conflict of the 16th century, the challenge to the authority of the Roman Papacy, ultimately became a challenge to the older "combination of unity and heterogeneity" and ultimately led to "hyperpluralism." The focus on authority as springing from the Bible alone, Gregory argues, ultimately led to a deterioration of the unity and an increase in the heterogeneity. With the Reformation and the idea of sola scriptura came the "shared insistence on scripture as the sole authority for Christian faith and life." (89) He writes with emphasis:

> "scripture *officially interpreted by hermeneutic authorities and backed by political authorities* led to confessional Protestant cities, territories, and states, whether Lutheran or Reformed Protestant (including the Church of England), which stipulated, imposed and policed their respective versions of what the Bible said in a manner analogous to Catholic political regimes." (92)

Gregory holds that with the Reformation, which he readily admits was linked with corruptions in the medieval church, came a new "problem" as he calls it: "the new and compounding problem of how to know what true Christianity was. 'Scripture alone' was not a solution to this new problem, but its cause." (368f.) Gregory points out that the new methodology of the Reformation churches, which postulated the Scriptures as the sole authority in matters of faith and life, ultimately resulted in an increase in the pluralization of Christian teachings and an increase in conflicts:

> Commitment to the authority of scripture led neither obviously nor necessarily to justification by faith alone or to salvation through grace alone as the cornerstone doctrines of Christianity. Radical Protestants made abundantly clear that the Bible did not "interpret itself" in this way, whatever protagonists claimed to the contrary. Unfettered and unconstrained, the Reformation

> simply yielded the full, historically manifest range of truth claims made about what the Bible said. (92)

Gregory holds that "Protestant pluralism derived directly from the Reformation's foundational truth claim. The assertion that scripture alone was a self-sufficient basis for Christian faith and life [...]." (94) As is also found later in the conclusion, Gregory goes on to put *sola scriptura* at the beginning of a very broad trend towards pluralism and fragmentation:

> "exegetical disagreements were translated into doctrinal disagreements that were in turn expressed in socio-moral division and political contestations. Against the intentions of the anti-Roman reformers but as a result of their actions, the church became the churches." (369)

Gregory continues in his argument about the consequences of the Reformation emphasis on Scripture by pointing out that after the long process of dispute, exclusion, oppression and war in confessional Europe, by the mid 17th century

> new options were being pursued that sought to transcend disputed religious truth claims by endeavoring to base answers to the Life Questions entirely on reason. Western modernity was forged in the context of the unintended persistence of Christian pluralism and the failures of confessional rulers to achieve their goals. Its central problem at the outset was different from that of medieval Christendom, the Reformation, or confessional Europe: how might human life be structured such that human beings could coexist in peaceful stability and security even though they disagreed about God's truth and were frequently hostile towards one another?[7]

In many places, his case has strong support. Gregory reaffirms a widely held narrative, for example, when he writes that the new conceptualization of the term "religion" and the development of the idea of natural religion in Western nations developed parallel to and in response to the "wars of religion." His presentation of the emergence of Enlightenment philosophy

[7] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 373.

and the focus on reason with the birth of modern philosophy itself (Ibid., 112-125) is also a common position in many historical presentations of the doctrinal and philosophical development from the early modern period. These points suggest a certain discontinuity which Gregory wants to emphasize. This is, indeed, important for understanding the shift and the transformation in the modern period. Conversely, however, one could also address the points of continuity, and not only in the sense of vestiges or remains. The points of continuity can also be understood in the sense of rebirth or as a process of further exploration of Christian thought (with varying degrees of success). Many early modern political theorists, as well, can be understood as not only "different," but also in differing degrees of continuity with the interests and aims of earlier conceptions of social order.

At this juncture, Gregory points to the Dutch Republic as an example of an early pluralistic society where "a distinction was in effect being drawn between public and private life [...]." He goes on to address how in this context "'religion' – understood largely as a matter of belief, worship, and devotion – was being individualized, privatized, and separated from political and economic life." (374) Following this, Gregory points to the formation of the United States with its Protestant "moral establishment" and the freedom of religion within this social order. In the broad narrative, Gregory thus sees the older conceptions of a relatively unified Christian social order with shared approaches to the "Life Questions" as transformed, with the Reformation, post-Reformation and early modern developments, to a culture of "hyperpluralism" without agreement about these questions and with a new conception of religion which is essentially therapeutic, emotional and individualistic. Gregory claims, regarding the present, that secularism and scientism are "subverting modernity's most fundamental assumptions from within" in that they are undermining and preventing "the articulation of any intellectually persuasive warrant for believing in the realities presupposed by liberal political discourse and the institutional

arrangements of modernity: that there are such things as persons, and that they have such things as rights." (376) Gregory brings the two ends of his narrative together, from sola scriptura to contemporary philosophers. He holds that

> "there is no consensus at all among them [modern philosophers] about the most important questions in their discipline." He asserts that "modern philosophers are analogous to Protestants who claim the correct interpretation of the Bible based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit." (125)

Gregory writes that "modern philosophy" has "failed" and that "there is no reason to think that it might ever succeed." (125) He goes on to argue that most of modern philosophy more or less returns to a conception of liberation "to think and do and live" as one may please, to "exercise their wills as they will – the *summum bonum*." Gregory argues that "this appeal persists" today and that

> "modern philosophies that informed the Enlightenment in all its varieties [...] belong to the same historical trajectory and endeavor as Protestantism: the attempt to offer answers to the Life Questions on bases different from those on which they rested and continue to rest in Roman Catholicism." (128)

In Chapter Three ("Controlling the Churches") Gregory chronicles the rise of secular power over the churches. As he insightfully points out, the "relationship of post-Reformation secular authorities to the churches would differ critically from that of medieval secular authorities to the church." (147) He holds that "Whether they were Lutheran, Reformed Protestant, or Catholic, secular rulers controlled churches everywhere in Western Europe by the late sixteenth century and arguably even earlier." (153) Gregory argues that Luther's doctrine of the two-kingdoms

> implicitly theorized the control of human bodies *and thus human beings* by secular authorities. In effect and as Luther elaborated the matter, a corollary to justification by faith alone was power exercised by secular rulers alone. Members of the "priesthood of all believers" were interiorly as free as could be, their hearts

> governed only by God and his gratuitous grace, but secular rulers were the sole stewards of the public sphere within which *alone* the flesh-and-blood social relationships of Christian life unfolded. (148)[8]

Gregory makes an argument for the continuity of this state controlled religion into the present:

> "Western states' control of religion in the early twenty-first century is a latter-day extension of the sixteenth-century control of churches by states. Secular authorities have exercised this control in many different ways in the interim [...] every one of these trajectories derives from sixteenth-century states' control of the churches."[9]

He thus claims that

> "Whether in Western confessional, liberal, or totalitarian regimes, states control churches: whether they prescribe, permit, or proscribe religion, they do so entirely on their terms, exercising an institutional monopoly of power in the public sphere." (Ibid., 130.)

Gregory sees the same phenomenon working itself out in American culture:

> "Free human decisions and action have progressively eroded any socially efficacious, symbiotic separation of church and state, most obviously since the 1960s [...]." (174)

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[8] Elsewhere Gregory returns to "Luther's sharp two-kingdom distinctions between faith and politics, the inner man and the outer man, the freedom of a Christian and obedience to secular authorities," (270) which he sees as a near mythical background to modern German history: "The imperturbable interiority of the saved Christian, simul justus et peccator, was a safe refuge and secure retreat, even if the world went to hell – whether in the sixteenth century, during the Thirty Years War, or much later, in the working conditions during aggressive German industrialization in the decades before and after 1871, during the Great War, amid the Weimar Republic's hyperinflation, or during a two-front bid for European domination in Hitler's Reich." (271) Cf. Andreas Stegmann, "Die Geschichte der Erforschung von Martin Luthers Ethik," in *Lutherjahrbuch* 79 (2012), 211-303.

[9] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 154.

He holds that

> all Americans can say what they think God's truth is, appeal to their individual consciences, express their unique opinions and make their voices heard, indeed start their very own churches. But this simply means that an anything-goes religious hyperpluralism is protected, incubated, enabled, and perpetuated by the state. (176)

Gregory goes on to address the

> "millions of divorces which, for decades, have exacted vast human costs. All this, too, is the product of individuals exercising their legally protected liberty, guided by the dominate ethos of a therapeutic society based on feelings." (176)

While in Greece, Rome and pre-Reformation Christian Europe "politics and morality were inseparable," with the Reformation came a separation of the realms. With the "separation of politics from religion" came the "separation of politics from morality," which Gregory sees as the shift from a

> "Christian ethics of the good to a secular ethics of rights in combination with a distinction between public and private spheres in conjunction with the privatization of religion." (179)

In Chapter Four ("Secularizing Morality"), Gregory writes that the Reformation

> "ended more than a thousand years of efforts in the Latin West to create a unified moral community through Christianity. [...] Yet no such alternative moral community emerged. There were only rival moral communities [...]." (203)

This leads ultimately to the modern situation, the "inexorable trend toward increasing permissiveness" which is "necessarily coupled with ever more insistent calls for toleration." (187) Gregory remarks that the consequences of the shift from an ethics of the good to a secular ethics of rights were essentially built upon Christian presuppositions. He can thus claim that "the moral foundations of the modern liberal state in general

are inextricable from central Christian truth claims." (214) In the context of pluralism, and

> "especially after World War II and even more since the 1960s [...] the emptiness of the United States' formal ethics of rights [would] start to become visible, the fragility of its citizens' social relationships begin to be exposed, and its lack of any substantive moral community be gradually revealed through the sociological reality of its subjectivized ethics." (218)

Gregory goes on to address the fact that the original rights discourses were developed in the context of near universal agreement about the high standing of humanity as the image of God and the world as God's creation, but today "hundreds of millions of people, especially in Europe, seem no longer to believe such things." (224) Gregory then turns to shifts in modern philosophies of the good and draws upon some very disturbing (but also clearly minority) positions from the realm of scientific naturalism, views of life, for example, as "chemical scum" (226) in the universe, etc.

In Chapter Five (concerning capitalism, "Manufacturing the Goods Life"), Gregory holds that the Reformation had only an indirect influence on the emergence of capitalism. Yet with the Reformation

> "the market and inherited Christian morality were increasingly divorced, which removed the ethical restraints inhibiting the eventual formation of a full-blown capitalist and consumerist society." (272)

In Chapter Six ("Secularizing Knowledge"), Gregory argues that

> "the contemporary academy and its buyers'-market hyperpluralism is simply a secularized outgrowth and recapitulation of the irresolvable Protestant pluralism that had set the stage for the secular revolution in the first place." (357)

The relationship between Protestantism and pluralism will be addressed below. The issue with the contemporary academy is also returned to in the Conclusion.

In the Conclusion ("Against Nostalgia"), Gregory reflects on modern public life today, the "Kingdom of Whatever" which has

> "incompatible views about what is good, true, and right. Many of these views and values are increasingly distant from substantive beliefs that derived most influentially from Christianity and that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained much more widely shared [...]." (378)

He then makes remarks similar to David B. Hart about transhumanism, abortion and biogentics as examples of the new scientific naturalistic worldview. He argues that the basis of liberalism cannot sustain itself "in research universities and in the public sphere" against the rise of scientific naturalism, in which "'persons' [...] 'rights' [and] 'dignity' are fictions [...]." (381) Gregory continues in arguing that secular reason and modern philosophy have simply failed to offer "a convincing rational substitute for religion with respect to the Life Questions." (383) His final arguments are a list of challenges to the "secularized academy" (383) and scientific naturalism. He also challenges the lack of basic theological knowledge in the academy, as if "God, if real, must be some sort of entity 'out there'" (384), while pointing to the general failings of "Western modernity". (385) Gregory brings his book to an end by making some suggestions on "unsecularizing the academy" (386) and working for "intellectual openness," by dealing with the presuppositions of naturalist philosophies and the "secularization of knowledge," which has "been for a century or so an ideological imperialism masquerading as an intellectual inevitability." (386) In what follows, some of the critical reviews of the book are addressed.

3. Critical reviews of The Unintended Reformation

David Martin states that the book "comes out of Notre Dame, Indiana, and is explicitly Catholic, philosophical, and

theological, in a way some may find irritating."[10] Martin does call his readers, as should be added, to wade through the text:

> "Perhaps those who 20 years or so ago read John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* with bemusement and uncertainty, or outrage, may feel they have heard something like this before. Nevertheless, they should persist." (Ibid., 511.)

When it comes to the broad perspective of Gregory's work, Carole M. Cusack writes that "the whole argument of the book is that the emergence of secular modernity and the principles it holds dear (Enlightenment rationality, individual freedom, the explanatory power of science, the benefits of material prosperity, and so on) was a wrong turn, a mistaken turning away from the ideal community of the God-centred Middle Ages." While Cusack also holds that the book "deserves a wide readership," it is, nevertheless, "a work of theological apologetics expressed through the medium of history, and should be read as such;" in this regard, "any claims to objectivity it may assert are seriously compromised."[11] Joshua Benson challenges Gregory's reading of Scotus by writing that "a major group of scholars" has "demonstrated at length" that "Radical Orthodoxy's reading of Scotus's doctrine of univocity," which Gregory adopts, is "tragically flawed."[12] Hans J. Hillerbrand holds that Gregory's "thesis and conclusions are neither new nor persuasive." (Ibid., 509.) He welcomes its publication with qualification: "Not that it makes a cogent case, but it should trigger a conversation." (510) The book has certainly triggered a conversation. Some of the critical reception, as also found in Hillerbrand's review, has to do in part with a handful of unqualified and generalizing statements in Grego-

[10] David Martin, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27/3 (2012), 510-511, here: 510.

[11] Carole M. Cusack, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Journal of Religious History* 36/4 (2012), 611-612, here: 612.

[12] Nelson H. Minnich, Joshua Benson, Hans J. Hillerbrand, Simon Ditchfield, Paul F. Grendler, and Brad S. Gregory, "Forum Essay," reviews of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *The Catholic Historical Review* 98/3 (2012), 503-516, here: 508.

ry's book. Sometimes Gregory presents one-sided evaluations of modern philosophy and does not take the time to present the good sides of modern thinkers. While Simon Ditchfield sees Gregory's book as a "philosophical rather than historical work" (511), Paul F. Grendler finds "historical problems" (512) with Gregory's arguments. Grendler holds that

> "Italian universities were already research universities producing secular knowledge and marginalizing theology before the Reformation." (512)

In another review, Hillerbrand writes that "the subtitle of his book is a *simplification terrible*," adding that

> "infant mortality has been eradicated in the societies he desires; child labor prohibited; slavery abolished; illiteracy ended; education made a right not a privilege. The Inquisition is no more and women are no longer burned as witches."[13]

Of course, on multiple occasions in his book, Gregory reassures his reader that he does not support a nostalgic view of history. Nevertheless, Hillerbrand's remarks are in their own way justified, in that Gregory's argument occasionally shifts into the style of decline and fall while sometimes neglecting to mention the positive aspects of modernity. The historical argument of the book is also addressed by Robert A. Yelle. He remarks: "Gregory's argument that the Reformation introduced pluralism not only renders the medieval Church too monolithic, but appears patently inadequate as an explanation for our contemporary diversity."[14] Yelle takes issue with the consequences of Gregory's narrative construction, in which he "seems to be condemning the very act of dissent itself." (Ibid., 922.) In Yelle's assessment, "capitalism is treated unfairly" by Gregory and he neglects "the positive dimensions of the Reformation". (922) While in many ways Mark Lilla,

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[13] Hans J. Hillerbrand, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Church History* 81/4 (2012), 918.

[14] Robert A. Yelle, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Church History*, 81/4 (2012), 918-924, here: 920.

in his *The Stillborn God*, and Gregory tell related stories about the birth of modernity out of religion and theology, and while both hold that the "Great Separation"[15] (Lilla) between politics and religion in the Enlightenment was not inevitable, and while both see the modern world as "an experiment" (Lilla) and an exception from a "unique theological-political crisis within Christendom" (Lilla, ibid., 308), and while Lilla makes use of the rise of radical 20th century ideologies in his grand narrative of modernity, Lilla's basic evaluation of the modern age is different than Gregory's. In Lilla's review of Gregory's book, he asserts that Gregory tells "about how everything went to hell."[16] Lilla situates Gregory's "Americano history of 'the West'" (ibid., 49) – which he holds to be "hugely frustrating" (48) and similar to other "mytho-histories" (51) – in the intellectual tradition of modern Catholic historiography, following the more aggressive 19th century "World We Have Lost narrative" (from counter French Revolution authors) and the softer "The Road Not Taken" narrative (characterized by a more distributive guilt). Lilla describes "The Road Not Taken" approach in the following way: "had everyone only been more patient, the Church would have continued evolving, and in a good direction." (48) He claims that Gregory's book is "inverted Whiggism" (49) and "a sly crypto-Catholic travel brochure for The Road Not Taken." (48) Lilla holds that "over the past thirty years" this genre has been adopted by a new group of

> "anti-modern Catholics (and some Anglicans) on the left and the right, from members of the post-modern Radical Orthodoxy movement in Britain to conservative American writers around First Things magazine." (48)

Lilla also points to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981) as an important work for understanding Gregory, a work

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[15] Mark Lilla, T*he Stillborn God: Religion, politics, and the modern West* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2007), passim.

[16] Mark Lilla, "From Wittenberg to Wal-Mart," in *The New Republic* 243/15 (Oct. 4, 2012), 47-52, here: 49.

which postulated the decline of the broad moral framework in modernity and the need for its replacement with new communities focused on promoting virtue ethics. Lilla describes Gregory's account of the Reformation in the following humorous manner:

> Then *it* happened. The Church itself was largely to blame for creating the conditions that the early Reformers complained of, and for not policing itself. The charges leveled by Luther and Calvin had merit, and theirs was originally a conservative rebellion aimed at returning the Church to its right mind. But then things got out of hand, as the intoxicating spirit of rebellion spread to the spiritual Jacobins of the radical Reformation. They are our real founding fathers, who bequeathed to us not a coherent set of moral and theological doctrines, but the corrosive pluralism that characterizes our age. The radicals denied the need for sacraments or relics, which ordinary believers believed in, handing them Bibles they were unequipped to understand. *Sola scriptura*, plus the idea that anyone could be filled with the Holy Spirit, inspired every radical reformer to become his own Saint Paul – and then demand that his neighbors put down their nets and follow him. Disagreements erupted, leading to war, which led to the creation of confessional states, which led to more wars. Modern liberalism was born to cope with these conflicts, which it did. But the price was high: it required the institutionalization of toleration as the highest moral virtue. The nineteenth-century Catholic Church rejected this whole package and withdrew within its walls, where intellectual life declined and dogma ossified. It thus left the rest of us to sink ever deeper into the confusing, unsatisfying, hyper-pluralistic, consumer-driven, dogmatically relativistic world of today. (49)

Ultimately, Lilla sees Gregory's "Road Not Taken" narrative as "distracting Christians from the only road that ever matters: the one in front of them." (51) Gregory would, of course, agree with Lilla in holding that it is important to stay oriented in the present and keep an eye on the future. For this reason, Gregory offers some pragmatic suggestions at the end of his book. In the above citation, Lilla has provided, in my assessment, a humorous but also generally accurate summary

of Gregory's overall picture of the Reformation. Lilla also understands the contemporary intellectual context of Gregory's work. He is correct, in my view, to mention the general tradition of modern Catholic anti-modern historiography as a point of reference. Lilla could have, however, more adequately distanced Gregory from the early 20th century forms of this thinking, which he mentions. As should be pointed out, Gregory does not reject modern democracy and does not call for a theocratic state, or an authoritarian society based upon discrimination and exclusion as many anti-modern intellectuals (Catholic and Protestant) did in the early 20th century. Some of the heated response here in Lilla's review, and in many of the other reviews, has to do with Gregory's provocative thesis. Gregory essentially argues that a contemporary intellectual of the left has a view of the world that is an astonishingly recent stopgap measure. Gregory holds that modern sensibilities, what he calls the "Kingdom of Whatever,"[17] have only gained wide approval in Western societies in the latter part of the 20th century. With this, Gregory also gives many painful (although sometimes unfair, in that they are sometimes one-sided) examples of this latest "hyperpluralist" version of the "Enlightenment ideas." (ibid., 339.) Lilla's assessment of Gregory's work is certainly not related to the following matter, but Gregory does challenge Lilla's account in *The Stillborn God* of the decline of Christian cosmology in the wake of the rise of natural science. Gregory writes: "Well, no." (Ibid., 53.) In other reviews, other challenging claims have been made. William Monter asserts that Gregory's book is "unlikely to persuade the uncommitted."[18] James Chappel suggests that Gregory intentionally did not treat the rise of modern democracy in his work and that this shows how the work is "a frightening and deeply anti-democratic work, both in its methods and in its findings." Chappel remarks that we

[17] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 378.

[18] William Monter, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 43/3 (2013), 464-466, here: 464.

do not live in the "Kingdom of Whatever" but "in a democracy, made up of people from multiple faith communities. This fact seems curiously irrelevant to Gregory: it is telling that, in a work as long and encyclopedic as *The Unintended Reformation*, 'democracy' is not deemed worthy of a paragraph's discussion."[19] Jordan J. Ballor reflects that it "might well need a generation (or more) of scholarship to overturn the caricatures and mischaracterizations perpetuated in Gregory's account" of the Reformation.[20] Barton Swaim states that Gregory's "arguments are marked by baffling leaps in logic and tendentious blustering." Although the book promotes a "preposterously overwrought characterization of modern Western societies," along with an "almost comically negative view of the entire Protestant Reformation," Swaim does engage Gregory on the counter-factual history:

> "I doubt that he really thinks that medieval Catholicism could have maintained its transnational cultural authority if only the Reformation hadn't happened, or that 17th- and 18th-century philosophers wouldn't have posed direct and multifarious challenges to Christianity's truth claims if only Luther, Calvin and others hadn't insisted on 'sola scriptura.'"[21]

Kenneth G. Appold takes issue with Gregory's focus on America in his narrative as the *terminus ad quem* for the Reformation. He claims that this might have to do with Gregory's reliance upon Max Weber (1865-1920). While praising the general attempt at interpreting the legacy of the Reformation, Appold writes: "The cumulative weight of these and other

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[19] James Chappel, "An intended absence? Democracy and The Unintended Reformation," Sept. 2013, *The Immanent Frame*: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2013/09/05/an-intended-absence-democracy-and-the-unintended-reformation/.

[20] Jordan J. Ballor, Review of Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, in *Calvin Theological Journal* 47/2 (2012), 349-353, here: 353.

[21] Barton Swaim, "Blame It on Calvin & Luther," in *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 14, 2012.

issues weakens the persuasiveness of Gregory's argument."[22] He claims that the "facts and observations align all too neatly with the author's [Gregory's] grand scheme."[23] Appold claims that such a unity was "certainly not in the fourteenth century, when there were two and at times even three rival papacies dividing Western Christendom." The fifteenth century is also not a candidate, "marked as it was by rival conceptions of ecclesial governance and even of the nature of the church itself."[24] He also remarks that the

> "long-standing competition between popes and emperors, and the rise of national-church structures in France and Spain (and arguably elsewhere), could have figured more prominently in Gregory's genealogy." (Ibid., 398.)

In response to Gregory, Appold writes that he moves "too quickly" when he asserts that there was an "'identifiable unity.'"[25]

Many of the reviews of Gregory's book deal with the general outlook that he provides on the contemporary situation. At the end of Matthew Lundin's review, he asks the following question: "in lamenting what has been lost, how can we avoid flattening modern history into a tale of inevitable futility and decline?"[26] Gregory responded to the review by stating:

> It remains to be seen how well liberalism's alleged 'pragmatic, negative consensus' can hold up in societies whose members lack shared substantive values, disagree sharply over matters of central importance for human life, and are increasingly equipped with technological means to pursue unprecedented aims that serve the divergent desires. Indeed, how well is it holding up

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22 Kenneth G. Appold, "A World Undone: Brad Gregory's critique of the Reformation," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 395-399, here: 399.

23 Ibid., 398.

24 Ibid., 398.

25 Ibid., 399. He refers to Gregory, Unintended Reformation, 84. Appold also remarks on the tone of the work: "his rhetoric is at times awkwardly reminiscent of preecumenical Catholic apologetics." Ibid.

26 Matthew Lundin, "The Unintended Reformation – A review essay," in *Christian Scholar's Review* 41/4 (2012), 407-413, here: 413.

> now? The United States' rancorous public political culture, environmentally destructive consumerism, self-regarding individualism, burgeoning gulf between rich and poor, reliance on millions of exploited overseas workers, and endless disagreements about fundamental moral issues – these and other realities seem symptomatic of a failing modernity.[27]

On multiple occasions in his book, Gregory also addresses contemporary problems of American society and those of Western society in general.[28] This assessment of the dominate cultural, social and political order of Western democracies and many other themes in *The Unintended Reformation* are reminiscent of work from Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael J. Buckley, Stanley Hauerwas, John Milbank and David B. Hart. Ernst van den Hemel has compared Gregory to the new right in Europe. He holds that

> "almost every Western European country is experiencing the rise of nationalist movements of which a culturalized notion of religion is an essential component."

He goes on to address Phillip Blond, a politician and theologian associated with Radical Orthodoxy (a theological movement associated with John Milbank). Hemel writes regarding Blond:

> One of the cornerstones of his argument is that without a strong sense of community, society is lost. Blond played a key role in providing the agenda for the British Conservative Party that won the national elections in 2010. Seen from this viewpoint, Gregory's suggestion that we work towards replacing the Kingdom of Whatever with a community guided by a religiously inspired moral framework is already very much part and parcel of political reality.

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[27] Gregory, "Response to Matthew Lundin's Review," in *Christian Scholar's Review* 41/4 (2012), 415-419, here: 419.

[28] See Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 15-20.

With view to the Netherlands, Hemel claims that an "Aristocracy of Culturalized Religion" has supplanted "the Kingdom of Whatever."[29]

In the broader German perspective of the 20th century, one is of course reminded of Oswald Spengler when they encounter the pathos of decline in Gregory's book. There are, however, differences between Gregory and Spengler. Spengler focused on multiple civilizations, and not only on the West. Spengler's conception of history was also built upon other theories, such as the philosophy of life, that are not found in Gregory's work. There are also differences between Gregory and the above mentioned contemporary Anglophone authors, although he does draw upon their work.[30] Gregory and many of these contemporary authors, share, however, a sense of urgency and a critical outlook. In their writings, they challenge the established norms of modern Western liberal societies. They point to evidence that suggests that the modern Western world is in a process of decline on many different levels. In some cases, the modern age itself and the emergence of secularism are featured as the key causes of the decline; in Gregory's case, the watershed point is the Reformation.

The world we live in today, according to Gregory, is "an open-ended ideological hyperpluralism within the dominant institutions whose character was an unintended outcome of the Reformation era."[31] Gregory sees modernity as failing because its ideals are incompatible with scientific naturalism. This is also addressed in his response to Peter E. Gordon's review where he states that "modern liberalism is failing" because

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[29] Ernst van den Hemel, "A Kingdom that no longer says Whatever," Dec. 2013, *The Immanent Frame*: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2013/12/02/a-kingdom-that-no-longer-says-whatever/ The phrase "Kingdom of Whatever" is from Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, e.g., 378.

[30] For examples of places where he distances himself, see ibid., 11-12, 185, 401.

[31] Brad S. Gregory, "Responses to the reviewers," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 429-436, here: 436.

> "its ideals depend on basic moral and anthropological categories that cannot be rationally justified unless one holds some metaphysical view in which human beings are more than the natural sciences say they are."

He goes on to claim that "Modern liberalism's 'most basic moral, political, and legal claims' about the reality of persons and rights depend on humans being more than just another species of biological matter-energy."[32] Gregory's analysis of the modern age follows older debates about the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In the latter part of the 20th century, much of the discussion on this subject was influenced by the Löwith-Blumenberg debate about "the legitimacy of the modern age."[33] Distancing himself from the criticism of his work as a general critique of modernity, Gregory writes: "my book is not a whole sale assault and rejection of modernity but a differentiated analysis of its making."[34] Yet many of the reviewers see this differently. William T. Cavanaugh writes:

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[32] Brad S. Gregory, "Contents and discontents of (post)modernity," Feb., 2014, *The Immanent Frame*: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2014/02/27/contents-and-discontents-of-postmodernity/ Here he quotes from *The Unintended Reformation*, 381.

[33] See Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen: die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953); Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of Modern Age*, transl. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983) [idem, Die Legitimität der Neuzeit, 1966]; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *"Christianity as the Legitimacy of the Modern Age: Thoughts on a Book by Hans Blumenberg* (1968)," in idem, *The Idea of God and Human Freedom* (London: Westminster Press, 1973), 178-191; Robert M. Wallace, "Progress, Secularization and Modernity: The Löwith-Blumenberg Debate," in *New German Critique* 22 (1981), 63-79. Peter E. Gordon remarks on this in his review. He states: "Upon finishing Gregory's book I was tempted to give it a new title: The Illegitimacy of the Modern Age." Peter E. Gordon, "Has modernity failed?" Sept. 2013, *The Immanent Frame*: http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2013/09/12/has-modernity-failed/.

[34] Brad S. Gregory, "Responses to the reviewers," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 429-436, here: 431.

> It is not the details […] that will make enemies for Gregory. It is rather the overall notion not only that Protestantism resulted in secularization, but that this was, on the whole, a bad thing, that will cause some reviewers to twitch. Gregory seems to be arguing that when the West turned from an integrally Catholic society, it took a wrong turn.[35]

Cavanaugh goes on to give the example of Gregory's linking the Reformation to the lack of contemporary moral norms.[36] John D. Roth also seems to have had the same sense after reading Gregory's work. He remarks on the nature of the book: "Clearly, the book is […] a passionate lament – and a wake-up call – for a society in decline."[37] Hans Boersma also addresses this:

> "The real challenge for the implementation of Gregory's implied agenda, it would seem, is the question of how to rid ourselves of hyperpluralism without recourse to the kind of coercion that involves the loss of caritas."[38]

Responding to Boersma's review, Gregory writes:

> Boersma nicely puts the overarching societal and political challenge as "how to rid ourselves of hyperpluralism without recourse to the kind of coercion that involves the loss of caritas." But that is perhaps an even greater challenge than trying to comprehend the complexities that have led to where we find ourselves. It is certainly unlikely to be articulated persuasively in a few pages. I hope *The Unintended Reformation* might serve as a helpful historical prolegomena to whoever wants to pursue this endeavor […].[39]

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35 William T. Cavanaugh, "The modest claim of an immodest book," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 406-412, here: 409. Emphasis his.

36 See Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 302, 326.

37 John D. Roth, "From tragedy to apocalypse," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 419-428, here: 424.

38 Hans Boersma, "Against nostalgia? Brad Gregory on the divisive character of the Reformation," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 400-405, here: 403.

39 Gregory, "Responses to the reviewers," in *Pro Ecclesia* 22 (2013), 429-436, here: 431f.

Here Gregory seems to affirm an understanding of his book as a prolegomena for ridding "ourselves of hyperpluralism".

Another point of entry into the discussion with Gregory's work is theological. This has not been explored very much in the reviews but it seems to have been addressed by David Bentley Hart. Hart may have recently offered a response to Gregory's book although he does not mention him or the book in the essay. Hart shows that he agrees with Gregory's analysis of the "conundrum of *caritas* and coercion" in the Middle Ages and gives a few examples of this. Hart claims, however, that "Christendom could not indefinitely survive the corrosive power of the revelation that Christianity itself had introduced into Western culture."[40] He thus asserts, in the subtitle of his essay, that "the gospel both created and destroyed Christendom." As he explains,

> perhaps the historical force ultimately most destructive of the unity of the Christian culture of the West has been not principally atheism, materialism, capitalism, collectivism, or what have you – these may all be secondary manifestations of some deeper problem – but Christianity. Or, rather, I suppose I should say, an essential Christian impulse that, as a result of the contradictions inherent in Christendom, had become alienated from its true rationality and ultimate meaning.[41]

Hart also calls this "essential Christian impulse" Christianity's "original apocalyptic ferment."[42] He states that "all of our modern fables of liberation, in all their often contradictory diversity, have sprung up in the shadow of the very particular Western history of the Gospel's proclamation."[43] This

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[40] David Bentley Hart, "No Enduring City: The Gospel Both Created and Destroyed Christendom," in *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, No. 235 (Aug./Sept. 2013), 45-51, here: 50; for a similar argument, see idem, "Christianity, Modernity, and Freedom," in T*radition and Modernity: Christian and Muslim perspectives*, ed. David Marshall (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Pr., 2013), 67-78.

[41] Hart, "No Enduring City," 50.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

"impulse" is something at the essence of Christianity and in another way at the essence of modernity. Hart sees this "Resistance to or flight from the authority of the law" as "a vital part of the moral sensibility of the Gospel."[44] Indeed,

> "in every modern demand for social and personal recognition as inherent rights, there is at least a distant echo of Paul's proclamation of the unanticipated 'free gift' found in Christ."[45]

As Christianity sought to become, after Constantine, and factually became "not only a pillar of culture, but also a support of the state," a deep tension in its essence was realized, for "it attempted to close the spiritual abyss separating Christ and Pilate on the day of their confrontation in Jerusalem."[46] Hart thus sees "certain *intrinsic* stresses" or an essential "ungovernable energy within" Christianity and Western culture which stems from this emphasis on the Gospel in opposition to the law, one which also leads to things like "militant atheism," or "self-conscious nihilism."[47] Hart claims that "modernity" itself, which he understands as the history of a one-sided conception of freedom, is a result of this long narrative of liberation.[48]

Although it is articulated differently, Hart envisions a deeper essence of Christianity, like Adolf von Harnack, lying behind the actual organized communities of Christians, their doctrines, philosophies and institutions: an "original

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44 Ibid.

45 Ibid. For other examples of similar contemporary readings of Paul, see: *John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek and Creston Davis, Paul's new moment: Continental philosophy and the future of Christian theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press., 2010); Douglas Harink, ed., *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek, and others* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2010); Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*; transl. Ray Brassier (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2003):

46 Hart, "No Enduring City," 50.

47 Ibid., 49.

48 Ibid.

apocalyptic ferment."[49] Hart presents the story of historical Christendom as the aftermath of this event in Christ, apparently with some relation to Alain Badiou's philosophy of the event.[50] The event is somehow still alive, however, fermenting within the Christian faith and within Western culture. Hart does not claim here that Christianity should be understood as a "revolution." In this recent piece he describes a "radical revision of the understanding of the human being and of nature that Christianity introduced into the world."[51]

In light of Gregory's work, Hart raises an important question regarding the relationship between Christianity and Christendom. In what regard was the cooperative relationship between Christianity and the state in the Middle Ages destined to fail? Has Gregory sufficiently acknowledged, as Hart might be understood to suggest, this deeper essence of Christianity that "destroyed Christendom"? Hart is certainly right to emphasize that Christianity transcends Christendom. The understanding of Christianity as having a deeper essence that is essentially in conflict with the political realm is, however, less convincing.[52]

Gregory links the Reformation to the "control of human bodies *and thus human beings* by secular authorities".[53] It is not clear from this passage whether or not Gregory is here suggesting that Protestant theology, and especially Luther's doctrine of the two-kingdoms, is implicated in the radical to-

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[49] See Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?* transl. T. B. Sanders (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press., 1986).

[50] See Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, transl. Oliver Feltham (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005).

[51] Hart, "No Enduring City," 49.

[52] Hart's more extended account of the "Christian Revolution" is found in his *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (London: Yale Univ. Pr., 2009). The book only commits a few passages to the "New Atheism" and is primarily concerned with Christianity's relationship to Western culture. My review of it can be found in: "New Atheism and old Christianity more majorum," in *Reviews in Religion & Theology* 17 (2010), 136-143.

[53] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 148.

talitarian ideologies of the early 20th century which brutally subjugated religious authority, or not. The expression regarding the "control of human bodies" may lead a reader to make the association here, but perhaps it was not Gregory's intention. One of the problems with this association, whether it is intended or not, is the fact that modern fascism emerged in Roman Catholic Italy, radical socialism, or communism, realized itself first in Orthodox Russia and the first modern genocide of the 20th century was carried out by the Muslim Turks against the Armenians and Greeks. Furthermore, an implied association between Protestantism and totalitarianism does not make much sense of the fact that many nations that were dominated by Protestantism in the early 20th century, like Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, were largely internally, and in many cases also militarily, resistant to totalitarianism in the 20th century. Again, it is not clear as to whether Gregory was actually suggesting this association or not with his use of the expression "control of human bodies".[54]

4. Conclusion

Many of the reviews above are critical of Gregory's work. Of course, any historical work that presents itself as a "different kind of history,"[55] as Gregory writes about his methods, or employs an "experimental analysis of the past," and is "self-consciously selective," (ibid., 4) is more likely than not to receive some criticisms. Yet the methodology does not preclude Gregory's work from offering some good insights

[54] This is reminiscent of the "bio-politics" theme from Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [Homo Sacer I], transl. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford Univ. Pr., 1998); idem, *State of Exception* [Homo Sacer II/1], transl. Kevin Attell (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 2005); idem, *Leviathans Rätsel* [Leviathan's Riddle], ed. Friedrich Hermanni, transl. P. S. Peterson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

[55] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 2.

into the nature and history of the modern Western world. The style of composite history, furthermore, which has significant freedoms when it comes to the narrative construction, was not criticized in any of the above reviews. This genre has also provided alternative accounts of the relationship between the Reformation and the modern period. A recent example is found in Heinrich August Winkler's *History of the West: From the beginnings in antiquity up to the twentieth-century*,[56] which has a chapter bearing the subtitle "From Wittenberg to Washington." While Gregory's work has come under criticism, he is correct, in my judgment, to point out that "ideological and institutional shifts that occurred five or more centuries ago" are "substantively necessary to an explanation of why the Western world today is as it is."[57] Granted, other things are also necessary in this explanation. Gregory is right, however, to draw attention to the very important things that happened in philosophy, theology and in the ecclesial and political realms in the late Middle Ages and in the Reformation-era that transformed the Western world. Gregory's book has provided an occasion for a healthy debate. His work has many arguments and each one of them deserves to be critically analyzed and individually evaluated. Gregory's work is a welcomed contribution that provokes reflection, conversation, debate and ultimately, and most importantly in these matters, research. As the 31st of October, 2017, becomes a topic in the planning of ecclesial calendars, debate about the Reformation is all the more welcome. This is particularly the case when the question is, as it is in Gregory's work: What does the Reformation have to do with our world today?

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[56] Heinrich August Winkler, *Geschichte des Westens: Von den Anfängen in der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (München: Beck, 2009); see my "Civitas terrena: On Heinrich August Winkler's Geschichte des Westens", in *theologie.geschichte* 6 (2011), at uni-saarland.de/theologie.geschichte

[57] Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 7.