over authority that Protestant movements were certainly responsible for propelling. But the way those disputes were embodied in coercive regimes was a legacy of the Catholic middle ages.

Evidence supporting this claim is stronger than counter-factual speculation since we know what has actually happened since the Second Vatican Council and the full Catholic embrace in *Dignitatis Humanae* of *caritas* over coercion. That bold move at Vatican II has resulted in an era of constructive mutual edification between Catholics and Protestants not witnessed since the 1520s, indeed not even imaginable less than a century ago. My conclusion from this recent history is that if medieval Christendom, and then Europe's confessional churches, had discovered a way to favor *caritas* over coercion (a task of admittedly great difficulty), the extraordinary range of convictions that Catholics and most Protestants continued to share after 1520—the Trinity, Christ understood by the Nicene Creed, scripture as inspired, the Ten Commandments—would have perhaps allowed Christian communities to hold back the tides of secularization more successfully.

In sum, the late-medieval turn away from non-univocal metaphysics as well as the practice by Christendom's central institutions of coercion over *caritas* cut the channels in which the effects of Protestantism would run. The Reformation would not have secularized the West if medieval Christendom had not already fatally undermined the medieval Christian ideal.

Mark A. Noll
University of Notre Dame

Author's Reply

doi:10.1017/S0009640712001990

I am grateful to these four colleagues for their reviews of my book. I also thank the editors of *Church History* for this forum and the opportunity to reply to the reviews. *The Unintended Reformation* is unconventional, demanding, and wide-ranging; it is also unnerving, with arguments that some readers are unlikely to like. That is unavoidable, because methodologically, theoretically, and substantively the book challenges much that is often considered settled. What matters intellectually, however, is not whether it is misliked but whether it is mistaken in its historical analysis or description of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

contemporary realities. Any book must be comprehended before one can essay counterarguments against it. As I state repeatedly, the six chapters of *The Unintended Reformation* comprise a whole and must be understood together (20, 24, 365–66). The book was written with care and must be read with care to be understood.

I am therefore especially grateful to Mark Noll for his review. Aware of my attention to the late medieval church's endemic problems, he sees the centrality to my argument of the "gulf" or "chasm" (my words) between the ideals and realities of medieval Christendom (21, 85, 139–44, 195–98, 202, 244, 250, 253–60, 366–67). It is thus puzzling that Robert Yelle thinks the book expresses nostalgic yearning for a supposed medieval "Golden Age of Christianity." I am also gratified that Noll, such a distinguished Protestant historian and keen observer of present-day society, thinks the book "powerfully demonstrates the summary conclusion offered near the end" about the respective (and different) failures of medieval Christendom, the Reformation, and confessionalized Europe, as well as the failing of modernity underway.

Because Noll understands the book's argument and agrees with its core conclusion, my disagreements with his review are relatively minor. As crucial as was the Luther affair for what became the Reformation, one cannot extrapolate from it to the church as a whole in the late 1510s. Much recent research has shown how vibrant Christian *caritas* was then, evident across Latin Europe in a wide range of concrete charitable works: care for the sick, prayers for the living and dead, spiritual counsel, and so forth. Some ecclesiastical authorities were harsher than others in handling heresy suspects, their actions varying depending on the case. More than simply a matter of coercion in the service of prelates' pecuniary and political interests, Luther's treatment also reflected the implicit challenge to papal authority that some theologians already perceived in the Ninety-Five Theses. Luther's quest indeed concerned salvation rather than authority per se, but insofar as he justified justification by faith alone and arrived at it with reference to specific Pauline passages, the two are inseparable; there was no "Reformation" yet when Luther expressed *sola scriptura* at Leipzig in July 1519, and by early 1522 Karlstadt, Müntzer, and others already sharply disagreed with Luther about scripture's meaning and application. Although Luther's response to his treatment is understandable, it was hardly compulsory—many others in analogous situations before and after recanted their views and returned to the Roman church. The sins of late medieval Christians, including popes, did not necessarily mean that the Roman church was no longer what it claimed to be, whatever the inferences drawn by those who rejected its authority. Others then and since have argued that its members' actions could not undo what it was, because the divine promise

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

embedded in its dominical origins rendered it indefectible on all fundamental matters of Christian teaching. According to the Roman church's defenders, medieval Christendom had not "already fatally undermined the medieval Christian ideal" by 1519—rather, the *ideal* remained no less intact and the church's *teachings* no less true despite egregious failures to live up to them. In their view the solution was to follow the teachings, not to devise new ones contrary to those of the established church.

Hans Hillerbrand's review is more problematic because less comprehending. Any reviewer would seem confused who says a book "is structured neither chronologically nor thematically" yet in his next sentence lists the chapter titles that "define the thematic trajectories" of the book. Only some of Hillerbrand's worst misrepresentations can be addressed, given space constraints.

The Unintended Reformation is not an "intellectual history" with a "fastidious focus on certain theological and philosophical developments" that pays mere "lip service to societal developments." That is a gross distortion. The book is a sustained argument that human beliefs, desires, ideas, practices, and institutions cannot be separated from one another in the history of the Western world between the late Middle Ages and the present: "We cannot content ourselves with a concentration on ideas or institutions, culture or capitalism, philosophy or politics—*all* must be incorporated because of their *combined* explanatory power, itself a corollary of their *interrelated* historical influence" (3, italics in original). Hillerbrand says nothing about the fact that chapter 3 is about the institutional exercise of public power; chapter 4 is about morality in connection to social relationships and politics; chapter 5 is about human acquisitiveness, capitalism, and consumption; and chapter 6 is as much about institutions as ways of knowing in the pursuit and transmission of knowledge. Given this apparent oversight of two-thirds of the book, it is perhaps unsurprising that he overlooks or misconstrues so many of its arguments. Contemporary intellectuals who "have a place for God" are just as modern as those who do not (27–28, 69–72); secular authorities' jurisdictional control of ecclesiastical institutions was underway long before the Reformation (131, 143–44, 367); Reformation-era governments did not "dictate theology" but decided which versions of Christianity to support and suppress (131–32, 149–60, 369–70); Christians' disagreement about a morality of the good led to a formal ethics of rights, not to "secular, open-ended expansiveness" in what is anything but a "commonplace or self-evident" chapter (185, 188, 211–12, 214–20, 340); and doctrinal disagreements divided Protestant reformers socially and politically despite what they shared in common (89–91, 203–6).

Hillerbrand says of *The Unintended Reformation*, "It would be an epochal book were it not for two problems": "the thesis of ultimate Reformation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

complicity for the ills of modernity" and "the way the book understands the dynamic of historical development and change." Since neither of these alleged problems is real, perhaps Hillerbrand will revise his assessment. The book repeatedly argues not that today's Western world is the product of "certain notions of the Reformation" promulgated by "those bad reformers," but—as Noll sees—of the Reformation era's doctrinal disagreements and religio-political conflicts that followed medieval Christendom's failures. English deists are *part of* my *conceptually much broader* account of rationalistic Protestantism between the sixteenth century and the present, a point also applicable to Yelle's review (51–52, 105–9). Even had I discussed every individual deist—indeed, devoted a chapter-length excursus to them, and another to Bishop Butler—it would only have strengthened (if distended) my much more encompassing arguments about metaphysical univocity and the fissiparity of Protestantism through more examples and detail. The book does *not* claim that Protestant pluralism contributed to any widespread, secularizing disavowal of Christianity *in the early modern period*, but rather "by the end of the twentieth century" (111). It is difficult to see what Hillerbrand means by "the importance of the ancient ecumenical creeds as consensus builder for all Protestant traditions," having told us two sentences before about seventeenth-century Lutheran divines who dismissed Calvinist biblical claims "as 'abomination' and heresy." Early modern encounters with non-Christian peoples did not compel an inference of relativism from pluralism, as Hillerbrand seems to imagine: the example of early modern Jesuits, whose globe-trotting missionaries collectively encountered a very wide variety of non-Christians in the era, makes this clear (as does Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* today). And Hillerbrand seemingly cannot distinguish cosmological models from metaphysics, and thus fails to see how the rejection of the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic universe did not (and does not) affect a non-univocal understanding of the relationship between God and creation (53–55). Hillerbrand's review shows not my "fallacious understanding of the European cultural dynamic during the past 500 years," but rather displays his failure to grasp what the book shows: that the dominant "intellectual, economic, and political forces" of the West since the sixteenth century are not "unrelated to the Reformation," but inextricable from the unresolved doctrinal disagreements and religio-political conflicts that accompanied it.

I am well aware that Western modernity alleviated multiple problems of premodern Europe and "made possible the flourishing of literally billions of human beings" (375; cf. 132, 233, 238, 293, 294). But *by the same means* it has precipitated new problems that we face today. Troeltsch's *Bedeutung des Protestantismus* appeared in 1911 at the height of self-congratulatory European assessments of colonizing imperial progress, before the twentieth

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

century's cataclysmic wars, genocides, and decolonization. The history and contemporary realities that Troeltsch explained relative to the Reformation were therefore very different from ours. Hillerbrand says nothing about the present-day problems described in my book: that we have no shared framework for resolving moral disagreements, no substantive common good or means of devising one, no grounds for believing that human rights or persons are real based on scientistic naturalism, much evidence that ever-increasing human consumption is apparently contributing to global warming and that undergraduate education is incoherent. Are these not problems? Are they not the product of the past, their making thus rightly analyzed by historians? Is my "candid display of opinions" in articulating them somehow inaccurate? The book is not "a Jeremiad, barely subtle, against modernity"—it *shows how* the institutional arrangements that *solved* problems inherited from the Reformation era, plus modern philosophy's failures and the natural sciences' successes, have in turn *fostered* major current problems. Reminding ourselves about modernity's successes does not alter this reality.

David Whitford draws a parallel between *The Unintended Reformation* and Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve*, alleging that we both "se[e] in a particular event the fulcrum upon which the medieval world pivots toward the modern" despite our different assessments of modernity. But unlike Greenblatt's use of Poggio's rediscovery of *De rerum natura*, I nowhere even suggest that the Reformation was a discrete "event." It strikes me as absurdly incongruous to compare one scholar's recovery of a Lucretian manuscript, or even the Renaissance recovery of Epicurean thought in general, with the politically backed rejection by multiple regimes and millions of people of late medieval Europe's most pervasive institution. And Greenblatt's confessionally secularist and neo-Burckhardtian reason-refutes-religion supersessionism is not only empirically inaccurate, but also cannot explain the contemporary intellectual viability of sophisticated religious worldviews or account for the ideological heterogeneity of Western modernity. Lumping *The Unintended Reformation* together with *The Swerve* is hugely misleading, because neither my book's genealogical method nor its emphasis on the Reformation era is arbitrary. *No* credible account of today's world is possible that does not encompass science and its applications, modern philosophy, sovereign states, industrial capitalism and consumerism, and higher education. Therefore my book includes them all. It shows how the Reformation era's doctrinal disagreements and religio-political conflicts are related to them and how they are related to each other.

All historical explanations of the contemporary Western world must begin somewhere. I start in the late Middle Ages because that is how far back we must go to account for the stipulated *explanandum*: the hegemonic institutions that permit and protect our contemporary hyperpluralism of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

answers to the Life Questions. But I am well aware that "the institutionalized worldview of late medieval Christianity . . . had itself been over a millennium in the unsystematic making" (4). Therefore I address whatever in the ancient or medieval past was necessary for my argument, in a manner consistent with the anti-supersessionist view of historical change that informs my analytical narrative of the past half-millennium: the biblically rooted, Christian understanding of the relationship between God and creation inherited from late antiquity (29–36); the relationship between Christianity and the exercise of power between the first and the sixteenth centuries (133–36); the teleological view of human nature and moral virtues in ancient and medieval Christianity (195–98); the biblically based condemnation of avarice as a deadly sin and developments pursuant to the eleventh-century commercial revolution (244–55); and the ways in which different types of knowledge were conceived within a medieval intellectual framework (309–17). Whitford is thus much mistaken in declaring that I "wish to point to a single moment and declare that it was at this moment in time when things changed." (Indeed, his own treatment of my discussion of Scotus contradicts his claim.) My book no more states or suggests this than it regards Luther and Calvin as the Reformation's "prime movers." Things are always changing—but with the Reformation they changed *in ways that have proven to be unprecedentedly consequential and remain influential in the present*. My book shows how. Tellingly, none of these reviewers addresses my argument about how different the Reformation looks once we historically reintegrate the radical with the magisterial Reformation without theologically privileging the latter (although Noll refers to "the morass created by Protestant appeals to *sola scriptura*"). For then we see the open-endedness of answers to the Life Questions precipitated by the anti-Roman emphasis on scripture alone, and its latter-day descendant in contemporary hyperpluralism. Depending on one's commitments, that can be discomfiting.

Whitford thinks the narrative of each chapter he criticizes "breaks down when examined in its particulars." In fact, as with Hillerbrand, his criticisms display incomprehension of the chapters' actual arguments. I do not "questio[n] Scotus's orthodoxy"—I say he was a "faithful Franciscan friar" whose views about univocity "were not condemned as doctrinally heterodox" (36). This is no "rhetorical sleight of hand" but simply a statement of fact. That Benedict XVI recently commended "Blessed Duns Scotus" does not change the fact that Scotus innovated with respect to the traditional, inherited view of the relationship between God and creation. More importantly, however, the main argument in chapter 1 depends *not at all* on the relationship of the Protestant reformers to metaphysical univocity or "the appropriation of Scotus by Protestants." Whitford misses this entirely. The point is that the interminable *doctrinal disagreements* that accompanied the Reformation sidelined all

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

controverted bases for *supra-confessional* discussion of the relationship between God and creation. This left only philosophical reflection or empirical investigation within a *newly important* framework of metaphysical univocity and Occam's razor applied to an either-or understanding of natural and supernatural causality, *if* one wanted to avoid doctrinal controversy (40–41, 43–44, 46–49). Once all natural events were in principle explicable with reference to natural causes, there was no "room" for a univocally conceived (in contrast to a transcendent) God (43, 51–53, 54–56).

Whitford's characterization of chapter 3 is similarly misguided. The Reformation *transformed and intensified* a process of secular authorities' *jurisdictional* control of ecclesiastical institutions that *began long before the Reformation* (143–44), because Reformation-era secular authorities had to make novel decisions about which among *rival* Christian *doctrines and practices* to support. This was a radical shift. Prior to the Reformation, notwithstanding the considerable diversity in late medieval Christianity (83–84, 366), the Swiss, Saxon, English and other churches (outside Hussite Bohemia) all included bishops and priests, male and female religious, confraternities, the celebration of Mass, seven sacraments, veneration of saints, pilgrimages, processions, acknowledgment of papal authority, and so forth. After the Reformation, they did not. I repeatedly note that coercion and violence characterized medieval Christendom (83–84, 141–42, 159, 367), but this had nowhere near the influence of the Reformation era's religio-political conflicts on the makings of modernity. Adding earlier medieval examples would only strengthen my point about medieval secular authorities' exercise of power in support of the faith (137). Advances in military technology during the Thirty Years' War are irrelevant to my argument, which turns not on the war's destructiveness as a *function of religious zeal*, but merely on the wearying *association* of religious disagreements with destructive violence between the 1520s and 1640s (112–13, 160–63, 167, 211–12, 216, 217, 243, 278, 341, 371).

Whitford's accusation that I fail "to look at [my] narrative with a wider lens" is a bit baffling given the lens's width already. The focus of the lens, too, is carefully calibrated, gauged to explain the historical formation of the hyperpluralism and hegemonic institutions of the contemporary West. I have not "missed the broader cultural world" of the Reformation era; it simply is not what my book is about. As a scholar of the period, I am scarcely unaware of it. The introduction expressly disavows any claims of comprehensiveness (4–5), and the conclusion notes that "additional domains of human life have scarcely been mentioned that could have been analyzed in the same manner—sex, marriage, and families, for example, or forms of communication" (365). The latter would include a narrative running from

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

medieval oral and manuscript culture through the fifteenth-century printing revolution to Claude Chappe's optical telegraph system in France in the 1790s, nineteenth-century telegraphic and twentieth-century telephonic communications, and on to our own digital age. But such supplementary genealogical analysis—including the important relationship between print and the Reformation—would only strengthen my argument about the makings of contemporary hyperpluralism by exploring different media through which truth claims about the Life Questions have been disseminated, contested, and negotiated.

I am pleased that Robert Yelle considers *The Unintended Reformation* an erudite book that "demands and repays careful reading," and I appreciate his fine summary of its main argument in his second and third paragraphs. Nevertheless, his review misrepresents the book in multiple ways. My book is not merely about how "theological commitments" contributed to secularization; the Reformation rejection of the Roman church's authority affected all domains of life because "for good or ill" (2) late medieval Christianity was an institutionalized worldview. The sciences' success in explaining natural regularities was not independent of the Reformation, because the impasses born of early modern doctrinal controversies problematized theology's epistemological status in relationship to science (40–41, 46–48, 339–40). I do not argue that "the Reformation introduced pluralism" into a "vanished, monolithic culture" (which I plainly state was "far from homogeneous" [2; cf. 83, 84, 366]), but rather that it introduced an enduring and unprecedented pluralism *about answers to the Life Questions* in comparison to medieval Christendom (92–95, 110–12, 369). Regardless of Charles Taylor's views, there was indisputably a loss of traditional religious culture due to the Reformation and subsequent modern developments, whether one likes it or not, notwithstanding the fact that many "new conformations and different spiritual possibilities" were also created. And obviously, as I am well aware, our hyperpluralism today is partly due to interactions with different peoples in an ever more globalized world (11, 76). Economic life is the complex product of human ideas, desires, and behaviors in relationship to the natural world, none of which was independent of Christian theology in the Middle Ages or Reformation era (244–69). My book is not an "indictment of the Reformation," but an explanation of change over time *regardless* of one's assessment of the results; and as Noll sees, in my book medieval Christendom's failures are also critical to that explanation. The book's narrative hardly "ignores questions of power and authority" related to processes of secularization, considering the entirety of chapter 3 in relationship to chapter 2. It was Christians involved in the Peasants' War, not me, who dismissed "the 'hyper-Pauline' views of certain Protestants" (148–49). And given my arguments about the compatibility of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

all possible scientific discoveries with some religious worldviews (71, 384), and about the normative impotence of the natural sciences for human life (19, 79–80, 227, 380), it strikes me as bizarre to claim that "Gregory plays into the hands of those secularist narratives that sideline Christianity and present modernity as the triumph of scientific reason over religious superstition."

I see nothing problematic—much less "intensely problematic"—about the term "unintended," nor how it allegedly impinges on my non-teleological explanation of change over time. The point is not that any historical agents have (perhaps) *any* control over the "longer-term consequences of their actions, and over large-scale social processes," but simply that (as it happens) not all human actions are equally consequential and some have greater unanticipated effects than others. These seem to be unobjectionable banalities. One task of historians is to show which actions (as it happened) turned out to be especially consequential. This in no way affects the contingent character of human decisions and actions or the complexity of unforeseeable consequences (365–66). Nor is such analysis incompatible with recognition of the many *intended* consequences of human actions, including those enacted by early modern Protestants or by those who later wanted to exclude religion from public life. The Protestant reformers intended to instill new Christian beliefs and practices, for example, and in time Protestant authorities largely succeeded through efforts of confessionalization (156–57); late nineteenth-century American elites sought to exclude religion from higher education, and they also succeeded (354–56); and so forth. Many human actions have both intended and unintended consequences, and historians should be alert to both.

The *historical analysis* of *The Unintended Reformation* is distinct both from its *description* of contemporary social, moral, economic, intellectual, and political realities, and from its *assessment* of some of them as problematic. One could, for example, think that my book inaccurately describes our situation, and thus with Yelle refer to what "[Gregory] regards as characteristic of our contemporary scene," as if this was somehow a function of my idiosyncratic allegations. In this case, I have wrongly described ever-increasing levels of consumerism, for example, or modern philosophy's failure to answer any Life Questions in a consensually persuasive way. Or one could think the *descriptions* are accurate, but what is described is unproblematic: the apparent contribution of human consumption to potentially dangerous climate change, or open-ended pluralism pertaining to *all* human beliefs and behaviors, or our lack of any shared means of resolving moral disagreements. What is noteworthy about Yelle's review, and Hillerbrand's, is the absence of any counterevidence or counterarguments whatsoever pertaining *either* to my descriptions *or* my assessments. They

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press

seem not to like them, but offer nothing to suggest they are respectively inaccurate or unproblematic. My book acknowledges that modernity has contributed to the flourishing of billions of people. But the very solutions to early modern problems have also led to the situation in which we find ourselves. Reminding ourselves of modernity's benefits does not make our problems chimerical, nor does it make my book "a strongly antimodern polemic" for explaining how we arrived at them. *The Unintended Reformation* is not "frankly apologetic in motivation and tenor"; it assumes no substantive religious views whatsoever, nor does it evince any desire to return to the past, which is impossible anyway.

In keeping with its non-teleological conception of historical change and insistence on the non-determined character of human behavior, however, the book does counterfactually imply—in ways that seem consistent with Noll's review—that the past might have been quite different and less destructively coercive if medieval Christians high and low had better practiced what they preached. "Institutionally and ideologically, materially and morally, we need not have ended up where we are" (12). For without the pervasiveness of late medieval Christianity's problems, an Augustinian friar's anxieties might not have prompted the emphasis on scripture that seemed to some like an answer to *their* problems, thus unintentionally contributing to the eventual secularization of the troubled Christian world it sought to fix.

Brad S. Gregory
University of Notre Dame

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640712001990 Published online by Cambridge University Press