

Introduction

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The conference *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, held at Fordham University in August 2002, originated with the intention of using multiple perspectives and methods to consider the nature of religious reform before the modern period. The inspiration for this conference was the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. That Council, opened by Pope John XXIII on October 11, 1962 and sweeping in its re-examination of the Catholic Church, must then have seemed especially modern in its conception of both the Church and of reform, as several of our contributors note. From the conciliar documents, the Church emerges as a clearly recognizable structure with a pontifical pinnacle, each aspect of the structure having its own prescribed set of functions. The subsequent response to the Council over the last forty years strongly suggests the limitations of such a mechanical model. Vatican II, as it is commonly known, has its critics: those on the right believing the changes it unleashed to be unprecedented; those on the left accepting the far-reaching nature of those but still considering them incomplete. The debate that surrounds the Council – over issues of clerical celibacy, accusations or celebrations of innovation, exhortations for the return to an earlier imagined ideal of either the first-century Apostolic or sixteenth-century reformed Church, and the authority of Rome – has a familiar ring to the historian. From this perspective, Vatican II appears to fit into a wider history of reforming movements rather than simply raising issues of modernity. In fact, not only does the Council seem connected by historical issues; its very convocation is credited, in some part, to the efforts of historians of the first half of the twentieth century.¹

At the same time, the Council took place in a clearly different context than had previous reform movements. Certainly by the twentieth century, the Church was no longer the dominant force within the cultures where it existed; we no longer think of Christendom as one idealized community. Rather, the present Church, even the Second Vatican Council itself, exists within a culture defined, largely, apart from itself and its own ideals. The engagement of an

¹ John Van Engen, “The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem,” *The American Historical Review* 91, 3 (June 1986), 519–52, at 522–7.

institution such as the Church, which is both modern and premodern, with modern culture and society (John XXIII's *aggiornamento*) is problematic and requires a better understanding of both.² The rejection or the embrace of the premodern Church is best informed by a critical historical perspective. For example, one recent reformer has suggested that the Church should restructure itself along the lines of a modern (American) corporation, such as McDonald's or Wal-Mart. Indeed, part of the problem within the Church, according to this reformer, is that the Church "operates as a feudal system," with lords (bishops) and a king (the pope).³ But this would-be reform seems blithely unaware of the vastly greater powers exercised by a modern CEO over his or her company as compared to any pope, certainly of the premodern era, or its consequences.⁴ Nor was concern paid to the vastly greater uniformity in experiences at the retail end of these corporations as compared even to a modern parish (let alone a premodern one). This example, however idiosyncratic, demonstrates both the need to understand properly how premodern institutions governed and the capacity of the modern Church to be overwhelmed by a culture it no longer dominates.⁵

These problems of continuity and discontinuity between the premodern and the modern Church, and of the issues of reform, motivated us to invite a

² The question has been posed to what extent it is appropriate to think of "the Church," or how we are to understand that phrase in the Middle Ages. In addition to Van Engen, "Christian Middle Ages," see also Gary Macy, "Was there a 'The Church' in the Middle Ages?," in R. N. Swanson, ed., *Unity and Diversity in the Church, Papers read at the 1994 Summer Meeting and the 1995 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical Historical Society* (Oxford, 1996), 107–16.

³ Frederick W. Gluck, "Can the Church Learn from Wal-Mart?," *America, the National Catholic Weekly* (May 17, 2004), 12–15, at 12. He suggests that in addition to enormous savings in costs, the Church would inspire greater devotion and higher job satisfaction (p. 14).

⁴ On the limits of the early medieval papacy, for example, see Thomas F. X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter (680–825)* (Philadelphia, 1984), or Margaret Harvey, "Unity and Diversity: Perceptions of the Papacy in the Later Middle Ages," in Swanson, *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, 145–69. One might also consider the effort required for even such an ambitious pope as Innocent III to control the so-called papal states. Brenda Bolton, "'Except the Lord keep the city': Towns in the Papal States at the Turn of the Twelfth Century," in *Church and City 1000–1500: Essays in Honour of Christopher Brooke*, ed. David Abulafia, M. J. Franklin, and Miri Rubin (Cambridge, 1992), 199–218, repr. in Brenda Bolton, *Innocent III: Studies on Papal Authority and Pastoral Care* (Aldershot, 1995).

⁵ Mr. Gluck himself was a former executive at both the Bechtel Group and McKinsey & Company. Thus the idealization of his immediate cultural context and suspicion of older models of organization are not surprising. See also his previous article on the topic, "Crisis Management in the Church," *America, the National Catholic Weekly* (Dec. 1, 2003), 7–9. On the relationship between Christianity and the modern state, see R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550–1750* (London, 1989) and *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* (Cambridge, 1998).

distinguished group of scholars to consider, from the vantage of their particular specialties, the phenomenon of religious reform prior to the birth of the modern Church: roughly to the period of the sixteenth-century reforms. Since the purpose was to investigate reform, per se, we arranged the panels by the questions our participants were asked to consider, rather than by historical periods, and allowed the panels to proceed chronologically. The aim was to consider how different methods might open up the question of reform. We suggested a variety of topics loosely inspired by the documents and challenges of the Second Vatican Council that seemed to promise the capacity to highlight aspects of reform history. We did not presume to define for the panel what reform, modernity, or, for that matter, the Church was, as that seemed too teleologically driven and, thus, self-defeating. These are all words and concepts we scholars commonly use, even if we lack common, readily articulated definitions of what they mean. The panels examined reform from the perspective of social change, historical scholarly methods and schools of thought; the clergy, monasticism, the liturgy, and the centers and peripheries of reform, questions of gender, heterodoxy and orthodoxy, and lay leadership also shaped the conversation. By examining the Church via reform we glimpsed the Church in the process of continually defining itself.

The results are fascinating and several major themes emerged that now appear central to understanding the questions of reform before modernity emerged. First, it should be noted that while a wealth of scholarship has been written about reform movements during the first 1600 years of Church history, surprisingly little energy has been spent considering how the term is used and how the term might be applied more precisely by historians.⁶ As John Howe notes in his essay, we now accept a variety of renaissance periods without detracting from the idea of the Renaissance as a recognizable period of history. Indeed, it might be possible to isolate an even greater number of reform movements if we attempt a more precise definition. In fact, the categories of the twelfth-century renaissance and Carolingian renaissance were created precisely because they seemed to stand the test of definitions of rebirth of an ancient aesthetic.⁷ Second, the same might readily be said for

⁶The great exception was Gerhard Ladner, *The Idea of Reform, its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). While Ladner's successors have tended to see the history of the Church as a series of reform movements, the continuities and distinctions among them, or the ecclesiological distinctions, have been less fully developed.

⁷These ideas have been explored in such works as Warren Treadgold, ed., *Renaissances before the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1984); Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); and Derek Baker, ed., *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History, Papers read at the fifteenth Summer Meeting and sixteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical Historical Society* (Oxford, 1977).

study of the Church, per se, though this dilemma has received fairly recent and careful consideration.⁸ The essays that follow raise almost as many questions as they answer, and offer important ways to pose questions of religious reform and new approaches to answering these questions.

Historians need to be sensitive to the dynamic reality of the Church's self-understandings, as both a theological (eschatological) reality and unity, on the one hand, and as a localized practiced reality and multiplicity, on the other. As medieval preachers on the dedication of a new church consistently reminded their listeners, the Church was both a local community and the trans-temporal body of Christ (as discussed by Louis Hamilton). The ideal of the Church as body of Christ was itself rooted in Paul's epistles especially. Reform of the Church was always a process of connecting (or reconnecting) the one practiced reality to the other biblical ideal. The link between this unity and diversity might be found in the relationship between personal transformation or conversion, the *conversio* of monastic movements ("becoming Deiform," as Wayne Hankey suggests), and widespread social and cultural transformation. The prescriptive sources we use, such as episcopal letters, conciliar decrees, and canon law, create a reality to the Church that becomes more elusive upon closer inspection; indeed, their authority to initiate reform rests upon that created reality. It remains an open question to what extent the Council of Trent (which met between 1545 and 1563), once assumed to have marked the birth of the modern Catholic Church, had in fact created a modern institutional coherence by the seventeenth century (as discussed by Susan Dinan).

Robert Markus connects modern scholarship's lack of a coherent understanding of reform to the nebulousness of early Church unity. The Late Antique Church was conceived primarily as a mystical, heavenly reality, not an institutional, structural phenomenon. Therefore, the language of reform of the Church has been seen properly from the vantage of personal reform from the life of sin. Here, the reader should also consider the discussions of personal reform by Wayne Hankey and Martha Newman. This language of personal sin and an idealized heavenly community of saints, Professor Markus suggests, shaped and was shaped by three critical social transformations of Late Antiquity: the Constantinian revolution, the conversion of the Germanic kingdoms, and the Moslem conquests within the Mediterranean.

These transformations launched two responses within Western Christendom, the first being self-critical: the search for an "authentic" Church within

⁸ Van Engen, "Christian Middle Ages," on *christianitas*, esp. at 539. See also David M. Thompson's introduction to *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, xvi–xvii, xxi, in which the first fifteen essays address the premodern Christian era, but do not attempt to consider the change over time, especially the idea of unity as an institutional reality.

the social Church. The cult of the martyrs and the rise of asceticism mark distinct pathways by which personal conversion became a call to a community of “authentic” Christians, that is the community of martyrs, the heavenly Christian community of Revelation 7: 13, the heavenly Christian community. Monasticism itself was, thus, both a reform movement and an innovator of ecclesial structures.

The second response was, in a sense, the opposite of the first. As the Western Church was both isolated from dissenting voices through the Moslem conquest (especially with the loss of the African Church) and increasingly the creator of its own social and cultural institutions within Northern Europe, greater emphasis was placed on the correctness of its institutions and practices: less emphasis was placed on making Christians stand apart from society and more emphasis was placed on the triumph of the Christian order. Thus, the waxing and waning of asceticism, of the cult of the martyrs, and of this self-critical mode of personal reform appears to have had wide implications for the Christian community as a whole and on its interaction with society.

In turn, it is not surprising that John Howe observes that the search for both social change and reform in a precise form, even in the eleventh century, an era famous for both, leaves one with more questions than answers. The sharp breaks in society, the so-called transformation of the year 1000, seem softer now than they did a generation ago: the emergence of feudal structures, such as *incastelamento*, appear to be phenomena more varied by time and location. The rapid change within the Church seems to play out over several centuries with a greater debt owed to a variety of monastic movements than was previously thought. Papal authority, on the other hand, as Howe suggests, was less novel. But Howe’s contribution is not a simple retreat from the questions concerning the year 1000; rather, it is a call to restructure the questions we ask. In what ways did contemporaries frame the questions of ecclesial crisis and why did they do so in their particular form? How did the Gregorians conceive of the ecclesial past and did that conception serve to shape their ideals?

In fact, Howe’s contribution raises the possibility that the Gregorians tapped into the Antique inheritance discussed by Robert Markus. He argues that the Gregorians recaptured motifs from Late Antiquity, especially those of the Church persecuted and set apart from society, in order to galvanize support for their movement, and to motivate the personal reform that could become the precursor to institutional reform. The broad demographic changes of the eleventh century may have lent credence and impetus to claims of social change, and therefore of religious crisis and calls to reform, even if those claimed crises in retrospect seem much less dramatic. Thus, Howe places reform into the categories of the study of *mentalité*, memory, and their consequences.

From questions of the intersection between social change and *mentalité*, we turn to questions of intellectuals in those changing societies. Wayne Hankey considers directly the Neoplatonic tradition of self-reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. This process, it has already been suggested, underlay the transformation of the mundane Church into the heavenly one. Through a reassessment of the relationship between the Neoplatonisms of Augustine and Aquinas, Hankey observes that the two have been falsely set against each other and against modernity, at least in so far as modernity is considered to represent a “turn to the subject” as the basis of self-knowledge. That is to say, because both Augustine and Aquinas can be located within the Neoplatonic and Arabic peripatetic traditions of the turn to the self, they share a common basis for knowledge and an ascent via that knowledge to the Divine. The gap, therefore, between the inheritors of Plato and those of Aristotle, most commonly thought of as that between Aquinas and Bonaventure, is likewise narrowed by this reappraisal. In consequence, reform, as Hankey observes, has always been rooted in the pursuit of proper self-knowledge and in the derivative pursuit of “conversion to deity.” From this perspective, all reform at its essence is non-institutional, and can neither be compelled nor prevented. Attempts to lead, direct, or control it, therefore, have been fraught with unintended consequences. This suggests that the study of ecclesial authorities needs to place their reforming ambitions (or lack thereof) and accomplishments in this much more conditional context.

Interestingly, the scholastics do not appear to be effective patron saints of an anti-modern campaign in so far as they were willing to conceive of the Church as disparate and dynamic in its practices – practices they saw, at times, as historically and culturally conditioned. Armed with these understandings they were willing to propose new solutions to ancient problems of doctrine and praxis when they thought ancient authorities were either irreconcilable or inadequate. Thus, Marcia Colish’s essay further diminishes the view of medieval intellectual history under the scholastics as a single and unbending handmaiden of ecclesial unity and authority. If reform is considered as the conscious change of practice with the intention of correcting it, as Colish takes it to be, then the early scholastics can also be considered as active reformers. Here, reform does not have the sense of returning to an earlier ideal practice (*reformatio ad pristina*) but rather to a better practice (*ad melioranda*). For this reason, the early scholastics felt free to apply new or revitalized methods (historical or source criticism, for example); to employ “the most high-tech philosophical tools available” (intentionality in ethics, Aristotelianism in Eucharistic theology, or early scholastic nominalism in the doctrine of God); or to yield to the weight of the current practice so as to form consensus. Marcia Colish’s essay brings us face to face with another theme in Church history: the dynamic between

orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and the manner in which each can narrow and reify the other in surprising ways.⁹

Turning to the early modern reformers, John O'Malley begins with the observation that students of "The Reformation" have been "sloppy and unreflective" in applying the term that defines their field. He chooses, therefore, to begin by considering an earlier reform movement with a more precise focus, that is, the interest of the Gregorian reform in canon law.¹⁰ This turn towards canon law, especially as it represented the deep concern to find coherent and ancient Christian authority to form the basis for Church order, was quintessentially reformist. The authority of that canon law and its concomitant scholasticism was central both to Martin Luther and to the Council of Trent. For Luther, canon law was the impurity that needed to be purged. For the Council of Trent, canon law needed to be reformed as a more precise instrument of social discipline. Thus, we discover a surprising relationship between these reform movements and the emerging modern state. The Council of Trent, in this regard, fostered and employed one of the mechanisms of the state – the expanding authority of the law. Luther, while attacking canon law, turned to and affirmed lay authority within the Christian community. Both, therefore, depended on aspects of, and promoted, the emerging modern state. While Luther and the Council of Trent shared a deep structural approach to reform, Erasmus, formed by monastic tradition and the *studia humanistica*, placed himself largely outside their approach to reform. For Erasmus, reform was a question of the transformation of the heart (and in this he fits nicely into the Neoplatonic tradition as discussed by Hankey). Most clearly in the dynamic among these three forces working towards reform in the sixteenth century, we see the real tensions emerging between conceptions of the Church and of reform, that attempted but hardly succeeded in engaging a common enterprise of reform.

This dynamic between personal reform and broader institutional reform had been a characteristic of the Constantinian reshaping of the Late Antique Church. In part, the Constantinian Church came to reflect the tensions between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. Debates among the bishops of Late Antiquity, their efforts to bring discipline and order to Christian theology, met with the changing circumstances and needs of the fourth-century Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire in helping to foster episcopal hierarchies within the Church. This was not a simple top-down reform, with

⁹Susanna Elm, Éric Rebillard, and Antonella Romano, eds., *Orthodoxie, Christianisme, Histoire: Orthodoxy, Christianity, History*, Collection de L'École française de Rome, 270 (Rome, 2000), xxi–xxiii.

¹⁰Exemplary in its concise presentation of the ideals of reform is Karl Morrison, "The Gregorian Reform," *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Myendorff, and John Leclercq (New York, 1993), 177–93.

the emperor imposing his will upon a Church made in his likeness.¹¹ Rather, as Rita Lizzi Testa demonstrates, difficult questions of imperial policy became bound up in questions of episcopal heresy and discipline. As the emperor attempted to forge imperial policy he was at once responding to requests from a variety of bishops yet also seeking out the advice of other bishops. Lizzi Testa perceptively notes how difficult it is to see who is reforming whom. Hence, for her, bishops become “reformed reformers.” The emperor grew increasingly dependent on his bishops to implement the mechanism of Roman government while, in turn, being willing to offer these bishops greater privileges. For their part, bishops argued before the emperor as to how those privileges and responsibilities were to be shared by the clergy. Lizzi Testa examines this dynamic process within the context of the Arian controversy where the debate over orthodoxy created an ecclesial structure that descended right down to the level of those who could draw public salaries or accept bequests.

Louis Hamilton further explores the complexity of the dynamics of clerical reform in regard to the liturgical commentaries of Bruno of Segni (d. 1123), cardinal, bishop, and one-time abbot of Montecassino. The liturgy, specifically that to dedicate new churches, was being used by reforming clergy to promote pro-papal reform ideals. Specifically, clerics capitalized on a double metaphor for papal authority contained within the dedication liturgy that carried the implication of Roman authority over the Church. The pro-papal reformers of the late eleventh century portrayed themselves as returning to an older ecclesial ideal, essentially twofold – of Christ’s charge to Peter as found in the Gospel and of the martyrdom, and hence the physical deposit of the bodies of the Apostles Peter and Paul in their Roman tombs. Ideas such as these provided powerful resonances with church construction and dedication from which Bruno and his predecessors could and did view the dedication liturgy as an opportunity to promote papal authority. As symbols become powerful, however, they also become volatile. After 1111, Bruno, having fallen out of favor with Paschal II and being deprived of the abbacy of Cassino, began to promote another model of reform, via another reading of

¹¹ To construct it as such is precisely to misunderstand premodern institutions. For a gross example of this, see James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews, a History* (Boston, 2001). Carroll presents Constantine as a modern totalitarian subjugating Europe and the Mediterranean to his will via an imagined elaborate state structure, “When . . . [Constantine] declared a freeze on wages and prices to control inflation, a chaotic system . . . began to operate as one,” p. 173. Similarly, Constantine is supposed to have reshaped the Church, “as if by imperial fiat – or rather precisely by such fiat,” p. 174. Interestingly Carroll presents this history as the basis for a third Vatican Council to reform the Catholic Church. See the excellent review by Eamon Duffy, “A Deadly Misunderstanding,” in *New York Review of Books* 48, 11 (July 5, 2001), 24–7.

the liturgy of dedication, one that emphasized the role of the episcopacy in guiding the Church. In clear contrast to his own previous writings, and to the previous fifty years of papal rhetoric, Bruno undermined the idea that Constantine's gift of *regalia* to Pope Sylvester held any significance beyond the historical fact (its literal sense). Thus the process of reform was a dynamic one that depended on the effective communication of its ideals through the liturgy itself. Reform to a considerable extent relied upon countless such dedications and the religious ideals they could transmit. Even at the highest levels of the Church the zeal for top-down reform was finite and an episcopal model remained an available alternative.

Giuseppe Alberigo provides us with a selected text and commentary on the *Libellus ad Leonem X* of 1513, suggesting that the *Libellus* provides a unique perspective on the possibility of reform. Reform in this case is not imagined in the narrow sense of moral correction or structural change. Rather the focus is on conversion, especially that of non-Christians, and is, therefore, on the effective preaching of proper doctrine. It is a more subtle type of reform that seems to suggest what we might call "cultural reform," whereas the authors of the *Libellus* see this as a confrontation with the *libido dominandi*, or desire for domination, within the Church. Ultimately reform in this sense is an organic approach to ecclesiology that imagines reform as reforming the customs of the Christian community, and papally led. In this sense, it is of a piece (though broader in scope) with the liturgical focus of Bruno of Segni, whose efforts to reform the clergy depended on right understanding of the liturgy's moral and ecclesiological significance. It is also of a piece with the Erasmian ideal of reform as presented by Professor O'Malley and may represent an older monastic tradition of personal reform.

The question of what becomes of the ambitions for reform once they have been articulated remains an open one; in the case of the *Libellus*, its ambitious program was overwhelmed by the controversy surrounding Martin Luther. An expressed ideal of ecclesial structure (even one promoted from the center, or apex, of the ecclesial structure) remains only an ideal (or, rather, one of several competing ideals) whose reality needs to be worked out. Our final group of essays returns us to this question, as well as to the distinction of primary importance between the theological reality of the Church and the institution of the Church. Claire Sotinel reminds us that the former was a greater reality in the Late Antique Church than the latter. Local reform depended on the particularities of the bishop and his community, but some commonalities can be found. First, Sotinel finds that there is reform, even surprising amounts of it, as early as the third century. This is reform in the dual sense of reform *ad pristina* and *ad melioranda*. Second, she finds an impulse towards establishing universal norms for all Christians and Christian communities. This impulse originates both in the collegiality of the bishops and the Roman legal system (cf. Lizzi Testa's essay). Third, a connection

might be established between personal reform and institutional reform through the related phenomena of repentance of sin and the correction of practice (both disciplines led by the bishop). This connection is seen clearly, and was perhaps established, in the debate over the baptism of heretics. (Again we see the creative tension between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.) Sotinel also sees a link between these two types of reform (personal and institutional) via the growing vogue of asceticism and the related call for greater ascetic discipline among bishops as well as the laity, that should be compared with Markus' statements on asceticism and reform. In the interplay of these different elements, much remains to be answered and clarified: how did ecclesial unity emerge from collegiality and common practice result from the personal reform of confession and self-discipline? Once historians can begin to address that question, then we may have taken the first step towards a much more precise understanding of premodern institutions.

It may well be that monastic communities may provide our most important links between personal and institutional ecclesial reform. Monasticism in the Middle Ages also offers us a case study of how unity was created prior to the modern Church, even in the midst of a reform movement. Martha Newman's essay is a close examination of the shift from the charisma of the Cistercian founders to the legal reality of the Cistercian order. While previous historians have accepted an imposed institutional history of the order that traced its governing structures to its earliest foundation, recent scholarship challenges that model. Newman argues that the "organizational structure" of the early Cistercians was a shared textual experience of common reading and liturgical practices. These were passed throughout the order via precise texts and illustrations that linked the texts to the monks who read them and personalized them. This textual charisma extended to Stephen Harding's reading of the Benedictine Rule. That text, rather than any individual Cistercian abbot, was to provide the charismatic authority in Harding's reformation *ad pristina*. It was one of a core of Cistercian texts that, along with their common reading practices, defined one of the most successful monastic movements of its day in lieu of a precisely articulated constitutional structure.

A much later monastic community, the Daughters of Charity, reveal a possible, if complex, contrast between the early modern era, specifically the France of Louis XIV, and our previous discussion. The Daughters of Charity were able to pursue a series of strategies that helped them to avoid claustration, relying on the legal definition of the Daughters as a confraternity. The Daughters, in Susan Dinan's presentation, thus offer an example of the multiplicity of institutions coherent with the earlier period of Christianity, but in this instance organized along structural lines. In claiming this, Dinan's presentation is of a piece with that of O'Malley. Even as Luther rejected canon law and Roman authority, but still embraced the growing state

institutions that surrounded him, so too the Daughters resisted Roman authority by pursuing a legal strategy that made the most sense in a Tridentine Catholic Church. The Daughters of Charity reveal other continuities with the earlier Church for it was their charitable charisma as servants of the poor that enabled their legal protection. “Ultimately,” suggests Dinan, “clerics in France treated the legislation of the Council of Trent as malleable.” And so, while the Council of Trent harbored ambitions for genuine social control, it still “lacked the mechanisms to impose conformity upon all Catholic Europe.” The French clergy’s ability to offer the Daughters their independence, in turn, depended on the strength of the emerging French State. The diversity of the Church appears, in this case, to have been maintained by recourse to those structures (the emerging state) that appear to have been eliminating just such premodern diversities.

Several conclusions, therefore, seem possible from our efforts and several questions deserve renewed attention. If we consider ecclesial reform as a phenomenon worthy of study in its own right, we need to begin by setting out the terms of the study. That is, the study of reform ought to address in what sense the term is being used in the sources, whether it is reform of the self, of ecclesial institutions, of religious practice, or of some combination of all these. Is this reform *ad pristina* or *ad melioranda* or is all reform, in some senses, an exercise in a reconstruction of the past? To what extent does reform become a debate over memory and the meanings of history? If this is the case, then literature and literary methods have much to offer the study of Church and reform. To what extent does Church reform depend upon ideas about the Kingdom of God? It is a commonplace that the medieval political thought sought, to some extent, a reflection of the divine order on earth. This implies that biblical exegesis is essential to political theory. In turn, if reform depended on notions about the heavenly city, then one would expect eschatological writings to be inherently about ecclesiology (though certainly not exclusively).

Three related conclusions are possible. First, we need to consider the resources for and processes of reform before modernity. Since premodern institutions had more limited capacity to govern large areas directly, one should expect a greater divergence between a reform ideal and its local application. Put another way, it is not clear that the consequences of reform activities have a significant relationship to the objectives of the reformers. Second, any examination of the consequences of reform needs to be more sensitive to the dynamic of personal transformation that was often the rallying image of reformers. This suggests the greater extent to which the premodern Church was dependent on local authorities and communities to offer obedience. Third, and related to the second, we ought to consider the dynamic between personal reform and institutional reform in order to reveal the highly elusive workings of premodern institutions. In some ways this goes

without saying as personal relationships and dynamics help to define premodern institutions and personal reform movements (ascetic or monastic) appear to yield ecclesial coherence. But, if considered seriously, it may mean that studies of the premodern Church relying heavily on prescriptive sources offer us only a limited view, of a narrow, almost entirely clerical *mentalité*, rather than that of a more broadly experienced Church. That dynamic between personal transformation and institutional reform requires that we consider the premodern Church from the broader vantage of culture if we are to understand how it was sustained and reformed.