

translation, informs his general introduction and his introductions to each of the twenty-two books, and distinguishes his work among all those available.

In the introduction Babcock discusses several important word choices. He presents theological, linguistic, and cultural rationales for his translations of Latin words such as *peregrinus* (pilgrim), *significare* (to signify), *beatitudo* (happiness), *res publica* (the common good of a people—a significant change from other translations), and *dilectio/amor/caritas* (love). Babcock's attention to such key concepts shows the depth of his theological appreciation of Augustine's thought, and highlights his keen attention to the fifth-century literary and social contexts of the bishop of Hippo's own care for words, those "finely-wrought, precious vessels" (*Confessions* 1.16.26).

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Reassessing Reform: A Historical Investigation into Church Renewal. Edited by Christopher M. Bellitto and David Zachariah Flanagin. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012. ix + 289 pages. \$69.95.
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This good-looking volume (Catholic University Press is to be congratulated on its high production values) is but the most recent of a fruitful series of volumes published under the aegis of the American Cusanus Society. Its editors describe it accurately and felicitously as the "*festschrift* for a book: [Gerhart] Ladner's *Idea of Reform*" (1959), and it betrays both the strengths and the weaknesses of the genre—the standard weakness being, of course, the disparate nature of the contributions gathered together in a single volume. In some ways, however, this volume is more unified than most *festschriften*, partly because of its overarching concern throughout with reform, but, beyond that, because of its focus on the reputation and influence of the distinguished scholar who left so marked an imprint on those, many of them his own students, who have worked in the subfield of reform studies during the past half century. Ladner's benign shadow often falls across these pages. The stated purpose of the volume is "to reconsider . . . [Ladner's] insights in a manner that both explores and critiques the enduring significance of . . . [his] study and also surveys and demonstrates new avenues and insights of contemporary reform scholarship" (1). Three goals then: exploration, critique, and demonstration. Of the three, this volume may be said to have done rather better with the first and the third than with the second.

As far as exploration goes, the three essays that make up part 1, those by Lester L. Field Jr., Louis B. Pascoe, and Phillip H. Stump, make the greatest

contribution and provide very interesting reading. All three had the privilege of being Ladner's students, and the tone they set is appropriately reverential. All three would appear to concur in Field's judgment that Ladner's work "not only survives the test of time but also, given current needs, now seems urgently important" (30). "It is only," Stump adds, "by juxtaposing concrete reform measures with ideology that we can begin to analyze the results of those reforms. . . . Only such analysis promises any hope of understanding the reforms from the viewpoint of contemporaries" (47-48).

It is not clear, however, that the essays gathered together in part 2 really serve to demonstrate the rectitude of that claim. The topics they address are quite disparate, from Gregory VII's idea of reform in the eleventh century, via Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*, to a clustering of pieces pertaining to reform in the fifteenth-century era of councils, and onward all the way down to the Protestant Reformation. All of these essays make a conscientious effort, at least, to evoke Ladner's *Idea of Reform*, but few do much to go beyond that and engage the intricacies of his carefully articulated approach. As for critique, with one exception they venture no further than a species of marginal grumbling.

In the preface to the volume, John Howe explains the difference between the grand sweep of Ladner's approach and the "narrower vision" evident in contemporary studies of reform as that between "intellectual audacity," still possible when the field was more manageable, and the constricting caution attendant on heightened specialization. But the difference in question surely cuts much deeper than that and reaches into the realm of those "meta-historical preconceptions" that Ladner himself, after all, chose to address in perfectly forthright fashion. Among the essayists in part 2 only Michael Vargas addresses that issue directly, and he is to be commended for so doing. Not all, of course, can be expected to react favorably to his forthrightly negative take on Ladner's approach, his labeling of it as "speculative" in nature, conducive even to "self-delusion," or his insistence on the "desacralized," "radically contingent and particular" nature of historical reality (104). But the issue surely needs to be engaged by those others who wish to promote Ladner's approach. He himself, after all, was straightforward (if not notably clear) about the nature of his "metahistorical preconceptions," classifying his own study of the idea of reform as "the study of a concrete 'unit-idea' in the sense of A. O. Lovejoy's terminology" (*Idea of Reform*, 434 n. 2). But Lovejoy's notion, however intriguing, has long since proved to be highly controversial. It cannot simply be taken for granted, and calls for the sort of critical scrutiny not foregrounded in this volume.

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