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**Recultivating the Vineyard:
The Reformation Agendas of Christianization**

Scott H. Hendrix

Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004

Pp. xxiii + 254, \$36 Paperback

When I picked up this book for a quick perusal I became so enthusiastic that I secured a free copy to review. I saddened to report that my enthusiasm was not sustained when I read it closely. This is not to say that I found Hendrix's study overwhelmingly negative. Indeed, the opposite is the case. Much that is valuable characterises this study. Perhaps the best way to review the book is simply to enumerate those facets I consider positive and those I deem more negative.

First I applaud the author's interjection of important female figures into his work. To be sure, they do not take centre stage, nor should they, given the patriarchal character of that society which insured that public notions of Christendom came from male leaders alone. At the same time, there were enough women leaders (especially Protestant monarchs) whose inclusion would have added a better gender balance to the book as well as a rather welcome unique twist. Nonetheless, in contrast to most Reformation studies, Hendrix does include important women Reformers – namely, Katharina Zell and Wilbrandis Rosenblatt of Strasbourg – and this deserves commendation. Likewise, with his inclusion of reflections on Reformation attitudes toward Muslims and Jews, Hendrix pushes the traditional envelope of Reformation history by analysing notions of Christendom beyond the strictly Christian scene in Europe. His description of Catholic missions in Asia and the western hemisphere also enhances the book. That he presents a grand scope so masterfully within a reasonable length is no mean achievement, to be sure. Finally, his carefully balanced and nuanced scholarship mixes beautifully with a gentle and tolerant scholarship that escapes caricaturing of any and all positions described in the work.

However, a few facets of the book deserve criticism. His sections on Luther and Calvin struck me as more superficial than the rest of the book. To rectify this, the author needed to expand his material on the socio-political realities in which these reformers operated by including more of their writings on specific issues and not just their

grand theological constructs. In spite of the gender inclusiveness for which I praised the author, I believe that he failed in this area when he elaborated on the more unique and tolerant individuals of the period. Yes, Servetus and Castellio deserve treatment; they are the traditional figures cited in this category. However, a solid argument can be made that such avant-garde tolerant figures as Katharina Zell, Jeanne d'Albert (France) and Queen Bona Sforza of Poland had a greater impact on religious pluralism and tolerance during the period than the more individualistic efforts of either Castellio or Servetus.

Last of all, although *Recultivating the Vineyard* proves to be a gripping title, it does not serve as a cohesive image or an obvious synonym for Reformation goals of Christianization. I felt that Cranach's painting and the vineyard image made a number of abrupt and forced appearances throughout the book. In order for this central theme to work as a unifying force, Hendrix should have underscored its significance in the Reformers' rhetoric. I suspect, however, that even this would not have helped, simply because the image did not hold centre stage in the Reformation.

In spite of what I would call some substantive critiques I liked the book. I believe that it constitutes a positive addition to ongoing Reformation scholarship.

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