9-2010

The Cresset (Vol. LXXIV, No. 1, Michaelmas)

Valparaiso University

THE CRESSET

A review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

Michaelmas 2010

Valparaiso University

Bearing the Cross As a Way of Knowing

Gerald J. Mast

The (Religious) Origins of Toleration

Thomas Albert Howard

Andrew Schulze and the "Post-Racial" Church

Kathryn M. Galchutt

How Popes and Reformers Gave Us the Rule of Law

Jarrett Carty

On the cover: Varaldo Guiseppe Cariani (1891–1969). *October Along the Creek*, no date. Oil on canvas. To honor the good people of Indiana from the family of Bernard and Susanne Konrady. Brauer Museum of Art, 2008.25.001.

Varaldo Cariani was born in Italy and grew up in Massachusetts. He studied art in New York City before going off to fight in World War One. The stress of his war experiences led him to pursue his art in the quiet country setting of Brown County, Indiana, where he became well-known for his still life and landscape paintings. Cariani was one of twenty Indiana artists chosen to show at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. He was a member of the Hoosier Salon, the Brown County Gallery Association, and the Brown County Art Guild.

The Brauer Museum of Art is grateful to the Konrady family for their gift of this particularly fine painting by the artist of an Indiana landscape that captures the fall season in a lively and bracing fashion.

—⚜—

THE CRESSET (ISSN# 0011-1198) is published five times during the academic year (September through June) by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for informed opinion about literature, the arts, and public affairs. Periodicals postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster send address changes to *The Cresset*, Huegli Hall, Valparaiso University, 1409 Chapel Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46383–9998.

Subscriptions: Regular subscription rates: $20.00 per year; Student/ Senior subscription rates: $10.00 per year; single copy: $5.00. International subscriptions add $8.00. Subscribe online at **www.valpo.edu/cresset**.

Letters to the Editor: Readers are encouraged to address the Editor and staff at cresset@valpo.edu. Letters to the Editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity.

Submissions: Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor. Authors who wish their manuscripts to be returned should include a self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage. Submissions of articles, essays, or reviews may also be submitted via email to cresset@valpo.edu. Poetry submissions are not accepted via email. For further submissions guidelines, please refer to the inside back cover of this journal.

The views presented are not thereby endorsed by Valparaiso University nor are they intended to represent the views of the faculty and staff of the university.

THE CRESSET

Michaelmas • September 2010 • Volume LXXIV, No. 1

In Luce Tua
In Thy Light

The Kingdom of God in a Post-Christian Culture

Over the last few months, it's been harder than usual to watch the news. As a scholar of religious and political movements, I always pay attention when religious issues come up in public debate, but most of the stories I've noticed lately seem to be examples of religion and politics at their worst. In August, a Pew Research Center poll found that nearly 20 percent (and rising) of Americans think that President Obama is a Muslim. Around the same time, a battle over the construction of a community center and mosque near Ground Zero in lower Manhattan erupted. While sensitivities about the location are understandable, neither the political opportunists nor the media talking heads exploiting the story made much of an effort to point out that the proposed location already houses a Muslim prayer room or that those who worship there belong to the Sufi Muslim tradition. This relatively liberal and tolerant branch of Islam itself is frequently the target of terrorist attacks. More recently, an angry pastor in Gainesville, Florida who was, in part, responding to the plans for the new mosque, announced his intention to hold "Burn a Koran Day." And with a chance to get pictures of angry Christian fundamentalists burning Muslim holy books, reporters, of course, rushed to the scene.

It is too easy to be pessimistic about all this, while pointing out, quite accurately, that these recent events are actually quite minor in the long, violent history of conflict between and within faiths. Those who hold religion in low regard have long hoped that, with time, its influence would fade or that it would, at least, retreat into the realm of private life and thus remove the root cause of many violent conflicts. Much to their disappointment, religious faith remains as powerful as ever in most of the world today, both as a system of personal belief and as a source of public conflict.

But the view that it contributes nothing more than discord to public life is far too narrow a view of Christianity or any other religious faith (including Islam). Christianity is also a source of prophetic vision, a prod to social reform, and a force for social justice. Christians believe that God has entered human history through the life of Jesus Christ, and that history now admits the promise of the Kingdom of God. We differ about what this Kingdom will be and how we will know it, but this hope that the work of God continues in the world around us is central to Christianity in any form.

The essays in this issue highlight the role that Christianity has played, and continues to play, in shaping our world. In "Bearing the Cross as a Way of Knowing," Gerald J. Mast considers how even in the midst of horrible violence—the murder of children in an Amish school—we can discover acts of self-sacrifice and forgiveness that allow us to participate in God's ongoing work of renewal. In "Andrew Schulze and the 'Post-Racial' Church," Kathryn M. Galchutt compares the careers of two pastors—Martin Luther King Jr. and Andrew Schulze—who made it their ministries to advance the civil rights of African Americans and to improve the condition of human relations in their communities. And in their review essays, Thomas Albert Howard and Jarrett Carty explore the role that Christianity has played in shaping modern political and legal structures, including the concepts of religious toleration, the separation of church and state, and the secular legal system.

It is true that the institutional Christian church is no longer the dominant cultural force it once was and that Christianity is no longer the foundation of our culture's prevailing beliefs and mores. In that sense, we do live in a post-Christian culture. Yet this secularized culture retains an immense inheritance from the Christian tradition, and the Christian faith remains a vibrant force for good within it. The work of God in redeeming this world continues, and we each continue to have our own roles to play in this work of redemption.

—JPO

Bearing the Cross as a Way of Knowing

Gerald J. Mast

"Shoot me first, and leave the other ones loose." These are the words of thirteen-year-old Marian Fisher just before Charles Roberts shot her, along with nine other Amish girls at the Nickel Mines Amish School near Lancaster, Pennsylvania on 2 October 2006. Roberts did not "leave the other ones loose." Marian and four other girls were killed in that tragedy, and five other girls were left with varying degrees of injury and disability. In media accounts of this school shooting, Marian Fisher's words are treated as heroic and generous, but no less remarkable are the Amish community's immediate offer of forgiveness to the killer and his family, their attendance at Roberts's funeral, and their insistence that relief funds be extended to the killer's widow. (On the Nickel Creek Mines School shooting see: Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher 2007).

What did Marian Fisher know in those last few moments of her life, and how did she know it? It may be that she knew what John Howard Yoder knew when he wrote that "people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe" (1988, 58). The self-giving, self-emptying love of Christ makes a witness to the true direction of history—the way things really work—and is thus the ground for any honest confrontation with the darkness of sin and violence. The story of the Nickel Mines Amish community's forgiveness broke through our culture's conventional wisdom and suggested the basis for a pacifist, or defenseless, way of knowing. From this perspective, following Jesus in discipleship, even to the point of willingly giving up life, becomes something more than a hard teaching or a rule of faith that Christians are expected to follow, no matter how absurd it may appear in the context of a natural world full of rivalry, competition, and violence. Such self-offering discipleship, from this perspective, springs rightly from what we can know to be true about the renewal of the creation that God is bringing about all around us. Yielding one's life to God in such a way is to align one's self with truth and is thereby an act of freedom in both the practical and actual sense.

In what follows, I elaborate on this pacifist way of knowing, assuming a narrative paradigm in which human knowledge and communication is viewed historically and situationally, "as stories and accounts competing with other stories or accounts purportedly constituted by good reason" (Fisher 1987, 58). In recent years, theologians and biblical scholars have come to assume that truth is conveyed not only through rationally defended propositions, but also through "master stories" that construe a world in which some actions make sense and others do not, in which "a scriptural world is… able to absorb the universe" (Lindbeck 1984, 117). This narrative-based approach enables a specific kind of inquiry into the relationship between knowledge and action, namely: How does the story of Jesus—his humble birth, healing life, defenseless death, and miraculous resurrection—"absorb the universe" for those who are persuaded by it?

Cross and Resurrection

In his book, *The Politics of Jesus*, John Howard Yoder makes a provocative statement concerning the epistemological status of the cross. In the final

chapter of the book, while describing a nonviolent view of history and social change, Yoder argues that patience trumps effectiveness as the criterion for Christian faithfulness. In extending this argument, Yoder claims that "the relationship between the obedience of God's people and the triumph of God's cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection" (Yoder 1972, 238).

What does this mean? More specifically what does it mean to identify obedience with the cross and triumph with the resurrection? What is the content of the obedience that can properly be called cross-bearing, and what sort of triumph can properly be called resurrection? In short, what is the relationship between the cross and the resurrection? The story of Jesus' death and resurrection offers us a way of seeing the entire cosmos as well as the particular events taking place around us in our own time and space. In this narrative, suffering is neither fearfully evil nor intrinsically redemptive, but rather it is a moment of meaningful and potentially redemptive struggle toward the reconciliation of all things in Jesus Christ. In the midst of suffering is the possibility for a kind of obedience, an obedience that involves the adoption of a right posture toward the suffering, a willingness to discover in that suffering that which is aligned with the direction of history and the unfolding of God's reality.

One way to understand suffering is as loss: loss of stability, comfort, possession, even coherence. The story of the cross, on this reading, is about not needing to fear losing those features of our social and personal world that are generally assumed to be required for experiencing health and well-being—such as food, clothing, shelter, comfort, and safety—even though these are gifts to be received with gratitude when they are available to us. As Yoder puts it quite succinctly, "...if you follow the risen Jesus, *you don't have to* hate or kill. *You don't have to* defend yourself" (Yoder 1988, 339). The loss of self-possession and self-protection is not, according to this view, the experience of victimhood—the forceful destruction or dispossession of human beings against their will. It is, rather, an experience of agency, of relinquishing willingly that which is demanded by another, of making a gift of what was demanded. We can hear Marian Fisher's words, "Shoot me first," as just such an act of impossible agency, of giving away what another sought to take, thus denying the killer ultimate control of the lives he destroyed, even denying retribution.

Furthermore, the words of Marian Fisher offer clues as to how the master story of the cross can absorb not just contexts of human conflict and violence, but also the apparent violence of the natural world. Angie Montel, for example, has critiqued the dominant war metaphors used by cell biologists to describe the relationship between white blood cells (named natural killer cells by scientists) and the so-called invading viruses and bacteria that threaten the life of the host. Montel challenges the idea that we need to understand the struggle between white blood cells and pathogens as a war taking place within the human body (2003, 224–25). She argues that such a narrative frame has motivated an approach to treatment that emphasizes ridding the body and the environment of germs that are actually helpful in strengthening the immune system. She notes, for example, the increasingly high number of cases of asthma, hay fever, and other allergies associated with germ-free environments, compared with a much lower rate in contexts such as the more

The story of the cross is about not needing to fear losing those features of our social and personal world that are generally assumed to be required for experiencing health and well-being—such as food, clothing, shelter, comfort, and safety—even though these are gifts to be received with gratitude when they are available to us.

polluted countries of the former Eastern Bloc, on family farms, and in child care centers (225). She also points out how the excessive use of antibacterial products may be destroying a protective layer of nonpathogenic organisms on our bodies and strengthening treatment-resistant forms of harmful bacteria (225).

Montel suggests replacing the war metaphors with images of dance and struggle in accounts of cell behavior. Emphasizing the co-evolution and mutual dependence of human hosts and microbial pathogens, following the work of Nancey Murphy, she suggests that we view the dance between microbes and their hosts as an occasion to appreciate the "sacrificial suffering through to something higher" that "binds us to all creation and to the nonviolent, suffering Redeemer himself" (233).

When we recognize that our encounter with natural and social forces that seem to threaten us with death provides an opportunity to bear the cross, we are enabled to face such struggles with the knowledge that we are "threatened with resurrection," as Jim Amstutz puts it (2002, 18). An eloquent articulation of this principle is found in the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
> who, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.
> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.
>
> (Philippians 2: 5–8)

Christ became exalted as Lord precisely in his self-emptying obedience to death.

Kenosis and Real Power

In her book *Powers and Submissions*, Sarah Coakley traces the concept of self-emptying, or *kenosis*, throughout church history. Her account ranges from the biblical account itself, through the writings of the Church Fathers, to the present argument among feminist scholars about whether the injunction to empty yourself as Christ did is properly addressed to women—or to anyone whose full humanity has been stolen by force (2002, 3–25).

This question of whether self-emptying is a practice of power or a means of disempowerment is crucial. The way of the cross is easily misunderstood as an acceptance or enablement of violence and abuse. Coakley attributes feminists' anxieties about self-emptying to an assumption that Christ was giving up power that he had possessed as a member of the Trinity when he accepted crucifixion. However, if the vulnerability associated with self-emptying is in fact an attribute of divinity, a feature or sign of divine power rather than a contradiction of the divine, then the vulnerability that women often exhibit is properly seen as a practice of real power rather than an experience of victimhood (25). For example, when Marian Fisher said "Shoot me first," was she exhibiting patriarchal training in oppressive self-effacement, or was she in fact taking charge of the situation by asserting agency in the face of a man's attempt to destroy her?

If we accept Coakley's argument, then Fisher's speech act can be seen as a "willed effacement to a gentle omnipotence which, far from complementing masculinism, acts as its undoing" (37). In fact, according to Coakley, if such vulnerability to enemies demonstrates our true humanity, then women's tendency not to take up the privileged role of the Enlightenment "man of reason" gives women a particular and privileged location for realizing the empowerment associated with vulnerability (30).

Furthermore, the spiritual and practical disciplines involved in giving up and letting go—what Anabaptists have named "*gelassenheit*" or yielding—are then to be seen as disciplines of empowerment, of receiving as gifts what others perhaps meant as harm. The practice of contemplative prayer, for example, should no longer be seen as a practice of passive withdrawal from the struggle of everyday life, but rather as the discovery of a renewed space within everyday life from

which it is possible to live in a new way amidst the ruins of the world that is passing away.

Such radical contemplative prayer in the service of yielding is aligned with the practice of revolutionary subordination, as described by Yoder in the controversial ninth chapter of *The Politics of Jesus*. In this practice, we become "free ethical agents" by voluntarily acceding to "subordination in the power of Christ instead of bowing to it either fatalistically or resentfully" (1972, 191). This is because "the new world or regime under which we live is not a simple alternative to present experience but rather a renewed way of living within the present" (190).

Because this renewed way of living is precisely not an absurd idealism amidst a tragic reality, but rather a quite realistic alignment with the actual direction in which the cosmos is being renewed by God, the disciple of Jesus can yield rather than fight. Or as Yoder puts it: "it is precisely this attitude toward the structures of this world, this freedom from needing to smash them since they are about to crumble anyway, which Jesus had been the first to teach and in his suffering to concretize" (192). Radical contemplative prayer or revolutionary subordination is thus a spiritual discipline that puts the disciple into the flow of God's purposes as they are being worked out.

To say this yet another way: Accepting God's will means accepting the way that God works in the world—not by might or by power, but by the spirit. If God does not impose God's will on the world against the wills of disobedient creatures, then for the disciple of Jesus to accept willingly the painful effects of disobedient practices or structures, without trying to crush them and without accepting their ultimate sovereignty, is to accept the will of God, without God's will being seen as the sovereign cause of the suffering caused by disobedience. Only in this sense is it right to understand Jesus' crucifixion as the will of God—as a way of responding to enemies even unto death that comports most fully with the way in which God intervenes in history, with the way God brings about God's purposes amidst disobedient creatures, and with the will of God for those of us who seek to pursue God's purposes in our daily lives. In other words, *kenosis* is real power.

Let us consider a few words from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech in Memphis the day before he was assassinated, when he reflected on the famous confrontation with Birmingham police chief Bull Connor. In the speech, King stresses the extent to which that confrontation witnessed to the tactical alignment of the Civil Rights Movement with God's will and with the "physics" of the cosmos: "Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the trans-physics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out" (Buckley 2007, 24). Arguably, the practices of nonviolence King advocated illustrate an aggressive version of yielding—a public and persistent witness against the disobedience of racist political and institutional life which endures the suffering involved in such a witness without retaliation or self-defense.

To return to Yoder's helpful phrase, "revolutionary subordination," one can imagine a range of tactical emphases that improvise on such a complex posture. King's activist stance arguably privileged the revolutionary aspect, while other stances might privilege the subordinate aspect. Yet, when some measure of each emphasis is present in Christian witness—a revolutionary refusal to be defined by the fading social order and a subordinate yielding to the damaging blowback of such a refusal—then the will of God can be understood as being fulfilled. It is this sense in which Marian Fisher can be said to have known the same thing that Martin Luther King Jr. knew: a kind of "trans-physics" describing a "fire that no water can put out."

Bible Reading and Cross-Bearing

How does a person come to see the world in this sort of way? What is the source of strength and wisdom for sustaining the life of renewal amidst the corrupting and dehumanizing structures of the fading order? What concrete knowledge can infuse contemplative prayer with improvised combinations of revolutionary challenge and nonviolent subordination which flow with God's purposes?

For centuries, Anabaptists and other radical Protestants have answered: *through the knowledge and practice of the Scriptures by the living body of Christ.* The texts of the Bible are a marvelous instantiation of the broken and renewed world that we seek to perceive and address rightly. Rather than functioning as contemporary self-help manuals, which tell us how to adjust our lives to the functional realities of the blinded world, the Scriptures empower us to align our lives with those purposes of God that challenge the disobedience of the surrounding world. The

Rather than functioning as contemporary self-help manuals, which tell us how to adjust our lives to the functional realities of the blinded world, the Scriptures empower us to align our lives with those purposes of God that challenge the disobedience of the surrounding world.

Scriptures make us dysfunctional, but in a way that humanizes us, that makes us into the lovely and loving creatures God intended us to be when God created us. This humanizing dysfunctionality is precipitated by the biblical text through at least three kinds of tensions found in the Bible.

The first tension is the tension of generic and literary difference. Like a good library, the Bible contains texts that address a variety of different human situations and problems. As such, one finds in the Bible many contrasting methods of communication and artistic appeal. For those who want to discover who they are, the historical narratives of Israel and the church provide a background against which to live out the drama of one's own life as a member of God's people. For those who struggle with the extraordinary emotions of human experience—love, hate, delight, anger, desire, fear—the Psalms provide poetry and music. For those who seek practical guidance amidst the recurring patterns of human failure, the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes offers rules for living and decision-making. For those who seek empowerment to challenge the sins of self and world, the prophetic texts offer judgment and hope. For those who seek spiritual counsel and admonition there are the pastoral epistles. For those who desire a perspective on how all of this is going to turn out, there is the apocalyptical literature. The changing demands of human experience are addressed in all of these genres in concrete rather than general ways.

The second tension is one of perspective and conviction. The Hebrew Bible provides what Walter Brueggemann has called disputed testimony about the nature and purposes of God (1997, 82–83). We find as we read, that we have the experience of being in a jury box of the biblical courtroom, listening to competing arguments and deciding which one to accept. Is the God of Israel an angry God who destroys the disobedient with water and fire, or is Yahweh a God of mercy and love who refuses to revoke the covenant God has made with God's people? Should the alien be removed from the community or welcomed as a friend? Are we to pursue purity or hospitality? Should we fight for God, or will God fight for us? These disputes about God and humanity, and many others, are not finally settled in the Scriptures. As James Barr has written, "the working out of the biblical model for the understanding of God was not an intellectual process so much as a personal conflict, in which men struggled with their God, and with each other about their God" (Peterson 2006, 105).

Third, we discover in the biblical story changing circumstances of godly intervention and will-manifestation. At times, God shows up in the earthquake, and, at other times, through a still, small voice. In one moment, God sends plagues, and, in another, he sends manna. God may harden the Pharaoh's heart, or he may remove the scales from the eyes of Saul. This God, in the testimony of Moses, both kills and makes alive, both wounds and heals (Deuteronomy 32:39). Perhaps most decisively, in the Christian inflection of Scripture, this God was revealed to the ancestors through the prophets, "but in these last days by a Son whom he appointed heir of all

things, through whom he also created the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Against the backdrop of such difference, debate, and development in the Scriptures, we can find ourselves with the apocalyptic seer before the mighty angel wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, with a face like the sun, and with legs like pillars of fire—one foot planted in the sea and the other in the land—holding a scroll. We hear the voice from heaven: "Go take the scroll." We hear the angelic invitation, "Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth" (Revelation 10:1–11).

Eugene Peterson's riff on this text emphasizes how consuming the biblical text through contemplative and prayerful reading opens up the true world of God—a world that is beyond our control, without obvious relationships between causes and effects, and full of upsetting miracles. This world—the real world—disrupts the dream world of our adolescent expectations, where everything works out on our behalf. "For most of us it takes years and years and years to exchange our dream world for the real world of grace and mercy, sacrifice and love, freedom and joy" (Peterson 2006, 105).

Such scriptural consumption is best experienced in the company of others. The proper image of scriptural consumption is not so much the individual meal but the community potluck. Swallow the text whole, but make sure you are with others who can help you out if you get too sick to your stomach. When the gathered body of Christ consumes the Word of God, taking it up in discussion and taking it in through prayer, the Word becomes enfleshed again among us. The "real world" of God becomes visible once again before the blinded world.

Eugene Peterson emphasizes that the "real world" that is available to us in the consumption of Scripture is not imposed upon us: "God's word is personal address, inviting, commanding, challenging, rebuking, judging, comforting, directing. But not forcing. Not coercing. We are given space and freedom to answer, to enter into the conversation. From beginning to end, the word of God is a dialogical word, a word that invites participation" (2006, 105). Thus, the truth we discover in the consumption of the Scriptures is a truth that can only be received rightly as a gift, as good news, and only ever offered to others in the same way.

Remembrance, Anticipation, and Obedience

The gospel way of knowing described thus far is a comprehensive experience of the world, even if it is as scandalously particular as a revelation of God in the life of a particular (temporarily divided) people—Israel and the church. There is a past, a future, and a present dimension of gospel consciousness, discovered first of all in the reading of the scriptures with other believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but then also instantiated in the way we come to see our places in the unfolding drama of God's story in our own time and place.

The memory of the past—both that of the human societies and of our own personal histories—is for the believer embedded in the story of God's people as found in the Bible. That story is one of failure, forgiveness, and faithfulness. God's people fail God and one another, while God both judges and forgives their failures.

Miroslav Volf has argued that in order for the injuries of the past to be rightly remembered, the gospel call urges both an accurate recall of such injury and a readiness to forget it (2006, 204–05). Of course, the ability to forget is not unrelated to the severity of the injury. Some injuries are easier to forget than others. One aspect of injury is precisely a legacy of ineradicable pain and suffering. Suppressing such memories makes forgiveness impossible. One cannot forgive what one cannot recall.

At the same time, as Derrida has argued, true forgiveness could only be properly offered in response to an unforgiveable offense. What is forgivable by definition can be recuperated within an economy of exchange and justice. Derrida thus distinguishes between pure forgiveness, which is impossible, and transactional forgiveness, which occurs in human history but is only given meaning by reference to the horizon of the impossible form of forgiveness—forgiving the unforgiveable. He writes: "Sometimes, forgiveness (given

by God, or inspired by divine prescription) must be a gracious gift, without exchange and without condition; sometimes it requires, as its minimal condition, the repentance and transformation of the sinner." Furthermore, he argues, "It is between these two poles, *irreconcilable but indissociable*, that decisions and responsibilities are to be taken" (Derrida 2001, 44–45).

Stated another way, the memory of God's gracious and impossible acts of forgiveness toward us provides a horizon against which it is possible to contemplate the offering of forgiveness to others—even when such forgiveness is flawed, limited, and conditional. And such a practice of both honest remembering and free forgetting is the condition of possibility for an anticipated future in which reconciled enemies make historically visible their already accomplished reconciliation in Christ. For Volf, the Eucharistic body of Christ is the crucial location of such a realized future: "by remembering Christ's Passion, we remember ourselves as what we shall be—members of one communion of love, comprised of wrongdoers and the wronged" (Volf 2006, 119).

The astonishing presence of Amish families at the funeral of Charles Roberts is perhaps a most Eucharistical instance of such practices of memory and anticipation, even though communion was not technically served. But in more ordinary contexts, the capacity of members of Christ's broken body—alienated from one another as they might be—to gather in right relationship around the Lord's table is indeed a practice that makes visible the cross-formed grain of the universe. And any such miraculous actions that yield one's memories to God, in the hope of the world to come, whether they take place in the sanctuary or the marketplace, are evidence of the possible obedience that right remembering and hopeful anticipation make visible.

Mennonite missionary David Shank tells the story of attending one of Karl Barth's seminars in the early 1950s with John Howard Yoder. Barth was discussing with students the relationship between the memory of the cross and resurrection, on the one hand, and the anticipation of the future coming of the Lord, on the other, as the basis for Christian hope. When a student asked what the task of the Christian is during the meanwhile, between the past event of the cross and the anticipation of the second coming, Barth responded: "In-between we look back and remember, and we look forward and hope. We remember... and hope." David Shank recalls, "I was sitting beside John Howard, and close enough to hear him mumble under his breath, 'We obey!'"

There are several ways to read Yoder's interjection during Karl Barth's lecture. Obedience can be posed as a kind of action-focused alternative to belief-centered Christianity: orthopraxy trumps orthodoxy. Obedience can also be understood as the next thing that follows once remembering and hoping have happened: Action must be rooted in correct theology, especially eschatology. But instead of replacing or following faithful contemplation, the patient, yet revolutionary, yielding associated with practices of remembrance and hope is itself an act of obedience, whether it is an organized experience of worship, a prayerful meditation, or an act of social protest. Knowing the reconciled creation is the same thing as yielding to it, the same thing as making the peace that Jesus Christ gives. ✟

Gerald J. Mast is Professor of Communication at Bluffton University and co-author of *Defenseless Christianity: Anabaptism for a Nonviolent Church* (Cascadia Publishing House 2009).

Works Cited

Amstutz, Jim S. *Threatened with Resurrection: Self Preservation and Christ's Way of Peace.* Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2002.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

Buckley, William F. "The Voice of America: Two Volumes of Political Oratory, from James Otis to Bill Clinton." *New York Times Book Review*, 7 January 2007, 24.

Coakley, Sarah. *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

Derrida, Jacques. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Walter Fisher. *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

Kraybill, Donald B., Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher. *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2007.

Lindbeck, George. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in Postliberal Perspective*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

Montel, Angela Horn. "Violent Images in Cell Biology." In *Teaching Peace: Nonviolence and the Liberal Arts*, J. Denny Weaver and Gerald Biesecker-Mast, eds. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Murphy, Nancey. *Reconciling Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective*. Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1997.

Peterson, Eugene. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Shank, David. "Another Grandpa David Story... We Obey!" 2.

Volf, Miroslav. *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Yoder, John Howard. "The Anabaptist Shape of Liberation." In *Why I Am a Mennonite*, Harry Loewen, ed. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1988.

_____. "Armaments and Eschatology." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1 (1988): 43–61.

_____. "On Not Being Ashamed of the Gospel: Particularity, Pluralism, and Validation." *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1992): 285–99.

_____. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

Andrew Schulze and the "Post-Racial" Church

Kathryn M. Galchutt

With the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, the term "post-racial" entered our everyday vocabulary. While the term's origins and definition are unclear, various commentators have invoked it to describe an American society unbound by race. Yet reactions to the election and presidency of Obama have been varied. Voting patterns in the 2008 election indicated that people living in areas with a more mixed racial population actually were less likely to vote for an African-American candidate than those in racially homogenous areas. And after the election, the nation experienced a wave of racial backlash, including incidents on college campuses like my own (see Huckabee, 16 November 2008).

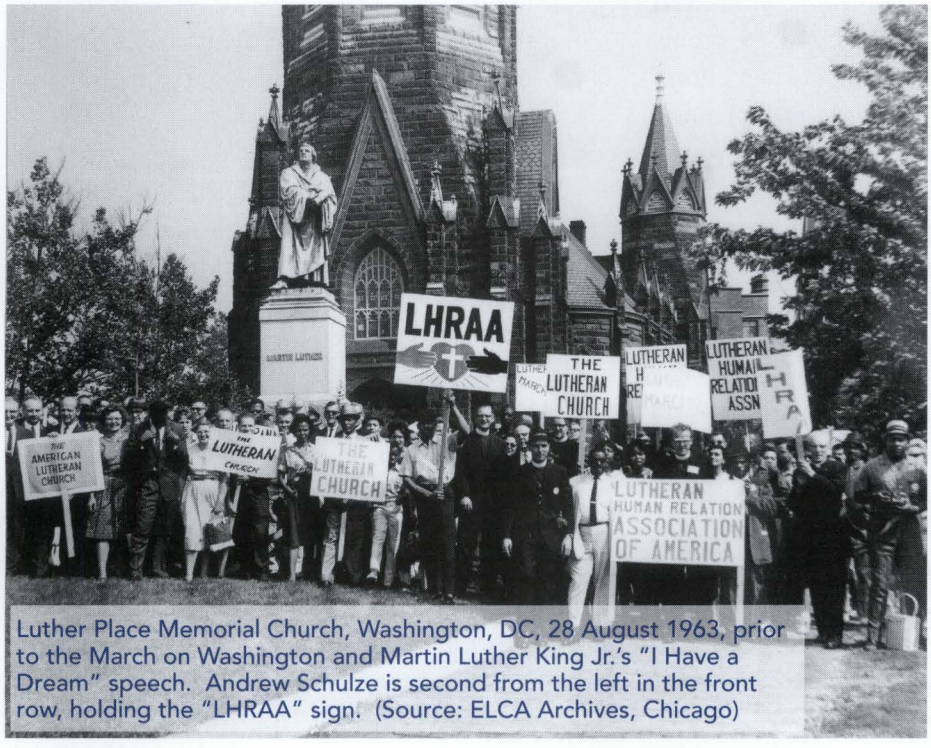
In his spring 2008 speech in Philadelphia about race relations, Obama himself described the United States as being in something of a "racial stalemate." As Obama explained, "Contrary to the claims of some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naïve as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle, or with a single candidacy... But I have asserted a firm conviction—a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people—that working together we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union" (18 March 2008).

Although in the "Age of Obama," there have been more discussions about the state of race relations in American society, there do not seem to have been similar levels of discussion about race relations in American churches. American Christians often have been reluctant participants in discussions about the potential and promise of a "post-racial" America. As *Time* magazine recently observed, "In an age of mixed-race malls, mixed race pop-music charts and, yes, a mixed-race President, the church divide seems increasingly peculiar" (Van Biema, 11 January 2010).

Religion and race have been deeply intertwined throughout American history. American religious history is marked by the evolution of separate white and black churches and denominations, and religion was often used to give sanction to the legalized systems of slavery and segregation. Though the Civil Rights Movement was born and sustained in black churches, it struggled to gain the support of many churches—both black and white—in the fight for racial justice in American society. As Martin Luther King Jr. famously reminded us, "Eleven o'clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week."

King led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization that organized black churches in the struggle to end racial segregation. This story is well known. Less known is the work of Andrew Schulze, a Lutheran pastor who also was an advocate and activist for better race relations. American Lutheranism is a predominantly white denomination, made up largely of the descendants of German and Scandinavian immigrants. Yet since the colonial period, American Lutherans always have counted a small percentage of African Americans among their number. Schulze was a white Lutheran pastor who min-

istered to black Lutheran congregations in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. After seeing how his own parishioners were treated by both church and society, he became committed to the struggle for racial justice. Schulze was the leading figure in founding the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America (LHRAA), begun in 1953, which for many years was based at Valparaiso University. While only a few thousand of the nine million Lutherans in America joined the LHRAA, members of the organization actively worked to improve race relations in the church and advance the Civil Rights Movement.



Luther Place Memorial Church, Washington, DC, 28 August 1963, prior to the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Andrew Schulze is second from the left in the front row, holding the "LHRAA" sign. (Source: ELCA Archives, Chicago)

Schulze's career largely focused on Lutheran churches and communities, and Martin Luther King Jr. was concerned with the larger national and even global situation, but their ministries shared many themes. Both Schulze and King believed in the dignity and equality of humanity, based on the Christian doctrine of creation. Schulze wrote, "'We are the offspring of God' (Acts 17:29). This thought is basic to the whole understanding of the race issue. The human family is one" (Schulze 1968, 65). As King explained, "...the image of God is universally shared in equal portions by all men... Human worth lies in relatedness to God. An individual has value because he has value to God" (King 1963, 158). Yet Schulze and King also recognized the fallen and sinful nature of humanity and the reality of evil in this world. Schulze and King both stressed that, despite the difficulties of our human condition, we have both the freedom and the responsibility to take action in this world.

Throughout their ministries, Schulze and King were drawn to the meaning and the message of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, from Luke 10:25–37. This parable was the inspiration for the title of Schulze's first book, *My Neighbor of Another Color* (1941), which called for the integration of the church. Martin Luther King Jr. often referred to the parable of the Good Samaritan in speeches and sermons. In King's last speech, "I See the Promised Land," delivered to striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee in April 1968, he stressed the lesson of the Good Samaritan, the need to reach out and help others despite the confines of self and society. In this parable, religious figures, the priest and the Levite, avoided helping the man in need, while an ordinary Samaritan took action.

King and Schulze shared a disappointment in the church's efforts on behalf of racial justice. They believed that the church should lead, rather than follow, society in social and ethical matters. As King stated, "...often the Church has been an echo rather than a voice, a taillight behind the Supreme Court and other secular agencies, rather than a headlight guiding men progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding"

(Ibid., 157). Schulze also wanted Christians to be in the forefront of racial change, which is why he titled the newsletter of the Lutheran Human Relations Association, "The Vanguard" and his regular column, "That The Church May Lead."

Both King and Schulze were active participants in the National Conference on Religion and Race. Held in Chicago in 1963 in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, the conference has often been overlooked by historians. It was a gathering of hundreds of religious leaders from various organizations and religious traditions. It was also largely a white gathering, dedicated to mobilizing white religious groups to greater efforts for racial equality. The conference was planned and organized by Mathew Ahmann, the young lay leader of the National Catholic Council for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), and was held on the one hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, which suggested that the task that Abraham Lincoln began had yet to be completed (Galchutt 2005, 189–90). This event seems all the more significant in light of the fact that there was scant national commemoration of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation (Branch 1988, 685; also see Cook 2007).

There were several prominent speakers at the National Conference on Religion and Race, but the event was highlighted by an address by Martin Luther King Jr. King is often remembered for what he had to say about American society, but he also had much to say directly to America's religious organizations. At the Conference, King issued "A Challenge to the Churches and Synagogues," an address not included in many of the edited collections of his writings. In his challenge, he acknowledged the tendency for some religious organizations to focus narrowly on explicitly religious matters.

> [T]here are always those who will argue that churches and synagogues should not get mixed up in such earthly, temporal matters as social and economic improvement... They make an undue dichotomy between souls and bodies, love and justice, the sacred and the secular. They end up with a religion which operates only on the vertical plane with no thrust on the horizontal. But however sincere, this view of religion is all too confined. Certainly, otherworldly concerns have a deep and significant place in all religions. Religion, at its best, deals not only with the relations of man to his fellowmen, but with the relations of man to the universe and to ultimate reality. But a religion true to its nature must also be concerned about man's social conditions. Religion deals not only with the hereafter, but also with the here. *Here*—where the precious lives of men are still sadly disfigured by poverty and hatred. (1963, 157)

Andrew Schulze also called for Christians to become more engaged with their communities and to reach out and help meet the various needs of their neighbors, and he especially prodded Lutherans. Lutherans in America had been known for often taking a quietistic approach to political and social matters. They were often reluctant to speak and act with regard to political and social issues (Galchutt 2005, 52–3 and 92–3). Martin Marty has noted that Lutherans have been better at showing mercy than promoting justice (2008, 153). Yet Schulze's understanding of Lutheran theology emphasized the need for Christian social responsibility and social action.

Schulze believed that the strong Christological nature of Lutheranism, with its emphasis on Christ and His saving grace, supported an active Christian witness. Schulze stressed the importance of the incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ at the center of Christianity. As he explained, "A faithful witness to Christ is a witness to the whole Christ, to the Christ of Good Friday and Easter, to the Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3), but also the Christ who comes to man in the lowly, the outcast, and the despised (Matt. 25:31–46)... the Christ who through His incarnation identified Himself with all men in their total need, 'not ashamed to call them brethren' (Heb. 2:11), whose life is described in the words 'He went about doing good' (Acts 10:38)" (Schulze 1968, 95).

Lutheran theology proclaims that all believers are saved through Christ's death and resurrection. Thus good works are not needed to make us right with God; however, good works are still needed by our neighbors. As is evident in Luther's commentary on the commandments in the catechism, Lutheran ethics are not just about avoiding what is wrong, but also about doing what is right. Luther explained that we should not only avoid hurting our neighbor, but actively help and befriend our neighbor (Wannenwetsch 2003, 121–22: also see Schulze 1968, 121–22). Following in the spirit of Luther, Schulze believed that the person of Jesus Christ changes our relationship with God and with our neighbor.

Schulze also believed that Martin Luther's "two kingdoms" theology called for Christians to demonstrate their "faith active in love" in the world. Luther's "two kingdoms" theology distinguishes between the spiritual and secular realms of life. Some Lutherans have misunderstood this to require a complete separation between church and state, but as Schulze correctly understood, in Luther's "two kingdoms" theology, God is King of all, and Christians are engaged in both kingdoms. In the kingdom of the right, the spiritual kingdom, God provides new life and grace to all believers. In the kingdom of the left, the kingdom of this world, Christians have to live among "the prince of this world" and the forces of evil, but that does not absolve them from Christian responsibilities. As Schulze understood, Christians are empowered by grace in the spiritual realm to live out lives of faith and action in the secular realm. "The Christian has opportunity and a responsibility to exercise his newly acquired faith and life in every conceivable circumstance in the world in which he lives" (Schulze 1968, 121).

King and Schulze described the state of race relations in church and society and offered suggestions for how Christians could work to improve race relations, and their writings continue to speak to the state of our society more than forty years later. We live in an America with an increasingly multicultural public life. African Americans like Oprah and Obama are among our best known public figures, but our private lives often continue to be limited by the confines of race. Though legalized segregation ended in the 1960s, we remain as segregated as ever in our homes, neighborhoods, schools, and churches (See Patterson 1997, especially 27–51).

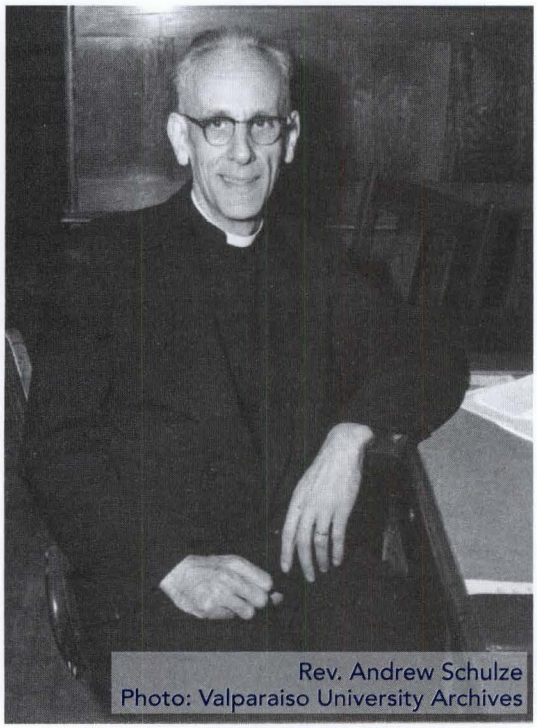
The continuing patterns of social segregation in American life affect how we view and relate to one another. As Martin Luther King Jr. explained, people "fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they can't communicate with each other. They can't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other" (Branch 2006, 162). In *Fire from the Throne*, Schulze spoke of the "invisible, psychological walls" that separate individuals and groups from one another (1968, 151). These invisible, psychological walls continue to this day, both inside and outside of the church.

In King's "Challenge" to churches and synagogues, he urged religious groups to use "their channels of religious education" to get at the ideological roots of racial prejudice and to hold up the ideal of human unity. In addition, King advised religious groups to "become increasingly active in social action... [taking] an active stand against the injustices and indignities that... minorities confront in housing, education, police protection, and in the city and state courts." He stressed that religious organizations "must support strong civil rights legislation and exert their influence in the area of economic justice" (King 1963, 161–62 and 162–63).

Schulze's book *Fire from the Throne* was devoted to the topic of the church and race relations. The title is a reference to God's judgment and God's mercy in the tensions and turmoil of race relations. Schulze described the church as the body of Christ: "the church is always a togetherness, never a separation; and segregation therefore is the direct opposite of what the church is" (1968, 150–151). Schulze wrote that Word and Sacrament, the pastor and the laity, and institutional and personal involvement all have roles to play in improving human relations.

Both Schulze and King emphasized the power of preaching to change the world. They believed that the Word of God is a powerful force that can change the hearts and minds of individuals.

King believed that the Word of God can instill in "worshippers the spirit of love, penitence and forgiveness... necessary for oppressor and oppressed alike" (1963, 163), and Schulze wrote that preachers should dispel stereotypes "that deny the humanity of the Negro" and let it be know that they are "unequivocally opposed to segregation in the church and... committed to a program of complete integration" (153). Giving this message is not all that is to be done, but "this is one of the first basic steps to be taken" (154).



Rev. Andrew Schulze
Photo: Valparaiso University Archives

As a Lutheran, Schulze also stressed the power of Sacrament, particularly Holy Communion. As Schulze explained, "In the Service of Holy Communion the faithful receive and give in communion, not in isolation from each other. Here the unity of those brought together in God through Christ has its highest expression (1 Cor. 10:16–17). "Man separated from man through sin is once again united with his fellowman" (1968, 149). Though Schulze did not use the term, his view of the Sacrament of communion can be seen as the ultimate expression of the "post-racial" church.

The modern liturgical movement has become more and more influential in Lutheran circles. Lutherans now celebrate the historic liturgy and more frequently celebrate communion; however, some of the original purposes of the liturgical movement seem to be overlooked. As Schulze explained, the intent of the modern liturgical movement is "to renew emphasis on the worship of the church 'as expressive of the implications of Christian action in personal and social life'... [By] interpreting these liturgies in their original meaning and purpose as expressions of the deepest bonds uniting us as Christians to God and to one another, the movement seeks a focal center in the liturgy for our religious inspiration and common activity, not only in the Church, but also in our life in the world" (Ibid., 176). "The purpose of Holy Communion is not limited to the sharing that takes place in the house of God and at the Communion table... Renewed in faith and life through Holy Communion... the Christian is to go out and to become a part of the life-stream of the secular community, to thank and praise God by sharing with his fellowman the good things that he himself has received from God" (Ibid., 149).

Just as the clergy are responsible for preaching that all believers have the "opportunity and responsibility of inviting and welcoming into the fellowship of the church and at the Communion table all people for whom Christ died" (Ibid., 154), a congregation must work to establish and strengthen its fellowship. "It must keep working on its theology... The fundamental catechism truths... must take on new life as they are applied to the world of today" (Ibid., 153, 152).

Finally, Schulze believed that both institutional and personal involvement were necessary in the work of improving race relations. As early as the 1960s, Schulze had noticed that traditional communities, fixed by a circumscribed geography, where neighbors really knew neighbors, were eroding. The continuing processes of urbanization, suburbanization, and continuing sprawl reinforces patterns of segregation by race and class. To counteract this trend, Schulze suggested that different congregations reach out and partner with one another to form relationships beyond the barriers of race and class. These connections should not be merely financial or technical in nature, but should offer genuine opportunities

for Christian fellowship. Schulze saw this fellowship as part of our calling as Christians, but he also believed that this personal involvement with the lives and the needs of others added purpose and meaning to our daily lives. He stressed that the church has the power to bring lonely, isolated, and self-focused individuals together for unity with God and with one another. Schulze also suggested that individuals consider choosing homes and churches in integrated settings, noting that if this were done on a larger scale, many problems in church and society would diminish (Ibid., 157–162; 175).

Over forty years later, observers remain concerned with patterns of increasing isolation and individualism in American society. Some of the most significant sociological studies of recent years have noted the loss of community in modern society. Robert Putnam, a sociologist at Harvard University, explored this phenomenon in his book, *Bowling Alone* (2000). More recently, Putnam has focused on the impact of diversity and community. Putnam noted that immigration and demographic trends are increasing ethnic diversity in virtually all advanced societies and that: "The most certain prediction that we can make about almost any modern society is that it will be more diverse a generation from now than it is today" (2007, 137). In the United States, projections show that minorities will be the majority by 2042 (Sam Roberts, *New York Times*, 14 August 2008).

Putnam's research also uncovered some disconcerting trends. As he examined individuals living in diverse neighborhoods, he found that, in the short term, "residents of all races tend to 'hunker down.'" "Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less... to huddle unhappily in front of the television... Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us" (150–51).

While these findings indicate real problems in the short term, Putnam's research concludes that in the long run, diversity has the potential for "important cultural, economic, fiscal, and developmental benefits." Putnam notes examples of institutions overcoming the short-term challenges of diversity to achieve long-term benefits. He cites the United States military as perhaps the best example of this; however, he also sees potential in American religious institutions, noting the integration of some evangelical mega-churches. Putnam's own research shows that "for most Americans their religious identity is actually more important than their ethnic identity."

Schulze and King shared a faith in the power of the church. While government has responsibilities to promote liberty and justice for all, both King and Schulze believed that religion has an even greater role to play. King called for religious organizations to "lead men along the path of true integration, something the law cannot do. Genuine integration will come when men are obedient to the unenforceable... unenforceable obligations are beyond the reach of the laws of society. They concern inner attitudes... something must touch the hearts and souls of men so that they will come together spiritually because it is natural and right... Here, then, is the hard challenge and the sublime opportunity: to let God work in our hearts toward fashioning a truly great nation" (1963, 165–67). Schulze explained, "In the final analysis, the eradication of prejudice, with all its psychological reactions to the race issue, is outside the realm of the state; the segregationists and others are right when they claim that prejudice cannot be legislated out of, and love into, men's lives. It is the Spirit of God alone who can make new creatures out of old ones" (1968, 120).

Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Andrew Schulze believed in the need to speak out against social injustice. Silence simply supports the status quo; however, they believed that words must be accompanied by deeds. While we often remember King as a great orator, his legacy is one of oratory *and* action. At the National Conference on Religion and Race, King told religious leaders that "one must not only preach a sermon with his voice... He must preach it with his life"

(Branch 1998, 30). In that same address, King commended religious leaders who responded to his call to join the civil rights protest in Albany, Georgia in the summer of 1962. Andrew Schulze was one of the over seventy religious leaders who responded to King's appeal and joined the protests in Albany. In deciding to go to Albany, Schulze had this to say, "I have been writing about this all this time, and if I can only write and I can't put my body where my words are, then I'm not much of a writer" (Galchutt 2005, 179). May the words and the examples of Martin Luther King Jr. and Andrew Schulze spur us to both speak and do our parts to improve human relations and to advance the struggle for racial justice in our own communities.

Kathryn M. Galchutt is Associate Professor of History at Concordia College-New York.

Works Cited

Bai, Matt. "What's the Real Racial Divide?" *New York Times*, 16 March 2008.

Branch, Taylor. *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

_____. *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963–1965.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

_____. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963.* New York: Simon & Shuster, 1988.

Cook, Robert K. *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961–1965.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2007.

Galchutt, Kathryn. *The Career of Andrew Schulze, 1924–1968: Lutherans and Race in the Civil Rights Era.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005.

Huckabee, Charles. "Advocacy Group Says Racial Incidents Are Increasing on Campuses," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 November 2008.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., "A Challenge to Churches and Synagogues." In *Race: Challenge to Religion,* Mathew Ahmann, ed. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963.

Marty, Martin E. "Epilogue: Bearing Risk in a Broken World," In *Social Ministry in the Lutheran Tradition*, Foster R. McCurley. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Obama, Barack. "A More Perfect Union," Speech, Philadelphia, 18 March 2008.

Patterson, Orlando. *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's "Racial" Crisis.* Washington, DC: Civitas/ Counterpoint, 1997.

Putnam, Robert D. "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century" *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2007): 137–174.

_____. *Bowling Alone.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Roberts, Sam. "In a Generation, Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority," *New York Times*, 14 August 2008.

Schulze, Andrew. *Fire from the Throne: Race Relations in the Church.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968.

_____. *My Neighbor of Another Color.* St. Louis: self-published, 1941; Second Edition, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1944.

Van Biema, Davis. "The Color of Faith," *Time*, 11 January 2010.

Wannenwetsch, Bernd. "Luther's Moral Theology." In *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, Donald K. McKim, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

GOD'S TEARS

Wild Fuchsia, Deora Dé, means God's tears in Irish.
After "Guidebook," by Claire Giblin, ink and acrylic on Yupo
for Adrianne Marcus

The petals open like silk umbrellas, the tiny stamens bearing God's tears.
The way mine bloomed this morning, reading the news that you were gone,
halfway around the world in Dingle by the sea. Back home, we grow fuchsias
in pots, lose them as soon as frost comes, but here, they tower over my head,
form thick hedges that line the narrow roads, a tunnel of scarlet. You were both
salty and sweet, difficult and a good friend. You would have loved these Wexford
strawberries in September, even while you'd have scoffed at the thought
of growing them this far north. The hedgerows move with the wind's song:
fluttering ballerinas in crimson skirts, purple petticoats, long long legs;
their tiny toes pointing toward earth.

Barbara Crooker

The (Religious) Origins of Toleration

Thomas Albert Howard

Shortly after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, Andrew Sullivan published an essay in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "This is a Religious War." Accompanied by pictures of Crusaders in Jerusalem and the Spanish Inquisition, the essay reminded readers that the principle of religious toleration was a fragile achievement in the West and that the terrorist attacks posed a direct threat to this principle. An early supporter of military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, Sullivan nonetheless opined that the deepest challenge facing the West was not necessarily on the battlefield but in the realm of ideas, in our ability to sustain the ideal of toleration in a dawning age of religiously inspired violence. Meeting this challenge meant developing a deeper historical understanding of toleration itself: "We cite [religious toleration] as a platitude today without absorbing or even realizing its radical nature in human history—and the deep human predicament it was designed to solve" (2001, 53).

To grasp how historically radical this modern platitude is, one might compare Thomas Aquinas's indictment of heretics in the Middle Ages to the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*) of 1965. Heretics, Aquinas wrote,

> ... deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be shut off from the world by death. For it is a much more serious matter to corrupt faith through which comes the soul's life, than to forge money through which temporal life is supported. Hence if forgers of money ... [are] put to death by secular princes, with much more justice can heretics immediately upon conviction, be not only excommunicated but also put to death.

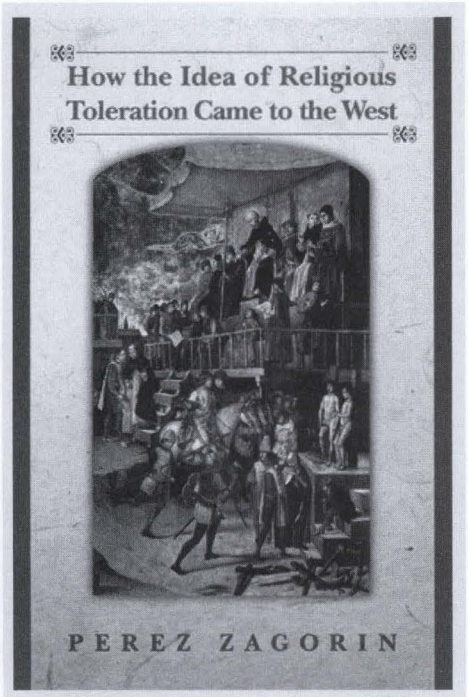
Over a half a millennium latter, the Catholic Church arrived at a contrary position, arguing that "the very dignity of the human person," as known through Scripture and reason, mandated that in religious matters "all men are to be immune from coercion" and "no one is [to be] forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs." (On the Catholic Church's shifting attitude on religious freedom see Noonan 2005, 145–158).

A similar about-face can be found on the Protestant side. Here one might contrast John Calvin's infamous approval of the execution in Geneva of Michael Servetus (accused of denying the Trinity) to the near universal acceptance of religious toleration in the Protestant world today. Luther, too, often preached harsh judgment, at various points directed against Turks, Jews, and Anabaptists. But today, while Lutherans might

still disagree with Mennonites on many issues, the latter don't suspect the former will marshal the National Guard to hunt them down.

Times have changed. Why?

In the past decade, a spate of books has sought to answer this question and others relevant to the complex nexus of issues pertaining to moder-



Princeton University Press, 2005.

nity and religion in our post-9/11, post-secular world. Mark Lilla's much-hyped, but disappointing, *The Stillborn God* is one example; Charles Taylor's magisterial *A Secular Age* another. One book, however, that has not received the enduring attention it ought is Perez Zagorin's *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton University Press 2005). I discovered this first-hand when I employed it recently for classroom use. An impressive achievement, if one subject to some criticism, the book is certain to inform, rankle, and stretch the historical and moral imagination of readers of various religious and political persuasions.

Integral to Zagorin's argument is a (largely compelling) effort to dispel three common misunderstandings about the origins of religious toleration. First, despite the novelty of the US Constitution and Bill of Rights, Zagorin wants to make clear that religious toleration does not represent a distinctly American achievement. "The founders' thoughts on the subject were largely derivative," he contends, and we must cast our gaze earlier, to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to find the origins of their ideas on the topic. Second, the genesis of the idea of religious freedom does not represent a *secular* feat of the Enlightenment, a common assumption in much modern scholarship. To be sure, eighteenth-century *philosophes* championed toleration, but they too drew extensively from past ideas. Finally, religious toleration should not be equated with political expediency, a resigned live-and-let-live mentality that developed out of sheer exhaustion from the post-Reformation wars of religion. Advocates of this view often point to the pragmatic conversion of Henry of Navarre ("Paris is worth a Mass") and the Edict of Nantes (1598), which granted limited rights for the Protestant minority in France. While this legal arrangement and others (in Poland, Holland, England, and Prussia) allowed for various degrees of peaceful coexistence between religious belligerents, coexistence per se does not add up to a morally principled argument for religious toleration so much as a general societal ideal. Yet the latter constitutes Zagorin's focus, even if he admits that intellectual defenses of toleration and ad hoc legal arrangements for coexistence often arose from the same social conditions—the wars of religion that raged in Europe from roughly the time of Luther until the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

In contrast to these views, Zagorin advances the argument that religious toleration as an ideal, as "something inherently good and valuable," first arose largely (if not exclusively) among Protestant thinkers of disputed orthodoxy in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, many of whom were faced with the need to defend themselves or others against persecution. Guided by this thesis, Zagorin leads the reader on a broad history of ideas focusing on seminal theorists of toleration in the early modern era. Beginning with two irenic Catholics, Erasmus and Thomas More, Zagorin moves on to discuss, *inter alia*, the Protestant humanist Sebastian Castellio; the

Dutchmen, Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, Hugo Grotius, and Simon Episcopus; the Jewish thinker Benedict Spinoza (the only non-Christian figure extensively treated by Zagorin); and the Englishmen, John Goodwin, John Milton, William Walwyn, and, finally, John Locke, whose famous *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) marks a milestone in the development of the idea of toleration, and one widely invoked by figures of the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions.

While many of these figures have received extensive treatment by specialized scholars, Zagorin's achievement lies in bringing various voices together to demonstrate that a more-or-less coherent discourse on toleration had emerged by the seventeenth century. It was the sustained *intellectual* efforts of these *religious* thinkers—not political expediency, not novel legal arrangements, and not the gift of Enlightenment secularism—that gave birth to the now pervasive ideal of religious toleration in the West. Collectively, these thinkers established a "theoretical rationale that was both philosophical and religious" without which the gradual acceptance of policies of toleration by political elites and society at large would have been unthinkable.

Zagorin's book gives rise to several thorny questions—some of a historical nature, but others that whisk one, willy-nilly, beyond history into the realms of philosophy, theology, and political thought.

Two aspects of Zagorin's treatment deserve particular praise. The first is his insistence that the ideal of religious toleration owes its genesis to distinctly theological concerns occasioned by the question of how people with contrary, deep-seated faith commitments might get along. For all of the thinkers under discussion, Zagorin pays close attention to their use of Scripture, their appeal to natural law and the ethical model of Christ's life, as well as their treatment of church fathers and subsequent theological authorities. "It is only stating the obvious," he concludes, "to say that in advocating a policy of peace and tolerance toward religious differences, their supreme concern was the welfare of religion itself. They acted from the primary conviction that persecution was contrary to the mind of Christ and a terrible evil which did great harm to Christianity." In light of the evidence Zagorin marshals, this conclusion is well taken and important to underscore, for today it is often forgotten, particularly in Europe, where religious toleration is viewed almost universally as a thoroughgoing secular achievement, a radical break from the past. In taking a contrary position, Zagorin comes closer to the neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain's contention that Christianity remains the "hidden stimulation" animating modern democratic impulses and practices (Maritain 1986, 31). Zagorin in fact provides an historical narrative that would lend credence to the claims of Maritain and like-minded thinkers.

Second, Zagorin admirably highlights the intellectual significance of Sebastian Castellio, whom he calls the book's "hero," "the first great advocate and defender of religious toleration and pluralistic freedom for differing religious beliefs." While Protestant seminarians today are routinely made familiar with Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, Castellio usually does not make the syllabus. This is regrettable, for he is a figure that contemporary Christians should reckon with even as they might wonder about some of his latitudinarian positions. Writing in opposition to Calvin's policies in Geneva, particularly the execution of Servetus, Castellio developed a remarkable body of work, upending the theological rationales for persecuting heretics. "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine," Castellio famously wrote, "it is to kill a man. When the Genevans killed Servetus, they did not defend a doctrine, they killed a man." The blunt eloquence of this statement served as a powerful

indictment of the early-modern persecution mentality generally and pointed forward to a doctrine of religious freedom (On Castellio, see Guggisberg 2003).

If Zagorin's book pleases on many counts, it also gives rise to several thorny questions—some of a historical nature, but others that whisk one, willy-nilly, beyond history into the realms of philosophy, theology, and political thought. Let me, in conclusion, raise four questions that my students and I have engaged. All of these remain relevant, I believe, to thinking Christians today living out their faith in pluralistic settings.

(1) Might one champion religious toleration and its emergence without engaging in the good-guys-versus-bad-guys history to which Zagorin sometimes succumbs? Indeed, despite the book's merits, Zagorin too readily implies only scorn for figures such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and others who advocated or condoned religious persecution. While one would do well to dispense with their lines of reasoning on this matter, one should do so only after sympathetically engaging the broader context of their thought and considering the possibility of countervailing theological sentiments therein—sentiments which, if developed, might in fact support the idea of religious freedom. Zagorin does this only in a limited fashion. In the case of the aforementioned Maritain, by contrast, the thought of Aquinas on Creation and the human person proved essential for allowing him to champion modern democracy and religious freedom (Hittinger 1994, 149–172). For Zagorin, however, Aquinas comes across as an oversimplified strawman, a stumbling block en route to modernity.

(2) What is the relevance of the Western, intra-Christian discourse on religious toleration to regions of the world—the Middle East, Indonesia, and the Kashmir region of Pakistan/India immediately come to mind—today wracked by conflict among different religions? Can Christian theological arguments for toleration be effectively transmitted across religious divides or must indigenous modes of thought be developed? Perhaps a combination of the two? Most pressingly, what is the intellectual relevance of the "Western example" in the early modern period to the "Islamic world" today? This question is raised at the very end of the book, but not explored.

(3) Can one embrace a robust understanding of toleration and a robust understanding of religious truth simultaneously or is there always going to be a degree of tension between the two? Put differently, does toleration require or lead to a measure of skepticism or perspectivalism with respect to dogma? Castellio seems to imply this when, *contra* Calvin, he writes: "I can discover no more than this, that we regard those as heretics with whom we disagree .... [I]f you are orthodox in one city or region, you are held for a heretic in the next." Is the price of religious toleration a permanent veering in the direction of theological relativism—something that can be worked against with deliberate effort perhaps but never fully contravened? From another angle: Is it cognitively possible for a twenty-first-century Christian to speak of "heresy" without sensing that it must be done with tongue-in-cheek or else that it will be understood as such?

(4) Finally, is there a potential dark side to the modern idea of toleration, one that Zagorin does not explore? Here we stumble upon one of the principal limitations of a history-of-ideas approach to this topic, for ideas do not live in some pure ether above the messy world of human ambition, contingency, and institutional configurations. If one takes these dimensions of reality more fully into consideration, one recognizes that power—primarily political power, what Hobbes called the Leviathan—must implement policies of toleration if they are to be realized on a large scale. Historically in the West, this implementation has paralleled the growth of the state's coercive power and the contractual rights of individuals, but it has regularly been enacted at the expense of corporative bodies—churches, families, religious organizations—which often insist on maintaining thicker, exclusionary conceptions of religious truth and normative ideas of moral obligation. Could the knot of modern history be cut in such a way that toleration must side with state power and individualism against corporative identities, with their abiding

normative concerns—the very concerns, ironically, that provided the moral framework for the articulation of religious freedom in the first place? Has this knot already been cut?

That these are all "live," complex questions suggests that we need more serious reflection on this book's topic and its meaning for our lives. Many recent books have attempted to do this. Zagorin's remains better than most at offering a provocative beginning point, even if we might want to tweak and take his inquiries in different directions.

Thomas Albert Howard is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Jerusalem & Athens Forum at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts.

Works Cited

Guggisberg, Hans Rudolf. *Sebastian Castellio, 1515–1563: Humanist and Defender of Religious Toleration*. Bruce Gordon, trans. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Hittinger, John P. "Jacques Maritain's and Yves R. Simon's Use of Thomas Aquinas in their Defense of Liberal Democracy." In *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy,* David M. Gallagher, ed., 149–172. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994.

Maritain, Jacques. *Christianity and Democracy*. Donald Arthur Gallagher, trans. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.

Noonan, John. *The Church that Can and Cannot Change*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.

Sullivan, Andrew. "This is a Religious War," *New York Times Magazine* (7 October 2001): 53.

How Popes and Reformers Gave Us the Rule of Law

Jarrett Carty

Whenever I teach medieval thought or history, I begin with my usual caveat on the Middle Ages: this broad period between "antiquity" (ending with the Roman Empire and Augustine of Hippo) and "modernity" (beginning with the Italian Renaissance, or the Reformation, or the Enlightenment) was not—despite the insinuating label—an interregnum of unreason characterized only by crusades, superstition, and despotic rule. To any medievalist this point is so elementary it deserves no further elaboration: no serious overview of the history of ideas in the West can overlook, for example, the achievements of the twelfth century "renaissance." Yet for students unacquainted with Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri, or Peter Lombard, the caveat is a necessary antidote to their usual prejudices against all things medieval. Even the best of students often see the Middle Ages as something like Bugs Bunny meets *The Da Vinci Code*: an age led by cartoon-like chivalrous knights and kings, alongside an oppressive, conspiring church.

Yet another more serious problem remains. If these same students read the great works of the Renaissance, Reformation, or Enlightenment (which in a broad survey course they undoubtedly will do), these "modern" works will disparage the Middle Ages as the ages of unreason, superstition, and darkness. Martin Luther, for example, called the period between the early church and his "discovery" of grace by faith alone as the *Mittelalter*, the Middle Ages of darkness whence the erroneous teachings of grace by works misled many souls to perdition. The teacher's task thereby becomes not only to treat medieval thought with the respect and attention it deserves, but to understand the objections of the "modern" thinkers as fully and completely as possible without accepting wholesale their vision (or revision) of the previous age. Optimally in this way, a historical perspective is fostered; we learn to rethink and respect the ideas from ages past while developing a critical eye to the state of things in our own world.

In contemporary law and politics in the Western world, and perhaps most acutely in the United States, the separation of church and state is a principle that has become so commonsensical in our public lives as to be assumed and unquestioned. An examination of medieval political thought helps us be critical of our own assumptions and gives us fresh perspective on our predicaments. The European medieval and Reformation worlds could scarcely conceive of the separation of church and state as we do, but this does not mean they were hopelessly governed by theocracies and fundamentalist clerics.

Fortunately, amongst the many superficial and erroneous accounts of law and politics of previous ages, a few jewels of intellectual history emerge, making past ideas come alive and deepening our understanding of our own age. Harold J. Berman's monumental study of the influences of two Christian revolutions on the Western legal tradition is such a jewel. His first volume, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Harvard 1983) meticulously traces the impact of the eleventh and twelfth century papal revolution (also known as the Gregorian Revolution or the Investiture Contest) upon the formation of integrated legal systems in the West. His more recent second volume, *Law and Revolution II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition* (Belknap 2003) authoritatively demonstrates the impact of the German Reformation of the sixteenth century (from Luther's indulgence controversy beginning in 1517 to the Peace of Augsburg in 1555) and the English Revolution of

the seventeenth century (the Stuart crisis of 1640 to the "Glorious Revolution" of 1689) on Western law.

In both volumes, Berman's argument is consistent and forceful: the influence of the papal and Protestant revolutions upon the formation and rule of law in the West was formidable. The independence of law, the integration of different legal systems, the science of law, the establishment of law schools, even the separation of law from morality and the supremacy of secular law in a nation-state were, in Berman's convincing account, due to the impact of the two Christian revolutions. Against the prevailing scholarship in legal history that has hitherto neglected the foundations of law in the Gregorian and Reformation movements, Berman's study serves a larger purpose: to show the importance of Christian ideas in the formation and development of our own legal and political world, even when these Christian roots have long been superseded by later influences. Berman's project is not in any way an apology or evangelism for the revival of Christian ideas in contemporary law and politics; rather, it is a study of the sheer impact that two church revolutions had in the past, and how much these revolutions have shaped our own legal ideas and practices.

The idea that a papal revolution influenced the rule of law in the West will no doubt first appear odd. Yet in *Law and Revolution*, Berman goes even further. Like many prominent scholars before him, he argues that the Gregorian revolution transformed the papacy into the first modern state. After this revolution, the papal state was sovereign and independent; the popes legislated new laws; a large administrative hierarchy executed them, and a judicial hierarchy interpreted and adjudicated them. Moreover, the papal state fostered a rational system of jurisprudence in canon law. It formed law schools. It taxed its subjects. It maintained records on its subjects and defined citizenship. It even waged war (though through proxy and mercenary armies that often brought unintended consequences).

Berman argues that while the papal state was not secular—one of the hallmarks of the modern state—it caused the growth of the secular state. Beginning with Pope Gregory VII's *Dictatus Papae* of 1075, the medieval papacy wrested control of the episcopacy from the civil authorities of Europe, gained control of the clergy in general, consolidated church properties (which were vast), and oversaw all criminal proceedings involving church holdings, clerics, doctrines, and several types of moral offences. The effects of this revolution were manifold; decades of bloody wars, civil unrest, even scandal (like the infamous murder in England of the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas à Becket by King Henry II's men in 1170) accompanied the papal revolution in eleventh and twelfth century Europe. More to Berman's argument, however, is that the revolutionized papacy, by claiming sovereignty over all spiritual affairs, left sovereignty in all secular and civil matters to the kings and princes of Europe.

For Berman, what ultimately resulted in the West was the rule of law in both the civil and ecclesial realms. In the church, canon law became rationalized and standardized. Though the popes were the chief legislators of canon law, and their *decretals* became a major source of this law, they were all the same subject to it. Popes after the Gregorian revolution were not clerical dictators, but the main legislators amongst a large machine of administrative and judicial functionaries, each working toward a universal church governed by its own independent, rationalized, and systematized law.

Just as the papacy asserted itself in spiritual matters and in the church, the civil authorities—largely in reaction to the strengthened papacy—asserted their sovereignty over all other matters. Thus Berman argues that the papal revolution modernized not only the papal state, but also the civil authorities. These kingdoms and principalities (including the Holy Roman Empire) began to systematize their laws and transform the foundations for their authority and legitimacy. The kingdoms, principalities, feudal lords, cities, and guilds founded themselves on the rule of their own particular laws, charters, and constitutions. Laws specific to certain areas of civil rule developed and grew. Feudal law became, for the first time, systematized and universalized, defining the rights and obligations of both lords and

vassals, and the rights and obligations associated with land tenure. Manorial law formed a legal system defining the rights and obligations between lords and peasants. Accompanying the expansion of an urbanized merchant class and an increased agricultural production, mercantile law also grew to systematize trade, commerce, money-lending, and early capitalism. (Thus Berman agrees with the solid historical evidence that "capitalism" began in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, not, as is commonly supposed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.) Urban law—the laws of the cities and guilds in the urban centers of Europe—also grew to prominence after the papal revolution as thousands of new cities appeared across the continent. These new cities and guilds within them (including the student guilds known as "universities") were, as Berman writes, "conscious of themselves as urban communities and they all had similar legal institutions" (1983, 357). Finally, just as the papal revolution had changed the nature of kingship in Western Christendom, royal law became systematized to regulate the relations of royal authority to other tribal, feudal, noble, and urban authorities.

In *Law and Revolution II*, Berman's thesis that Lutheran and Anglo-Calvinist reformers greatly affected the Western legal tradition sounds at first no less peculiar than his first study. As in his earlier volume, Berman challenges the conventional views of the legal historians and political theorists by affirming the Christian roots of the Western legal tradition. Yet in this volume, Berman argues that the aggrandizement of the modern secular state's ability to wield virtually all law under a common rationalized system (including laws governing churches within the secular territories) was a result of the impact of Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

To Luther and the Lutheran reformers, the true church was the spiritual kingdom, the priesthood of all believers; it was a kingdom governed by the Gospel and destined for the resurrection. The earthly kingdom or the kingdom of this world (which for Luther included the institutional church) was governed by law. For the Lutherans, God was ruler of *both* kingdoms; therefore, positive law—regardless of its criminal, ecclesial, or commercial ends—was the embodiment of divine command. The moral law of the Ten Commandments and the positive law of the secular king for the Lutherans had the same purposes: to make sinners conscious of their sinfulness (and thus help them to repent), to deter transgression by threat of punishment, and to generally educate human beings in the paths of righteousness.

For Berman, the essence of the Lutheran revolution in law was the enactment of *Ordnungen*,

For the Lutherans, God was ruler of *both* kingdoms; therefore, positive law—regardless of its criminal, ecclesial, or commercial ends—was the embodiment of divine command.

or the comprehensive statutes in the Protestant principalities. Statutes governing the institutional churches, marriage and family, moral and criminal offenses, schools and education of the young, and even ordinances on services to the poor, widowed, homeless, orphaned, and unemployed were enacted throughout the Lutheran principalities. Behind these *Ordnungen* a Lutheran legal philosophy developed that emphasized the unity of all law (though with distinct branches and classifications). Thence what was conceived in the Lutheran revolution was a new "common law" that was based on principles derived from earlier canon and even Roman law and from the commonalities of feudal, manorial, mercantile, urban, and royal law. Concomitant to this development of a comprehensive legal system, the Lutheran reformers developed a legal science, complete with law schools and an academic elite who were often called upon by authorities to resolve difficult legal matters. Moreover, Berman argues that the Lutheran legal philosophy considered law as biblically based. Just as Lutheran hermeneutics saw to the integration of the Old and New Testaments, so did the Lutheran jurists

see positive law as the embodiment of biblical imperatives and morality.

Measuring the influence of the English Revolution on the Western legal tradition is a difficult task, especially if the English Revolution is defined as the entire upheaval from the Stuart monarchy to the Glorious Revolution. Yet Berman's analysis is not fazed by it. With breadth and detail, he accounts for the transformation of the English legal system through the clash of Anglo-Calvinism, absolute monarchism, and Anglicanism, leading to the eventual settlement of Whig government, jurisprudence, and religious toleration.

Berman does not deny the importance of economic or social history; rather, he defends the central place of beliefs and ideas that academia has often neglected or ignored.

In Berman's account, the English Revolution greatly transformed Western law in several ways. Royal prerogative courts were abolished, judges became independent of the crown and tenured, common law courts became supreme, and the modern doctrine of precedent was formed. The English Revolution also transformed trial by jury by freeing it from the dominance of royalist judges. Procedural rights of the accused, an adversarial system for the presentation of evidence, and the development of new criteria for proof in civil and criminal cases were developed. In addition, the English legal system formed a legal philosophy based on empiricism. Guiding principles in law were derived from common experience over time. These principles of English legal philosophy came to be seen as incremental and continuous with English legal traditions including the *Magna Carta* and canon law. Yet at the same time, this philosophy was revolutionary in its pervasive transformation of the English legal system; multiple legal spheres in criminal law no longer were permitted to exist, for all was subsumed under a new English common law.

"Contemporary scholars in all the relevant fields," Berman argues, "have with few exceptions paid little attention to the enormous impact of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestantism on the development of Western legal traditions" (2003, 373). This argument, of course, extends to the first volume study on the Gregorian revolution. Against many of the prevailing views of historical change in academia and common opinion (that economic, social, and material factors are the main engines of change), Berman argues that belief systems—in his cases medieval and Reformation Christian belief systems—more than any other influence, gave us the rule of law as we know it in the West. Berman does not deny the importance of economic or social history; rather, he defends the central place of beliefs and ideas that academia has often neglected or ignored.

Retrieving an historical understanding of past ideas lends us valuable insights into our own moral and political dilemmas. In this spirit, at the end of his second volume, Berman aptly quotes Alexis de Tocqueville: "When the past no longer illuminates the future, the spirit walks in darkness" (2003, 382).

Jarrett Carty is Assistant Professor in the Liberal Arts College at Concordia University Montreal.

Bibliography

Harold J. Berman. *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Harold J. Berman. *Law and Revolution II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003.

WHAT TREES DO

Every morning I am given all this wisdom
and every afternoon I throw it all away.

I can't pray.
I can only walk: the forest is my audience.

There is a hill behind me, it has always been
behind me, and it has been given to me to climb,

especially in the summer and in the morning
when it is cool and soft and I can tell the trees

all know and love me.
If I were to die at the top, overlooking

the valley, if my body were to drop,
the trees wouldn't move.

They would never leave me.
They would just keep rising.

Chris Anderson

Trusting Marriage

David Lott

The affidavit has lain on the corner of my desk for several weeks now, sparking mixed feelings of guilt and uncertainty every time I notice it. Even when I pile other papers and books on top of it, somehow this particular piece of paper manages to work its way back to the surface, reminding me again of what I have left undone. It should be so easy to complete, but each time I look at it, I find myself both reflecting upon and stymied by its key question:

> *I believe that these two people were married to one another for the following reasons.*

That query seems at once obvious and absurd. It's a question that few of us ever have to ask ourselves about any married couple, or even about our own marriages. How many of us have ever asked ourselves, "I believe I am married to my spouse because..."? But when the union has never been formalized with a wedding, but instead falls under the legal category of "common law," finding answers to such a question may well become essential, particularly when such a marriage is challenged in a court of law. I did not witness these people exchange vows in a public ceremony, so what basis do I have for stating my belief?

> *I believe they were married because they spent the better part of the past fifteen years living together as a couple. I believe they were married because they came together to nearly every family gathering during that time. I believe they were married because they both invested their individual money into doing a thorough renovation of the house they shared. I believe they were married because of the annual winter trips they took together to warmer climes. I believe they were married because she gave birthday and Christmas gifts to his daughter and grandchildren, and he to hers. I believe they were married because she cared for him through several critical illnesses, including a grueling three-year bout that left him broken in body and spirit and finally claimed his life.*

All those seem like valid reasons for my belief that these two loved ones should be considered husband and wife, yet something still prevents me from committing such thoughts to paper and having them notarized. I don't have any doubts that they should in fact be considered married. Yet, at the same time, all these reasons seem inadequate to describing the realities of their lives and relationship. It's not just that these statements are deceptively positive in their observations. I could just as easily add, *I believe they were married because they fought just as much as my parents did* or *I believe they were married because she nagged him about household chores, and he tuned her out.* For some, those statements might be even more convincing evidence of an authentic marriage.

But the truth is, the proof of any marriage is not easily quantifiable. A pastor friend of mine reminds couples who come to him for premarital counseling, "If you're not married to one another before your wedding, the wedding itself isn't going to change that." Indeed, under that view, one might conclude that many couples do not become married to one another until sometime after their weddings, if ever. "Marriage" and "being married" are not necessarily synonymous. The former is a legal state of affairs that anyone can acknowledge, but the latter seems to imply a

quality of relationship that is somehow recognizable to the partners and to others close to them that may yet resist legal description. Given that, I could also write, *I believe that they were more married to one another than they were to either of their previous spouses, the mothers and fathers of their children.*

Last month I attended for the first time a legal wedding for a same-gender couple. I had taken part in or had witnessed numerous gay and lesbian "blessing of relationship" ceremonies before, but, with the recent sanctioning of same-gender marriage in the District of Columbia, this was the first such ceremony to carry force of law, at least locally. These two men will now be legally recognized as spouses in their domicile and in a handful of states around the United States, though their marriage does not have any of the federal protections that opposite-gender marriages benefit from. And so, given the limited public goods that these men may enjoy, and the ongoing debate in our society on gay marriage, I glance at this same affidavit, lying next to the worship bulletin for this wedding, and the same question haunts me, *I believe that these two people are married to one another for the following reasons.*

Several weeks ago, Judge Vaughn Walker issued a ruling striking down California's Proposition 8, a referendum passed two years ago that banned same-sex marriage in that state. In his decision (since stayed pending appeal), Walker wrote, "Proposition 8 fails to advance any rational basis in singling out gay men and lesbians for denial of a marriage license. Indeed, the evidence shows Proposition 8 does nothing more than enshrine in the California Constitution the notion that opposite-sex couples are superior to same-sex couples." Most of the 136 pages of his decision lay out carefully the factual reasoning for this statement, including the following findings:

- "Marriage is the state recognition and approval of a couple's choice to live with each other, to remain committed to one another and to form a household based on their own feelings about one another and to join in an economic partnership and support one another and any dependents."

- "Same-sex couples are identical to opposite-sex couples in the characteristics relevant to the ability to form successful marital unions. Like opposite-sex couples, same-sex couples have happy, satisfying relationships and form deep emotional bonds and strong commitments to their partners. Standardized measures of relationship satisfaction, relationship adjustment and love do not differ depending on whether a couple is same-sex or opposite-sex."

- "Same-sex couples receive the same tangible and intangible benefits from marriage that opposite-sex couples receive."

- "The children of same-sex couples benefit when their parents can marry."

I believe that these two people are married to one another because they have shared a household for nearly twenty years. I believe that these two people are married to one another because they have attended one another's family gatherings together over the course of their life together. I believe that these two people are married to one another because they have renovated their home together. I believe that these two people are married to one another because they have helped one another through serious illness. I believe these two people are married to one another because they have adopted two sons and helped them make the journey from being labeled "at risk" and "special needs" to "gifted."

I know that these two men are as married to one another as were the couple for whom I

have been asked to submit an affidavit. And yet the reasons I can give for my understanding also seem equally insufficient. In both cases, using the words of Judge Walker's ruling, I could bear witness to their "happy, satisfying relationships" and their "forming deep emotional bonds and strong commitments to their partners," but I can't quantify that according to any standardized measure. I simply must trust what I have witnessed and try to state that with equal confidence, as inadequate as it may seem.

Opponents of same-sex marriage are often as tongue-tied and ineloquent as I am in trying to explain the reasons for their convictions about what makes two people married. Their rationalization usually comes down to something like, "I believe that marriage is between a man and a woman," as if that statement of faith were itself a proof of its truth. And even when they attempt a deeper explanation, it usually has to do with matters of procreation, of demonstrably questionable global and historical cultural practices, of sentimental notions of romantic love, all of which are intended to imply that the quality of the same-sex relationship is somehow inferior and therefore untrustworthy.

Yet, if mutual trust is one of the pillars of civil society, then it may be that these assertions of moral convictions or theological persuasions are in fact a subterfuge for what is a willful decision *not* to trust one's fellow citizens. If that is true, then it is not the sanctioning of same-sex or common-law marriages that spurs the breakdown of civil society, but our refusal to affirm our trust in one another. As much as we value the current legal and religious formalities of marriage, and maintain that marriage is essential for society's well-being, we know for certain that the bonds of trust are ultimately what hold all us together, married and unmarried, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.

Pressed to ask ourselves the question, *I believe that these two people are married to one another for the following reasons,* perhaps what our common life together requires of us is that we respond, *I believe that these two people are married to one another because I trust them when they tell me they are.* That may not satisfy our need for civic legitimacy or theological purity on matters of human sexuality, nor may it appeal to the human desire to celebrate love in all its forms. Indeed, it may seem like a weak witness to how two people live together as a committed couple, regardless of how we view these matters. But articulating how it is we know two people are married may simply defy all our legal definitions and theological musings. Certainly gender restrictions and the requirement of public vows are in themselves insufficient. It may be something we can only intuit. By placing trust at the center of our definition, we also appeal to the bedrock of all our relationships, however we define them. That is surely an affirmation to which we can affix our names.

David Lott is a religious book editor and a graduate of St. Olaf College and Luther Seminary. He lives in Washington, DC, where he does freelance editing and writing.

"LORD, IN YOUR MERCEDES, HEAR OUR PRAYER"

It starts that young:
mishearing mercy.
In bed, a child prays with her mother
and a chorus line of animals
backed against the headboard.

The liturgy's familiar as the organ
with its bottom row of pipes
sticking straight out like shot guns
between the choir.
She keeps her eye on them.

And tonight, where we are,
who's to say where the Lord is, exactly?

Worse things can be dreamed
than a shepherd in a CLK 500 coupe,
a backseat full of lambs,
and a jug of juice looking like wine
(she's on to this already)
hot on the trail of that one
who wanders off again, and again.

Katy Giebenhain

What Dreams May Come
Christopher Nolan's *Inception*

Charles Andrews

In one of his final films, master auteur Akira Kurosawa created an anthology of his dreams. The substance of this film, fittingly called *Kurosawa's Dreams* (1990), was meditative reflection upon his eighty years of imaginative life. One thing the film's eight vignettes reveal is Kurosawa's possession of a surprisingly linear and moralizing subconscious, as if his superego were the official director of his nocturnal reveries.

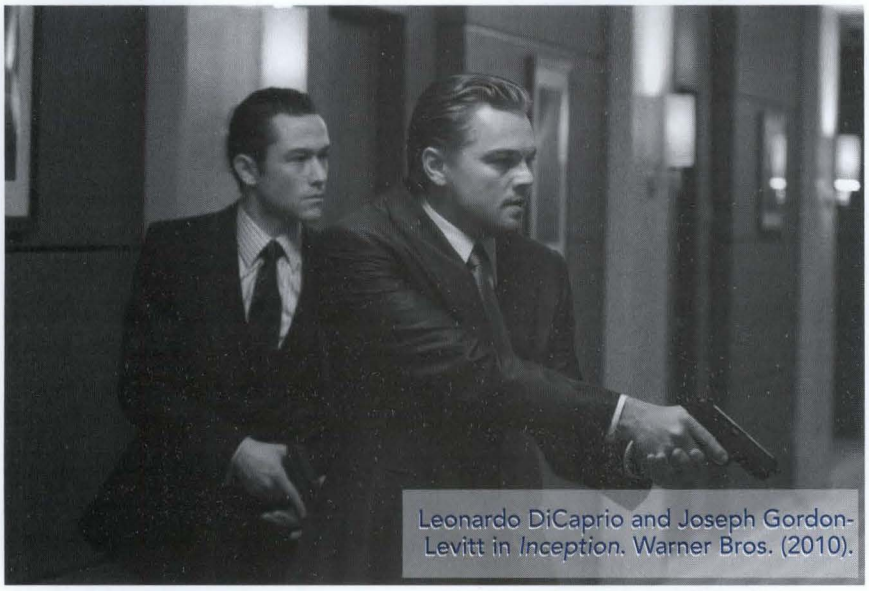
Kurosawa's film is just one remarkable example of an often-explored sub-genre—the dream movie. Since the earliest days of cinema, filmmakers have recognized that a succession of moving images sutured together bears a distinctive formal kinship with the visions we have while sleeping. Buster Keaton's comedy *Sherlock, Jr.* (1924) contains a still unsurpassed depiction of how dreams fuse with cinema. In a more serious vein, akin to Kurosawa's use of the genre as subconscious autobiography, the newest film by Christopher Nolan explores the dream-film with incredible verve but much less depth. *Inception* is finally a nifty puzzle box with under-nourished dream theories, spectacular but often-toothless action sequences, and a rich but clumsily developed alternative universe.

Nolan has a knack for selling complex narratives to mass audiences. Where brain wrinkling thrillers like Shane Carruth's *Primer* (2004) or Erik van Looy's *Memory of a Killer* (2003) remain strictly art house fare, *Inception* is the biggest hit of summer 2010 and a healthy follow-up to his previous movie, *The Dark Knight* (2008) which is the third highest grossing domestic film of all time. Nolan has often been called a "thinking man's action director," which simultaneously discredits action films and thinking men. But, this moniker describes his ability to lure the "shoot 'em up" crowd in droves while still tantalizing explosion-weary critics.

The premise of *Inception* is really just one science fiction idea: Someone has invented a machine that allows ingenious, highly skilled people, whose talents miraculously combine engineering, architectural design, neuroscience, gunslinging, and martial arts, to infiltrate other people's dreams. There in the unconscious these infiltrators may manipulate the dreams, though the degree of manipulation fluctuates considerably and forms one of the many inconsistencies that mar the film's imagined world. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the leader of an outlawed team paid by mysterious corporate thugs in excellent suits to steal vital trade secrets from competitors. The huge paychecks seem to be only partly for their technical know-how and legal risks. Double and triple crosses, mistaken or switched identities, and psychotic breaks are all occupational hazards for DiCaprio, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and the rest of the crew. Additionally, it appears that every dreaming person had watched a *Matrix* marathon right before bed in order to fill their subconscious with anonymous, well-clothed, well-armed, kung-fu fighters prepared to annihilate our heroes.

I realize that this sort of premise is enough to turn away many serious cinephiles. One friend told me of her "active dislike" of *Inception* and that just as with the final battle scene in *Avatar*, she fell asleep during *Inception*'s major action set-piece. The litmus test here might be deciding how much pleasure you derive from seeing beautiful people diving through the air in slow motion while firing guns in both hands. Against my own best snobbery, I find my tolerance for "cerebral" action thrillers to be embarrassingly high. Nolan's latest ends up being engaging, sometimes thrilling, and deeply flawed—and I was never tempted to snooze.

One of the key difficulties with science fiction premises is establishing the rules of the world before finding ways to exploit them. Nolan showed that he could maximize this type of structure in *The Prestige* (2006), where the three parts of a magic trick become a narrative device, a philosophy, and ultimately the distraction which prevents the audience from guessing the secrets of the Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale characters. *Inception* has a few too many monologues about characters' motivations and desires and the rules of their sci-fi world. Especially clumsy is the terribly unsubtle, Screenwriting 101 use of Ellen Page's character as a "window" into DiCaprio's thoughts and the workings of the dream machines. Additional ham-fisting occurs in her character name, Ariadne, an over-determined, "on the nose" title for a genius architect responsible for building the web-like mazes of the dreams and who assists with clews but is finally abandoned by her leader. Not calling DiCaprio's character "Theseus" must count as authorial restraint.



Leonardo DiCaprio and Joseph Gordon-Levitt in *Inception*. Warner Bros. (2010).

The film's rough edges seem to cry out for another draft at the writing desk, which is a curious fault given that Nolan supposedly has been fiddling with this pet project for a decade. Yet despite these shortcomings, Nolan provides superb payoff for the elaborate premise with an extended action montage that functions on (at least) four separate levels of reality. Characters in one dream are put to sleep so they might enter another and solve a problem in the first—and this process repeats several times. Nolan's technical skill is unrivalled as he keeps a furious yet not quite incoherent editing scheme alive, juggling several different action sequences. As he ratchets up the intensity and spectacle of each sequence, the number of faceless bad guys, flying bullets, and things going boom reach preposterous levels that undermine their threat—literally, a case of overkill. Nonetheless, this section of the film is expertly designed to get us reaching for several boxes of popcorn at once.

Much has been written about the convolutions of the plot, especially the "ambiguous" ending, as critics like the AV Club's Tasha Robinson call it. I hesitate to be more explicit about these elements. Even calling the ending "ambiguous" is a kind of spoiler, since there are several components to the narrative's palimpsest frame, and the end of the movie plays on the viewers' anticipation that one of these levels will be the last layer of the onion skin. Given the success of this film, as well as the "gasp/groan/what?/c'mon!" response from the row behind me at the final shot, I foresee swarms of internet discussion boards devoted to parsing *Inception*'s final meaning for years to come. Rather than giving away any more here, I will just say that I think the key to the whole film is Michael Caine's character who appears briefly and incongruously and is my vote for the plot's mastermind.[1]

Inception also succeeds at displaying how a director's personal interests and pet themes can emerge through the diffusion filter of the Hollywood machine. Nolan's first feature, *Following* (1998), was an ultra low-budget thriller about voyeurism and home invasion that gained a great deal of traction from its jigsaw narrative and gestures toward philosophical heft. The struggling writer who is the protagonist in *Following* gets

sucked deeper into spying on his London neighbors when a burglar named Cobb shows him how to steal even more private information through breaking and entering. Leonardo DiCaprio's character in *Inception* is also called Cobb and is also a metaphysical burglar—one of several references that the current film makes to the rest of Nolan's *oeuvre*. The tricky plotting of Nolan's breakout hit *Memento* (2000) features a hero with a tortured past and limited short term memory who compensates for his disability by tattooing into his own flesh whatever important information he uncovers in the mystery. Dom Cobb, the hero of *Inception*, also pursues a mystery with a solution just beyond his imperfect grasp of reality and memory.

Like most action directors today, Nolan is obsessed with neo-Byronic heroes who are dark and brooding, who soldier on carrying sinister and overwhelming secrets, and who are self-destructive yet somehow lovable. Few lead roles for men in Hollywood seem free of these traits, which even crop up in fluff like *Avatar* or *Indiana Jones* and kids fare like *The Incredibles* and *Kung Fu Panda*. Christopher Nolan's particular fascination with this character type in everything from *Following* to *Insomnia* (2002) made him a perfect choice for the Batman reboot, and his record breaking grosses for *The Dark Knight* opened the way for *Inception*, which naturally extends his preoccupations with memory, identity, and audience-goosing. Your overall pleasure with *Inception* may rest on how engaging you find these themes, how quickly you are willing to swallow the film's absurdities and infelicities, and the height of your threshold for intricate narrative trickery with orange fireballs accenting the visual décor.

But a question remains: what does this film have to say about dreaming? Perhaps not much at all. David Denby's complaint in *The New Yorker* was that *Inception* "is an astonishment, an engineering feat, and, finally, a folly" because it "exploits dreams as a vehicle for doubling and redoubling action sequences" rather than for some worthier message. For something weightier dealing with dream-life, we have many options: Kurosawa or Luis Bunuel's surrealism or Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) or Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001). As one character (who might just be dreaming) tells another in the Linklater film, you know you're in for boredom when someone asks if he can narrate a dream he had last night, and Nolan certainly escapes this problem. Nolan may not have given us the lasting richness of Kurosawa, Kubrick, or Bunuel, but his dazzling, multi-layered thrills amount to somewhat more than folly.

Charles Andrews is Assistant Professor of English at Whitworth University.

Endnotes

1. Spoiler-averse readers might want to skip this footnote before seeing the film. Caine's character apparently pioneered the dream infiltration machine that establishes the film's plot. He taught DiCaprio how to run its programs and to create the alternative dream fantasy maps where characters walk. This role—the "architect"—is unsuitable for DiCaprio's damaged psyche and Caine offers Ellen Page as a replacement architect. Caine's daughter is Marion Cotillard who has married and then "been killed" by DiCaprio. And, most importantly, Caine appears at the airport in the film's final sequence, somehow back in the United States even though he was presumably unaware of DiCaprio's plans to travel. Page alludes to the unlikelihood that a man like DiCaprio would be constantly on adventures performing dangerous espionage for anonymous, fantastically wealthy corporations. If there is an outer shell to the convoluted kernel of the film, then Caine is on that outside, pulling DiCaprio's strings either to heal him or to exact some kind of vengeance.

Not the Tremblin' Kind

J. D. Buhl

> "My favorite record of the last ten years and possibly of my life is an LP by a New York woman born in Nashville called Laura Cantrell. It's country, and I don't know why I like it, but it has the same sort of effect on me as Roy Orbison had in the '60s, and you think, 'Instead of yet another review of Eminem, or whoever, why doesn't somebody review Laura Cantrell?'" —John Peel

RIGHT, THEN. SINCE A NEW EMINEM ALBUM had recently topped the charts, I am more than happy to take marching orders from the legendary BBC disc jockey whose "Peel Sessions" have had their own effect on music fans for over thirty years. The thing is, Peel was speaking in 2000, and I ran across the quote only earlier this year—and I'd never heard of Laura Cantrell. Peel's testimony appears near the end of Paul Gorman's 300-pager on the golden age of rock journalism, *In Their Own Write* (Sanctuary 2001). That probably the most influential disc jockey in history, who championed everything from psych-folk to reggae and owned more records by The Fall than by anyone else, was so moved by "a New York woman born in Nashville" startled me. The favorite record of his *life*? What had I missed?

This sense of discovery, of running down a missing piece to one's musical mosaic, was what drew me to rock writing in the first place. The writers I read, most of whom appear in Paul Gorman's history, took the music personally while still enjoying the responsibility of critical thinking. They could lay their lives and professional careers on the line over a particular album or single while still displaying a huge debt to the craft of writing itself. Their loyalties were spread among many interesting locations, such as philosophy, art, celebrity, social criticism, cultural movements, literature, politics, the history of Western civilization, and, yes, record company largesse. So while the greatest records of any given year may have shown up in their post office box, the rest of us needed to go out and get them; and the best writers made it seem as though they were right there with you, standing in line at the record store, flipping through the latest issue of *Rolling Stone*. They seemed invested, not entitled.

"The music papers no longer dare to take a chance of delighting their audience," said Peel, "by which I mean you have to be able to take them by surprise. What I want is for people to be sitting at home or driving or whatever and to think, 'What the [hell] is *that*?'" Surprise is not the same thing as shock or provocation. Artists covered in today's magazines—Lady Gaga, say, or Lil Wayne—trade on spectacle, and their reporters are content to serve it straight, with no insight added. Plus, I know many audience members who do not want to be surprised. For every one who uses Pandora or some similar system to hook them up with new music based on their current likes, there are a dozen who can't be bothered by a country record from ten years ago that changed somebody's life. There are even those who live in major cities with hip, happening radio stations that could surprise them every five minutes, and still they shuffle through the same old iPod items at home or driving.

And the Internet is a spoiler. If I found myself curious about Laura Cantrell, I could have flipped open the MacBook, started typing L-A-U-R-A-C and before I got to the end of her name I'd have twenty websites to choose from. I then could have read the Wikipedia entry, perused the online "reviews" ("dude this like totally breaks yr heart, its awesome"), ordered the CD from Amazon, and considered myself in the know. Attention deficit: about five minutes.

But that's no fun. So, when my van needed to be left for a brake job in California, I took the Metro from Long Beach to LA, caught the Red Line to Hollywood and Vine, and walked a few blocks to the Wittenberg castle of used record stores, Amoeba Music, all of which took an hour and a half. After shopping around some, bumping

my head twice going through the "Jazz Clearance" bins below the regular stock, asking a nice fellow in the country CDs about Cantrell, and following his directions to the folk section (as well as to Peel's autobiography, *Margrave of the Marshes*), I found the recording in question, *Not The Tremblin' Kind*, for $3.99. I added this to my basket and two hours later returned to daylight having spent thirty dollars on one book, ten CDs, and a copy of the *LA Times*. Not bad.

The aging lions of rock journalism note in Gorman's closing pages that much of the best music writing appears in the major daily papers. Marc Weingarten comments specifically on three critics in the *New York Times*. "As someone who has newspaper experience, I know how hard it is to file something that's trenchant, cogent and smart on deadline." The influence of rock's early writers on me was such that I was striving for trenchancy and cogency before I knew what they were. Today, with words about music found all over the Internet (some of which can be considered writing), the indication is that readers' needs are being met. Listeners hungry for trenchancy and cogency have a place to go, but these qualities are not highly valued. Instead, one finds plenty of snarky sorts with more attitude than talent. One reason the dailies have the best music coverage is that they have retained people with a certain kind of mind, men and women who love journalism as much as they love popular music and can be smart on deadline.

Throughout *In Their Own Write*, when writers praise other writers it is invariably for their "humanity" or a "moral sense" that enabled them to keenly cut through the hype and defend—or destroy—someone's art on the basis of whether or not it was *good for you*. Such concern for listeners' mental and spiritual well-being seems to fall to Christian and other religious writers now. There is no greater sin than to be judged "judgmental," and it is a rare writer indeed who will go against the prevailing relativism to say, "It's *not* all good."

Cantrell has a look of discerning intelligence on her unsmiling face, and she exudes a thoughtful remove from front and back of the jewel case. I anticipate music of highly refined emotions that is nevertheless a little ragged around the edges, characteristics found often in those who spend their lives around records. Another reason *In Their Own Write* gives for the decline of general music magazines (as opposed to the specialized titles that advertisers prefer to keep afloat) is the ubiquity of pop coverage. Once rock became just another element of celebrity culture, its "news" started popping up everywhere. There is also a been-there-heard-that weariness that many writers assume is premature, though it may not be unearned.

At the Long Beach Public Library I look up Cantrell in the *All Music Guide*. It turns out that she is quite well known. She has toured with Joan Baez, Ralph Stanley, and Elvis Costello; played Conan O'Brien, the Grand Ole Opry, and recorded *five* Peel Sessions; hosted her own radio show on WFMU in New Jersey from 1993 to 2005; and in 2008 released her fourth work, the travel-themed EP *Trains and Boats and Planes* (yes, the old Bacharach-David song) and contributed a cover of New Order's "Love Vigilantes" to the soundtrack album *Body of War* in support of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Oops. Well, like I said, the greatest records of any given year don't just show up in my post office box.

Nor will they for anyone else much longer. The fact that Cantrell's travel-song collection is available exclusively as a download is itself an admission that most "record buyers" don't buy records anymore. It is a song-by-song, digital-format world, one more reason why a music press as "vital and vibrant" as that of the 1970s will not happen again. In his forward to *In Their Own Write*, Charles Shaar Murray sees that heyday arising from "a variety of historical accidents, large and small," but posits two for readers' consideration: the post-WWII invention of the teenager as a social and economic entity (something that now has ascended to dominance), and the fact that "no one knew anything." In the world that existed before MTV (which has dropped the "Music Television" from its logo), "if a company wanted to break an act, they had no option but to come to us, and we were left alone to do the job however we saw fit." When I hoped to be the next Cameron Crowe back in 1975, it was this idea of having a job to do that inspired me. Whether it was *Phonograph Record*, *Creem*, or Murray's *New*

Musical Express in England, music magazines put writers to work, even if they were half crocked much of the time.

So are many of the characters on *Not The Tremblin' Kind*, stumbling through honky-tonks, backstage areas, strangers' bedrooms and "churches off the interstate." Some of these interesting folks come from Cantrell's own imagination, others from the work of contemporary songwriters. Their stories are told in a clear Nashvillean alto so plaintive that it can make one uncomfortable. What I heard was not the mystery or mastery of a voice like Orbison's, but I did hear someone I knew. Bonnie Simmons and Dirk Richardson, two music writers, surprise their listeners every week on KPFA in Berkeley, and they played this album. So there had indeed been moments of what-the-hell-is-that at home and driving; some of these songs had crept through my evening hours and left their impression; that plain, shaky voice did reside in my musical memory—oh, *that's* Laura Cantrell. Perhaps what Peel heard was an effortless earnestness that UK country cousins like the Mekons could only approximate. Me, I like my jangly country-pop with a bit more zang (zing plus twang). *Not The Tremblin' Kind* sounds like home, but there's nothing here that Jill Olson doesn't do better.

Don't know Jill Olson? Well, there's one for you to do the legwork on.

J. D. Buhl teaches Eighth Grade English and literature at the Casady School in Oklahoma City. He also has been known to sing country-pop with zang.

LATE OCTOBER, MINERAL KING

It is the kind of afternoon in which
shade and sun please equally.
Smoke-filled valleys pale below,
but we climb into bluer skies
on remnant snow in the ravines.

How does the trail know where
to turn? Why do the wood grouse
wait for us around the bend?
What makes each pair of trees we pass
a new door, an old welcome?

— *Sequoia National Park*

Paul Willis

A First Novel
For Better or Worse

Susan Bruxvoort Lipscomb

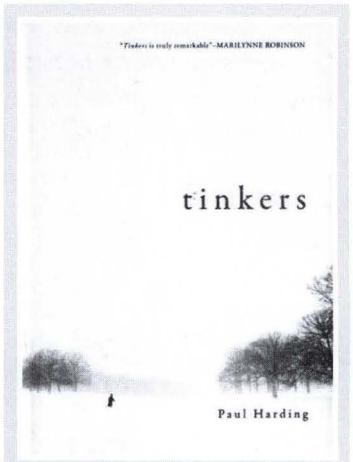
When Paul Harding won the Pulitzer Prize earlier this year for his first novel, *Tinkers*, the literary world gave a collective gasp of delight. The story was perfect: Harding, a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop, had written an inventive little novel, only to have it rejected by a number of well-known publishers. He published it, instead, with a small press. With a glowing cover blurb from Pulitzer-winner Marilynne Robinson, it was warmly received at independent booksellers but largely ignored by the literary establishment. *The New York Times* didn't bother to review it. Then, it won the nation's largest literary prize. The glass-slipper-shod Harding had, like that, ascended to the pinnacle of American literary achievement.

I understand why this novel was the darling of independent bookshops, why it won the Pulitzer, and why many critics are radiant with praise. I also understand why some avid readers I know haven't made it through even its modest 191 pages. It is, for better and for worse, the first novel of a graduate from the nation's most prestigious creative-writing program. For better, the novel has lovely prose, a complex structure, and important and interesting themes. For worse, it is a lot of work to read.

The novel counts down the last eight days of the life of George Washington Crosby. As George lies dying in his living room, his family gathers around him. He drifts in and out of consciousness and lucidity. Interspersed with his near-death experiences is background insight into George's personality and narrates the stories of George's father, Howard, and of Howard's father, who is not named. The novel interweaves these accounts with quotations from an invented eighteenth-century clock-repair manual and poetic literary fragments from someone's journal—perhaps Howard's, perhaps Howard's father's.

One piece of literary showmanship that slows down the reading process, then, is Harding's narrative voice. Or voices. Harding's novel shifts voices a number of times, for reasons that are not always clear. The novel is mostly in the third person, past tense: "George Washington Crosby began to hallucinate eight days before he died." It periodically shifts into first person, and Howard, George's father, speaks in his own voice: "I should say that the sermons my father gave on Sundays were bland and vague."

There are other shifts too, though, and they are occasionally perplexing. At one point, a minor character at George's bedside speaks in the first person: "This is a book. It is a book I found in a box. I found the box in the attic.... The dust and the air was made up of the book I found. I breathed the book before I saw it; tasted the book before I read it."



Bellevue Literary, 2009

Charlie, George's grandson, seems at first to be speaking to himself. No one talks like this, least of all by a bedside, on limited sleep. Without any marked transition, however, it becomes clear that he is saying all this to his grandfather: "Do you want the bed down a little bit more?" It is clever, but jars the reader, for a moment, out of the comfort of knowing what is going on. Harding also shifts repeatedly between past and present tenses, particularly in the third section of the novel which narrates a crucial turning point in Howard's childhood and a crucial turning point in Howard's adult life.

I could usually find reasons for the shifting voices and tenses in the novel. Because Howard's story—and character—is so central to the novel, perhaps he needs to speak for himself. A tinker in the late nineteenth century, he travels through

the New England woods, ineptly trying to interest homesteading housewives in his wares. He routinely gets distracted by the beauty of the natural world and falls into a kind of poetic reverie. The story of Howard's life is the dominant narrative of the novel. And Howard's story—his experience with epilepsy, his memories of his own father, a crucial moment of high drama during George's childhood—is compelling. If Howard is a writer, then the novel's impulse to let him speak makes some sense.

There are likewise plausible justifications for the other voices in the novel. Howard's father is a writer, too, a "strange and gentle man" who spends his days "in the room upstairs at the walnut desk tucked under the eaves, composing." Perhaps the book that Charlie describes (and then reads) to George is Howard's father's journal. The entries, with mysterious headings like "Cosmos Borealis" and "Crepuscule Borealis" are full of lush, evocative, descriptive prose: "Skin like glass like liquid like skin; our words scrieved the slick surface (reflecting risen moon, spinning stars, flitting bats), so that we had only to whisper across the wide plate." If the selections are from Howard's father's journal, they make certain plot and thematic elements in the novel more poignant. They are not easy to understand, however, and the hints about their significance are oblique at best.

There is also something clever and appropriate about the selections from *The Reasonable Horologist* that Harding sprinkles throughout the novel. George, in his retirement, has taken to repairing antique clocks. He tinkers with the mechanisms, as his father tinkered in the New England woods. While the lives of his father and grandfather were full of chaos and rupture, George's life is one of order and control. He's a practical, careful person. As his life winds down, he can be content that he has acted reasonably. We discover that George has stashed cash away, methodically, in safe-deposit boxes throughout New England that his wife will use to live comfortably after his death.

But although the selections from *The Reasonable Horologist* can be accounted for thematically, they are yet another interruption in the novel, another element that disorients. Perhaps Harding would say that interruption and disorientation are thematically essential to this story of a man's death. As George's life unwinds, as his brain ceases to make coherent sense of his surroundings, the reader experiences this as well. As a teacher of literature, I can accept this; it is an answer I might give to my students. As a reader, however, I reject it. I lost patience with this novel a number of times and got tired of working to make sense of what was going on.

This is a beautiful novel, especially at the sentence level. Harding, who admires the transcendentalists, describes in finely wrought prose many mystical encounters with the physical world. Each of the main characters in the story is afflicted in some way that is a source of transcendent experience and fodder for evocative description. As George dies, Harding gives us sparse but compelling metaphors, describing the transformation of his body from living to dead: "His bloodless legs were hard like wood. His bloodless legs were dead like planks. His bone-filled feet were like lead weights that were held by his dried veins—his salt-cured, metal-strengthened veins, which were now as tough as gut, and strong as iron chains." Howard, for his part, suffers from epilepsy: a "secret door that opened on its own to an electric storm spinning somewhere on the fringes of the solar system." Howard's father, a minister, who obsessively composes up in his attic room, deteriorates into madness or dementia. The reader experiences this process from the perspective of Howard who tells us that: "The end came when we could no longer even see him, but felt him in brief disturbances of shadows or light, or as a slight pressure, as if the space one occupied suddenly had something more packed into it." The rupture of Howard's father's mind is thus a source of transcendent experience for his son.

All three men struggle with their relationship to their own embodiment: George, because he is dying; Howard, because he is an epileptic; Howard's father, because he is mad. Their stories are affecting. Some readers, however, will not get far enough to come to care. Some will lose track of the narrative threads in the shifting voices, tenses, and genres before they get to know George, Howard, and Howard's father.

Tinkers will naturally be compared to the novels of Marilynne Robinson. After all, Robinson wrote the glowing blurb. Harding studied with her and was inspired by her to read great works of theology. They both wrote prize-winning first novels, and both wrote novels about older men and their relationships with their fathers. Though they are a generation apart, the connections between the two are evident.

Thematically, *Tinkers* is most similar to *Gilead*, Robinson's second novel. Both are novels about fathers and sons and about mortality. In terms of craft, however, a comparison with Robinson's first novel, *Housekeeping*, is more apt. *Housekeeping*, a first novel which also won a top award (PEN/Hemingway) is also more experimental and less reader-friendly than the later *Gilead*. *Tinkers* may frustrate some readers, and I will not blame those who toss it aside as too showy and labored. But, trusting the comparison with Robinson, I have high hopes for his *second* novel.

Susan Bruxvoort Lipscomb is Assistant Professor of English at Houghton College.

COMPENSATORY JOY

If you estimate peak
leaf by leaf as lily-lover God
must—hairs-on-your-head,
sparrows-in-freefall God—
you don't discount what is
for what's expected,
single note for crescendo,
firework for grand finale
but stand inside the drip-line
of each tree and watch
the flush of greeting spread
lobe by lobe, leaflet by leaflet
until you know by a slow
process of accretion one
lingering, compensatory joy
in the otherwise impossible job
of being, and staying, God.

Georgia Ressmeyer

A Luther for the Whole Church?

Paul R. Hinlicky's *Luther and the Beloved Community*

Robert C. Saler

Much contemporary Lutheran theology operates with a kind of uneasy conscience about its very status as "Lutheran." Among ecumenically minded Lutherans in particular, there is a nagging suspicion that penning contributions to Lutheran theology *qua* Lutheran might perpetuate rather than assuage denominational divisions by focusing on those things that make Lutherans different from other ecclesial bodies rather than emphasizing the continuity of Lutheranism with previously established Christian traditions. With that worry in mind, some confessional Lutheran theologians have sought to construct specifically Lutheran theology with an eye toward emphasizing the potential of Martin Luther to instruct (and be instructed by) the Church catholic, rather than just "the Lutheran tradition."

One of these theologians is Paul R. Hinlicky, who throughout his prolific publishing career has sought to clarify how Luther's writings can best serve as a resource for an ecumenical theology that is post-Enlightenment, post-Holocaust, and (most importantly for Hinlicky) post-Christendom. His 2009 book *Paths Not Taken: Fates of Theology from Luther through Leibniz* was an exercise in intellectual genealogy that, in tracing the fate of Lutheran themes from the Reformation through early modernity, afforded the author the chance to engage substantially with what he sees as the numerous wrong turns taken by contemporary Lutheran theology. Intriguingly, his new book *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) largely restricts its historical scope to Luther himself (as well as to contemporary Luther scholarship), yet features even more constructive commentary from Hinlicky himself on where theology (Lutheran and otherwise) might go from here.

This is no coincidence; indeed, one of Hinlicky's main contentions in the book is that the best way forward for Lutheran theology is to recast Luther himself as less of an innovator, a dramatic break from pre-Reformation Christianity, and more of a teacher of the whole tradition, a teacher whose theology is in fundamental continuity with much that came before. As he puts it, "Modern Protestants especially...[have thought] of Luther as their hero of faith, or hero of conscience, a solitary religious and/or cultural genius who broke the regressive shackles of the authoritarian past and opened the way to a progressive future of freedom." It is worth noting that this image of Luther as an innovative genius of faith's freedom is not restricted to self-identified Protestant Christians; much history and secular philosophy depends on a similar image. See, for instance, the portrait of Luther in Mark C. Taylor's *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). In Hinlicky's view, however, "It is Luther as creedal Christian, Luther as teacher and *doctor ecclesiae* [doctor/teacher of the church] that matters here" (267). At stake, according to the book's argument, is whether Luther's theology can serve as a resource for the eventual reunification of the Western church or if the reformer's legacy must remain one of perpetual division and ecclesial schism.

Other ecumenically-minded Lutheran thinkers (e.g., Michael Root, David Yeago, and Robert Jenson) have similarly stressed the "catholic" nature of Luther's theology and the concomitant need for Lutherans to press for visible unity among churches. For all of these theologians, the denominationally divided church stands as

a scandal and an impediment to proclamation of the gospel. The main contribution of *Luther and the Beloved Community* to this ongoing discussion is its wide-ranging and conceptually rich application of Luther's writings to a host of classical and contemporary theological dilemmas. Hinlicky, who in the book's introduction is admirably clear about the degree to which he appropriates his own vision of Luther ("my Luther") from the reformer's notoriously unsystematic corpus of writings, enlists Luther in service to what the author calls "critical dogmatics." Critical dogmatics, in contradistinction both to simple repristination of premodern thought patterns as well as (in Hinlicky's view) to most contemporary "constructive" theology, seeks to promote the possibility of "creedal Christianity," that is, belief in the classical teachings of the Christian church in an age where that church can no longer depend upon validation by cultural Christendom. It is theology that "tests the life of the Church against those binding beliefs that must structure it" (257).

The main contribution of *Luther and the Beloved Community* to this ongoing discussion is its wide-ranging and conceptually rich application of Luther's writings to a host of classical and contemporary theological dilemmas.

Hinlicky's Luther serves this enterprise of critical dogmatics by synthesizing and adapting classical theology (particularly, in Hinlicky's telling, key Christological motifs from Cyril of Alexandria and Anselm) from a relentlessly biblical, and indeed "apocalyptic," perspective. Hinlicky continually stresses the apocalyptic (most often in the sense of "revelatory") nature of Luther's writings in order to show how Luther, like his later interpreter Karl Barth, did theology in absolute dependence upon God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. When readers of Luther keep his dependence upon God's apocalypse in mind, it allows them to avoid such mistakes as reading *The Bondage of the Will*, for instance, as a general anthropological statement of the human condition, instead of as an exegetical commentary upon the specific revelation of the human condition within the salvation history narrated by scripture (which it in fact is, according to Hinlicky). Hinlicky describes this as a kind of theological "perspectivalism," in which such notoriously difficult Lutheran themes as the two kingdoms, the hidden God, and the hidden church are understood as descriptions of the life of the believer (and the church) at various stages within creation, baptism, and the final redemption rather than actual divisions in God's reality.

It should be noted that Hinlicky is aware of how commending the apocalyptic in Luther runs the risk of endorsing the reformer's premodern obsession with demonic forces and (more troublingly) his tendency to demonize his theological opponents with rhetoric that became increasingly vitriolic in his later years. Throughout the book, Hinlicky argues persuasively that such rhetorical tendencies must be left behind by contemporary Lutherans if Luther is to have any future as an ecumenical teacher for the church; indeed, the epilogue of the book contains one of the best arguments that I have read for committing "the needed act of hermeneutical violence" (384) *against* Luther's vitriol *for the sake of* theological charity (and clarity).

In Hinlicky's telling, the culmination of Luther's theological vision is "the Beloved Community," the eschatological unity which is imperfectly embodied in the temporal church but to which that church continually aspires. Thus, "the hope of the Beloved Community [is] our theological point of departure: as social and somatic selves, there is no salvation for the individual except by reconciliation to the community" (255). This hope structures the book, not only in the support that it lends to his ecumenical vision, but in the way it allows Hinlicky to engage other "social themes," particularly politics (of especial

interest here is the enduring legacy of Marxism, which Hinlicky regards as a "Christian heresy," and the careers of Luther, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King Jr. as political theologians). Hinlicky reads Luther as a theologian for whom support of the church as a visible public and engagement with civic affairs were of a piece (albeit a complicated piece), and *Luther and the Beloved Community* performs a similar mediation.

The extent to which one judges as successful Hinlicky's project of recasting the sixteenth-century Luther as a teacher of the whole Church catholic will, I suspect, depend upon the degree of one's sympathy for the constructive theological proposals (or "critical dogmatic" proposals) that Hinlicky offers for our twenty-first-century consideration. And that is, perhaps, as it should be; again, Hinlicky is clear that the Luther that he is commending to the Church catholic is one formed of careful selection amongst Luther's writings. That honesty does, however, raise a methodological tension that, while not insurmountable, nevertheless persists throughout the book. Given that other Lutheran theologians named and critiqued by Hinlicky (particularly Werner Elert and Gerhard Forde) perform similar acts of fashioning "their Luthers" in their writings, yet reach very different conclusions than Hinlicky, by what criteria do we judge a given "Luther" to be preferable to another? Hopefully the answer would boil down to preferring the "Luther" that most faithfully reflects close reading of the reformer's own texts; however, the degree to which that seemingly commonsense answer coheres with Hinlicky's defense of "appropriation" remains somewhat unclear. More explicit attention to this matter on the author's part would strengthen confidence in his methodology.

A more substantive concern arises in connection with Hinlicky's consistent invocation of "community" as the ideal toward which Lutheran theology must tend. As one who has, in this book and elsewhere (Cf. Hinlicky, "Sin, Death and Derrida," *Lutheran Forum* 44/2, Summer 2010), recommended that Lutheran theologians engage the work of the deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida, Hinlicky is no doubt familiar with how Derrida problematizes the idealization of "community" (in the singular) by inquiring into the structures of authority, boundary-making, and exclusion that have characterized all historical communities. This difficulty taken together with how Hinlicky's emphasis upon Luther's "perspectivalism" tends to de-emphasize themes of multiplicity in Luther (again, the "hidden God" comes especially to mind), leaves the sense that the eschatological vision which Hinlicky finds in Luther is perhaps tamer and less tolerant of contrast, porousness, and diversity than a differently construed Lutheran theology might allow. Saying, as Hinlicky does, that the Beloved Community is not perfectly embodied by any historical community may defer this problem, but it does not fully solve it. That may seem like an esoteric theological issue far removed from the daily lives of Lutheran Christians, but I suspect that it is not. At stake is the extent to which Luther's writings support the integrity of a host of different theological, ecclesial, political, and perhaps even denominational arrangements as legitimate expressions of the gospel—an issue that is, needless to say, central to the challenges faced by Lutheran communions today.

Negotiating this question will no doubt require further theological conversation among committed Lutherans—a conversation in which relentlessly ecumenical visions such as that offered by *Luther and the Beloved Community* will no doubt play a signal role. The value of the book comes, not only from the lens that it provides for interpreting the historical Luther, but from the portrait it provides of how a catholic-minded "constructive" theologian can still innovate in a Lutheran key.

Robert Saler is a PhD candidate at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Interim Pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Miller, Indiana.

Answering Prayers

Thomas C. Willadsen

As a Presbyterian minister there are two things I regard as professional imperatives: considering a new call when one is suggested and praying for people when they request it. Only once in my career has someone contacted me about a potential new call. I asked to see that church's paperwork and declined to pursue the opportunity further. When it comes to praying for others, however, I am walking in new territory.

Earlier this year the congregation I serve upgraded its website. It is fabulous, if we do say so ourselves. One of the new features is that people can submit RSVP's for congregational events and prayer requests.

So far we have received two prayer requests from members and dozens from God only knows whom. The requests come to the office from the website; we are unable to contact the people who request our prayers. At times, I read these requests and feel like I am hearing the distress cries of someone who is in grave danger, without knowing where exactly that person is.

Anyone on earth with internet access can request the prayers of this congregation. And they do. Phillip Brooks said, "A prayer, in its simplest definition, is merely a wish turned Godward." I read requests like this one, from K., and you can be sure I am praying for her. I confess, however, that I am not following K.'s specific instructions.

> Please, support me in prayers for an urgent, difficult intention: For my complete reconciliation with my loved one, ex fiancé N. That N. DOES NOT GET INVOLVED INTO ANY NEW RELATIONSHIP, but THAT HE BE DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH ME AND start CALLING ME, APOLOGIZE, that God with His QUICKENING SPIRIT work out peace between us, LEAD OUR FURTHER COMMUNICATION AND GIVE US WISDOM IN BEHAVIOUR TO EACH OTHER, COMPLETE RECONCILIATION and NEW BEGINNING! THAT GOD DESTROY ALL DEVILS AND WEAPONS FORMED AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIP IN THE NAME OF JESUS ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, protect our love and future (that our relationship be a stronger and successful one) and bring us to marriage as soon as possible! God gives promises, and I know He is FAITHFUL! I am sure when your prayers join mine, I will surely receive a miracle. I am praying with Faith and please help me in this.

A Yiddish proverb says "If you pray for another, you will be helped yourself." I have been praying for L., with this proverb in mind, since February, when she first sought our help. Her first request was longer than most of the sermons I preach. Here's just the first paragraph:

> Thank God that I can submit my prayer request here, and thank you for your prayer, may God bless you. Firstly, please pray for my mother who was cheated by Mr. K., Mr. H., H., C. and A. years before, she went to a company and worked as an office assistant, but they cheated my mother, and compelled my mother to give her money out to them (they cheated my mother and said that the money was used for investment, and the investment failed), and went away. Thank God that the policemen arrested Mr. K. now, but the Mr. H., H. C. and A. were still not arrested. Please pray that God can help policemen in the investigation, and find the evidence to accuse the Mr. K. and his helper in the judiciary court. Thank God that the policemen sent us several letters about how the investigation is progressing, and please pray that God can move their heart, that Mr. K. , Mr. H., H. C. and A. will regret that they cheated my mother,

> and they can have pity on my mother and return the money back to my mother. Thank you.

L.'s request continues for two more pages. She submitted this request verbatim several times through May. After that her requests have been less detailed. We have received this one more than ten times, "Please pray for that I now use sharp things to cut into my skin in order that I can keep on praying." So now I find myself praying for L. even more frequently.

Emerson said, "Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life, from the highest point of view." I suspect P. has not read Emerson; he submitted this request last month.

> Please pray GOD gives me all the desires of my heart. Pray GOD sends me on the mission He has for me now. Pray GOD raises me a mile above those used by Satan to glorify GOD. Pray GOD Blesses me financially now and always. Pray GOD heals my body completely now. Pray GOD brings me my soul mate now In JESUS' Name. Amen.

Years ago a friend observed to me that she only knew two prayers, "Help me, help me, help me," and "Thank you, thank you, thank you." I would not mind expanding the prayer repertoire of some of the people who visit my church's website.

A. submitted the following request: "Please pray that I can have long healthy hair. I have been unable to grow it due to illness."

Jesus got a pretty good response from the lepers he healed, I now realize. One of the ten turned around and said, "Thank you." I have yet to have anyone submit a word of thanks for our prayer ministry. That is probably because I'm not very good at intercessory prayer.

Maybe we could run a disclaimer next to the prayer request form on our website. Something like, "Our pastor sees all prayer requests, but intercessory prayer is not his gift."

Last month my son's baseball coach told me that a boy on another team had a growth in his abdomen, three centimeters by nine centimeters. A biopsy had been scheduled. Coach asked if I would give a prayer at home plate before the game started. I accepted.

The twenty-five boys from both teams and their coaches gathered and Coach introduced me. "Peter's dad's a pastor." I prayed for R.'s family, for those who care for him, for the staff of the hospital where his surgery would be. I prayed that we would feel strength and the presence of the Holy Spirit; that we would support one another and R. in the uncertain days ahead....And I was reminded, again, that I'm not very good at intercessory prayer. Coach added a post-script following my amen, "... that the growth not be cancer."

Silly me! I was praying to change me and for my people to accept reality, for comfort and hope and strength in whatever lay ahead. I should have asked God to change reality!

The next week I found out the growth was benign, but that is not what I had led a prayer for! Doh! I coulda been a contender!

Presbyterians believe that prayer is "a conscious opening of the self to God." I do not find much openness to God in the requests that find their way to our website. I find the same openness one has to a vending machine. The transaction *should* go like this: I put in the appropriate amount of money and the machine delivers my Cheetos. If my Cheetos are not forthcoming, the machine is obviously broken. If I do not get my money back, I have been cheated, nay, *betrayed*.

Every year about a dozen people are killed when they express their anger at uncooperative vending machines. Vending machines are large and heavy; sometimes the betrayed Cheetos-seeker is crushed when they [the vending machines] are knocked off balance.

I worry—and I pray too—for people whose prayers are not answered as they hope. I worry because in my own life God's answers to my most fervent prayers have often come in ways that are completely unrecognized for years. I worry because so often God answers our prayers with "not yet," or "I have something better in mind," or "No! And one day you'll thank me!"

But if I am expecting Cheetos from my prayer and I get something else, or silence, or nothing, or

gout, I just might try to throw God off balance and get crushed. I hate when that happens.

During the Babylonian exile, Jeremiah spoke a word of great comfort, hope, and solace to the Israelites: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you" (29:11–12).

The problem, at least from my narrow, selfish vantage point, is that God promises to deliver after the seventy years of exile. It is as though God says, "That's right, go ahead and have kids in a foreign country, have a couple generations, in fact. I will be there for *them.*"

That's what I want to tell K. and L. and P. I want them to open their hearts in prayer and to be prepared to *wait* on the Lord. I will still pray for you when you ask; I feel ethically bound to pray for you when you ask, but the prayers you want me to raise on your behalf make me feel like an impotent genie, or Santa with an empty toy sack.

I will pray for you. I *promise* to pray for you, but I will pray for a change in you, for openness or humility or wisdom or patience. I will pray that you feel God's presence; that you discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit; that you know the healing grace of Jesus Christ, but I probably will not get too specific. Except, just this once, I will concur with L.'s prayer that she keep eating her psychological medicines.

Amen.

The Reverend Thomas C. Willadsen is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

ORDINARY TIME

I wake
and pray,
break fast,
embrace the day,
then wash
and such,
do work —
but not too much.
I sing
and write.
I walk the dog
each night.

In all these homely tasks
I know
my God is near —
extraordinarily mine
in blessed ordinary time.

Ann Applegarth

St. Francis in the Trashcan

Joel Kurz

STANDING ON THE LEFT-HAND CORNER OF my dresser is a an old gold-framed diptych. One panel depicts St. Francis, bending over slightly, preaching to the birds gathered on the ground just as others are making their descent. The other panel contains his well-known prayer, *Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.* On a not-too-infrequent basis, the disturbance I cause to the nearby stack of prayer-books creates just enough momentum to send the wobbly diptych off the edge and into the almost always empty wastebasket. Bending over to retrieve it time and again has led me to reflect more fully on the relevance of this saint's self-abasement to the unbending spirit characteristic of our times.

Much is known about Francis's life (1181–1226), and when one looks at the outline and details of his existence, the contours that emerge are those of a person so self-emptied that he knew his true self, rejoiced in the goodness of Creation, and cared about the suffering of others. When he abandoned his privileged life as a cloth merchant's son, he exchanged his fine attire for a beggar's tattered rags. When the priest of a ruined church wouldn't take the money he got from selling some of his father's possessions, Francis went about begging for and gathering stones so that it could be rebuilt. When he refused the meal of bread, fish, and fruit served to him after embracing poverty, Francis vowed to eat what others rejected, so he took a bowl, had housewives fill it with their kitchen and table scraps, and ate it saying, "This is the table of God!"

Few of us are willing to go to those extremes, yet Francis's radical humility and simplicity challenge us to evaluate our habits of being and doing. Mark Galli wrote, "The real Francis makes every age a tad uncomfortable.... In the end, although our modern world wishes to discard so much of Francis into the rubbish bin of history, it is the medieval Francis who shows the modern world a better way" (182–183).

In large part due to Francis's example of reverence for Creation and resourcefulness in making use of what appeared useless, I often find myself bending over waste receptacles to pull out anything that can be recycled, reused, or resold. Despite signs positioned above the various trashcans throughout our church building which encourage people to consider first if what they're about to throw away is recyclable, I still repeat the ritual. Some might ask, "Why should you lower yourself that way?" To which I answer and ask, "Why should I not? Why should I not make sure that even my smallest actions serve to preserve the wonderworld God made instead of desecrating it into a wasteworld" (as Thomas Berry put it)?

"St. Francis Preaching to the Birds"
Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337)

Rather than functioning as "lords of the Earth," human beings were fashioned to be "stewards of Creation." It does us well to be humbled and brought down to the ground alongside our fellow

creatures. It does us well to be emptied of our self-sufficiency and arrogance, to learn from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. It does us well to recall that God uses "things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order" (I Corinthians 1:28). After all, Paul encourages us to have the mind of Christ, who made himself of no reputation, took on the form of a servant, and humbled himself even to the point of a shameful death (Philippians 2:5–8).

Here is where Francis, whom the church remembers with thanksgiving on October 4, can be our wise teacher. Long before Pope John Paul II proclaimed him the patron saint of ecology in 1979, Francis's words, life, and legacy have instructed Christian and non-Christian alike on how to live a humble and peaceful existence.

Whether I'm bending over my wastebasket to retrieve "St. Francis" or over a trashcan somewhere to salvage a bottle or can, I'm reminded that lowering ourselves is what being a servant is all about. I often think of the time when my brother, a resourceful college student, rescued some like-new clothing from a dumpster. A girl with fashion-sense complimented him on his sharp-looking shirt only to hear where he had found it. Horrified, she exclaimed, "You would wear something from a dumpster?!" My brother responded: "Yes, and you just complimented me on it!"

Sometimes others are scandalized by acts of waste redemption, and sometimes we might even be, but the good thing is that they're habit-forming and lead to self-scrutiny in others areas as well. Although I haven't done it as often as I'd like, on occasion, I've enjoyed carrying a five-gallon bucket filled with kitchen scraps from our local hospital kitchen to our church garden's compost bin. Who knows, maybe you might even want to start composting food scraps, that is, if you don't feel like eating them!

Writing of his own lowering awareness ritual—removing the bodies of killed animals from roadways—Barry Lopez commented, "For animals so large, people will stop. But how many have this habit of clearing the road of smaller creatures, people who would remove the ones I miss? I do not imagine I am alone" (116). We can all find valuable acts to implement, acts that change us and our world for the better.

The curse of our times is that we humans have lost reverence not only for the Lord and one another but for all of this wonderworld as well. So how do we regain something so large yet so elusive? By doing the simple daily deeds of selflessness which give the rest of Creation its fair due. I'll keep doing my trashcan ritual, knowing that sometimes others might see and stop and think, and maybe start doing the same. And as I do, I'll keep these words from the hymn rendition of Francis's canticle running through my head and heart: "Let all things their Creator bless / And worship God in humbleness."

Joel Kurz is pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Warrensburg, Missouri.

Works Cited

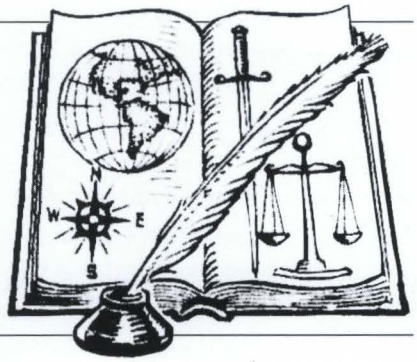
Galli, Mark. *Francis of Assisi and His World.* Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2002.

Lopez, Barry. "Apologia" in *About this Life.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

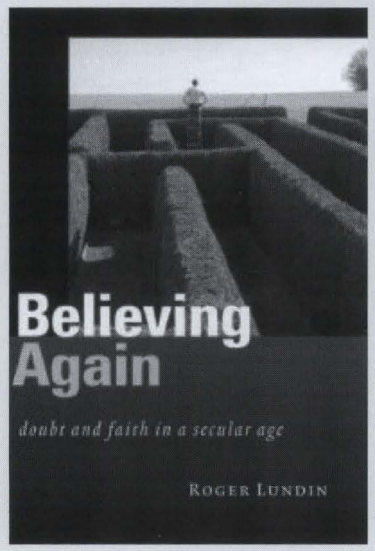
Reviewed in this issue...

Believing Again

Onward Christian Athletes



The title of Roger Lundin's book *Believing Again* comes from the eighteenth-century German aphorist G. C. Lichtenburg, who said "There is a great difference between believing still and believing again." Lundin picked up the aphorism from the poet W. H. Auden, who used it on several occasions in his *Forewords and Afterwords* to indicate the difference between a naïve and tested belief (55, 87, 518). Those who believe still what the church has always believed, what their parents believed, what they themselves believed as children, says Lundin following Auden, do not believe like those who struggle to come to terms with unbelief and find themselves believing again.



Believing Again: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age
Roger Lundin
Eerdmans, 2009
292 pages
$26.00

Reviewed by
Kevin Seidel
Eastern Mennonite University

The essays that comprise Lundin's book are simply titled and arranged into three sections. The first section includes two essays ("History" and "Science"), which show the contours of the nineteenth-century's crisis of faith. The second section of essays ("Belief," "Interpretation," and "Reading") examine different facets of that crisis. The essays in the third section ("Story" and "Beauty") describe two creative responses to that crisis. In a final chapter called "Memory," Lundin tries to articulate an approach to the past that is Christian rather than nostalgic. He quotes extensively throughout his essays from Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, W. H. Auden, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Czeslaw Milosz, exemplars of the "nimble believing" (a phrase from one of Dickinson's letters) that Lundin considers a crucial stage in the journey to believing again. To be clear, Lundin is not primarily interested in unbelief, not in refuting it or fixing it. What Lundin hammers against in his essays are forms of believing still, that is, forms of Christian belief too nostalgically attached to certain moments in the past, to the supposedly unified Christian culture of the Middle Ages, for example, or to the exalted view of the individual inspired by the romantic period.

It is easier to say what Lundin is against in these essays than what he is for, what he means exactly by believing again, because he nowhere risks a clear, overarching thesis, not for the collection as a whole, not in the individual essays. The essay titles might have offered some guidance, if Lundin had

said that each one names a different obstacle or barrier to belief. For example, in the third section, what preoccupies Lundin is not "Story" per se but stories that have made the Christian story more difficult to believe. Similarly, in the next essay, he is less interested in beauty than in concepts of beauty that make it more difficult to appreciate the "beauty of belief" or "beauty *as* belief" (212). Each chapter, then, names one tall hedge, one wall of the maze depicted on the front cover of the book. Altogether, Lundin's essays are intended to be the ladder that readers can climb to help see the way out, to see again the expansive field on the horizon, the great cash crop of Evangelicalism—vigorous, green individual belief.

Lundin's essays are intended to be the ladder that readers can climb to help see the way out, to see again the expansive field on the horizon, the great cash crop of Evangelicalism—vigorous, green individual belief.

Yet to judge this book by more than its cover, here are a few points of criticism about the role of the literary arts in Lundin's essays and about his depiction of what constitutes believing still.

The internal sequence of Lundin's essays discloses some of his assumptions about the role of literature. Take chapter two, "Science," where Lundin uses Dickinson, Auden, and Milosz to describe the growing conflict between science and imaginative literature that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Each poet depicts a suffering humanity living in the flinty, indifferent world given to them by nineteenth-century science, and each poet turns, Lundin shows convincingly, to images of a "suffering Christ" for consolation, as the old arguments for design in creation break down. While Lundin clearly admires the way these poets invoke the suffering Christ, he criticizes them, along with much of twentieth-century theology, for not believing more, that is, for not affirming the resurrected Jesus. Whereas the poets are reticent to speak of the resurrection, "the New Testament asserts that we are able to know everything we need to know" about the identity of Jesus (98). For Lundin, the poets articulate the problem that the New Testament answers.

By chapter seven, a pattern has emerged: the intellectual problem named by the essay title is discussed at the beginning. Then the poets and novelists are brought in to show the subtlety of the problem and struggle with it bravely. Finally, the New Testament or the theologians (usually Karl Barth or Hans Urs von Balthasar) arrive to solve the problem. For Lundin, artists like Melville and Dickinson deserve praise because they don't settle for unbelief, that is, they keep struggling to believe, hinting at the supernatural. Yet, for "a robust understanding" of what such hints point to, "the Christian student of nature and culture" must turn to scripture and to the theologians (133). Even where Lundin tries to qualify his usual submission of literature to theology, he still keeps the arts not yet believing, just outside the borders of belief. The poets "may not proclaim Christian truth as vigorously as the theologians," Lundin acknowledges, but that "should not obscure... the importance of their restless, ceaseless, and nimble efforts to "believe again" (134). The word "efforts" is crucial here. Try as they might, the poets cannot quite believe.

For Lundin, good poetry seems to teach a kind of condescension toward unbelief: if great artists like these refused to settle for unbelief, who are we to do otherwise? Some Christian scholars may appreciate this approach to literature, its careful preserving of the Bible as the last word or the theologians as the final authority, but other scholars may feel more heavily the weight of condescension, that something has been lost in using literature this way, as round artistic holes for square theological pegs.

Another problem is Lundin's depiction of what constitutes believing *still.* For example, he is right to try to historicize romanticism, as he does in chapter one, to loosen the "ties between

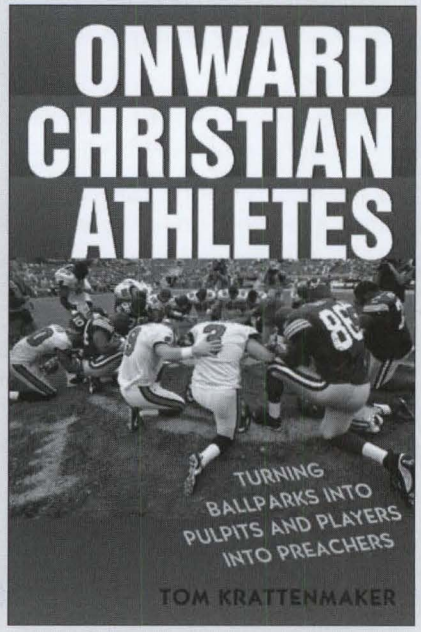
Protestant spirituality and romantic aesthetics" (37), but he relies too heavily on old ideas about the period. He would have a harder time criticizing the romantics if he had supplemented what he learned from M. H. Abrams with more recent accounts of the period, such as Lori Branch's chapter on Wordsworth in her recent book *Rituals of Spontaneity* (Baylor 2006).

Furthermore, he rides out a number of times in his essays against what he calls "spatial models" of truth, that is, notions of ourselves or of God that rely too much on the language of up and down, inside and outside. Lundin recommends that we abandon spatial metaphors and adopt "narrative" models of understanding instead. Elsewhere, he tilts against what he calls the "occularcentric" understanding of the self (193), a way of thinking dominated by visual metaphors that Lundin says rose to power on practices of silent reading (186). With his usual flair for generalization, he says that "the invention of the printing press silenced the cosmos and paved the way for the rule of sight" (201). It is difficult to imagine how we as human beings could escape this rule of sight altogether, since we have eyes. And why should concepts of "narrative" or "orality" give us access to the truth less prone to error or misuse than concepts of "space" and "vision"? Yet, Lundin's idea seems to be that if we could change our spatial models of truth for narrative ones, trade our visual metaphors of understanding for aural ones, then we would more closely approximate "the priorities of the biblical writers" (198), and so find ourselves believing again, more robustly, more resiliently.

Like most intellectual hobbyhorses, these two are generally harmless, but there is one moment in the essay where they pull Lundin into terrible understatement, when he tries to recruit Dietrich Bonhoeffer for his attack against believing still. Lundin says, "Bonhoeffer's reflections on religionless Christianity and the suffering of God were efforts to meet the challenges posed by spatial models of the cosmos and visual conceptions of knowledge" (204). So what makes it difficult to believe in a loving God who is at work in the world today? Apparently, it is not the atrocities of war, the pervasiveness of human suffering, or the worldliness of the church, not the rise of historical criticism or evolutionary science, not these so much as quarrels over interpretation and practices of silent reading.

Yet, Bonhoeffer's reflections on religionless Christianity, in his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, are about much more, if one goes back to look. Whereas Lundin wants to hold on to the possibility of believing again by reviving a more humble author, a more moderated view of language, a shift to aural metaphors of understanding, Bonhoeffer seems to be trying to find a way beyond the struggle between belief and unbelief altogether, that is, a way for Christians to stop putting all their efforts into maintaining their own belief, in however subtle a form, and, more importantly, to stop clinging to a God of the humanistic gaps, a God who only appears, Bonhoeffer says, "for the apparent solution of insoluble problems, or as strength in human failure—always, that is to say, exploiting human weakness or human boundaries" (154). This is the passage from Bonhoeffer that one wishes Lundin had spent more time with than he does (206–207), especially toward the end of his book.

In the last essay, "Memory," Lundin discloses what he considers to be the crucial legacy of the nineteenth century, not its skeptical historicism or proud science but its preoccupation with orphans, which illustrates to Lundin that the era's "delight in having been liberated was slowly changing into the fear of being abandoned" (274). Lundin is there to speak tenderly to that fear, of course, to hint that Christians need not be so afraid, if they believe in God. What then moves us to believe again? Refusing nostalgia, Lundin settles for a kind of pathology of the Victorian period that he calls his intellectual home (3). Thus, despite his admirable taste in authors, his well selected quotations, his ability to lean on the work of other scholars, his forthrightness in speaking of his own faith, and his candid reliance on theologians and the New Testament, *Believing Again* too often keeps God at the limits of human ability, not transcendent so much as tethered to our weaknesses, to what literature cannot quite achieve, and, ultimately, for Lundin, to the fear that our secular age has been abandoned by God. ✟



Onward Christian Athletes: Turning Ballparks into Pulpits and Players into Preachers

Tom Krattenmaker

Rowman & Littlefield, 2010

228 pages

$22.95

Review by

Alan Bloom

Valparaiso University

During his playing days in the National Football League, Reggie White was a star whose preaching prowess earned him the nickname the "Minister of Defense." But after retiring, White began to question the role of Christianity in his life and even claimed that he had been "prostituted" by religious leaders because of his fame. "Most people who wanted me to speak at their churches, only asked me to speak because I played football," White explained, "not because I was this great religious guy or this theologian" (190). White also had second thoughts about his claims that God had spoken to him, now tacitly acknowledging that the huge contract that the Packers dangled in front of him had more to do with his move to Green Bay than had religion. A chastened White announced that he wanted to try to live the principles of his faith rather than just speak to them. Tired of being a "motivational speaker" and "entertainer," White stopped peddling jock evangelism and instead turned inward to study his faith (190). For Tom Krattenmaker, Reggie White's doubts about his evangelism serve as an important warning about the excessive and misguided role that evangelical Christianity currently plays in the professional sporting ranks.

In *Onward Christian Athletes*, Krattenmaker has two principle tasks: first, he "uncover[s] the large part of the religion-in-sports iceberg hidden beneath the water" (2). To keep the iceberg less than Titanic-sized, Krattenmaker focuses exclusively on "the big three" of professional sports—football, baseball, and basketball—in order to show how conservative evangelical Christians have led a concerted effort to exploit professional sports and its concomitant star power for the purpose of evangelism. In telling his story, Krattenmaker, a progressive writer on religion in American life, is careful to humanize his subject. He disabuses his readers of the idea that these are simply "crazy" evangelicals, and is clearly impressed by their efforts to "out-hustle" the other religions in their quest to seize control of religion in professional sports (9). Nevertheless, the development of this uneven religious playing field bothers the author and leads him to his second task: drawing up a proposal to reform the role of religion in professional sports. In short, Krattenmaker aims not "to do away with religion in sports," but rather to "make it better" (6). For Krattenmaker, that means that religion in professional sports should be less about evangelism and more about religious pluralism; it should be less about cozying up to conservative political causes and more about serving as the conscience against the "sports industry's 'sins'" (7).

Krattenmaker's greatest contribution is illuminating just how pervasive the recent rise of the evangelical Christian right has been. We often hear how leaders like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell helped forge a social movement of conservative evangelical Christians that entered the political fray, but Krattenmaker details how evangelicals brought similar energy and ideas to the world of sports. Indeed, the effort to bring religion into the professional sports arena is not merely the sum of every jock pointing heavenward after a big play or praising God in the post-game interview; rather, it is the product of a concerted effort by dedicated evangelists. Beginning in 1954, the

Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), with the blessing of the legendary Branch Rickey, began using sports "heroes" to promote Christianity to those who "idolized" them. Significantly, early in the FCA's history, this "granddaddy" of sports ministries turned down suggestions to become the Fellowship of *Religious* Athletes (18–19). In the 1960s, Athletes in Action (AIA) began an even more "aggressive evangelism," one that relied on winning athletes winning souls for Jesus. In the early 1970s, the evangelical Baseball Chapel began serving ballplayers whose schedule prevented churchgoing. The organization immediately flourished. By 1975 the organization had a chaplain with every big league team, and it has since expanded to the minor leagues and overseas. Krattenmaker acknowledges that Baseball Chapel provides church services and counseling for its congregants, but he considers the organization's claim that salvation comes only through Jesus, as "inherently divisive and dismissive of other forms of belief" (98).

By the 1990s, the evangelical presence in sports had become even more salient. Promise Keepers, a new Christian organization for men, adopted a masculine brand of evangelical revivalism and drew huge crowds to stadiums across the country. In the twenty-first century, the promotional and marketing whiz, Brent High, has used everything from biblical bobbleheads to "faith nights" to transform ballparks into de facto oversized religious revival tents. These faith nights, however, as Krattenmaker makes plain, are really *evangelical* nights where those sitting in the box seat pews can hear stars like John Smoltz deliver his "sermon on the mound" (117). The Colorado Rockies drew considerable attention when they announced that—from its pious players to its top executives who prayed together—it was "an organization guided by Christianity" (38).

Krattenmaker, for all his criticisms, remains optimistic about a "faith-based reform agenda" (201). He is heartened by a recent change in leadership at AIA and by the fact that Catholics increasingly are embracing opportunities in sports ministry. Krattenmaker is convinced that a more constructive engagement between religion and pro sports can allow Christians to serve as "the *conscience* of sports" (208). How so? He wants to replace a "get-Jesus evangelism" with a sports ministry that seeks social justice, as well as addresses the problems endemic to American sporting culture (208). Specifically, Krattenmaker offers three suggestions. First, sports ministries should "serve as a prophetic force" for redressing racial injustice, particularly in sports, and thus work to ensure that African Americans and Hispanics receive the opportunities they deserve in the big leagues and prevent them from being exploited if they fail to make it (201). Next, Krattenmaker believes that Christian missions in sports must challenge the winning at all costs mentality that allows cheating—think, for example, performance enhancing drugs—which have become as much a part of sports as the singing of the national anthem. Krattenmaker argues that Christians must question their blind devotion to the "god of victory" (203). Finally, Krattenmaker wants to see the creation of "a fair and level religious playing field in the world of pro sports," one that is defined by "inclusiveness" (205). To that end, the author recommends that professional sports scrap the chaplaincy that is the exclusive territory of evangelicals and replace it with a pluralistic system such as those found in hospitals or in the military. Moreover, Krattenmaker acknowledges that nothing can be simply handed to anyone, and therefore, recommends that

We often hear how leaders like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell helped forge a social movement of conservative evangelical Christians that entered the political fray, but Krattenmaker details how evangelicals brought similar energy and ideas to the world of sports.

"moderate Christians, religious minorities, and nonbelievers would do well to take a page from the evangelicals' book and insert *themselves* into the action" (207).

I do not share Krattenmaker's optimism for reform. The nature of this sort of book is that the diagnosis is usually more on target than the cure, and that is the case here. Major league sports have accepted the expansion of religious missionary events over recent years, because they were consistent with selling more tickets. But Krattenmaker's agenda for social justice does not provide a winning gambit for the bottom line. Similarly, major league franchises will stop inviting religious organizations into the fold if religious leaders begin to question, denounce, or simply take away from the luster of the game. Furthermore, though Krattenmaker recognizes that the US is the most religious nation in the West and the most religiously diverse, it does not simply follow that other faiths will want to, or be able to, follow evangelical Christians into the sporting arena. Indeed, when I think of the congregation in which I was raised, Temple Emanu-El, it would not be hard to imagine Rabbi Landsberg leading us to Yankee Stadium for a game. But when I consider the prospect of Rabbi Landsberg leading us to the stadium for rest, relaxation, and *a retreat*, I cannot stop from laughing at the incongruity of such an outing. We do not take our religious act on the road—not even to home games, and while we may be fans of the Yankees, we are not fans of proselytizing or religious pep rallies. Muslim Americans also present a challenge to Krattenmaker's call for pluralism. Under the current religio-political climate, it is hard to fathom Muslim Americans wanting to hold a faith night at a stadium, but it is equally hard to imagine professional sports organizations aiding in such a visit with its potential for negative publicity or a possible financial hit at the turnstiles. As for atheists' "faith night," I will leave it to the good folks at Saturday Night Live to design that event.

To be fair, Krattenmaker's position that we should not eliminate religious significance and events from the ballpark is tenable. But once stadiums cease to be solely civic arenas and become at least in part religious spaces, Krattenmaker's sanguine call for democratization and social justice will be overshadowed by the reality that not everyone will feel equally welcome in an environment of "peanuts, popcorn, and proselytizing" (119).

THE QUALITY OF MERCY

Her work is wasted, they say,
as she tries to lift the weight of sorrow
heavy as a brickyard
or a prison gate.

What can Mercy do
beneath this empty sky
with her few blankets,
her dwindling source of water?

How can she turn her solemn face
to Misery again and again
collecting his tears,
hearing him ask to die?

Come, she says,
I will do what I can.
And when I leave you,
mark the place where I knelt
beside you with a stone
too heavy to cast at your brother.

Miriam Pederson

The Pursuit of the Great American Movie

First published March 1980

Richard Maxwell

New Year's Day 1980 was special in several respects. For one thing, it was probably the first New Year's ever when both Brenda Starr and Little Orphan Annie were in the hands of Middle Eastern sheiks. For another, it marked the end of what may be the most abused decade in American history. Looking back on the last ten years, we are likely to reflect that America itself is becoming a prisoner of the Middle East—or at least of circumstances beyond control. Fortunately, as in many times of economic travail, the 1970s have been a good time for the arts. It would be overly simple to say that social crisis precipitates aesthetic creativity. This formula is helpful only if it frees us from a collective end-of-decade hangover.

The problem for students of novels, say, or movies is in grasping just how art functions in a bad time. As the economy collapses, we demand more from the arts: we embrace with new fervor the traditional American search for a definitive, all-encompassing masterpiece. This impulse is a mistake. Masterpieces sneak up; they don't come when called. The pursuit of the Great American Novel brought forth one bloated production after another this year. The pursuit of the Great American Movie—my main concern in this essay—brought forth *Apocalypse Now,* a film whose aspirations are sufficiently suggested by its title. Apocalypse is not very frequently a mode in which art can flourish.

Even in its technical sense, the word "masterpiece" is a problematic basis for aesthetic judgments. It establishes itself in the English language by the mid-seventeenth century, signifying "a production of art or skill surpassing in excellence all others by the same hand." Several broad definitions extend the reach of this narrow one, with its emphasis on craftsmanship and individual accomplishment, but for the term to have any meaning at all it must be used sparingly. In addition, it should probably be confined to the description of works created in and through one human mind. On both these counts, the concept of the masterpiece is almost useless to the habitual filmgoer. Going to see movies is a process—a search in which we are rewarded by brilliant fragments and exhilarating continuities from one work to another, rather than by definitive, unified products.

Moreover, we seldom know just who is responsible for the excellence of what we enjoy. There has been a growing acknowledgment that the originally European concept of the genius-director doesn't apply all that neatly to the American scene—or, often enough, to the European scene either. Writers, cameramen, editors, and special-effects experts have all found a place in the limelight. Even actors and actresses have made a comeback. Film, to sum up, is still a prolific and usually a collaborative art. The quest for masterpieces leads to *Apocalypse Now.* If we forget masterpieces for the moment—if we let them arrive on their own—we receive in return a more fluid and more satisfactory notion of cinematic accomplishment.

We approach then—with a certain amount of trepidation—that most tempting form of criticism, the ten-best list. Any reader of newspapers and magazines has encountered, by this time in March, half a dozen lists of the ten best films of the decade. Typically, the critic will begin his summary by reciting some "trends" of the 1970s; disaster films and science fiction will probably dominate. Then he or she will plunge into a list of masterpieces, a list—most likely—having little to do with the account of trends. The films in the list, like comets or other astronomical visitations, will

appear magnificent but cold and remote: beautiful visitors, passing through on their way into textbooks.

I will confess that I am on my way to a ten-best list of my own. My only excuse is that I intend to praise not so much individual films as the context, tradition, and spirit that contained these films—that made them possible. The question of how one sees an object (aesthetic or otherwise) is closely wrapped up with the question of what category one chooses to put it in. Jorge Luis Borges cites "a certain Chinese encyclopedia" in which "animals are divided into (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they were mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (1) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance." These categories break up the world of animals and rearrange it before our eyes. I cannot promise to do so much for seventies film but I shall try.

(a) We should first drink—since this is a festive essay—to the survival of several old masters, neither of whom made a masterpiece in this decade, both of whom enlivened it immeasurably. Alfred Hitchcock, who had not made even an interesting film since *The Birds* (1963) came up with *Frenzy* and *The Family Plot*—in which good scripts and good actors allowed him to exercise his talents once more. The more consistent Luis Bunuel produced *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* and *That Obscure Object of Desire.* To see these films—all of them attaining a consistent excellence—was to be in touch with the very sources of western cinema. There won't be many more decades with good movies from directors who have been working since the 1920s.

(b) Secondly, we can acknowledge the partial (but still surprising) resurgence of detectives. Jack Nicholson in *Chinatown,* Elliot Gould in *The Long Goodbye,* Art Carney in *The Late Show,* and Richard Dreyfuss in *The Big Fix* were all convincing embodiments of the 1970s sleuth; so—to extend the definition of "detective" a little—were Dustin Hoffmann and Robert Redford in *All the President's Men.* The bias of these films towards the hard-boiled stories was pretty strong, but there were also wonderful tributes to the classical texts. The two Christie adaptations demonstrated the dependence of the genre on traditional comic plots and character types. A succession of Holmesian pastiches thrived on period detail, satire, and superb Dr. Watsons.

(c) Horror films had a good decade too: *Jaws—I* almost hate to admit it—was a pretty good film of its kind; *Carrie, Night of the Living Dead, Don't Look Now, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Halloween,* and (probably) Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu* were even better.[1] A horror film can be anything from high art to lowest-common-denominator gore. Why not both at once? As a lover of Jacobean tragedy, I find myself believing now and then that the horror film is on the verge of finding its John Webster or its Cyril Torneur.

(d) In the 1960s, the two Richard Lester-Beatles films looked like a fluke; in the 1970s rock 'n roll powered *American Graffiti, American Hot Wax, Saturday Night Fever, The Buddy Holly Story* (with Gary Busey's superb performance), and *Rock 'n Roll High School.* These films do not define a genre: they are not musicals or even "youth" films. Collectively, nonetheless, they are a memorable tribute to the survival of energy in a mass society.

(e) and (f) The two American directors who developed styles of lasting worth in this decade were Woody Allen and Robert Altman. It is probable that both men produced masterpieces; more essentially, for the identity and experience of the whole decade, they managed to produce strings of excellent works—films that were idiosyncratic and original, yet seldom repetitious. (For what it's worth, my own favorites were Allen's *Love and Death* and Altman's *Thieves Like Us.)* Altman's career faltered a bit towards the end of the 1970s, while Allen's picked up. We can expect both of them to make it through the 1980s with honor.

(g) I suppose I must put at least one individual film on this list. My choice for best film of the decade is a movie practically no one in this country saw: Alain Tanner's *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000.* This Swiss (French language) film

was released in 1976, a year or so past the center of the decade. *Jonah* is a comedy about politics, and especially about radical politics in the aftermath of the 1960s. Tanner makes this subject more urgent and vivid than it has ever seemed in film. It is hard to imagine a director infusing Brecht with sentiment or pulling off Godardian tricks with a light, entertaining touch, but Tanner does both. Most important, the community of weird characters here created actually embodies a kind of hope for our culture.

(h) Back in the 1920s and 1930s German movies were of central importance in the development of film; now they are again, thanks to state and audience support for Fassbinder, Herzog, and Wenders. I want to see more of this stuff. For the moment, it is enough to acknowledge the miraculous revivification of a tradition and an industry.

(i) This was also the decade when we began to get access to good films from places like Cuba and Senegal. On the whole, American film distributors did not do a very effective job in the 1970s; we must at least give them credit for making available the movies of Ousmane Sembene, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, and other talented directors from exotic or inaccessible places. The 1970s—in however disorganized a fashion—held out the possibility that American audiences might start to perceive film as a truly international art. The technology of the next ten or twenty years may well speed up this process.

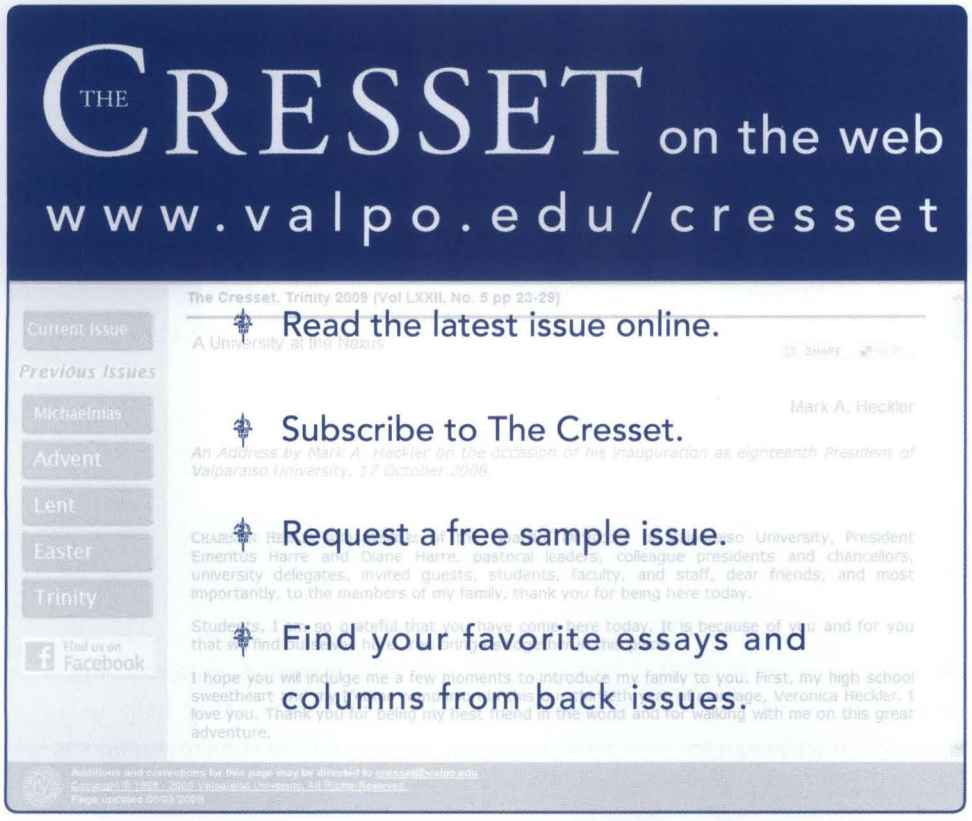
(j) My last category is my most complex, and so I can only hint at its significance. In the nineteenth century, the historical novel was a way of imagining what was almost unimaginable: the interaction between individual yearnings and the fate of whole civilizations. For the first time, in the 1970s, there were some great films —great individually and as a group—that carried on this enterprise. *The Conformist, Barry Lyndon,* and *The Man Who Would Be King* come to mind immediately. Each of these films is based on a strong work of narrative fiction; each exploits the possibilities of ironic spectacle as perhaps only the cinematic medium could have done. Extraordinarily, two musicals belong to this group: *Cabaret* and *Hair.* Adding Broadway show tunes to a spectacular meditation on modern history might seem a very peculiar thing to do. For some reason, the strategy worked. *Apocalypse Now*, I suspect, might be usefully seen as a lesser member of this group—lesser because it tries too hard. Masterpieces don't direct your attention to their masterfulness, or, if they do, it's at a considerable risk.

In spite of myself I have circled back to the idea of the masterpiece. This idea is, of course, useful in its place. Looking back at a given period of time, however—particularly a period we have experienced—we are likely to realize that artistic vitality stems less from isolated works than from the way these works prefigure, amplify, and answer to one another. Thinking in terms of many different categories—genres, national traditions, individual careers, distribution patterns, interrelationships among the arts—may help us to remember just how extensive the cinematic success of the 1970s was. Thinking in these terms may also make us a little more patient as we search for masterpieces—and a lot more willing to see lots of movies.

Note

1. I don't dare put my personal favorite anywhere but in a footnote, but if you ever get a chance to see a Canadian production titled *Cannibal Girls*, go right ahead. You won't regret it.

Richard Maxwell was a long-time contributor and, briefly, editor of *The Cresset*. During his eminent career, he served in the Valparaiso University English Department and later taught comparative literature at Yale University. He died at his home in New Haven, Connecticut on 20 July 2010. A memorial fund in his name will support exceptional student work in comparative literature. Donations can be sent to: Yale University, c/o Alison Coleman, PO Box 2038, New Haven, CT 06521-2038.



Submission Guidelines

What We Publish: *The Cresset* publishes essays, reviews, and poetry, not fiction. Essays that we publish generally are not opinion pieces but expository, personal, or exploratory essays. We will, on occasion, consider interviews or selected other genres. Almost any subject is possible. We are highly selective about personal essays of faith experience and about homilies. The editor reviews all manuscripts and, when necessary, solicits opinions from members of an Editorial Board, consisting of faculty members at Valparaiso University.

Guidelines for Authors: 1. Our readership is educated, most with some church connection, most frequently Lutheran. Articles should be aimed at general readers interested in religious matters. 2. *The Cresset* is not a theological journal, but a journal addressing matters of import to those with some degree of theological interest and commitment. Authors are encouraged to reflect upon the religious implications of their subject. 3. Style and spelling are governed, in most cases, by *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *Webster's New International Dictionary*. 4. We do accept unsolicited manuscripts; however, before submitting a manuscript, you may want to contact the editor at cresset@valpo.edu about the suitability of your topic for the journal. Our review columns (film, popular culture, music, and so forth) are usually supplied by regular columnists. 5. The preferred method of submission is in Microsoft Word for Window format. Email your file to cresset@valpo.edu. Or you may send your manuscript via USPS to: The Editor, The Cresset, Huegli Hall, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN 46383. 6. Poetry submissions should be sent via USPS. Poetry submissions via email will not be accepted. 7. The use of notes is discouraged. Notes of supporting citations should be placed in parentheses in the text, listing: last name of the author, year of publication, and page numbers where appropriate, e.g., (Wright 1934, 232). 8. In a separate section entitled "Works Cited," list alphabetically by author (and, within author, by year of publication) all items that are cited in the text. Provide complete bibliographical information, including author's first name, publisher, and place and date of publication. Examples:

Bass, Dorothy, ed. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Wright, Basil. "Filming in Ceylon." *Cinema Quarterly* 2/4 (1943): 231–32.

_____. *The Long View*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1974.

On The Poets

Barbara Crooker is author of *Radiance* (Word Press 2005) and *Line Dance* (Word Press 2008). Her poems have appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor, Christianity and Literature*, and other journals.

Chris Anderson is Professor of English at Oregon State University and a Catholic deacon. He has published a number of books. A new book of poems, *CONSOLATIONS*, is forthcoming from Airlie Press.

Katy Giebenhain has published poems in *The London Magazine, Prairie Schooner, Bordercrossing Berlin, Water~Stone Review, Hidden City Quarterly,* and *American Life in Poetry*. Her chapbook, *Pretending to be Italian*, is available from RockSaw Press.

Paul Willis is Professor of English at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. He is author of *Bright Shoots of Everlastingness: Essays on Faith and the American Wild* (Woodfarm 2005).

Georgia Ressmeyer is a 1970 Valpo graduate and Christ College Scholar who received her JD from Yale Law School. Her poems have appeared recently in *Wisconsin People & Ideas* and *The South Carolina Review*.

Ann Applegarth teaches poetry to elementary and middle-school students in Roswell, New Mexico. She is poet-in-residence for the High Plains Writing Project at Eastern New Mexico University.

Miriam Pederson is Associate Professor of English at Aquinas College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is author of the chapbook *This Brief Light* and exhibits her poetry regularly in collaboration with her husband's sculpture in regional galleries.

Valparaiso University

[redacted]
CHRISTOPHER CENTER

Shield of Character

The Shield of Character is one of the most important and powerful symbols of Valparaiso University. At its center is the Light, the source of all truth, serving as a reminder of who we are and what we strive to be.

The Shield of Character reflects what we protect and defend as an interconnected Valpo community: the common set of shared characteristics and values found among those who live and work here and those who have walked this campus.

- truth-seeking
- free to inquire
- humble
- compassionate
- service-minded
- purpose-driven
- empowered
- ethical

Our Motto: IN LUCE TUA VIDEMUS LUCEM
In Thy Light We See Light