She Stands
Kim Suttell

What Does the Reformation Mean for Us?
A Roundtable Discussion
Ronald K. Rittgers, Katie Benjamin, David King, Alissa Kretzmann, David Rojas Martinez, Amelia Schroeder, Nura Esther Zaki, and Thomas Albert Howard

Edward Schroeder's Gift and Promise, edited by Ronald Neustadt and Stephen Hitchcock
Frederick A. Niedner

David Bentley Hart’s The New Testament: A Translation
Brett Beasley
On the front cover: Carl August Schwerdgeburth (1785-1878). Dr. Martin Luther im Kreise seiner Familie zu Wittenberg am Christabend (detail), 1536, 1843. Engraving on paper, 9 x 11 inches (plate), 11 1/2 x 15 inches (paper). Gift of Selma and Gerhard Neils. Brauer Museum of Art, 80.03.005.


THE CRESSET is published five times during the academic year by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for informed opinion about literature, the arts, and public affairs. Periodicals postage paid at Valparaiso, Indiana.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Cresset, Valparaiso University, 1320 Chapel Drive South, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

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.thecresset.org.

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

Submissions: Refer to our online submissions management system at thecresset.submittable.com/submit.

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. Entire contents copyright 2017 by the Valparaiso University Press, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383-9998, without whose written permission reproduction in whole or in part for any purpose whatsoever is expressly forbidden.
# THE CRESSET

Advent-Christmas 2017 • Volume LXXXI, No. 2

## ESSAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brian T. Johnson</td>
<td>What Does the Reformation Mean for Us?: Setting the Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald K. Rittgers</td>
<td>Loving the Unlovely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alissa Kretzmann</td>
<td>An Encounter with Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David King</td>
<td>Freedom Under the Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nura Esther Zaki</td>
<td>Honoring Our Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Rojas Martínez</td>
<td>The Chapel of the Resurrection as a Pilgrimage Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Benjamin</td>
<td>Screw-ups and Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Schroeder</td>
<td>Moving Beyond Disagreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Albert Howard</td>
<td>Remembering the Reformation and the Problem of Christian Disunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh Langhoff</td>
<td>Listen Up! Our Post-Reformation Approach to Music and Scripture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## COLUMNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. David Baer</td>
<td>Northern Exposure: Russia's Influence on the Modern West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Eberle Kreiner</td>
<td>The Word and the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebekah Curtis</td>
<td>The Tree Killers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REVIEWS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xueying Wang</td>
<td>Remembering the Reformation by Thomas Albert Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick A. Niedner</td>
<td>Gift and Promise: The Augsburg Confession and the Heart of Christian Theology by Edward Schroeder, edited by Ronald Neustadt and Stephen Hitchcock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett Beasley</td>
<td>The New Testament: A Translation by David Bentley Hart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Meilaender</td>
<td>Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective by Mark R. Amstutz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimee Fritz</td>
<td>The Year of Small Things: Radical Faith for the Rest of Us by Sarah Arthur and Erin F. Wasinger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## DEPARTMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IN LUCE TUA</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON THE POETS</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VERSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim Suttell</td>
<td>She Stands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anya Silver</td>
<td>Secrets of Ferns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergio A. Ortiz</td>
<td>In a Room Full of Bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Woolfitt</td>
<td>Blue Clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Diaz</td>
<td>Chrismation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Dietrich</td>
<td>The Barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luci Shaw</td>
<td>Whelm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Wright</td>
<td>Along the Prairie Path, Behind the Library, You Tell Me What We Cannot Write in Books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
whatever is **TRUE**

whatever is **NOBLE**

whatever is **RIGHT**

whatever is **PURE**

whatever is **LOVELY**

whatever is **ADMIRABLE**

if anything is excellent or praiseworthy
—think about such things.

*Philippians 4:8*
In Luce Tua

In Thy Light

On the Road

If you are a regular reader of the Cresset, chances are that you have marked in some way the quincentennial of the Reformation. Indeed, we cannot let this occasion pass without participating in some small way—namely, by recapping a conversation that took place at Valparaiso University in honor of the anniversary, and by providing reviews of several books that delve into the topic of the Reformation.

First-year students attended a panel discussion on October 31 that addressed what the Reformation means for us today. In their remarks, eight panelists, mostly recent alumni, highlighted themes at the heart of the Reformation: love, grace, freedom, and truth. Rather than focusing on these themes in the abstract, however, the speakers honed in on how these themes manifest themselves in their daily experiences, relationships, work, faith, and communities. The panelists’ insights reveal an appreciation for the Reformation that radiates throughout their lives. Turn to page four to read their remarks, and those of professors Ronald K. Rittgers and Thomas Albert Howard—two Reformation historians who have enriched the Valpo community’s commemoration of this anniversary with their scholarly expertise. (Among our Reformation-related book coverage is Xueying Wang’s review of Howard’s recent Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Protestantism, which appears on page 26.)

This issue does contain a number of pieces that are not Reformation related. Truth be told, however, all of the Reformation content has me seeing reformation—with a lower-case “r”—throughout this issue, even where it is not intentional. Aimee Fritz’s review of The Year of Small Things, for example, describes how authors Sarah Arthur and Erin F. Wasinger handle their discontent over how they and their families had been living their faith. They make small, deliberate changes to try new ways of sharing the gospel and participating in its saving power. And in her essay, “The Tree Killers,” Rebekah Curtis recounts her tentative and somewhat squeamish first steps into forest management—an activity that, through the almost heretical action of killing trees, literally reforms the habitat of other woodland flora and fauna.

That may be a long way from Luther, so I’ll close with a favorite quote from the reformer that David Rojas Martínez shared in the Reformation panel discussion:

This life, therefore, is not righteousness; but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam, but all is being purified in glory.

The relevance of this quote extends beyond Reformation commemorations and into our observance of Advent. Both reformation and preparation require action. We are on the road; we are not yet what we shall be, but growing toward it.

—HGG
What Does the Reformation Mean for Us?
A Roundtable Discussion

Setting the Stage

On the evening of October 31, 2017—exactly 500 years after Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg—eight panelists at Valparaiso University engaged in a public ritual in which they remembered identity and shared personal narratives. They answered the question, “What does the Reformation mean for us?” Patterned after Martin Luther’s Tischreden (Table Talks), the campus community first gathered for a festive German feast in honor of the Reformation. Then, first year students assembled to listen to a panel of two faculty members, five recent alumni, and a current student. These panelists came from a variety of faith backgrounds, including Lutheran (Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), Catholic, and United Methodist. Professor Ronald K. Rittgers, the Erich Markel Chair in German Reformation Studies, began the panel, while Professor Thomas Albert Howard, the Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Chair in Ethics, concluded it. In between, the six panelists offered brief comments. They represent a glimpse into how the identity of Valparaiso University has shaped the narratives of eight public, faithful intellectuals, while engaging in a pattern of conversation and reflection on ideas that matter.

Many Lutheran and Catholic (especially Jesuit) institutions host community events where they can remain rooted in their church-related identity while reaching out to engage different religious, non-religious, and philosophical perspectives. This rooted and reaching perspective resides in the middle of a continuum between (on one side) church-related institutions that claim a more orthodox or sectarian perspective, and (on the other side) institutions with pluralist points of view (Johnson). All three perspectives make credible theological claims and develop events and practices that contribute to an education connected to those ideas. A rooted and reaching paradigm grows out of particular enlightenment thinking, deep commitments of influential theologians (like Luther and Ignatius of Loyola), and cultural and historic influences that cultivated refined world-views. This paradigm is paradoxical, dynamic, and marked by tensions, as institutions of this ilk navigate sometimes competing and controversial differences. At their best, rooted and reaching institutions are a kind of laboratory for how people who hold differing points of view can engage across difference to deepen and broaden shared visions and common work on behalf of church and society. In the process of such events, the academic ritual practice of discussing controversial ideas helps through shared experience to create narratives that form identity.

Brian T. Johnson is assistant vice president for mission and ministry at Valparaiso University.

Works Cited
Johnson, Brian. “Sustaining the Theological Exploration of Vocation.” Presentation, Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education Conference, St. Louis, MO, March 27, 2015.
Loving the Unlovely
Ronald K. Rittgers

The Protestant Reformation was an event of world historical significance that has shaped modern society in profound ways. Many of the defining characteristics of contemporary economic, political, social, and religious life may be traced back to the seismic shifts that occurred in sixteenth-century Europe as a result of the Protestant revolution. The Reformation has also shaped our university in profound ways, a fact that is evidenced by the inscription on the cornerstone of our chapel. This inscription reads: "Valparaiso Memorial Chapel, in the Year of Christ 1959, the Four Hundred and Forty Second Reformation Year, Jesus Christ Himself the Chief Cornerstone." Here we see a direct link between the Reformation and our chapel, which is intended to be the spiritual center of our campus.

But what exactly was the Reformation? What was it fundamentally about? What lay at the heart of the Reformation? And what does this heart have to do with us today at Valpo, 500 years later? Why should we care? Why should you care? I want to try answer these questions in a way that I hope will make sense to you.

Let's take up the final question first, why should you care about the Reformation? I'd like to suggest the following intentionally provocative answer: you should care about the Reformation because it has the potential to significantly improve your love life!

So, let's talk about your love life a bit. What do you do if you want someone to be attracted to you? Doesn't it work pretty much like this? You see someone in class or on campus and you say to yourself, that's the one for me! He is so handsome, so smart, so interesting, and so cool. I want to be his and I want him to be mine! Or, she is so beautiful, and so intelligent, and so funny. I want to be hers and I want her to be mine! And so what do you do? You try to make yourself attractive to that person because that's the way human love works, right? We are attracted to people we find attractive. You go to the gym, study more diligently, comb your hair, brush your teeth, and pray that he or she might just notice you, for there is nothing greater in life than loving and being loved by the beloved.

The heart of the Reformation is the simple but life-changing belief that God's love does not operate this way. God's love does not require or allow the kind of strenuous effort we exert when we seek to persuade another human being to love us. There is no such persuading involved in one's love relationship with God. It is in this way that the Reformation can improve your love life, by which I mean your life of loving and being loved by God, in the first place, and then of loving and being loved by others.

Listen to how Martin Luther compared human and divine love at the Heidelberg Disputation in 1518, which took place just a few months after the Ninety-Five Theses appeared in 1517 and a few years before The Freedom of the Christian in 1520:

"The love of God does not find, but creates that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it." A pithy if somewhat obscure statement, wouldn't you agree? Here is how Luther sought to clarify it: "Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good. Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive" (LW 31: 57). According to Luther, fallen human love is always at root self-seeking, whereas God's love is always self-giving, always seeking the good of the beloved regardless of the
beloved's moral condition. In other words, we do not have to make ourselves attractive to God in order for God to love us. We are not able to do so, and God does not require this of us, in any case. God loves us precisely in our unloveliness—our habitual moral failure—and God's love makes us lovely in God's eyes.

You see, Luther had worked extremely hard to make himself attractive to God. He had sacrificed a career in the law to become a monk and had then engaged in all manner of religious exercises as he sought to persuade God to love him. But he failed and became extremely frustrated with God. In fact, he tells us that he came to hate God. That's right, the father of the Protestant Reformation, the guy whose Reformation inspired the founding of our university and the construction of our chapel, once hated God. Why? Because he thought that God expected him to become perfectly lovable in order to earn divine love. This belief drove Luther to rage and to despair, for he knew he could never achieve this goal. But then, through intense study of the Bible, the reading of some good books, and the wise counsel of some good friends, Luther was rescued from his anger and despair. It was the insight that he did not have to persuade God to love him—that God had in fact first loved him long ago—that changed everything. Luther tells us that he felt born again when he arrived at this realization.

God is in the business of loving the unlovely, of loving in a totally unconditional way, because God is Himself self-giving love at His very core—that is the fundamental Reformation insight. In order to enter into a relationship of love with this God, Luther thought that one simply had to accept that one was unlovely, morally speaking, and place one's faith in God. And Luther thought that God's love would draw forth this confession and faith from the individual—God would make them happen.

But according to Luther, this divine love is a very costly love, and it comes to us in the last place we would expect to find it: in a man who lived 2,000 years ago and who was brutally executed on a cross. I am referring to Jesus Christ, of course, who according to Christian theology is the Son of God in human flesh, come to take death and all of its consequences upon Himself and to give life to all who live in the shadow of death, which is basically all of us. For Luther, Jesus Christ is the supreme expression of God's self-giving love.
God’s radical, unconditional love is a cruciform love, that is, it takes the shape of the cross, of Christ the God-man on the cross. That’s where we find God and His love, even though it makes little sense to our natural way of seeing things and may even offend us.

I am a Reformation scholar. That’s my job, to teach and write about the Reformation. This year I have been searching for a way to convey the radical, cruciform love of the Reformation to our campus. As I have cast my mind and eyes about, I have landed on what I think is an especially fitting symbol of this love: the Homeless Jesus sculpture, which is located on the lawn just west of the Union. In this sculpture, the crucified Christ is wrapped in the cloak of a homeless man and rests alone on a bench. I think the presence of this sculpture raises some really important questions for us as we collectively try to take stock of the Reformation and what it might mean for us today. Here are some of these questions:

The crucified God inhabits the central crossroads of our campus in what Mother Teresa would call His “distressing disguise.” He has come to us. Have we noticed Him there?

Why has the crucified God come to us in this way? Might it be to draw our attention to the marginalized in our midst and the way we frequently pass them by? Luther taught that the experience of God’s radical love for us was supposed to motivate us to share this love with others. How are we doing at passing on such love, especially to those on the fringes of society?

Or perhaps the crucified God is among us to reveal to us our own homelessness, our own alienation from our true home and source of love, which is God. Might Homeless Jesus be present among us to assure us that He has taken this homelessness on Himself as an expression of God’s deep love for us? Might He be there to tell us He understands our alienation, even from God? After all, it was He who cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46) He gets alienation from God and He has provided a solution to it.

Of what significance is it that Homeless Jesus is located at the crossroads of campus, common to all, belonging to all, yet owned by no one? He is not in the chapel. He is a Jesus that belongs to all religions on campus. Might the location of Homeless Jesus be a sign for us of how the radical love of God comes to us and seeks us wherever we are, whoever we are, and in whatever dire situation we might find ourselves?

What is the relationship between Homeless Jesus and the glorious Christus Rex of the chapel? Might we wish for the consideration of one to lead to a consideration of the other? Or must the two remain separate at Valpo? If so, why?

Finally, of what significance is it that there is space to sit next to Homeless Jesus on His bench? It seems that we have been invited to join Him on His bench and to sit next to His crucified feet. How might it change the way we all understand and experience Valpo if we would each sit on this bench next to these feet and ponder these questions for a while?

My hope and prayer is that such an act might bring the radical cruciform love of the Reformation to our campus in new ways.

Ronald K. Rittgers holds the Erich Markel Chair in German Reformation Studies at Valparaiso University, where he teaches history and theology. He is author of The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany and The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany. Rittgers is past president of the American Society of Church History.
An Encounter with Grace
Alissa Kretzmann

I REMEMBER ONE CLASS SESSION DURING MY freshman year when we were talking about the Bible. The professor asked us, “So who believes this stuff?” I was the only one who raised my hand. I realized then just how diverse Valpo’s campus is in regard to what we believe and what we don’t believe. While Valparaiso University has a rich Lutheran tradition, it is naive to assume that all of us here are Lutheran! Not all of us are Christian or people of faith. But this conversation about the Reformation is for all of us to wrestle with what it means to be a part of a university rooted in the tradition of the Reformation. Our diversity and our questions and our differences of opinion and experience are what make this conversation rich.

What requirements and prerequisites have we put into place, intentionally or unintentionally, that make some people feel distant from the unconditional love of God?

One thing we do probably all have in common is the experience of feeling inadequate. Think about that for a second. Think of a time when you felt like you weren't good enough, smart enough, fast enough, brave enough, attractive enough. Feeling like you aren't good enough or that you don't belong can be cause for torment. In contemporary society we place excruciatingly high expectations on ourselves and others. The result is that we fall short of these expectations pretty often. This dynamic is perhaps especially present in contexts where we are graded, judged and scored, such as college. But that experience was also common in the 1500s, when Martin Luther was alive. Luther was a part of a culture in which people thought about whether or not they had done enough to be saved, to be in good standing with God. That question tormented Luther. But at some point, he realized that he had it backwards. He realized that God’s love and forgiveness were unconditional.

When I was a student at Valpo, this realization changed my life. It’s a longer story than I have time to tell here. But, basically, when I first arrived on campus I was under the impression that there was a lot wrong with the world and that it was my job to fix it. I was very drawn to social justice and activism and was a part of the Social Action Leadership Team (SALT). But at some point, I realized that I had been doing some of those things because I felt pressure to do so. Somewhere along the way I encountered God’s grace and realized that there was nothing that I could do, or not do, that would make God love me more or less. In a way, I realized that God didn’t need me; the salvation of the world was not all on my shoulders. That realization was very freeing to me. Out of that encounter with grace I began to see loving my neighbor as something that flowed out from God's unconditional love for me.

Luther saw that the church was turning into an institution that taught and practiced that God's love and salvation were conditional. That's what sparked the Reformation. The Reformation was when Luther and others called upon the church to tear down the requirements and prerequisites that were keeping people from experiencing the unconditional love of God.

As members of a university community that is part of the Reformation tradition, what does this mean for us now? What requirements and prerequisites have we put into place, intentionally or unintentionally, that make some people feel distant from the unconditional love of God? In terms of our campus community, are there unspoken cultural or social rules that make some people feel like they are “in” and other people feel “out”? Are there expectations that make some people feel good enough to be at Valpo and other people feel like they aren't?

When I was on campus, the gay, lesbian and trans students were calling out the fact that they didn’t feel particularly safe or welcome at Valpo.
There were certain spoken and unspoken norms that made them feel like they weren't truly accepted as Valpo students. My queer friends, on a really basic level, wanted to feel like their bodies, their voices, and their presence belonged on this campus as much as anyone else's, without condition.

Perhaps part of what it means to be a part of this Reformation tradition is that we call out the theologies and practices happening in our own community that make some people feel like they aren't worthy to receive the unconditional love and welcome of God.

Let me give you an example. Some people are celebrating the Reformation by eating German food and dressing up as Martin Luther. This is nice and all. But those of us who are Lutheran need to be careful that we don’t unintentionally suggest that in order to be Lutheran, or that in order to experience God's love, or that in order to appreciate the Reformation you must be European American and like eating bratwurst. Do you see what I’m saying?

What if the Valparaiso campus community celebrated the Reformation by destroying some of those unspoken prerequisites and expectations that still exist on this campus? Are we ready to do that kind of reform? Are we willing to do the work of tearing down walls that make some people feel welcome and others feel alienated? Are we open to doing what it takes to really live into the claim that God's love is truly without condition?

Alissa Kretzmann graduated from Valparaiso University in 2012 with a bachelor of social work degree. She received her master of divinity degree at Yale Divinity School and is completing a master's degree in Lutheran studies at Luther Seminary. She is awaiting her first call as a pastor in the ELCA.

Freedom Under the Cross

David King

If I were to ask you when the Chapel of the Resurrection was dedicated, what would your answer be? The typical, and correct, answer would be 1959. However, near the doors to the entrance of the chapel, another date is listed: "the four hundred and forty second Reformation year." That inscription speaks to the grand legacy of the Reformation at Valpo in a way that is fascinating but also somewhat problematic. The Reformation is at the very heart of what Valpo should be, yet it can remain hidden.

The most articulate argument I have heard for Valpo's relationship with the Reformation can be found in O. P. Kretzmann's inaugural address from 1940, entitled, “The Destiny of a Christian University in the Modern World.” I encountered Kretzmann’s address during my last semester here at Valpo thanks to history professor Heath Carter. As I read through it, I was struck by Kretzmann's crystal clear declaration of universal Truth and the role of the Christian university regarding the Truth. In the middle of a tumultuous time, Kretzmann stated, “We can build here a school whose greatness is the greatness of freedom under God, the greatness of the free preservation and transmission of Truth, the greatness of an intelligent and dynamic application of a militant faith.” Freedom was at the heart of the Reformation, and for Kretzmann, freedom was at the center of this institution. The kind of freedom that Kretzmann spoke of is the freedom to pursue any knowledge because the ultimate Truth was, and is, already known. That Truth is that salvation rests in Jesus Christ—with that at the foundation of the university in Kretzmann’s eyes. The question is, how does a twenty-first century Valpo reflect the Reformation tradition that is at the heart of Kretzmann’s vision in a very different looking world?

It is important to define what freedom is, both in terms of the Reformation and Valpo. The kind of freedom that Luther found was deeply relational. That relationship came through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to cover our wholly sinful selves. This emerges from Luther’s Theology of the Cross. Luther argued that the Cross is where God can be found, and the place where the imputation of Christ's righteousness occurs. This university has referred to itself as a University under the Cross. While that can seem like a fancy phrase that should be designated for an admissions pamphlet that parents of prospec-
tive students will read, I would encourage each of us to think deeply over what that means for us and future generations.

I believe that a twenty-first century university under the Cross is a university that unapologetically clings to the Truth while welcoming all.

One of the lasting legacies of the Reformation, especially on the campus of a Christian university, is debate. The Truth that must be at the foundation allows institutions like Valpo the freedom to engage in real debate.

When Kretzmann spoke of “the transmission of the Truth,” I believe he meant telling the story of Jesus Christ and the salvation that was won on the cross. This means a campus atmosphere with Christ at the very center, always. The mission of the University is to be aligned with the chapel inscription I mentioned at the beginning—that Christ himself is the cornerstone of the Chapel and of the University. With this unapologetic transmission of Truth in all that the University does, all who attend this institution will benefit. The bold proclamation of Truth should be the firm foundation of all that goes on here.

With that foundation, any debate can be entered, whether it is between different Christian traditions or between non-Christians and Christians. One of the lasting legacies of the Reformation, especially on the campus of a Christian university, is debate. The Truth that must be at the foundation allows institutions like Valpo the freedom to engage in real debate. As the nexus of Athens and Jerusalem, Valpo must be a place where tough conversations happen. Valpo must develop future leaders who are comfortable engaging in difficult conversations with those with whom they have real differences. I believe that Valpo has at times shied away from uncomfortable conversations that are possible because of the Truth, and by doing so, has fallen away from its foundation. This place should be at the forefront of uncomfortable conversations around religious freedom, denominational disagreements, and social justice issues that are the focus of our national conscience.

We have a unique blend of groups here, at a Lutheran institution with more Catholic students than Lutheran ones, and with a growing number of non-Christians. For many students, this place is where they first interact with others who have vastly different views than their own. My charge to Valpo moving forward is to facilitate the kind of difficult conversations that it is uniquely positioned to do while guaranteeing that the Truth holds the highest importance. This cannot be done in an arrogant manner, but with the utter joy that comes from knowing what Jesus Christ has done. That joy creates an atmosphere of welcome that sparks a healthy campus life. That healthy campus life, when based on the foundation of the Truth, promotes the freedom to dialogue across difference. It is critical that Valpo embraces its Reformation heritage not just as an institution of higher learning, but as a Lutheran university born in the tradition of difficult discussion, rooted in the ultimate Truth that Luther communicated 500 years ago.

David King graduated in 2017 with degrees in history and humanities and as a Christ College Scholar. He is currently living in the Denver area and applying to graduate school while working at a law firm.

Honoring Our Heritage

Nura Esther Zaki

In an increasingly pluralistic society, being an institution “under the Cross” has meant unapologetically and humbly incorporating rich Christian traditions and values into a community that welcomes and encourages diversity of thought, creed, and practice. The Reformation represents, among many things, a more inclusive invitation for people of religious and non-religious inclinations to expe-
rience Christ. I have found that the values of the Reformation are implicitly experienced in Valpo's community life—so much so that sometimes people miss the connection between the Reformation and how we behave as a community. Therefore, I am thankful for this opportunity to reflect on how the philosophy behind what we do makes us part of a heritage that deserves recognition to better perfect its influence on our lives together.

As a member of the United Methodist Church—part of a larger religious tradition founded by John Wesley in England in the early 1700s—I must note that without Martin Luther's contributions in Germany, Wesley could not have done what he did in England two centuries later. Wesley attributed his key conversion experience, known to Methodists simply as “Aldersgate,” to hearing Luther’s preface to Romans on the night of May 24, 1738, on Aldersgate Street. He recorded the moment in his diary: “About a quarter before nine, while the leader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation …”

It is worth noting that Wesley was already a Christian at this point. Along with his brother, the prominent hymn writer Charles Wesley, John had studied the Scriptures at length since his time at Oxford with a group of friends, even naming their group “the Holy Club.” In fact, their meticulous devotion to spiritual formation is how the name “Methodists” originally came to be. However, it was at Aldersgate, hearing Luther, that Wesley experienced a spiritual rebirth.

This sense of continual renewal of the mind and soul that brings about transformation is at the core of the evangelical reform movement. Luther and Wesley both critiqued the church of their time, not simply for the sake of disrupting or dismantling what they saw as unfit, but to remind the church of its core mission of truly representing the Gospel they preached through both their words and actions.

In practice, at least one Christian denomination based on Wesleyan teaching, the United Methodist Church, asserts that, “Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. Scripture [however] is primary, revealing the Word of God ‘so far as it is necessary for our salvation.’ This is an echo of the Five Solas that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers’ theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.

A core tenet at the heart of Valparaiso University is the freedom of inquiry. This “freedom” allows students to think independently while consulting wisdom that has persisted throughout time. Luther, in his zeal, shared this

There is wisdom in teaching students in college and students of life alike not to shun the honest inner questioning of their spiritual journey or accept simple answers to complex problems.

To do so would be a disservice to their own curiosity and to the authenticity of how their faith may evolve as a result of paying attention to those thoughts. The same spirit of freedom by expanding access to the Bible. Considerable evidence shows that both Luther and Wesley struggled with their faith and made it their own not in spite of their doubts and questions, but because of them. There is wisdom in teaching students in college and students of life alike not to shun the honest inner questioning of their spiritual journey or accept simple answers to complex problems. To do so would be a disservice to their own curiosity and to the authenticity of how their faith may evolve as a result of paying attention to those thoughts. To nurture that spirit of “freedom” rather than fear the wandering that may result is healthy, and it’s the only way people have moved the tradition forward. I hope that
Valpo continues to teach this. In United Methodist understanding, both laypeople and clergy alike share in "our theological task." The theological task is the ongoing effort to live as Christians in the midst of the complexities of a secular world.

Luther and Wesley were both serious scholars with pastoral hearts. By virtue of who they were and who they were called to be, they sacrificed neither strict doctrine nor their conviction for showing compassion to the hurt world around them. At Valpo, students, professors, staff, and community members alike speak and understand a common language of passion and purpose. Whether that means finding one's purpose through choosing an academic program (nursing, education, art, computer science) or choosing to find purpose in the roles we've already been given (dad, daughter, brother, roommate, supervisor, colleague) let's be intentional in what we do and look for ways in which our contributions can benefit others. For the very ways we “have always done things” weren't always there after all.

Nura Esther Zaki graduated from Valparaiso University in 2017 with a bachelor of arts in political science and a complementary major in the humanities from Christ College. During her time at Valpo, she was part of the Sacristy Team, Student Senate, and served as an RA. She currently serves her communities of the Southeast side of Chicago and the Northwest suburbs of Chicagoland through the local church with plans to pursue a legal career in public interest.

The Chapel of the Resurrection as a Pilgrimage Site

David Rojas Martinez

When I was at Valpo, I spent many hours in the Chapel as a student worker. I was able to experience the building in a very personal way—much like my engineer friends experienced Gellersen Hall and my more musically talented friends experienced the VUCA. It seems to me that buildings on this campus have strong characters, and that they each embody something important to this institution. However, none compare to what the Chapel embodies.

These few years later, I have come to understand that time here is a pilgrimage, and the Chapel of the Resurrection is Valpo’s central pilgrimage site. You see, the Chapel embodies something intrinsic to the life of Valparaiso University. Grounded in its Lutheran Christian tradition, the Chapel of the Resurrection embodies Valpo’s journey toward the Light of God.

Perhaps by now you have noticed the Latin phrase *In luce tua videmus lucem* portrayed in a variety of ways throughout campus, especially on the Arts and Sciences building, where it is emblazoned and surrounded by the word “light” in a plethora of languages. This phrase is both the motto and the essence of VU: *In thy light we see light.*

The Chapel embodies VU’s journey toward the Light of God by being an entry point into a community, a place for all who want to think deeply as well as for those who simply want to pass by. It is also a place of sending that provides us with an identity that cannot be easily denied or shaken.

At the beginning of the academic year, you may have participated in the opening convocation. Did you see the world that was sitting beside you, behind you, in front of you, and throughout the Chapel on that day? Did you see the world becoming a part of your community and you becoming a part of the world’s community? Did you experience yourself becoming a new individual? If you were anything like I was at my opening convocation, I venture to guess that you most likely did not. That’s okay.

The Lutheran Christian tradition believes that God, through the Holy Spirit and because of Christ, draws all of humanity to God’s own self and transforms it for the good of the world. This happens without our doing anything, per se. In a way, the Chapel functions in a similar way.

On that opening convocation day, you became a fellow pilgrim with people from all over this country and the entire planet. You became a member of a sojourning group of people who gathered with you, on Valpo’s campus, in the Chapel.
At the end of the opening convocation the bells rang, you were dismissed, and you started to live into your Valpo experience. You may choose to never again step foot inside the Chapel. That's okay. Your days will still be marked by its existence. Those bells keep ringing: every fifteen minutes, every day of the week, every week in a month, every month of the year, for four years. They ring steady like a heartbeat.

While I was at VU, the Chapel staff played hymns on the campanile ten minutes before chapel break every day. I specifically remember the day that a friend who is an atheist mentioned to me that she had heard the bells playing Amazing Grace as she walked to the library, and that it brightened her day. Now when we get together, we chat about things that are important for the good of the world. Often she mentions how, even as an atheist, she felt VU steered her toward thinking deeply about her existence and its implications.

The Chapel continues to do this for us even when we are not physically present there, and as it sends us out of this place into the greater world. A pilgrimage never truly ends, but transforms into another journey.

The Chapel is here for just that purpose: to prepare you for the travels awaiting you. It does this by being a place to think deeply about your place in this world and by carrying you in its prayers as you grow and leave. The theologian Joerg Rieger reminds us that life, as faith, is not a static thing. This existence in perpetual movement as an act of faith and this living, Rieger tells us, is a part of the human story.

As you live into who you are called to be, please know this: The Chapel community never stops praying for you.

One day in December or May, you will find yourself in a cap and gown, hugging friends, taking pictures with beaming people who love you, and saying goodbye to this campus as you go out into the world, much as I did.

On my last day here as a student, I sat on a pew in the Chapel with four close friends. At the beginning of my time at Valpo I had not known a single one of them, but over the years, as the bells tolled, we ultimately spent hours together, learning, growing, and living.

We studied different disciplines and came to differing opinions, but our shared experience at Valpo was marked by the Chapel, which brings together aspiring economists, politicians, actors, and theologians in the common search for Light. The site that had gathered us in was now sending us out to new ventures that carried us all over the United States and into the world. Just as it will be for all of you.

I leave you with these words from Martin Luther, wishing you well on your pilgrimage:

This life, therefore, is not righteousness; but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing; not being, but becoming; not rest, but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam, but all is being purified in glory. (Luther, 24)

David Rojas Martinez graduated in 2015 as a Christ College Associate with majors in international service and theology. He is currently pursuing a master of divinity degree at Luther Seminary and is a soon-to-be deacon of the Lutheran Deaconess Association.

Works Cited


Screw-ups and Saints
Katie Benjamin

Valparaiso University taught me to read texts and talk to people, particularly if they were from a different perspective than my own. This was how I know Valpo is engaged with the Reformation tradition. That may seem odd. The Reformation isn’t known for its respectful dialogue. Luther himself called the Catholic baptismal font a “goblin bath”—Kobelbad in German
(Luther, 307)—and the legacy of those years is a rift in Western Christianity that hasn't yet been repaired. But there's a time and a place for invective, and not every age is a golden age (Steinmetz, 54-55). Now is not, and I say that because that's what Valpo taught me. Valpo taught me to engage with people and viewpoints different from mine, with charity and understanding. That's the other part of this that might seem odd. Valparaiso, diverse? Really? As diverse as it could be? Probably not. But I will say that you don't have to go far to find a viewpoint, background, or tradition that's different from your own. It doesn't take much to divide us. I don't know

For Luther there's no one whose life was good enough to get them into heaven. We're all horrible screw-ups. And yet, because of who Jesus is—God with us, and God for us—we're all saints, too. Everyone is both: screw-up and saint at the same time.

a better story to illustrate this, or Valpo's reaction to it, than the saga of Chick Tract Man. A Chick Tract, if you've never seen one, is a hand-drawn comic book meant to lead people to Christ, usually by telling the story of an incredibly self-centered person leading an incredibly self-centered life and missing several obvious signs about God's existence until they finally die and go to Hell. While I was a student here and a member of the chapel staff, these tracts started appearing out of nowhere. It bothered my friends and me, but we didn't know who was behind it, and the tracts kept showing up. Until I got an email from a colleague: "I got him," he wrote. "I got Chick Tract Man." Apparently, my friend surprised the man in the act of dropping off his tracts, gave chase, caught him—and they talked. Chick Tract Man, it turned out, was a Valpo alum, and he was acting out of concern. He was concerned because Valpo seemed to be admitting a lot of Catholics, a lot of Muslims, and a lot of people with no religion at all. He wanted to call us back to the Gospel, and these tracts were his Ninety-Five Theses, nailed right to our front door.

We were big on the Gospel at the Chapel. We were also big on welcoming the stranger, and the strange point of view. And we were especially big on talking it out, which is what my friend did with Chick Tract Man, and which is what another friend did when he wrote and presented an academic paper on the theological merits of your average Chick Tract, against the iconoclasts.

All of this is true to Valpo's Reformation heritage. See, Martin Luther was also big on the Gospel. And he was big on talking it out, and I don't just mean all of his lengthy treatises and sermons that have come down to us. I mean his Ninety-Five Theses, and the theses from the Heidelberg Disputation, and other episodes from early Protestant history where Luther and others gathered precisely in order to talk things out. These disputations assumed disagreement, and they were exercises in working from disagreement toward truth. They were normal and they were fun—just like chasing down someone you've got a question for, or using a paper to argue the merits of an unpopular view, is fun.

The question becomes—and this is what I spent a lot of time learning at Valpo—how do we take that passion for truth, which Luther had and Valpo shares, and not talk about the people we disagree with in terms like, say, "goblin bath"? Luther himself, famously, didn't always do that perfectly, but he did have an idea. The idea was about saints, those folks that go on the list with purgatory and relics and celibacy as things Luther had real issues with. See, for the Catholic Church, saints are people who lived exemplary lives and went straight to heaven. But for Luther there's no one whose life was good enough to get them into heaven. We're all horrible screw-ups. And yet, because of who Jesus is—God with us, and God for us—we're all saints, too. Everyone is both: screw-up and saint at the same time. And when it comes to talking to one another, that's what we have to remember. We have to believe the person across from us, the total screw-up, who's wrong, is a saint.
If you’re not a Christian, you might wonder where you fit in this paradigm—whether you still get to be called a saint. All I know is that wherever you are, God invites you. If you reject that invitation, like the unfortunate central character of a Chick Tract, God nevertheless invites you. That’s the only thing I know. That, and that Valpo, which exists to help you find truth, welcomes you as a saint. Even though you’re a screw-up. That’s Christ’s invitation. As a university that engages the Reformation tradition, I always found that it was Valpo’s invitation as well.

Katie Benjamin graduated from Valparaiso University in 2007 with degrees in theology, English, and humanities. She is finishing her doctorate in historical theology at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina.

Works Cited


Moving Beyond Disagreements
*Amelia Schroeder*

I grew up in a family that has been Catholic for generations. My Catholic education began in preschool. Over the next few years, I learned my prayers and Bible stories and received my sacraments. As I grew older, I became more interested in my faith and wished to discuss it on a deeper level. I was fortunate to continue to Catholic high school, where I learned about modern church teachings and discussed the Bible more thoroughly than in grade school. One of my favorite theology courses in high school was Catholic Church history. It is impossible to fit so much history into only one semester, let alone discuss the interconnectedness of the historical events. The Reformation was but a small chapter in my studies. Little did I know that I would be attending a Lutheran school during the 500th anniversary of that very Reformation.

Valparaiso University has a distinct Christian identity while being inclusive and welcoming to all. Here, I can interact with individuals from various cultural and religious backgrounds, something that was lacking in my seemingly homogenous childhood. Valpo has a long history of dialogue among diverse populations. Last spring when I saw that there was a Catholic Reformation course, I jumped at the opportunity to take it. I had learned a little about the reforming activities of Catholics after the Protestant Reformation. It always seemed that this Catholic Reformation was reactive, a way to combat what Luther proclaimed in his Ninety-Five Theses. On the contrary, the Catholics had started to reform their teachings hundreds of years before Luther came center stage.

The late Middle Ages and early modern period were a time of change that created a tumultuous society, and this unrest spread to the Church. Many individuals saw that the Church was not living up to its original purpose and were determined to fix the issues. Most of the dissatisfaction stemmed from behaviors of the clergy. Benefices, revenue producing property attached to ecclesiastical offices, were often sold. Greed abounded when it came to indulgences. Additionally, not all clergy kept the rule of celibacy, often having numerous children.

Various reform movements came about to negate these behaviors. St. Francis of Assisi practiced the *vita apostolica*, or apostolic life. Members of this movement lived a simple lifestyle similar to that of Jesus’ apostles. These individuals humbled themselves by living in poverty. Moreover, a monk named Thomas à Kempis wrote an exceptionally influential work, *The Imitation of Christ*, which calls for piety, humility, and obedience. This work, which proclaims the importance of personal prayer and meditation, remains popular today.

By the time Luther observed that the Church was not changing its ways, many had already gradually pushed the Church to become better. Luther’s intention was not to split from the Church but to reform it like those before him. When Pope Francis recently discussed the Reformation at a
religious gathering, he said, “The church was not a role model. There was corruption, there was worldliness, there was greed and lust for power. He [Luther] protested against this. And he was an intelligent man.” Many of Luther’s concerns in the Ninety-Five Theses have been addressed in contemporary Catholicism.

When Pope Francis recently discussed the Reformation at a religious gathering, he said, “The church was not a role model. There was corruption, there was worldliness, there was greed and lust for power. [Luther] protested against this. And he was an intelligent man.”

Ever since Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation, there have been differences in dogma between the Catholics and the Protestants. Vatican II promoted increased ecumenical dialogue which has broadened understanding and acceptance over the years. Even now, fifty-two years after Vatican II, the church is striving for better communication among all. In fact, to kick off this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Pope Francis gathered with Lutheran leaders last year in Lund, Sweden, to celebrate a prayer service. The day focused on coming closer to each another by remembering our commonalities instead of concentrating on our differences. Closer to home, there was a meeting in Chicago in March of this year among Catholic and Lutheran leaders. They signed a joint statement declaring that Catholics and Lutherans would continue to pursue dialogue and remain committed to work for the poor and victims of injustice. Pope Francis put it perfectly in his dialogue at Lund. He said, “We have the opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond the controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding one another.”

Lutherans and Catholics should continue to see each other as brothers and sisters in Christ while respecting the religious or non-religious beliefs of others. VU does a great job of this. As a Catholic at a Lutheran university, I do not feel out of place, and I thoroughly enjoy our diversity.

Amelia Schroeder is a student at Valparaiso University from Joliet, Illinois. She will graduate in 2018 with a degree in health science and plans to complete the master’s portion of the five-year physician assistant program.

Remembering the Reformation and the Problem of Christian Disunity
Thomas Albert Howard

IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES, CHARLES DICKENS ruminates: “A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is... that profound secret and mystery to every other.” The Psalmist writes, capturing the mystery of our being, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?”

While both passages refer to generic “man,” permit me to borrow their language and ask: who, 500 years after the fact, is “that profound secret and mystery” who we know as Martin Luther, and why and how should we be mindful of him as we mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation?

It’s a difficult question, because both Luther and the Reformation beg enormous questions. Protestantism, it should be remembered, has not only been credited for the recovery of religious truth or blamed for church divisions, but in the eyes of historians has been seen as the cause of the modern nation state, liberalism, capitalism, religious wars, tolerance, democracy, individualism, subjectivism, nationalism, pluralism, freedom of conscience, modern science, secularism, and so much else. As the historian Brad Gregory has observed, “What transpired five centuries ago continues today to profoundly influence the lives of everyone not only in Europe and North America but all around the world, whether or not
they are Christians or indeed religious believers of any kind" (Gregory, 1).

In light of such complexity, and given Valpo's own thick connection to Luther: who, again, is Martin Luther and how should we be mindful of him at this quincentennial moment? I've pondered the question quite a bit lately, especially in a short volume that I wrote on the history of Reformation commemorations (Howard). And what I have for you, I'll organize in three categories: the bad, the good, and the hopeful. And as a guide for my remarks permit me to invoke the eighth commandment and Luther's gloss on it in the Shorter Catechism: "Thou shalt not bear false witness" should be the starting point when a church-related academic community remembers events or people in the past; and as Luther glosses: one should even give one the benefit of the doubt and "not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame:"

But not bearing false witness also means remembering the bad. In light of many past highly triumphalist, uncritical remembrances of the Reformation, I think it is incumbent upon us soberly to take stock of the darker sides of the Reformation. The list is well-known to scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: vitriolic polemics, civil wars, destructive iconoclasm, confession-inspired executions, and wars of religions that ravaged Europe and were exported abroad by European missionaries. We all might do well at this moment to remember the Swiss humanist Sebastian Castellio's brief, arresting line: "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine. It is to kill a man."

And yes, we should remember Luther's inflammatory rhetoric against peasants, spiritualists, Anabaptists, Ottoman Turks (Muslims), and, not least, Jews. In light of the Holocaust and ongoing tensions in Christian-Jewish relations, it is particularly necessary, I think, to soberly acknowledge Luther's tract On the Jews and their Lives, in which Luther recommends: "to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and Christendom...I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed."

There is also Luther's escalation of rhetoric against the Pope as the Anti-Christ—rhetoric readily reciprocated from the Catholic side—that has poisoned Protestant-Catholic relations for centuries. For both Catholic and Protestants today, I recommend the theologian Stanley Hauerwas' line that "if we no longer have broken hearts at the church's division, then we cannot help but unfaithfully celebrate [the] Reformation." In our own tolerant age, we easily forget how nasty past confessional polemics actually were. Permit me to remind us by quoting the title for a lecture series established at (then-Protestant) Harvard University in the eighteenth century. The series was to be devoted to "the detecting & convicting & exposing the Idolatry of the Romish church, Their Tyranny and Usurpations, damnable heresies, fatal Errors, abominable Superstitions, and other crying Wickednesses in their high Places; and Finally that the Church of Rome is that mystical Babylon, That Man of Sin, that apostate Church spoken of in the new Testament."

But not bearing false witness also means not interpreting historical actors exclusively through the lenses of their most reprehensible words, of taking the easier path of denunciation over the more difficult one of discrimination. On this point, permit me to appeal to the Roman virtue: pietas, loyalty to one's kin, a duty and devotion to the past, our past, Valpo's past, that, while sensitive to the negative, does due diligence in seeking out the positive, the praiseworthy. Any memory of Luther and the Reformation—among Protestants especially but others too—that only deplores the blemishes—that in fear of the bathwater of traditionalism throws out tradition too—does a disservice to both past and present. So, yes, let J. S. Bach be praised in 2017. Protestants, and Lutherans in particular, have good reason to delight in the memory of many things: the sixteenth-century recovery of a theology of the laity; the ordinary saints in the teaching of the "priesthood of all believers"; in truly extraordinary hymnody; in the searching catholicity of the Augsburg Confession (1530); in the educational legacy of figures such as Philip Melanchthon; in Luther's dual emphasis on the free and serving nature of the devout life; and, not least, in Luther and other reformers' accent
on call or calling (vocatio, Beruf)—an idea that has proven enormously fruitful in recent years for re-envisioning church-related higher education—particularly here at Valpo.

Finally, my last category: the hopeful. Any Christian body or institution commemorating the Reformation in 2017 ought to reckon with the far-reaching implications of the Ecumenical Movement of the twentieth century and the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), along with Pope John Paul II’s historic encyclical on Church unity, Ut unum sint (1995). The topic of ecumenism or Christian unity is of vital importance for

An honest appraisal of the contingency and messiness, the unexpected sources and ironic outcomes, of the Reformation—something too often overlooked in past commemorations—might help one step back, gain perspective, and regard the conclusions of this era as important, to be sure, but not necessarily set in stone.

Christianity today—and especially to Protestant bodies, who, sadly, have made an art form of sowing divisions, whether over doctrine, practice, race, or other issues. Where “two or three have gathered in My name” often means two or three separate churches, each persuaded of its own righteousness and of their former co-religionists' dereliction.

But the imperative of Christian unity flows directly from the words of Christ in the Gospel of John: “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21). And also from the pen of Paul: “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that... there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose (1 Corinthians 1:10).

What is more, fraternal relations among Christians, Scripture and church tradition hold, ought to be a model for human cooperation and good will in general. Regrettably, Christian practice has seldom lived up to Christian principle on this score, and, in fact, the latter has often gravely contradicted the former. But remembrance of the Reformation in 2017 just might provide impetus for narrowing the gap between the two, if the right conciliatory habits of the heart and mind are cultivated. How so?

It is theologically important to regard the Reformation in historical terms and not in theological ones alone. As the best scholarship on the sixteenth century makes clear, the Reformation occurred as a bewilderingly complex, confusing set of historical events, not as a checklist of doctrinal principles that dropped from the sky after 1517. Multiple problems come from looking at the Reformation era strictly from a doctrinal or theological standpoint. They include a temptation for partisans to regard the conclusions and condemnations from this era as timeless and above criticism. They also encourage over-simplified stories of this period's place in church history that conveniently lends credence to one's own religious standpoint. By contrast, an honest appraisal of the contingency and messiness, the unexpected sources and ironic outcomes, of the Reformation—something too often overlooked in past commemorations—might help one step back, gain perspective, and regard the conclusions of this era as important, to be sure, but not necessarily set in stone. Christians confess Christ and Him crucified, not Luther and him pedestalized.

Attention to the historical accidents of the Reformation—particularly attention to the fact that many of the condemnations and doctrinal statements of this era, whether Protestant or Catholic, issued from a highly propagandistic, polemical, and politicized atmosphere—has been one of the key factors allowing for significant ecumenical progress in recent years. With a more
sensitive approach to history, divided Christians today have been creating areas of common ground where none seemed to exist beforehand. Taking stock together and repenting of painful memories, not historical ignorance, or affected amnesia, marks out the royal, arduous road toward unity, according to Pope John Paul II in *Ut unam sint*:

> [T]he commitment to [Christian Unity] must be based upon the conversion of hearts and upon prayer, which will also lead to the necessary purification of past memories. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today.

For a concrete example of what this might entail, we might consider the path laid down by the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue, whose first-ever, jointly-written history of Lutheran-Anabaptist relations in the sixteenth century paved the way for a public declaration of repentance and request for forgiveness on the part of the Lutheran World Federation in 2010, which was met with a full declaration of forgiveness on the part of the Mennonite World Conference. As the Lutheran-Mennonite joint report movingly recorded: “The past cannot be changed, but we can change the way the past is remembered in the present. This is our hope. Reconciliation does not only look back into the past; rather it looks into a common future.”

The prospects of one’s imminent death, Samuel Johnson famously said, “wonderfully concentrates the mind.” The same might be said of preparing for, reflecting on, and observing a major commemorative date—such as October 31, 2017. To be sure, there is something naggingly arbitrary about large centennial numbers such as 500. But why not make a virtue of necessity? Insofar as they have the capacity to focus attention on the past that is inevitably constitutive of our present, marking them has the potential to foster reflection and self-examination and—with respect to painful and divisive memories—perhaps change for the better “the way the past is remembered in the present.”

Sadly, this potential has not always been realized at past anniversaries and centennials, as I can attest. Instead, partisan, xenophobic, and narrowly time-bound concerns too often have prevailed. True enough. But the past is not necessarily prologue to the present, and, therefore, equipped with retrospective insight and the virtue of hope, one might be forgiven for believing that this time ‘round, now in 2017, that things might be different...that unity will ultimately prevail over division, trust over fear, and, not least, love over hate.

Thomas Albert Howard is professor of history and the humanities and holder of the Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Chair in Christian Ethics at Valparaiso University. His recent publications include *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the Religious Divide* (2011), and *The Pope and the Professor: Pius IX, Ignaz von Dollinger, and the Quandary of the Modern Age* (2017).

Works Cited


Luther, Martin. *The Shorter Catechism*.


SHE STANDS

Mr. Baumgartner might have been someone had he not rejected Katherina,

who was sprung from the nuns to propagate Protestantism. Runt of the laundry

basket, she cleaned Cranach's brushes and swept—one presumes—his floor earning her keep (she ate very little). In time, with a shrug, Martin himself married her, his union to a farmer, a brewer, boardinghouse-keeper, a sales manager, shill. Mother

in a model home. Supermodel cheeks and sly eyes sold Europe a new bill

of goods: the clergyman's wife. Cranach had a logo—a winged serpent. Katherina

stood for the Church vernacular. She stood a lot. She was too busy to sit.

Kim Suttell
Listen Up!
Our Post-Reformation Approach to Music and Scripture
Josh Langhoff

In the 1970 "Beethoven" issue of Revue L'Arc, the French essayist Roland Barthes tried to figure out what happens when we listen to music. He proposed there were "two musics: one you listen to, one you play." Barthes claimed music for playing—physical, "muscular," performed "alone or among friends"—had already disappeared in favor of music for listening, as performed by professional interpreters. But listening to Beethoven's music, he still found what he called an "unknown praxis," in which listeners projected themselves into Beethoven's creative activity, composing and performing it vicariously while they listened. "Operating" the music, Barthes called it, as though Beethoven's musical texts were contraplications of some sort (Barthes 1970). What might those operations look like? Maybe you've surreptitiously conducted Beethoven from your theater seat, or felt your step buoyed by humming the Eroica, or complained that the Fidelio overture sounds like the work of an anal retentive man determined to wring the life from any musical idea unfortunate enough to enter his head. These are all reasonable responses to Beethoven.

Several years later, Barthes, writing with Roland Havas, dug even deeper into what it meant to listen. As an effort to decode meanings from sounds, listening meant communion, not just with the makers of sound but with "the hidden world of the gods." "To listen is the evangelical verb par excellence," wrote the two Rolands; "Luther's Reformation was largely made in the name of listening; the Protestant church is exclusively a site of listening, and the Counter-Reformation itself, in order not to be left behind, placed the pulpit in the center of the church... and made the faithful into 'listeners'" (Barthes and Havas 1976, 250). They were alluding to the doctrine of sola scriptura, the idea that the Word is the final authority in matters of faith, accessible to anyone. By teaching the church how to listen to the Word, the Reformation began a centuries-long process of teaching the Western world how to read and listen to everything else. (When we say a certain book or passage "strikes a chord," we realize how closely reading and listening are linked.) And as often as not, after we listen, we find ourselves acting out those hidden meanings we've deciphered. "Go in peace," says the priest to end the Mass; and so we go.

Or, as the American critic Richard Meltzer wrote in a 1971 pan of the Rolling Stones' classic album Sticky Fingers: "There's creation and there's listening—one has eight letters and one has nine."

But what happens if we mishear? If our listening is off, does that mean all our subsequent communing, acting, and creating is somehow wrong?

The critic Michaelangelo Matos tells a remarkable story about his mother listening to Diana Ross and the Supremes' song "Love Child." Matos was born when his mom was fourteen years old. She originally planned to put him up for adoption, but changed her mind just before signing the papers, deciding instead to raise her son by herself, in poverty. When Matos was a baby, she would sing him "Love Child"—as it turns out, incorrectly. In the song, Ross's narrator sings to her boyfriend, refusing to sleep with him because she won't raise their potential child alone. Mishearing a crucial...
line, Matos’ mother thought Ross was singing to a baby, not a boyfriend; she assumed Ross was endorsing single motherhood, when in fact the song’s message was the complete opposite. Matos concludes:

“I think ‘Love Child’ told Mom what she needed to hear, at a time when it seemed that no one else would. And that’s difficult to accept, because by all rights no one else should have told her that. I don’t think fourteen-year-olds should be having children... [but] I have little choice but to feel indebted to ‘Love Child.’ If a pop song can change your life or save it, this one feels like it helped to enable mine” (Matos 2007, 18).

Few misheard lyrics have such life-or-death consequences. Mostly they become fleeting jokes, to be compiled in bathroom books like Gavin Edwards’ ‘Scuse Me While I Kiss This Guy. More commonly, listeners hear songs correctly but repurpose them, projecting themselves into the lyrics and music, grappling with or mutilating the texts to suit their own needs—“operating” them, Barthes might say. Sometimes this renders listeners ridiculous, as when Ronald Reagan tried to pump up crowds with Bruce Springsteen’s desperate character study “Born in the USA,” or when generations of suburban white kids (including yours truly) learned to walk like superheroes while listening to rap music. Sometimes listeners grapple as a survival strategy, using more imagination than the texts they wrestle. In 1971, confronting a suffocating wave of smug sexism in rock music, the critic Ellen Willis proposed a test: “take a song written by a man about a woman and reverse the sexes.” By this reckoning, she found the Rolling Stones’ openly hostile “Under My Thumb” less sexist than the simpering condescension of Cat Stevens’ “Wild World,” because women could better imagine themselves singing the former to men (Willis 1971, 136).

And sometimes we realize musicians are telling us more about themselves than they intend. In Barthes’ words, fans listen to decode “the ‘under-side’ of meaning.” “To be gay requires watching for hints,” wrote the critic Alfred Soto in his moving eulogy for the long-closeted pop star George Michael. “When nearly 100 percent of pop songs aren’t about or for the queer life, gay fans learn to study shifts in emphasis, to stay alert” (Soto, 2016).

We also hear this phenomenon in songs where the singers assure their listeners they don’t care about us or our love. If they don’t care, why did they take the trouble to record a song about it?

We are post-Reformation listeners. We prize the text, the “Word,” but we take from it what we need, or what we think its author needs to give us; and these different listenings exist in perpetual motion.

COMPARE THIS WITH HOW WE LISTEN TO scripture; specifically, with how one set of listeners has traditionally listened to—misheard?—one familiar parable.

In Matthew 25’s Parable of the Talents, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a master entrusting his three slaves with large sums of money called “talents.” Two of the slaves put their talents to work and double their master’s money; the third, a nervous man, buries his single talent in the ground to preserve it. When the master returns, he applauds the two investors—“Well done, good and trustworthy slave”—and invites them to share in his happiness. The third isn’t so fortunate. “You wicked and lazy slave!” cries the master. He gives this man’s talent to slave No. 1, and consigns lazy slave No. 3 to outer darkness for weeping and tooth-gnashing. The master delivers his stark moral, “For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Who­ever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”

Protestant church musicians are always hungry for approval, so we tend to zero in on the first words of the master: “Well done.” This has been true at least since the eighteenth century, when John Wesley wrote the hymn “Slave of God, Well Done!” In her nineteenth century adaptation of St. Patrick’s Breastplate, Cecil Frances Alexander taught Anglican congregations to long for “the sweet ‘Well done’ in judgment hour;” and in modern gospel and Christian pop, “Well done” has become a trope, used in song after song. Earlier this year, the Christian R&B singer Erica Campbell released her own fine single called “Well Done,” in which she imagines herself meeting Jesus after a life spent devoting her gifts to his service. “I just wanna hear you say WELL... DONE...” she sings,
her voice layered and stretching into dissonant harmonies, searing the message onto listeners' brains like a cattle brand.

"Well done" songs represent a highly complex, if common, method of "operating" scripture. Acknowledging only half of Jesus’ parable, Campbell extracts the master’s "well done" and wraps it in heavenly visions from a different book, John's Revelation. Her song mentions John the Revelator's streets of gold, but not Matthew's wicked and lazy slave; she sees the company of saints but not the outer darkness, nor the master who would consign to it another human being, stripped of what little he had. For Campbell's song and for many Christians, listening well to the Parable of the Talents means using our earthly gifts to serve God, with the promise of a divine reward at the end. This reading makes for a good song. After all, who doesn't long for some kind of ultimate recognition and rest?

But this is not the only way to listen! Thanks to the Reformation's legacy of vernacular Bible study, everyone—you, your pastor, the neighborhood theology professor, and Erica Campbell—can listen to the same scripture and come away with a different message. If you chafe against one another's readings strongly enough, one of you can simply start a new Protestant denomination. Difficult passages like the Parable of the Talents hover somewhere between Rorschach test and shibboleth: who are you, and whose side are you on? Do you follow the prosperity gospel, turning to Jesus for investment advice and creative visualization techniques? Does the parable prize the master's grace (the gift of the talents) or the slaves' works (what they did with those talents)? One Lutheran scholar suggests the harsh master doesn't represent a divine figure at all; rather, Jesus’ parable is a parody, designed to subvert his followers' messianic expectations (Carey 2014). Sola scriptura, sure; but which scripture are we listening to?

Matthew's surrounding chapters offer a clue. Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives when his disciples ask him how they'll know the end times are nigh. Jesus answers not with words of comfort or explanation, but by unsettling them. His disciples have some ideas about what the end of the age and the Son of Man will look like. Jesus suggests most of what they know is idolatrous junk. Serving the Son of Man means serving other people—even poor prisoners, "the least of these"—as though they are your king or master. Furthermore (Jesus doesn't mention this but I will), if the commutative property of the parables holds true, not only do "the least of these" equal the Son of Man; the master in the Parable of the Talents also equals "the least of these." Who entrusts us slaves with talents to build the kingdom? Who judges the proper use of those talents, and doles out rewards and punishments accordingly? It might be the woman you served at last month's community meal—the one who described, at some length, the bizarre revelations God had laid on her heart, and then finagled a ride to the train station.

Jesus' visions of the kingdom of God represent a great leveling of authority, and if we're listening correctly, they should deeply unsettle or exhilarate us—maybe both at once.

Jesus' visions of the kingdom of God represent a great leveling of authority, and if we're listening correctly, they should deeply unsettle or exhilarate us—maybe both at once. The Body of Christ is a swarm of people from every rung of the social ladder. We meet the Son of Man through our joy and praise, our struggles and service, but not through any single tradition of Biblical education. Isn't it possible that someone with whom I profoundly disagree has a better grasp of Jesus' teachings than I do? Isn't it possible I've misheard the Word? On the other hand, they might be a false prophet. Who the heck knows?

Despite that uncertainty, we find exhilaration in the Reformation's other solas. The gifts of grace and faith mean God can use me and all my squabbling spiritual siblings, along with our disputes and mishearings, to build the kingdom. We might
never settle our differences before the Son of Man appears, but that's not our deal; our calling is to invest our talents with a quickness, because the master could show up at any moment. Whatever that means.

PROTESTANTISM IS A PARADOX, A TUMBLING "-ism" devoted to undermining itself. Theologian Paul Tillich called the Protestant principle "the expression of the victory of the Spirit over religion," making the idea of a "Protestant religion" something of a conundrum. But here's one thing Protestantism is not: some kind of purity march toward correct, unsullied doctrine. Sola scriptura doesn't mean we can burrow deeply enough into a passage of scripture to find its one true meaning, as though "one true meaning" could exist in a body with billions of members, hearing the Word in thousands of languages, listening amid circumstances most of the others cannot hope to understand. The divine genius of the Word is that it meets every person where we are and operates on us, offering to toss us into the Spirit's grasp regardless of how we might have misheard the text.

So we continue to listen, burrowing toward something. One joy of music listening is discovering other people have heard the same text in a completely different way, and then struggling to hear through their ears—operating the music as though we were someone else. At this point the musical canon is less settled than the scriptural one. (I still dislike most Beethoven, and though I enjoy Sticky Fingers, I also hear Meltzer's point: "Without 'Brown Sugar' there'd be no excuse for this album.") But after thousands of years people continue hearing new things in the Word, inspiring creative new ways to go in peace and remember the poor. If you come to scripture listening for doctrinal certainty...well, let's just say you can't always get what you want; but if you try sometimes, you just might find you get what you need.

Josh Langhoff is a church musician living in the Chicago area. He is also the founder of NorteñoBlog, a mostly English-language website devoted to regional Mexican music.

Works Cited


SECRETS OF FERNs

(Painting by Anselm Kiefer, 1996-2000)

The secrets of ferns wear little white nightgowns.
They float like ghost-moths into the dark.
Stars with sleeves, full of dreaming.
The ferns subdue their green at night.
But they still have it, this green, hidden.
The scene is black, white, neutral.
Night has rubbed a chalky finger over all.
My out-breaths ascend as my lungs empty.
Each one carries my soul on its hem,
yet the soul is never depleted.
Little bits of it float over every continent.
All the souls of all the sleepers merge.
All the dreams become one enormous dream
and the secrets one secret, larger than the earth.

Any Silver
A Review of Thomas Albert Howard’s
*Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Protestantism*
Xueying Wang

Among the many books that have been published on the Reformation in honor of its quincentenary in 2017, Thomas Albert Howard’s *Remembering the Reformation: An Inquiry into the Meanings of Protestantism* (Oxford, 2017) takes a unique and insightful perspective. Instead of elaborating on the Reformation per se, Howard traces the history of how the Reformation was remembered, celebrated, and, at least in some cases, used and abused on its major commemorative occasions. In four chapters, Howard traces the history of commemorations of Reformation in 1617, 1717 (Chapter 1), 1817 (Chapter 2), 1883 (Chapter 3), and several commemorations of the Reformation in the twentieth century (Chapter 4).

In the preface, Howard acknowledges his indebtedness to Jan Assmann’s distinction between the past itself and the remembered past: The past remains set in the past and changes no more, but which part of the past gets selected in the social memory of a new era and how it is remembered by different parties mutate often. Howard’s study of past commemorations of the Reformation elucidates the underlying frameworks in which the Reformation was remembered and interpreted. To borrow a metaphor from the author, just like a geologist drills into the earth to examine the sediment of remote geological times, this historian drills into layers of social memory of the Reformation in an effort to elucidate the circumstances and Zeitgeist of different eras in the recent human past.

The first centenary of Luther’s posting of Ninety-Five Theses, 1617, is a natural starting point for Howard’s project, for it sets in motion centenary celebrations in subsequent centuries. Without the 1617 commemoration, Howard notes, the 2017 celebration might not have taken place. In 1617, Georg I, Elector of Saxony, officially launched celebratory activities in response to the request of Wittenberg University’s theology faculty to celebrate the “first Luther Jubilee.” Both Lutheran authorities and local parishes embraced this decision. Through his reading of a wide array of evidences, including sermons, prayers, pamphlets, newspaper articles, plays, woodcuts, pictorial biographies of Luther’s life, commemorative coins and medals, Howard maintains that the celebrations in 1617 were unmistakably confessional in character. According to Howard, since Lutheran churches were still solidifying their religious identity at that time, the memory of Luther’s initial actions was shaped by what they considered as threats—the Catholic Church, the Reformed Church, and dissident Lutheran groups. Whereas Lutherans disagreed on whether reconciling with the Reformed Church and building a unified Protestantism was worthwhile, the threat of an increasingly assertive
Tridentine Catholic Church was felt on all fronts. As Howard observes, in numerous official documents, exegeses, sermons, and artifacts, Luther was portrayed as "one little monk," who bravely rebelled against the bloated, papalist system, just like David had risen up against Goliath, or Samson against the pagans. The same strand of thought underlies another biblical analogy: Luther is like Moses, who liberated the faithful from the bondage of "Egypt," the superseded papal church. Not surprisingly, the Catholic Church returned fire. Pope Paul V declared 1617 to be a Catholic Jubilee, and some Catholic priests called Luther a minion of Satan and arch-heresiarch. According to Howard, the same protestant confessionalism and anti-Catholic sentiment to a large extent set the tone for the second centenary jubilee of 1717.

The tercentenary, 1817, constitutes for Howard an important turning point in the commemoration of Martin Luther. As Howard observes, in contrast with the jubilee of 1617 and 1717, which were by and large religious events, the Reformation jubilee in 1817 infiltrated social, political, and intellectual arenas. The movement of Enlightenment radically reoriented the understandings of Luther and his legacies. Instead of focusing on Luther's criticism of beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church, intellectuals in 1817 portrayed Luther as a proto-Enlightenment figure who bravely used human reason to break through the shackles of religious authorities in the Middle Ages. As Howard puts it, "the form, not the content, of Luther's challenge to the papacy" was emphasized and praised. The emphasis on Luther's use of reason in pursuit of freedom was coupled with another Enlightenment-era concept—the concept of historical progress. Roman Catholicism was viewed less as a false church than as a massive impediment to historical progress, a dungeon of darkness, superstition, and suppression of human freedom.

Another major theme in the 1817 celebration, as Howard accurately observes, was German nationalism. It emerged partly in reaction to Napoleon's military victory over Prussia. In the late eighteenth century, Luther started to be hailed as a German hero who embodied the national spirit of the German people (Volksgeist). Howard draws attention to two significant events: the Wartburg rally and the establishment of a united evangelical church. In October 1817, German students from eleven universities convened at Wartburg Castle near Eisenach in Thuringia, where Luther had translated the New Testament. The tercentenary of the Reformation seemed to be the perfect occasion for the students to express their nationalist and ideological longings: just like Luther defeated the papal tyranny and superstition, the students wanted Prussia to defeat foreign forces and build a German nation characterized with national unity and political freedom. Meanwhile, in a different form, the ruling elites of Prussia sought to unify Protestant churches for the sake of "national interest." Friedrich Wilhelm III (1797-1840), regretting

**Intellectuals in 1817 portrayed Luther as a proto-Enlightenment figure who bravely used human reason to break through the shackles of religious authorities in the Middle Ages.**

the division of churches in Prussia, initiated a unification of the Lutheran and Reformed churches into a united evangelical Church (Unionskirche). However, Howard hastens to add, not everyone approved of the direction of the 1817 jubilee. The Kiel pastor Claus Harms, for instance, uttered his worries that the "unionism" and "rationalism" were subverting the doctrinal purity of Luther's message. Luther, he reminded his contemporaries, was first and foremost a man of the church. Harms' concerns were shared by a number of other orthodox Lutherans.

The celebration of Luther as a national hero became even more prominent in 1883, when Germany celebrated Luther's 400th birthday. Howard emphasizes that at this time Germany had recently become unified under the Prussian Protestant leadership of Otto von Bismarck. Against this background, the acclamation of Luther as a German hero had amounted to noth-
According to Howard, in British and American tributes to Luther in 1917, distinction was frequently made between the young Luther, a champion of freedom and conscience, and the mature Luther, an ethnically compromised mouthpiece of the power interests of German princes.

imperialist aligned with Bismarck. In a short work titled “Luther and Bismarck,” the author Hermann Hoffmeister maintains that Luther and Bismarck stood together for “Germanness, Christianity, and the principle of monarchy.” Meanwhile, Howard mentions that Luther’s 400th birthday was celebrated in a very different light in the United States. As Howard puts it, the New England Protestants had “discovered” Luther anew, seeing his revolt from Rome as a model of New World liberties, which made Luther a banner of national independence, mental freedom, and democracy—therefore, a distant forefather of the United States.

In the book’s final chapter, “The Twentieth Century: A Memory still Mutating,” Howard undertakes to canvass the complex treatments of Luther through a most eventful century. As Howard skillfully demonstrates, the two world wars, the division between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the West, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Cold War, the Second Vatican Council, and widespread secularism—all had their impact on the social memory of the Wittenberg Reformer. Not surprisingly, the two world wars amplified the divide in the understanding of Luther in and outside of Germany. Howard accurately observes that the 1917 jubilee in Germany witnessed the overt radicalizing of theology, out of which the Nazi-sympathizing “German Christian” later grew. Even in the German professoriate, no less a figure than Adolf von Harnack explicitly connected Luther with German national greatness and the country’s wartime efforts. The strident nationalist reading of Luther continued when the 450th anniversary of Luther’s birth was celebrated in 1933. In particular, Luther’s anti-Semitic attitude and his exhortations to political obedience were favorably invoked by Nazis. Hitler himself made reference to Luther as “a great German.” Unsurprisingly, Protestants outside of Germany, in Howard’s words, “begged to differ.” In an attempt to disentangle Luther from the German nationalistic interpretations, they sought to differentiate between Luther the German and Luther the Protestant. Luther himself, however, also received criticisms. According to Howard, in British and American tributes to Luther in 1917, distinction was frequently made between the young Luther, a champion of freedom and conscience, and the mature Luther, an ethnically compromised mouthpiece of the power interests of German princes. It was this latter spirit, many accused, that led to “Prussianism.” This kind of sentiment intensified in the 1930s and 1940s. Howard points out that some political critics identified Luther’s exhortation to obey political authorities as the root cause of German authoritarianism. One of them, Peter Wiener, went so far as calling Luther “Hitler’s Spiritual Ancestor”!

After the Second World War, Luther’s fame continued to fluctuate along with Cold War geopolitics and ideological struggles. In particular, Howard points out that with the division of Germany, Luther’s treatment in the East contrasted strikingly with his treatment in the West. Initially, the GDR in the East hailed Thomas Müntzer, the
leader of Peasant’s Revolt, as the true hero of the Reformation, because he was the one who translated revolutionary zeal into social action. Luther, in contrast, was deplored as reactionary because of his decision to side with German princes. The negative attitude, however, gradually softened as the GDR sensed the need to garner support from Protestant churches in the GDR, and later the need to attract tourists from West Germany. By the time the 500th anniversary of Luther’s birth was celebrated in 1983, Luther was reclaimed as “one of the great sons” of Germany by the GDR. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the FRG and the rest of the West also faced the task of reevaluating Luther’s legacy. One notices strenuous efforts in West Germany to divest Luther of nationalistic hue. Besides, the FRG also sought to distance itself from Marxist interpretations of Luther in the East, indicating that such assessments of Luther by GDR scholars and politicians were ideological and unable to withstand closer historical scrutiny. Howard highlights a speech given by West German chancellor Helmut Kohl, which was notable for its candid recognition of instrumentalization of Luther for political purposes throughout history. Affirming that Luther was primarily a religious man, not of “revolution, politics, worldly power and earthly strife;” Kohl, ironically, could not help but attribute some Whiggish values to Luther, such as freedom of conscience, toleration, even pluralism and federalism.

In his description of the post-war commemorations in the West, Howard devotes special attention to a new chapter in the Catholic-Lutheran relationship. Howard stresses that the 450th anniversary of the Reformation in 1967 followed directly on the heels of Vatican II, which issued the deeply influential Unitatis redintegratio (Decree on Ecumenism) declaring that the Catholic Church is to “embrace them (Protestant Christians) as brothers, with respect and affection,” in pursuit of the restoration of unity among all Christians. In harmony with the ecumenical ethos, a number of Catholic scholars have reevaluated Luther in a more positive light. As Howard observes, since mid-century, Catholic historiography had witnessed a shift from viewing Luther as a heretic to regarding him as deserving more open-minded evaluation. Despite qualms among some Lutherans, the Lutheran world generally responded positively to the Vatican’s irenic message. In the 1967 celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, the Lutheran World Federation, in an unprecedented move, invited the Catholic Cardinal Jan Willebrands to give one of the keynote speeches. This event was followed by the first official meeting between the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation in November 1967 in Zurich. Many more meetings between the two churches have since taken place in many places throughout the world.

Howard’s manuscript went to press before the 500th anniversary of the Reformation took place. This reviewer of his book, however, is finishing the book review on October 31st, 2017, having witnessed, as Howard predicted, “a dizzying array of commemorative activities”—celebrations in Lutheran churches, academic conferences, the publication of countless books and articles, special radio programs, and programs on social media.

As Howard observes, since mid-century, Catholic historiography had witnessed a shift from viewing Luther as a heretic to regarding him as deserving more open-minded evaluation.
Having traced the anniversary commemorations of the last 500 years in a most impressive way, Howard raises an important and insightful question—which portions of what we consider as the legacy of the Reformation are actual consequences of the Reformation, and which portions are merely attributed to it? While it is impossible to completely separate these two kinds of "legacies," Howard's book reminds its readers to be cautious when attempting to pinpoint the consequences of the Reformation. In this way, Howard's book engages in a dialogue with Brad S. Gregory's much debated book, The Unintended Reformation, which aims to identify the social and ideological consequences of the religious Reformation. Ultimately, Howard presents his project as reflection on how to remember the Reformation rightly. He has convincingly shown that the memory of the Reformation has been influenced by political and social circumstances, and often distorted by ideological and political agendas. Now the question is, how should we remember Luther rightly in 2017 and beyond? Howard is explicit about how not to remember the Reformation: recognizing the extreme complexity of the Reformation, one must avoid making blanket, simplistic assertions about the legacy of Luther. One legitimate question for Howard that is not yet answered, in my view, is whether it is right to remember Luther in today's ecumenical, peace-making rhetoric. Both Lutherans and Catholics from 1617 would be most astounded if they were to see the peaceful atmosphere that surrounds the jubilee of 2017. If Luther's criticisms were theologically sound, shouldn't Luther be rightly remembered as a "Moses" who liberated the followers of Christ from a false Church? If that were the case, the ecumenical celebration of Luther would be legitimately viewed as a compromise of Luther's legacy. On the flip side, if Luther's criticisms for the Catholic Church ultimately cannot be justified, should not Luther be rightly criticized for false theological beliefs and for splitting the Church? These sorts of questions, of course, sound extremely jarring in an age when we do not want to make judgments on what others believe. After all, we, like our predecessors, are children of our own time, the conditions of which inevitably affect our own memory of Luther and the Reformation.

Xueying Wang teaches theology at Loyola University of Chicago. She was a Lilly Postdoctoral Fellow at Valparaiso University from 2015 to 2017.

IN A ROOM FULL OF BODIES

My grandmother ran an ER

she told me that when a man is about to die
he drops his hand to the ground
and desperately claws the floor

later
sky and earth merge
on his palm

she said
you can't improvise the edge
of that vein

Sergio A. Ortiz
THANKS TO THE SPATE OF BOOKS AND FILMS that have appeared in this 500th anniversary year of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, more people than usual may currently have some grasp of Lutheranism's distinctive teachings and way of doing theology. Ordinarily, even Lutherans themselves know little more of their tradition than a few shards of Luther's Small Catechism and certain peculiar tastes in music (Bach) and comfort food (lutefisk). Many developments account for this, including the inexorable growth of Christianesque Americanism that has spread like kudzu across the ecclesial landscape and rendered a broad spectrum of church bodies virtually indistinguishable.

Add to this the historic reality that Christianity began as proclamation of good news that thanks to Christ's atoning death, law codes and obligation cannot dictate who has a place among God's chosen and beloved, but the church has inevitably devolved, always and everywhere, into an exclusive club, or worse, a racket that preys upon frightened souls. Gift and Promise addresses both issues, the chronic malady that tempts everyone, including the church, to choose captivity over freedom, and the theological carelessness behind sermons that mostly urge "Be nice" or "Be right."

Primary author Edward Schroeder taught theology at Valparaiso University, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and Christ Seminary-Seminex. He later directed the Crossings Community, "an ecumenical, international theological venture dedicated to 'Christian ministry in daily life.'" For the past quarter-century he has lived in alleged retirement, but in various ways he still teaches students both new and old. The latter group includes this volume's nine co-authors, both its editors, and this reviewer. Thus, alongside everything else this book attempts, it offers a glimpse of a theological tradition's DNA. Those familiar with the genetic variations of Lutheran theology will recognize that this strand traces back to Schroeder's own teacher at the University of Erlangen, Werner Elert, and ultimately to Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon.

Schroeder's three opening chapters take up two primary tasks. They teach "theology of the cross" and they demonstrate how to use Melanchthon's twin criteria (as presented in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession) for distinguishing genuine from defective attempts to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Most Christians and many theologians assume that "theology of the cross" includes any and all talk that mentions Jesus' crucifixion. Strictly speaking, Luther and his theological heirs use the phrase to refer to a specific way of doing theology, the work of finding true and honest ways to talk about God. In sum, theology of the cross finds its central, ultimate, and defini-
Tive “data” for describing God in the crucified Christ on Golgatha. If you want to know who God is or what God is up to in the world, look there, Luther urged. Only there will you find the trustworthy mercy of the God who gives life, not merely death.

The alternative, which Luther dubbed “theology of glory,” looks for clues elsewhere, in the more obvious places humankind has always mined for theological data. These include nature, including the human organism itself, with its vast scope, stunning beauty, and astonishing intricacy, and also the vagaries of history, the interplay of nature’s forces and humanity’s machinations, all of which presumably operate under God’s permission or control. Given how nature and history finally dispatch even those who have more joyful than sorrowful days, we can only conclude that this God means to destroy us. It behooves us to do what we can to get on the deity’s good side, if there is one.

Theology of the cross, which frees humankind to recognize and face the truth about ourselves and God, also affirms that God means to kill us, and, as this book asserts, afflicts us with disease and disaster, partly to get our attention but mostly because we deserve it. This latter claim derives from the diagnosis that we are rebels, not merely fallible mistake-makers. We neither trust nor honor God and we presumptuously make gods of ourselves. This sorry state of affairs is “life under The Law,” as St. Paul, Luther, Elert, and Schroeder describe it.

Theology of the cross, therefore, allows us to see that God speaks in two ways—in the demanding, accusing, and condemning word of Law, but also in the Word Incarnate, the word of Gospel, that Christ has taken our place under the Law and swapped fates with us. He gets our death, we get his life. This is the church’s one and only message, and in Article IV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Melanchthon argued that two features distinguish genuine gospel from cheap imitations: it honors the death of Christ and comforts penitent hearts. That is, it declares the absolute necessity and sufficiency of Christ’s death in our place, and it never leaves hearers uncertain of their status with God. No one need worry over having done too much or too little in thought, word, or deed to warrant God’s forgiveness and salvation.

The crucial need to distinguish between God’s word of Law, which never offers a way of escape but always and only accuses and condemns, and God’s word of grace, mercy, and reconciliation in Jesus Christ the crucified, along with Melanchthon’s twin criteria for recognizing authentic gospel, serve as the distinguishing characteristics of Lutheran theology. Anyone who has sat under Edward Schroeder’s tutelage knows that he illustrates this “system” with the graphic of a wagon wheel. The promise of justification by faith in the crucified Christ stands as the hub, while the distinction between accusing Law and promising Gospel serves as the rim. In between, all the other doctrines of the church function as spokes, connected to both hub and rim. These include the various peripheral teachings the Augsburg Confession addressed, each taken up in this volume by Schroeder’s students, most of whom either studied or have taught at Valparaiso University.

Topics and authors include the Trinity (Arthur [Chris] Repp), Sin (Kathryn Kleinhans), Church and Ministry (Marcus Felde), Baptism (Steven Albertin), the Lord’s Supper (Marcus Lohrmann), the “Two Kingdoms” (Marie Failinger), Ethics (Michael Hoy), Church Conflict (Steven Kuhl), and Mission (Jukka Käärläinen).

All these chapters warrant review and response, but in the spirit of sinning boldly (see the Kleinhans chapter), a few shout-outs must suffice. Chris Repp’s essay on the Trinity does an exemplary job of explaining how the church’s
creeds and doctrines, such as the Trinity, aren’t so much scripturally derived philosophical constructions of truth as they are a form of gospel proclamation. Without these teachings, we have no authentic good news. Marcus Felde uses his pastoral experience, including counseling matrimonial wannabes, to remind clergy they are ordained as ministers of the gospel, not ministers of law and gospel (even though they must work hard to understand both). The church’s main thing, indeed its only authorized work, is the forgiveness of sins. The church is not the world’s beat cop, called to make the world straighten up and fly right. Law enforcement can become part of a Christian’s work in the world, explains Marie Failinger in her chapter on Christians’ service in both God’s right-handed work of redemption and God’s left-handed work of keeping order and doing justice. Finally, Jukka Kaarlainen offers a helpful perspective on Christian mission that properly entails as much listening as speaking. We don’t merely listen with care to confessions of weakness and sin. We also have much to learn from the world that, except for the central revelation on Golgatha, knows as much about God as we do.

**This volume expresses as clearly as any other the theology by which I have found my way and my calling in this world that seems to thrive more on cruelty than kindness. Still, I struggle with and occasionally resist certain features, and I expect to remain in dialogue with its authors and their company for as long as I live.**

But like all metaphors, it only captures a part of the reality it attempts to comprehend. At least some of what happens to human beings in this treacherous world has little or nothing to do with forensics, at least as many of us understand the world today. Another confusing category in this volume helps to explain this complex problem. Authors in this volume speak of *deus absconditus* (the hidden God) in at least two ways. On the one hand, *deus absconditus* is the God who hides behind nature and historical events and does not want to be seen or understood in such things. Moreover, relying on nature’s and history’s signals as sufficient for knowing God is the fatal flaw of “theology of glory.” On the other hand, this volume also speaks of *deus absconditus* as the God who hides precisely in those places the world would never think to look, namely, in weakness and suffering—on the cross.

This, in turn, seems to lead to the conclusion, or working assumption, that the suffering nature’s outbursts and history’s continual mayhem inflict on us are God’s ways of occasionally slapping us upside the head, so to speak. However, since many like me no longer live in Luther’s “enchanted world,” we don’t see hurricanes, brain tumors, or terrorists, just for starters, as God’s tools for landing a punch or sending intelligible messages to groups or individuals. The twentieth-century Holocaust made
such thinking more than merely difficult.

If part of our big test is comforting troubled hearts, here is a challenge I, for one, can never again ignore. A child born recently to young friends suffered from a genetic abnormality that allowed her to complete gestation with no sign of difficulty, but she could not survive outside the womb. Moreover, her condition caused constant, severe pain. There was no cure. Medical personnel could only offer limited, palliative care. The child lived, alternately sedated and screaming in pain, for eight weeks, as her parents and grandparents struggled over how to pray.

Here lurks deus absconditus, all right, the God who hides. Had it been my duty to preach at this child's funeral, I could never have said this was all somehow a matter of forensics, or that the hidden God who seeks to kill us was sending a message and somehow this child got picked as both messenger and message. For good reason, the church has four canonical gospels and multiple soteriological images, all of which try to make meaning and preach gospel faithfully.

The gift and promise of Gift and Promise continue to norm and shape my preaching, even when I can only see the absence of God as the absence of God, and when I hear Jesus as quite sincere in Mark's gospel when he accused God of abandonment. Still, the only absolutely necessary and sufficient promise-making response, and the only one that truly comforts, is Christ the crucified, the one who comes out of hiding and joins us on our side of all that's chaotic, deadly, and wrecked in the universe. As Luther said so often when commenting on the meaning of Christ's descent into God-forsakenness, "No matter how far I might sink, even there he is Lord for me."

Frederick A. Niedner is senior research professor of theology at Valparaiso University.

BLUE CLAY

Tennessee, 1838

Ruth hurries, gathers, puts back, considers her necessaries, chooses what to leave, what to take from the house her grandparents built, the woods, the creek with banks of gritty blue clay.

Corn meal, no potatoes. The iron pan, none of the pots her grandmother made. Her grandmother knew the creek's richest blue veins, and a secret place on the ridge for dark pipe clay.

She shifts her baby. He doesn't wake as the soldiers shriek and jeer, stamp out the garden she coaxed from stubborn soil, sandy mud streaked with clay.

In the curve of her free hand, space for one more thing—fine, cherishable, small, light. She wants a peach pit, and her grandmother's burnishing stone, and a pinch of clay.

William Woolfitt

Brett Beasley

When Jonathan Ives and Steve Jobs set out to design the iMac, most computers were bulky beige boxes. But they believed a computer didn't have to feel like an ungainly piece of hardware. They set out to make a machine that was personal—friendly, even. So they removed the hard edges. They replaced the bland colors with gemlike transparent plastic. They made their iMac enticing, like the piece of fruit emblazoned on its top. And in a crucial stroke of design genius Ives and Jobs added a large handle on the back that, Ives said, “invites people to pick it up and touch it.”

Bibles, it seems, have gone the way of the iMac. User-friendliness is on the rise; “thought for thought” translations like the Contemporary English Version (CEV) and The Message aim for middle school or even elementary school-level readability. At the same time, publishers have segmented the market and pursued every possible demographic. The result? It is now possible to purchase the Duck Commander Faith and Family Bible; The American Patriot’s Bible; The Waterproof Bible (which also floats); the Beautiful Word Coloring Bible; the FLEXIBible, which features squishy rearrangeable binding; and a vast array of sports-themed Bibles, allowing fans of all ages to combine passion and piety. The message is simple: whoever you are, there is a Bible just for you.

This trend toward accessibility and ease of use at any cost is what makes David Bentley Hart’s translation of the New Testament so intriguing, and so necessary. Hart’s translation turns out to be remarkably free of “handles.” In fact, it’s downright forbidding. Hart describes it as “pitilessly literal.” It is a translation attempted *etsi doctrina non daretur* (“as if doctrine is not given”). Hart warns, “This is not a literary translation of the New Testament, much less a rendering for liturgical use.” Moreover, it is a translation that refuses to clean up or “finish” the text it renders. Hart writes:

I have chosen not to fill in syntactical lacunae, rectify grammatical lapses, or draw a veil of delicacy over jarring words or images. Where the Greek of the original is maladroit, broken, or impenetrable (as it is with some consistency in Paul’s letters), so is the English of my translation; where an author has written bad Greek (such as one finds throughout the book of Revelation), I have written bad English.

In this translation, even the word “God” is unstable. It appears alternately as “God,” “god,” “GOD,” or “God” to reflect different terms in the original. Outside the copious, meandering footnotes and appendices, one will be surprised not to encounter the words “Hell,” or “Salvation” or even “Christ”—Hart opts to use “The Anointed” in this
latter case. In short, it's nobody's Bible. It is not
designed with a user in mind. It serves no creed,
no ideological tribe, no demographic.

Although Hart aims to forcefully strip away
layers of interpretation and render the literal text
in a fresh way, not all of his choices are dramatic.
But at times even his subtle choices are highly
suggestive. For example, his rendering of the
beatitudes (Matthew 5) uses “blissful” where we
expect “blessed”:

How blissful the destitute, abject in
spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of
the heavens; How blissful those who
mourn, for they shall be aided; How
blissful the gentle, for they shall inherit
the earth.

The effect of this slight semantic modification
is profound. Compared to familiar, time-worn
translations, Hart's text feels ruder—yet richer as
well. It achieves an effect that is all at once more
mystical and more matter-of-fact than the texts
we are used to.

Appearing as it does during the quincentenary of the Protestant Reformation, this new
translation affords a crucial opportunity to con-

**Compared to familiar, time-
wor transparency translations, Hart's text
feels ruder—yet richer as well. It achieves an effect that is all at
once more mystical and more matter-of-fact than the texts we
are used to.**

sider the status of scripture in Christian practice
and theology. Hart, it should be noted, is no
Protestant. Eastern Orthodox by practice and
universalist in his soteriology, his translation
of Romans is not hospitable to—perhaps even
hostile to—a Protestant understanding of “jus-
tification by faith.” His translation has already
prompted John Milbank to declare that “Hart has
shown, after five hundred years, that the core of
Reformation theology is unbiblical.” Yet the parallels between Hart's project and the Protestant
project remain. Protestantism as a movement was,
of course, made possible by vernacular translations
of the Bible, and the primacy of scripture came
to be one of the defining features of Protestant
thought. Insofar as Hart is asking us to return to
scripture, to see it afresh, and to let it shape us in
new ways, he is doing what the Reformers did,
even if he is not saying what the Reformers said.

More urgent than the questions Hart raises
about Protestant theology are the questions he
raises about Christian culture in general and its
relationship to the Bible. He asks, simply, does the
New Testament affirm the people we are—meaning us modern, Western Christians? Hart's answer
is a plangent “No.” He writes:

> The first Christians certainly bore little
> resemblance to the faithful of our day, or
to any generation of Christians that has
> felt quite at home in the world, securely
> sheltered within the available social
> stations of its time, complacently com-
> fortable with material possessions and
> national loyalties and civic conventions.
> In truth, I suspect that few of us, in even
> our wildest imaginings, could ever desire
to be the kind of person that the New
> Testament describes as fitting the pattern
> of the life in Christ. And I do not mean
> merely that most of us would find the
> moral requirements laid out in Christian
> scripture a little onerous—though of
> course we do. […] Rather I mean that
> most of us would find Christians truly
> cast in the New Testament mold fairly
> obnoxious: civically reprobate, ideologi-
> cally unsound, economically destructive,
> politically irresponsible, socially discred-
> itable, and really just a bit indecent.

This newfound realization about just
how radical and otherworldly the early
Christians were leaves Hart at odds also
with another feature of the Protestant imagination, the affirmation of ordinary life, the view that normal work and family rather than renunciation and asceticism are proper holy pursuits. This is not without some regret on Hart's part. He concedes that there is a "cultural genius" to this view, and he appreciates "the countless ways in which it allows for an appreciation of the moral heroism of the everyday." Nevertheless, this view was "largely invisible to those who wrote the Christian scriptures." Hart's primary example on this point is the relationship between Christians and material wealth. Whereas Christians have become comfortable with the culture of capitalism, early Christians were communists who saw riches as intrinsically immoral. According to Hart, it is only our theological tradition, aided by highly diplomatic translations, that allows us to ignore this truth that appears so plainly in the biblical text.

Is Hart correct? At the risk of quibbling over a fine historical point, it is worth mentioning that many of the early modern architects of the affirmation of ordinary life were also those most opposed to material wealth for its own sake—one need only look at the "Diggers" or True Levelers in the seventeenth century, who were both thoroughly Protestant and adamantly opposed to private wealth to the point of becoming agrarian communists. Or we could consider another seventeenth-century figure, the Anglican clergyman and poet Thomas Traherne whose meditations teach us to "enjoy the world aright." Traherne wrote that "God did infinitely for us when He made us to want like Gods, that like Gods we might be satisfied." For this very reason Traherne had nothing but contempt for "the corruption of Men and their mistake in the choice of riches: for having refused those which God made, and taken to themselves treasures of their own, they invented scarce and rare, insufficient, hard to be gotten, little, movable and useless treasures." The affirmation of ordinary life, in other words, entailed a condemnation of the pursuit of worldly goods.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life can coexist with a radical otherworldliness and a critique of material wealth does not change the fact that it has clearly played a role, as Max Weber pointed out long ago, in promoting the opposite values: a bland, contented bourgeois moralism and a drive toward material acquisitiveness. The fact that Protestants need not repent of everything does not mean there's nothing to repent at all.

**Whereas Christians have become comfortable with the culture of capitalism, early Christians were communists who saw riches as intrinsically immoral. According to Hart, it is only our theological tradition, aided by highly diplomatic translations, that allows us to ignore this truth that appears so plainly in the biblical text.**

As the saying goes, *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*: the reformed church must always be reforming; we honor the Reformation by reforming even it, if necessary. I suspect it's not a process that requires us to rashly throw out the past or our traditions so much as it requires us to look back through our history, as through a row of knitting gone awry, to identify the moment and place where we went wrong and to begin again, careful not to repeat past errors. But to do that we need a Bible not made in our image. So we have Hart to thank—both for giving us a Bible we did not want and for showing us how much we need it.

Brett Beasley is a writer and researcher at the University of Notre Dame.
CHRISMATION

Brown glass glow and polished steel,
glorious jars of lotion and cream gathered
on shelves, waiting their redolent slather
on a bristling jaw, sweet lather to loose
the hair beneath the razor's swathe.
I am here for my father's gift, which
I was bid again to leave un-bought,
charitable thought belied each year
by reproachful eyes on Christmas morning.
Now, he is bearded like the Cid,
a wiry mask about his laughing mouth,
flowing over his machinist's frock
to make of him an errant Athonite,
a Brother strayed from the blessed mountain.
A salesman smears thick oil on his thumb,
commends this perfumed grease to me
for properties of eucalyptus and
orange peel, says it will soften a stiff
beard and scent it with cloves.
But will it be heavy
as Holy Chrism? Will it be
myrrh-sweet and sting
like salt on a scored tongue?

Jonathan Diaz
“History may not repeat itself, but it often rhymes” goes an old cliché, which is not less true for being obvious. Human affairs unfold according to patterns that persist over time to shape the future. So our own time seems to be reprising unhappy themes from the past. The reemergence of crony capitalism evokes images of the Gilded Age; the rise of populism in Europe and America calls to mind the rightist nationalism of the early twentieth century; the teetering European Union, struggling to adjudicate tensions between centralization and regional autonomy, resembles the Austro-Hungarian Empire in its final decades. None of which means we are living through 1914 redux. History reprises, it does not repeat. Old themes combine with new ones to bring on the unexpected. Today, several of history’s reprising themes have converged to produce a new kind of Republican Party, one with a contingent that sympathizes with Russia. This turn of events, while startling, is not wholly without precedent, as those familiar with modern European history can see.

The history that concerns us starts with Russia. Back in 1919, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin and his comrades founded the Communist International. The Communist International, also called the Comintern, sought to foster a worldwide communist revolution, a goal that seemed realistic given the enormous upheaval in Europe caused by World War I. Indeed, as Austro-Hungary collapsed, a communist named Bela Kun, backed by the Comintern, managed to establish a Soviet republic in Hungary that lasted 131 days. After Kun’s experiment failed, the Comintern began to reckon with the delay of the communist eschaton, and settled instead into a long-term strategy of working to undermine the political stability of non-communist countries.

It did this partly through propaganda and partly through front organizations committed to leftist causes that sought to build relationships with sympathizers outside the Soviet Union. Among other things, the Comintern organized international conferences called World Congresses, to which it invited communist parties and labor unions from around the world.

Stalin dissolved the Comintern in World War II, perhaps because he sensed undermining the political systems of his wartime allies would be counterproductive. After the war, however, the Soviets again took up the work of influencing and infiltrating left-leaning Western political movements. The Russians were heavily involved, for example, in the international peace movement, which they used to try to undermine American foreign policy. Although the international peace movement predated the Soviet Union and was not a communist construction, it was supported by people on the left who were susceptible to communist propaganda. The Soviets also worked to influence Christian ecumenical bodies. The Prague Peace Conference, established in 1958, nurtured relationships with Christians in the West, but was headed by churchmen from the East who were almost certainly also secret agents for their communist governments. Under Soviet influence, the Orthodox churches, almost all of which existed behind the Iron Curtain, joined the World Council of Churches despite long-standing objections to the ecumenical movement. The purpose of all this, from a communist point of view, was to establish influence in international bodies that might criticize, and hence undermine, Western foreign policy.

These Cold War themes have returned unexpectedly with the renewal of Russian informational warfare. Russian propaganda today
relies heavily on the internet, which makes it much more effective than it was during the Cold War. Slicker than Pravda, the news source Russia Today, or RT, publishes slanted English language reports on the internet that are picked up by news agencies in many parts of the world. RT offered favorable coverage of Brexit as well as supportive reports on the Catalan independence movement. As we have recently learned, Russian operatives also created Facebook and Twitter accounts for the purpose of influencing the American electorate. The Twitter account @Ten_GOP, claiming to speak for Tennessee Republicans but in fact run by Russians, posted links later retweeted by Michael Flynn and Ann Coulter (Washington Post, Oct. 18, 2017). Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, Parliament has started to investigate the possibility that Russian operatives also used Facebook and Twitter accounts to influence the Brexit vote (New York Times, Oct. 24, 2017).

Unlike the Cold War, however, the propaganda out of Russia today targets those on the right. It seeks to tap into conservative skepticism of international institutions like the European Union and the United Nations, and hopes to stoke nationalist populism in ways that undermine the liberal international order. Not long ago, for example, the Russians hosted an international conference in Moscow for political separatists, which included participants from Northern Ireland, Catalonia, Italy, Puerto Rico, California, and Texas (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 27, 2016). If the image of California and Texas separatists attending a conference of right-wing European nationalists seems humorous, one should remember the Russian objective behind such conferences is to exacerbate discord and political disunity in the West. After Brexit and the upheaval in Catalonia, one cannot say Russia’s pursuits have been without effect. Nor are Russian efforts to influence American conservatives limited to the fringes. The Washington Post reports growing contact between Russian businessmen and the NRA (Washington Post, April 30, 2017).

However, the most receptive soil in America for Russian propaganda may well be among Christian conservatives. Many cultural conservatives are so frustrated, even panicked, by recent losses in the culture wars that they appear prepared to turn anywhere to stave the tide of liberal values. Vladimir Putin, who has built up an impenetrable kleptocratic and authoritarian regime over two decades, has learned to cloak his abuse of power under the cover of conservative cultural and Christian values. In 2013 Putin signed a “gay propaganda law,” which makes it a crime in Russia to distribute information about homosexuality. Over the years Putin has also developed a close alliance with the Orthodox Church, which he extols for defending Russia’s spiritual values, even as he clamps down on religious freedom. Russia has passed a series of “anti-extremism” laws that prevent non-Orthodox Christians from publicly professing their faith. Meanwhile, disturbing reports from Russian-occupied Crimea and Donbas recount harsh persecution of Protestants, Catholics, and Tatars.

That Putin’s defense of Christian values is disingenuous and tainted has not inured cultural conservatives to its charm. Resurrected Christian nationalism has proved a useful ideological formula for aspiring autocrats across Eastern Europe. These petty tyrants, describing their attacks on democracy as a defense against extreme liberalism, have been able to find conservative apologists abroad. If the Soviets sought to influence liberals through front organizations and peace congresses, today Putin and East European autocrats seek to influence Christian conservatives by supporting and participating in international conservative organizations.
conservative organizations. Consider the World Congress of Families (WCF). A global association of conservative groups committed to defending the traditional family, the WCF is similar in some respects to the world peace congresses of an earlier era. Like peace congresses of old, the World Congress of Families holds international conferences intended to promote a pro-family political coalition worldwide. In recent years, the venues for these conferences have been countries with poor democratic credentials.

For example, in 2017 the WCF held its world conference in Hungary, a country whose government has been dismantling democratic institutions for years while paying lip service to Christian values. Reporting on this conference for The Catholic Thing, an online journal with several conservative Catholic luminaries on its masthead, Robert Royal lists without citation a series of inaccurate statistics purporting to demonstrate a dramatic rise in Hungary’s fertility rate since the country passed its pro-family, Christian constitution in 2010. Royal next displays a map of Europe colored in with red and blue states. The blue states in the West permit gay marriage, but the red states in the East do not. “Even in decadent, declining, demographically collapsing Europe,” writes this morally sensitive Christian conservative, “there’s significant resistance” to liberal attacks on the family:

It’s probably no accident that it’s the European peripheries, the parts that were not so long ago under Communist domination, where the resistance is strongest. They still remember the old totalitarians and are not much intimidated by the new ones. (The Catholic Thing, June 1, 2017)

To support his thesis, in addition to supplying inaccurate demographic information, the author conveniently forgets to color in Russia red on his map, although Russia has some of the strongest anti-gay (or maybe they are pro-family) laws in Europe. Willful ignorance about authoritarian developments in Eastern Europe is justified, apparently, in order to defend the traditional family. No Faustian bargain costs too much if it helps to keep gay people from getting married.

Seventy years ago, as the Second World War drew to a close, the great theologian Reinhold Niebuhr warned that naive “children of light” failed to appreciate the dangers posed to democracy by the pursuit of power by nations. Overly confident in the virtue of democracy and the inevitability of progress, the children of light underestimated the power of fascism and communism, and failed to appreciate the ways in which they themselves might be manipulated by the powers of darkness. Democracies today face similar challenges from their own domestic critics, conservative Christian idealists who fail to appreciate how fragile the achievements of democracy really are. Less ingenuous, perhaps, and more ideological than in Niebuhr’s day, today’s children of light cut an unsympathetic figure. Cultural conservatives who would defend the moral fabric of America by forging alliances with repressive authoritarian regimes have about as much credibility as a side-street swindler. Like a cheap Rolex watch, what they are selling will fail to deliver. ♦

H. David Baer is professor of theology and philosophy at Texas Lutheran University.

Works Cited


“Moscow welcomes the (would-be) sovereign nations of California and Texas.” The Los Angeles Times, Sep. 27, 2016.


Robert Royal, “The Other Europe.” The Catholic Thing, June 1, 2017.

Peter Meilaender

IN 2011 I COLLABORATED WITH MARK Amstutz, professor of political science at Wheaton College, on an essay about public policy and the church. Although we were ultimately interested in broader questions about how the church should think about and speak to contested policy issues, we began by examining some recent church statements about immigration—concluding that they were not especially compelling. Not until a few months ago, however, did I discover that our short essay was for Amstutz only the beginning of a much longer and more intensive examination of the immigration issue in particular, an examination that has now culminated in a book, *Just Immigration: American Policy in Christian Perspective*, released by Eerdmans Publishing Company.

We can be grateful that this issue captured Amstutz’s attention, because he has written the most thorough analysis of immigration policy to date from an explicitly Christian perspective. Given the prominence of immigration in our political debates over the past several years—from President Obama’s executive action to protect the so-called “Dreamers” to President Trump’s travel ban on certain migrants and calls for increased border security—the book could hardly be better timed. But it is also well timed in a broader sense. Twenty years ago, relatively little scholarly work had been done by political scientists or moral philosophers about the specifically ethical aspects of immigration. That has changed significantly over the past two decades. At the same time, immigration has become an issue upon which many church denominations have felt compelled to speak. The issue is thus ripe for reflection—the intellectual and moral questions at stake have become clearer, and religious organizations have staked out public positions on the matter. Amstutz’s book provides a valuable overview of these debates, one that should be of use not only to scholars and teachers but also to churches and citizens seeking greater clarity about the specifically religious implications of immigration policy.

The book works on two levels. First, it is a careful policy analysis of a specific issue. It also involves second-order reflection on a more general question, the propriety of churches’ speaking to policy debates and the pitfalls they face in attempting to do so. At the first of these levels, Amstutz devotes two full chapters (roughly a quarter of the book) simply to describing America’s labyrinthine immigration system: the rules relating to how many people are admitted each year and according to what preference criteria, the different government agencies involved in making and enforcing policy, special issues related to refugee and asylee admissions, and the thorny problem of illegal immigration. Given the complexity of the system, his description of these issues is admirably clear and successfully lays the groundwork for his com-
sideration of moral questions. Amstutz is similarly thorough when he turns to church statements on immigration, devoting a chapter each to Catholic, evangelical, and mainline Protestant denominational statements, giving careful attention to a number of documents from all three groups. I know of no more complete account of the denominational landscape with respect to immigration.

Amstutz frames the issue using a pair of competing theories of international order, which he labels "communitarian" and "cosmopolitan," or in other places "realist" and "idealist." Communitarians accept the existing order of sovereign states and regard the state as the primary actor in international relations. Without denying that states may have obligations extending beyond their borders, they view states as primarily responsible for the good of their own citizens. States, which are valuable as the chief institutional mechanisms for protecting human rights, are thus entitled (perhaps even have a duty) to regulate entry at their borders. Cosmopolitans, by contrast, view the world as a "coherent moral community" and regard individuals as the key units in thinking about global justice. They are not inclined to attribute moral significance to sovereignty or to state borders, which often help perpetuate global inequality, and they have more confidence in international institutions. Because states have no inherent moral significance, and given the huge disparities in life chances accruing to people born in different countries, cosmopolitans find it difficult to justify restrictions on immigration.

This communitarian/cosmopolitan distinction is a helpful way of framing competing positions on immigration. It involves some oversimplification, since one could identify a range of variations on either the communitarian or cosmopolitan theme. But as a way of capturing the two basic impulses that animate different approaches to immigration, it is entirely accurate. Opponents and proponents of immigration reform do indeed hold different views of the state and its moral significance, and attitudes toward immigration tend to align with attitudes toward related issues such as sovereignty, patriotism, or the importance of international organizations. While Amstutz argues that a Christian ethic on immigration must combine insights from both perspectives—from the cosmopolitan a recognition of universal human dignity, from the communitarian an understanding that this dignity can be protected only by stable and healthy states—it is clear that his own sympathies lie chiefly with the communitarian view. He repeatedly criticizes moral philosophers and church officials alike for their failure to give sufficient weight to the world's division into sovereign states, and he claims that any effective defense of human rights currently depends upon states. His hybrid view, which he labels "realistic idealism or global realism" (106), seems to me less of a hybrid than he implies.

Indeed, I found myself wishing that Amstutz, instead of frequently merely asserting the existence of sovereign states as a fact that must be accepted for the foreseeable future, had offered a more forthright defense of communitarianism's superiority over cosmopolitanism. Doing so might have prompted a deeper treatment of other assumptions that Amstutz appears to make without explicitly defending. For example, it gradually becomes clear that Amstutz regards amnesty for illegal aliens as extremely difficult to justify due to its corrosive effect on the rule of law. Thinking through the communitarian position more extensively, however, would complicate this assumption. Communitarians understand that immigration is, at its core, an instance of a more general ethical dilemma, the problem of special obligations. When we restrict entry by foreigners, we are putting the force of the state behind the interests of our own fellow members, prioritizing them over those of outsiders. Communitarians justify the state's obligation to give preference to the needs of its own members in this way by appealing to the special duties we have toward those with whom we share the bonds of a common life. If this sharing in a common life is what justifies immigration restrictions, however, it becomes difficult to deny illegal aliens access to citizenship indefinitely, because over time they too inevitably come to share in that same common life. The very same principle that justifies immigration restrictions, in other words—the communitarian recognition of special duties toward our fellow
members—also generates the claim to amnesty for aliens who have spent some significant amount of time among us.

Amstutz also appears to think, without explicitly saying so, that we ought to give greater weight to the claims of refugees than we currently do, given our system's strong preference for family reunification, and to a lesser extent economic considerations, in determining whom to admit.

This disconnect between theological analysis and policy recommendations is revealing, because it suggests that many churches may actually be more interested in arguing for specific policy outcomes than in providing moral guidance to their members as they sort through the thorny issue of immigration.

One can certainly make a compelling argument to this effect, and I myself have argued elsewhere that the claims to admission on the part of those we might call "truly desperate" are very strong. At the same time, were we to recognize these claims more extensively, we could fill much of our entire quota for immigrant admissions with refugees, without ever even getting to family reunification or employment applicants. Amstutz does not seem to want to go that far. To stave off such a result, however, we need a robustly defended communitarian position, explaining why the right of current members to regulate admission is sufficiently compelling, at least much of the time, to override the very strong moral claims of refugees by admitting others instead.

Nevertheless, while I might prefer a more forthright defense of the communitarian view, Amstutz has provided a very judicious and balanced treatment of both perspectives, illuminating their contributions to our thinking about immigration. With these perspectives in mind, he turns his attention to Catholic, evangelical, and mainline Protestant denominational statements. They do not come off very well. Almost all of them tip heavily toward cosmopolitanism; few offer any serious or detailed analysis of the actual workings of immigration policy, such as Amstutz provides in his opening chapters. He notes a few documents that offer more balanced treatment of the theological values at stake—in particular from the Catholic, Christian Reformed, and Episcopal churches—but even these, when they move toward recommending specific policy initiatives, generally move in a sharply cosmopolitan direction that bears little relation to their own preceding theological analysis. (Many readers of the Cresset will be pleased to learn that the lone denomination Amstutz singles out for special praise—one that, as he notes, does not quite fit into either his evangelical or mainline Protestant category—is the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.)

This disconnect between theological analysis and policy recommendations is revealing, because it suggests that many churches may actually be more interested in arguing for specific policy outcomes than in providing moral guidance to their members as they sort through the thorny issue of immigration. And here we arrive at Amstutz's other concern, the broader question of how the church should approach public policy. Amstutz believes that the church should speak out on important issues, but he offers a number of cautions. Public witness requires thorough knowledge of policy and the workings of government, acknowledgement of actual political conditions (such as the division of the world into sovereign states), and a robust political theology. In particular, it requires churches to remain sensitive to the different roles of church and state or, to adopt characteristic Lutheran language, of the distinct roles of the heavenly and temporal kingdoms. Whereas states are chiefly responsible for establishing temporal justice, the church can offer its members moral education. Its most important influence on public policy comes not through its own direct intervention but through the many contributions of members who have been shaped by its teachings.
and who bring that witness to bear upon public issues through their many diverse callings.

Amstutz offers few specific policy recommendations; indeed, one might have wished for more indications of what he himself takes to be the implications of his own analysis. Where his own views do become clear, it is less through open avowal than through the repetition of certain implicit assumptions (that amnesty undermines the rule of law; that refugees have weightier claims than other applicants do). He is presumably seeking to tread cautiously in this respect, perhaps not wanting those who disagree with his conclusions to reject the rest of his analysis for that reason. Still, he writes as a lay expert and not as a church representative, so he could take more specific positions without violating his own cautions to those speaking officially on behalf of a church. Even so, it is not a bad thing for readers to be given the thorough analysis that Amstutz has supplied and then invited to reach their own conclusions. A citizen who reads Amstutz’s detailed, fair, and thoughtful analysis will be in an excellent position to do just that—far better, alas, than one who has read only the typically less detailed, fair, or thoughtful analyses that so many of our churches have supplied on this issue.

Peter Meilaender is professor of political science at Houghton College.
A Review of *The Year of Small Things: Radical Faith For the Rest of Us* by Sarah Arthur and Erin F. Wasinger

Aimee Fritz

Suburban life is filled with bake sales, craft sales, and car washes for good causes. Goodwill donations, GoFundMe campaigns, and volunteer work are all attempts to make the world a better place. But most suburbanites don’t have to think too much about poverty and injustice. When one’s neighborhood, health care, and local schools are basically clean and safe, practicing compassion could almost be a hobby, a temporary interest that swells at Christmas and at times of global tragedy.

Nonetheless, a growing number of people are choosing to reject that comfortable suburban culture and its relentless consumption. Instead, they are “turning... away from the false promises of the American Dream and toward Jesus.” In *The Year of Small Things: Radical Faith for the Rest of Us*, authors Sarah Arthur and Erin Wasinger share their hunger for simplicity, reconciliation, hospitality, contemplation, and Jesus.

One rainy night after dinner, Arthur and Wasinger were discussing their shared admiration for Shane Claiborne (*The Irresistible Revolution*) and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (*The Awakening of Hope*), chief spokespersons of the new monastic movement. Arthur and Wasinger wondered aloud how they might translate that countercultural way of life into their suburban contexts, and *The Year of Small Things* project began.

New monasticism is rooted in scripture, especially passages like Acts 2 and Matthew 18. It attempts to answer that old rubber bracelet question: “What Would Jesus Do?” Jesus obviously identified with the poor. He obviously wasn’t a racist. He obviously loved strangers, lived in community, and lived a contemplative life.

In 2005 Cascade Books published *School(s) for Conversion: Twelve Marks of New Monasticism*, a book edited by the Rutba House, an intentional community founded by Wilson-Hartgrove and his wife, Leah, in Durham, North Carolina. The twelve marks include:

1. Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire.
2. Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us.
3. Hospitality to the stranger.
4. Lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities combined with active pursuit of just reconciliation.
5. Humble submission to Christ’s body, the church.
6. Intentional formation in the way of Christ and the rule of the community along the lines of the old novitiate.
7. Nurturing common life among members of intentional community.
8. Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children.
9. Geographic proximity to community members who share a common rule of life.
10. Care for the plot of God’s earth given to us along with support of our local economies.
11. Peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution in communities along the lines of Matthew 18.
12. Commitment to a disciplined, contemplative life.

These are radical marks that require voluntary poverty and vulnerability on the one hand and a renunciation of the stereotypical American Dream on the other. It’s one thing to give money, run 5Ks for charity, and go on mission trips. It’s something else to embrace messy, unpredictable relationships and move into neighborhoods with abandoned houses, struggling schools, and crumbling infrastructure.

Wasinger and Arthur formed a simple, intriguing plan to embrace this kind of shared, radical faith, and it came with a catchy tagline: “One city, one church, one year. Two families. Twelve small radical changes.” Their goal: “By the end of one year [we want to be] twelve steps closer...to the One who can make something out of nothing.”

The authors assigned one of the twelve marks to each month and outlined practical prompts for first steps. They invite their readers to watch how they tried, slowly and cumulatively, one small, radical experiment at a time.

For example, in December the two families focused on “stuff.” They addressed “[d]ownsizing for the holidays; exploring what it means to be creators rather than consumers; navigating cultural and family expectations without ‘buying into’ society’s myth that stuff equals status or even love.” One family budgeted $25—total—for Christmas. The other family wrote a patient and pleading letter to their parents requesting that donations be made to their church’s Christmas offering instead of giving lavish presents to their grandchildren. (They provide a copy of this letter for their readers’ use in the appendix.)

In other months, the families focus on hospitality, marriage vows, sabbath, time commitments, church, finances, parenting, creation care, self-care, and just living. The “small things” are ordinary, like on-paper budgets, regular date nights, and family mission statements. The authors reassure us that “small things for God were better than no things.” They discuss topics such as school choice, downward mobility, and not locking the door, and these discussions led to action.

It’s unexpected and refreshing to remember that peacemaking starts at home. Hopeful possibilities bloom in our imaginations—Maybe this kind of faith is possible? Maybe we, too, can be radical?

The authors know following through with momentous life changes can feel impossible.

Just as Weight Watchers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University prove, real, sustainable change happens best in the context of consistent vulnerability and accountability.

They address that concern with the most radical idea in *The Year of Small Things*: “covenantal friendship.” Just as Weight Watchers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University prove, real, sustainable change happens best in the context of consistent vulnerability and accountability. Setting this foundation was the first “small thing” the Arthur and Wasinger families did.

They agreed to meet regularly to ask each other hard questions, listen well, speak loving truth, and encourage each other with “transparency and boundaries.” They granted each other unprecedented access in order to critique each other’s written budgets, ask about each other’s marriages, and challenge each other’s parenting decisions.
They notice depression and unhealthy busy-ness. They eat, pray, sing, and get sick together.

Despite living in separate houses, they choose to do life together. They share “the material stuff of daily existence: the food, housing, transportation, chores, child care, prayers, conversations, finances, [and] problem solving that it takes to make our lives run.”

The authors persevere in spite of their daily chosen challenges, and in some ways their quest echoes other modern quest stories such as Cheryl Strayed’s Wild and Elizabeth Gilbert’s Eat, Pray, Love. Their struggles are voluntary, difficult, and pay off with deeper understandings of their souls and relationships. But unlike solitary Strayed and Gilbert, Wasinger and Arthur journey together, like the hobbits in Lord of the Rings, along with their husbands and children.

The heroines in Wild and Eat, Pray, Love sought personal enlightenment and transformation. They used their time, energy, and resources to make it to the top of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: self-actualization. The Year of Small Things, though, acknowledges that millions of people do not even have their most basic needs met.

Christians have been trying to meet these needs for millennia, but poverty, hunger, and racism persist. This is where covenantal friendship could make a difference. If we hold each other accountable for everyday small things—praying with one’s spouse every night, subscribing to a CSA, seeing a doctor when we’re sick—we will build the trust, and the momentum, for the next small things.

It would be easier to dream and risk big if covenantal friends are going to cheer and challenge us. It’s harder to quit helping at an after-school tutoring program or a refugee ministry (Arthur and Wasinger started and stayed in these things) when we know our covenantal friends will “vow to lovingly ask you the hard questions” like “how is it with your soul?” The authors confirm, “When facing a decision, the first people you think of are those who will lovingly tell you the truth.”

Imagine how covenantal friendship could change the church in America. What transformations could happen if we chose intimate accountability for clear, shared goals? What if each congregation had four families participate in covenantal friendships? What could change in our neighborhoods, churches, urban centers, and political systems?

While the authors recognize that the choice to intentionally identify with the poor through thoughtful, risky, small things does not change the world, they also recognize that the choice does something else: “[Y]ou’ve begun to let God change you.” That’s no small thing!

The Year of Small Things: Radical Faith for the Rest of Us is not a field guide for moving from the comfortable suburbs into commune life. Instead, it’s an intimate look at the authors’ desire to enter into radical faith through a yearlong experiment in new monasticism (they’ve re-upped twice since that first year). Arthur and Wasinger share their struggles, failures, and celebrations with humor, transparency, and grace. The invitation to join them, and have our own hearts and communities transformed, is hard to resist.

Aimee Fritz is a freelance writer in Atlanta. You can find more of her work at familycompassionfocus.com.
THE BARN

When we packed it all up—gently used empty spirits boxes, cardboard hives designed for Big Beauty tomatoes, mildly odiferous milk crates, newsprint, poster tubes, strapping tape—neither knew this would be our last move together. Nor did we suspect what little we would see of it again. Last I looked, just before we left, it still stood there, in the barn, on the farm that’s no longer a farm, stacked back and back against the black rafters where digger wasp and wood bee nest. Two marriages and twenty years later, I still say “Barn” when asked where X is. It’s not like I give a shit about the oak table or the waterbed or the tie dyes. But my first robot, Rom? My remote control R2-D2? Moon base with rocket launcher and lunar lander? Barn. My nearly complete set of Micronauts, Biotron, Baron Karza, and Acroyear included? Barn. First printing of my first bad book? Barn. Videosphere, lava lamp, fully articulated black knight in made-to-scale, pre-pieced armor? Barn. Original remake of King Kong movie poster, two hundred Big Little books, Bomba the Jungle Boy, records, comics, oh God, the comics…. Barn. At this point, it could be anything. Rock’em Sock’em Robots, Quick Draw McGraw bedsheets, magic books, smoking skulls, happier sisters. A mother who doesn’t scream Mrs. Bates, father who doesn’t have a mind of winter. No bad students, no bankrupt bookstores. Walter Cronkite again. Frank Frazetta again. Bradbury. Bradbury. More poems, more wine, cats that don’t die. All of it waiting, there in that barn, there among the wood bees.

Bryan Dietrich
I got cancer—A bad case, actually—right around the time that I learned to read. The cancer was a nightmare that I have mostly blocked out. (Short version: painful tumor, head and neck surgery with a beastly recovery, radiation that permanently affected my facial appearance, and two years of chemotherapy—the worst part—without antinausea meds.) Reading was a dream that helped me forget. Books were a way to get out, away from my body.

When chemotherapy meant whole weeks during which nothing would be possible but drinking red KoolAid (no Gatorade or Ensure in those days!) and throwing it back up again, then *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* might help. (If you read it hard enough, long enough, again—again enough, it almost becomes like prayer.)

Or the book with my name! You know, the one about the two dogs, *Biff and Tiff*, where Biff the big dog teaches Tiff the puppy all about how to be a dog. I loved that one. My parents appreciated how it reinforced what I needed to do:

*Sit, Tiff, sit!*
*Drink, Tiff, drink!*
*And Tiff is sitting. And Tiff is drinking.*

And it helped. Sort of. (At least until I couldn’t find “And Tiff is throwing up again.”)

Reading helped on good days, especially when the books got better. Raggedy Ann beckoned me along with her and Andy, or some band of fairies from Andrew Lang’s stories spirited me to the *Red or Blue or Green Fairy Book*. Words whirled me away from my body and the world, it seemed like.

But even then the world would rush back in; the body would push its way back into my consciousness. Some days, after all, I was too sick to read. Some days I watched *Sesame Street*, even when I was far too old for it and could only lie there in misery. Some days the *Mr. Rogers Neighborhood* episode was one that I’d already seen a million times, and I was having trouble believing the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, anyway.

I still kept trying, though, to use the word to get away from the world. Gosh, I must have pretended to be *Anne of Green Gables* for at least the next decade—more if you count skits at summer camp where my red hair and temper fit me for the role. And how romantic it all was!

*Me (longingly) to the devastatingly handsome Brad (he was too tall to be a convincing Gilbert, but never mind): “I don’t want diamond sunbursts or marble halls. I just (pause) want (pause) you!”*

As I grew older, often the word meant escaping a different body than my cancerous one: the Body of Christ. After church, when my parents would stand around yammering with other members of the church family, I’d run away to the car, to my own words. Laura Ingalls Wilder, maybe, or some other book I’d read already dozens of times. Probably the description of frying doughnut twists in *Farmer Boy*. It was text I wanted—those precise, delicious snippets, not the snipes of my sibs, either blood sibs or sibs in Christ. I wanted the *word*, not the world.

I got called back from Almanzo Wilder’s fictional fritters by my growling stomach and by my good parents. They’d find me gone from church, in the cheerlessness of the wintercold car; they’d call me back. I’d get a chalky peppermint from the pastor or greet Uncle John Barone, a saint never seen
out of a suit and tie, who'd touch my face—the side with the scar—and ask me if I loved the Lord. We'd pick up a real dozen doughnuts from the A&P on the way home—cherry tail-lights and long johns and jelly-filled—and cut them into far too many pieces, fractions, to share. The real body and the body of Christ would call me back to the world, away from my private word.

At family reunions, when I got shouted down from my room or wherever I'd snuck off to, a different kind of word emerged. These were words about my grandfather, soaking his sax reed in a shot glass, playing gigs at the Officers' Club in the Aleutian Islands during the Korean War (when he wasn't serving as a dental hygienist). Words about my grandmother, running away from home and floating on a door down the Genesee River. Or words about my uncle, a butcher in Utica, New York, who used to pound veal for a known hitman of the mob. Words about my dad as a teenager—the time he and his buddies really really almost got that kid holding four frosty mugs of Tom Wahl's root beer in each hand to check the time on his watch. Or the story of "Anderson," enshrined in the family book of stories for when he, just after being warned by the teacher to be extremely careful carrying the only overhead projector in all of St. Mary's High School, dropped it in an explosive, echoing crash. The teacher's howls of "Andersoooooon!" echo in the halls of fame as they did that day in the halls of St. Mary's, I assure you.

In the company of those characters, words plunged me into the world. Hearing the words and telling the words felt good sometimes, but the world was hard. There was always the pain of loss, the cancers that seemed to keep getting us, one by one. It was easier to take comfort in the other worlds, the fictional stories whose shapes I knew from beginning to end. Sooner or later, I'd run away again, somewhere over the Reading Rainbow.

How astonishing, then, to consider the incarnation: a Word for the world! Far from escaping the world, the Word builds the world and becomes in the world. The first words of the Gospel of John seem just how I'd have thought about it—the Word transcendent: "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That's far enough above the dirty round. But in a total plot twist, the Word of God actually makes a world: "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." The Word makes the world through himself—with himself. And he doesn't abandon it. Rearrange the syntax of that last phrase with me: things come into being with him. The Word is with the world he makes.

There's more. The Word makes the world become new—by his own becoming, his growing up in the world. The whole first chapter of John is powered by the electric charge between coming and becoming. And in the lightning line, the perfect flash that lights up the night: "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." St. Athanasius, in the fourth century, describes it like this: "For the Word unfolded himself everywhere, above and below and in the depths and in the breadth: above, in creation; below, in the incarnation; in the depths, in hell; in breadth, in the world."

Now, it's totally possible, when reading the gorgeous parallelism of Athanasius, to find the religious cliché-o-meter beginning to quiver a bit. Even the above lovely bits about the Word in the world—so elegant and capacious—could...
seem like just another kumbaya, “He’s-got-the-whole-world-in-his-hands” KoolAid. Even BabyJesusintheManger can seem a kind of escape to some calm, bright, silent, starry night. The smart kids didn’t drink it at back at Christian camp, and they’re all grown up now.

TaNehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me* hits on just this sort of KoolAid problem—especially in America. He calls it the Dream. Religious people in America, he says, are “lost in the Dream” of a Godordained, democratic nation. They can’t see the truth about all the Memorial Day cookouts, neighborhood associations, tree houses, and Cub Scouts (and we might add church picnics) they think are the truth of Christian America. In reality, Coates says, those pieces of the dream have been built by—and are being maintained by—violence against black bodies, violence that our society continues to allow. Escaping into worddreams has its costs. Namely, it costs the world, and everyone who can’t afford to escape.

But my point about the incarnation is not that. My point is not even that those Sunday doughnuts, broken with my family, were some kind of lay communion (though I think they probably were). The Word in the world is not set apart for the privileged few who can get the treat. The Word in the world is not some pie- (or doughnut-)in-the-sky story to run away to when the injustice of the world or the devastation of our own lives seems too much.

My point is that the Word takes readers toward the world. The Word takes us toward the injustice of the world, toward the devastation of lives and bodies, both our own and others. And the Word doesn’t end the world’s story there: the world’s meanings are not crushed or frozen on the page. For the becoming of the Word—who became flesh, who grew in wisdom himself—is making the world new. In the Word, we readers in the world groan and struggle. We move, we act, we read toward the community of the new creation.

Because there was never a real problem with the words themselves. Even Kumbaya. It was always how they were read.

Tiffany Eberle Kriner is associate professor of English at Wheaton College. She is the author of *The Future of the Word: An Eschatology of Reading* (Fortress Press, 2014).
WHELM

He who has become and is
forever coming—
site and map and motive,
arena, whelm and wind, apse and
undercroft, silence and song,
rinse and wring, thumb of flame
in a darkened cave.

He who always escapes dimension.

I speculate, wishing it to be faith:
Is He that fur collar against my cold
cheek? Scarlatti on the car radio?
A peony unbuttoning her frilly blouse
for my pleasure?

Tentative, I sketch a loose shape
in the air. But in a squander of
bright wind He escapes.

Luci Shaw
ALONG THE PRAIRIE PATH, BEHIND THE LIBRARY, YOU TELL ME WHAT WE CANNOT WRITE IN BOOKS

—for Brett Foster

Beside the tracks, our bony butts parked on this green metal bench, we laugh and bitch about losses, say damn this bag of stench stapled to your cancer-belly, while butterflies try to hover themselves into spirits. Don’t believe I’ve ever wanted to caress another man’s shoulders. Never had a brother. But, brother, I can see the sharp blades of your back cut through your flannel shirt. Between commuter trains, you parse ileo, so we ride that song for a moment towards Troy. The obvious monarchs keep flitting into light. Look out you say, as a yellow and black spider crawls its path up my shin. I move my hand from your back, remember how slowly we walked here and try to say nothing while I flick the dark body away.

David Wright
The Tree Killers

Rebekah Curtis

My husband waits patiently as I pull on my boots. He puts down the hatchet and the spray bottle to help me get the baby situated in the sling carrier. I put on my hat, and the baby pulls it off. "Let's be realistic," I say, and my husband shrugs as I toss the hat back into the house. "Hope you like ticks," he says, pulling the door shut behind us. We start up the hill. We are going to kill trees.

A relief map of the United States is an asymmetrical mess. Deep rumples run in contradictory angles and magnitudes all over the western third of the country. The flat middle shows a spider vein cluster of rivers, with one unsightly bump in what must be Missouri and Arkansas, and a smaller one in South Dakota. On the eastern third of the map, a more orderly row of wrinkles runs equidistant between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic. There is no pattern or sense to the place, taken as a whole. The crookeds, straights, rough places, and plains just have to deal with each other.

The south central bump is the Ozarks, that stray dribble of Appalachia. My first time driving through, I gawked at the hills. To a flatlander, this voluptuous display of the fruits of the earth was extravagant. The epiphany to which the scene brought me was not high-minded, but wonder drove me to proclaim it without thinking: "That's why they're called hillbillies!" It was before hillbillies were trendy, and I meant no ill will. But my belief had been that topographical cosmopolitanism properly consisted of taking in extremes; mountains, deserts, oceans, islands. This rolling land hidden in the middle was a marvel I never imagined.

Up and up the hill. I lean right to counterbalance the baby on my hip. My husband is waiting patiently again as I huff and puff the last ten yards. The trail levels out and we follow it for a while, but then he tramps into the brush. We pick our way behind him carefully. He stops at a skinny-hickory. I put on gloves, and he hands me the spray bottle. Then he brings the hatchet down into the trunk at a sharp angle, not quite five feet from the ground. He pushes back on the blade, opening the groove. I squeeze the sprayer slowly along the blade, and liquid seeps into the gash in the light cambium layer of wood under the bark. We move around the tree, and hack and the spray once more. The rule is one hack and squirt for every three inches of diameter. The tree will die standing. We'll cut it down for firewood when its green is gone.

Poisoning trees will never be a feeling I love. Even preschoolers know that if you care about the earth, you plant a tree. And these trees we're poisoning...they're too small for a hug that satisfies, but each one comes into focus as a glorious hero of life when it becomes a question of whether he is good for the forest or not. I am spraying undiluted glyphosate 41%, also known as Roundup, which in my mind is the same thing as Agent Orange. The deed done, my eye follows the line of the trunk up to the little burst of leaves against the sky. They're really up there. Not forever, though. Now, not even for long.

Gardeners are above reproach. They take the wilderness and make cities of flowers, civilizations of vegetables. Forestry feels more suspect. It's one thing to plant a petunia, and another to start bossing trees around. Trees are the whales of the woods, and nobody likes whalers. But in the same way that most backyards don't yield much on their own, an
acreage needs management to be productive. So I begin my intellectual journey to tree killing by looking at the timber stand as a really big garden.

Trees are the whales of the woods, and nobody likes whalers. But in the same way that most backyards don’t yield much on their own, an acreage needs management to be productive. So I begin my intellectual journey to tree killing by looking at the timber stand as a really big garden.

My husband helps me by pointing out that nature’s way of managing forests is fire. Humankind has gotten into the habit of suppressing natural fires to protect residences. Without fires, forests are taken over by towering trees with high canopies. They prevent light from reaching the ground and leave animals without brushy habitat. Forest management imitates fire by opening the canopy so that light reaches the ground, giving young trees and groundcover plants a chance to grow.

That seems like a job for guys in Smokey-the-Bear hats, not a housewife hauling her baby and a pastor on his day off. But the Lord has given us every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. To us it has been even more for meat than King James meant. My husband is a deer hunter. Factoring in our property’s lack of mahogany or pistachios, timber stand improvement for wildlife was the plan that made the most sense. We want the woods to give the critters what they want. In this corner of Ozarkia, that’s cover and food. A park-like forest of tall trees leaves deer without Bambi’s famous thickets. Thinning these trees makes the forest grow brushier for shy folks like deer and turkeys, encouraging them to settle there. If they can find what they need in the woods, deer make less trouble for highways and commercial crops.

We’ve also cleared some larger areas for food plots, a wildlife-friendly forestry trick that’s easier to get behind than tree-killing. A perimeter is created by hinge-cutting trees; that is, cutting almost all the way through them and then pushing them over at the unfinished cut. They make a living fence, leaning onto neighbors’ trunks and forming a kind of privacy wall with branches that now grow out, but up. Once the hinge fence is complete, a controlled burn opens the sunny space for seeding with rye or clover, and the deer have a happy place to browse. I’d shuffle through these cool swards barefoot if I did like ticks.

We crash through last year’s leaves toward the next sun-hog devoted to the ban, and find that the plan is working. A large dark patch has been cleared on the ground: no leaves, no little plants, just a conspicuous area of dirt almost as bald as a burn. A buck’s bed, my husband diagnoses. A doe with fawns would sprawl out more. The baby and I completely understand.

I think I’ll never cause to croak a thing so lovely as an oak. With the baby watching, this tree-killing seems nigh on indecent, but she’s too little to play at the creek with the other kids. She’s getting antsy and I’m getting sweaty, so we hack and spray today’s last giant, wooden weed. My husband leads us back to the trail and we jolt down the hill. The sun hits us hard as we leave the forest, and we miss the trees already. ✉

Rebekah Curtis’s writing has appeared in print magazines including Lutheran Forum, Modern Reformation, Touchstone, and Salvo, and online at First Things, Babble, The Behemoth, and The Imaginative Conservative.
ON THE POETS


Anya Silver has published three books of poetry with the Louisiana State University Press: From Nothing (2016), I Watched You Disappear (2014), and The Ninety-Third Name of God (2010). Her poetry has been published in numerous journals, including Image, St. Katherine Review, and The Windhover, and in anthologies such as Best American Poetry 2016 and The Turning Aside: The Kingdom Book of Contemporary Christian Poetry. She is professor of English at Mercer University and lives in Macon, Georgia, with her husband and son.

Sergio Ortiz is the founding editor of Undertow Tanka Review. He is a two-time Pushcart nominee, a four-time Best of the Web nominee, and 2016 Best of the Net nominee. He placed second in the 2016 Ramón Ataz Annual Poetry Competition, sponsored by Alaire Publishing House. He is currently working on his first full-length collection of poems, Elephant Graveyard.


Jonathan Diaz lives in Whittier, California, with his wife, Abigail. He is a perpetual member of the Torrey Honors Institute, and holds an M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Notre Dame.

Bryan D. Dietrich is the author of seven books of poems and co-editor of a superhero poetry anthology. He has published poems in The New Yorker, The Nation, Poetry, Harvard Review, Yale Review, Asimov's, Weird Tales, and many other journals. Bryan has won The Paris Review Poetry Prize, a Discovery/The Nation Award, a Writers at Work Fellowship, an Asimov's Readers' Choice Award, and has been nominated for the Pulitzer. Professor of English at Newman University, Bryan lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife and son.

Luci Shaw has published ten volumes of poetry, including her latest, Sea Glass: New & Selected Poems (WordFarm, 2016). In 2013 she received the Denise Levertov Award for "sustained engagement in creative writing in the faith tradition." Her work has appeared in Image, Poetry East, The Southern Review, The Christian Century, Weavings, and other journals. She lives in Bellingham, Washington.

David Wright teaches creative writing and American literature at Monmouth College (Illinois). His poems have appeared in 32 Poems, Image, Ecotone, Poetry East, and Hobart, among many others. His most recent poetry collection is The Small Books of Bach (Wipf & Stock, 2014). He can be found on Twitter @sweatervestboy.
JUDITH MILLER
CHRISTOPHER CENTER