Let Go and Let God
Tania Runyan

Gethsemane
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River
Cameron Alexander Lawrence

Heart in a Box
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The Unknowable More:
Contemplation, Creativity,
and Education
Stephanie Paulsell

Why Mission Matters Today
Susan VanZanten

"Use Nothing Only Once":
Believing Again with Roger Lundin,
Emily Dickinson, and Ron Rash
Martha Greene Eads

Dante in the Woods:
The Potential of the Para-University
Christopher S. Noble

The Refugees
by Viet Thanh Nguyen
John Ruff

Bruce Cockburn's
Bone on Bone
Josh Langhoff

A Job Description
for a Christian Scholar
in the Twenty-First Century
Jennifer L. Miller

Come Learn with Us
David L. Parkyn

P. Solomon Raj is a celebrated Lutheran pastor, theologian, professor, poet, and visual artist from southern India. His numerous woodcuts, etchings, and unique works in the Brauer Museum's collection offer a thorough overview of Raj's esteemed career and rich interpretive representations of biblical subjects. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. David and Julie Zersen, as well as the artist's family, the Brauer can share with the public the artist's complex and wonderful blending of Christian imagery and scenes of daily Indian life. Through such blending, Raj is able to explore themes of social justice. We at the Brauer Museum of Art are pleased to be able to represent this artist in depth.


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: $29.95 per year; Student/Senior subscription rates: $14.95 per year; single copy: $6.00. 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.

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The biennial Lilly Fellows Program Book Award honors an original and imaginative work from any academic discipline that best exemplifies the central ideas and principles animating the Lilly Fellows Program. These include faith and learning in the Christian intellectual tradition, the vocation of teaching and scholarship, and the history, theory, or practice of the university as the site of religious inquiry and culture.

WINNER OF THE
2017 LILLY FELLOWS PROGRAM BOOK AWARD

Andrea L. Turpin
Cornell University Press, 2016
ISBN: 9781501704789

A New Moral Vision by Andrea L. Turpin is an ambitious and thoughtful historical study that complicates and challenges the view that American higher education has simply become increasingly secular over time. The book weaves into a single story the complex changes in mainstream American Protestant religious life, gender roles and self-understandings, and American higher education from the period of women's first thin wedge of entry into higher education in the 1830s to the end of the Progressive Era in 1917. This history, the book reveals, is less a straight line of secularization and more a twisting path that involves numerous "trajectories and tradeoffs."

FINALISTS

Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism
Molly Worthen
Oxford University Press, 2014
ISBN: 9780190630515

At This Time and in this Place: Vocation and Higher Education
Edited by David Cunningham
Oxford University Press, 2016
ISBN: 9780190243920

Teaching and Christian Imagination
David I. Smith and Susan M. Felch
ISBN: 9780802873231
IN LUCE TUA

In Thy Light

Who Is My Neighbor?

The Cresset office is in Valparaiso University’s Linwood House, so that means all of my neighbors are part of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities in the Arts (the LFP). They’re good neighbors: conscientious and kind, witty and generous. These neighbors are historians and theologians and literature scholars who teach in Christ College, the honors college at Valparaiso University. Usually they leave their doors open as they write or grade papers; sometimes students drop by during office hours, and I overhear them discussing course readings and assignments. Occasionally they leave plates of brownies or lemon bars on the kitchen counter next to a “Please eat!” sticky note.

Several of this issue’s contributors are part of the LFP in some capacity or another, although most do not work in Linwood House. Stephanie Paulsell, a former Lilly postdoctoral fellow, writes in the opening essay, “The Unknowable More” (page 4), about how to engage in the world in a way that honors both all that we know and all that we can never know in history and contemporary society, in others, and in ourselves. Susan VanZanten, a former board member of the LFP National Network, mentor for multiple cohorts of Lilly Graduate Fellows, and incoming dean of Valpo’s Christ College, considers the role of Christian colleges and universities in a dark and violent age (“Why Mission Matters Today,” page 12). Martha Greene Eads looks back at some of the lessons she learned during her time as a Lilly postdoc fellow in her essay, “Use Nothing Only Once” (page 24). Former postdoctoral fellow Jennifer L. Miller reviews the winner and finalists of the 2017 Lilly Fellows Program Book Award (page 32). Christopher S. Noble, an LFP representative from Azusa Pacific University, writes about the benefits of a change of scenery in “Dante in the Woods: The Potential of the Para-University” (page 18). My neighbor at the far end of the hall, Joe Creech, LFP director, reviews David Hollinger’s Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America—a book that considers how human interactions on a personal level—often just basic neighborliness, in service to God—have shaped and transformed organizations, political policy, and society.

Neighbors can make or break a neighborhood, an office space, the world. I’m grateful for good neighbors at work (you can learn more about them at lillyfellows.org), but that question first posed to Jesus by the lawyer—the set-up for the parable of the good Samaritan—continues to echo in my mind: “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). David L. Parkyn takes up that question in his column “Come Learn with Us” (page 42) and explains why faculty and staff at colleges and universities in particular should think about their answer in broad terms. “The immigrant experience has profoundly marked American colleges and universities, both individually and collectively, for nearly two centuries,” he writes. “This simple factor provides a lens through which to measure the proposals by the Trump administration—whether to ‘build a wall’; crack down on undocumented immigrants, void the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), slash the number of legal immigrants and refugees welcomed each year to our borders...” the list goes on. And John Ruff reviews Viet Thanh Nguyen’s short story collection, The Refugees, with an eye toward the challenges and humanity of the individuals and families who flee dangerous homelands for a chance at a better life in a strange new environment.

I know I have plenty of room for improvement when it comes to being a good neighbor, especially outside the office. Listening with an open heart and responding with mercy to the people we encounter can at times be uncomfortable, inconvenient, and difficult. But our charge is clear: “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37). ¶

—HGG
IN THE SPRING OF 2016, THE SOUTH AFRICAN artist William Kentridge created a frieze of Roman history on a portion of the embankment wall that runs along the Tiber. Containing some eighty images, many of them more than thirty feet tall, the frieze stretches for a third of a mile along the river. Kentridge created it through a process called “reverse graffiti”—he placed enormous stencils against the wall and then power-washed around them so that when the stencils were removed, the remaining images were made from the patina of grime and organic matter that had accumulated on the wall over the years.

The frieze depicts a procession of images from Roman art, history, and tradition. Some are iconic: the wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus; Marcus Aurelius on his horse; the angel on top of Castel Sant'Angelo, sheathing his sword. Other images recall the violent displacements that mark Roman history in the past and in the present: soldiers returning to the city after the sack of Jerusalem, bearing the treasures of the Temple they destroyed; refugees with their possessions strapped to their backs, boarding a small boat for the dangerous crossing to Italy. Kentridge titled the frieze Triumphs and Laments, drawing our attention to the terrible intimacy of glory and loss and the laments that every triumph bears in its wake.

One of the most arresting images in that frieze for me is a simple dark panel, blank except for the words “quello che non ricordo” scrawled across it. The words mean “what I don’t remember.” Which is most of history. Most stories are not remembered by us, not written down in books, not displayed on
walls for us to ponder. So in the midst of a procession of images of some of the most well-known stories in human history, Kentridge placed an image marking all that has been forgotten.

Of course, the procession of human history depends upon what has been forgotten. It is not just the emperors on their horses, but the lives of the unremembered, the relationships they forged, their hopes and aspirations, their triumphs and laments that have moved history forward. We will be among them one day, inevitably.

To memorialize what we can’t remember—to give it weight and heft and make it a part of the procession of history, as Kentridge has done—is an act of reverence by the artist and an invocation to us, the viewer. It calls us to follow our imaginations to the boundaries of what we know and then to press on even further. It asks us to imagine the lives of those whose history has been forgotten as well as those in our own day and age whose unfolding history we ignore. It urges us to remember that our triumphs and laments are interwoven with those of others, that we are implicated in the lives of others, even those whose names we will never know.

This weekend, we’ve been invited by our hosts here at Loyola Marymount University to draw upon the Ignatian magis—the Ignatian more—as we think together about our shared work. The Ignatian magis, as I understand it, calls for a deeper engagement with the world in our learning, an integration of education and life. Ignatius’s compelling “more” urges us toward more fullness, more depth, more commitment. I’d like to offer William Kentridge’s artistic attempt to honor the history that has been forgotten but which is nevertheless present in order to lift up an idea that I would like to claim for the Ignatian magis: the more that is unknowable. The unknowable more. What would it mean to say that the deeper engagement with the world to which the magis calls us requires the cultivation of a reverence for what we do not know and cannot remember? What kind of education would that be?

I recently got to hear Minna Zallman Proctor, a professor of creative writing, read from her new book at one of our local bookstores. She writes nonfiction but in the form of the short story: true stories, she calls them. When she was asked at the reading about the difference between teaching students how to write fiction and teaching them how to write nonfiction, she said, “Fiction students are often told to make their writing more ‘richly imagined,’ while nonfiction students are told to make theirs more ‘richly observed.’” And she described for us an exercise that she learned as a student that clearly draws upon both capacities, for observing and for imagining. If you’re describing something happening in a room, she said, you send your attention all the way around it. You ask: what does this room look like, what does it smell
like, how warm or cool is it, where do the light and the shadows fall? What is the feeling in the room; what’s the atmosphere? Who’s in the room, and what’s in the room, and what can you observe about each object and person and what do you imagine the relations between them to be?

You send your attention into every corner of the room, she said, asking these questions. You begin in one place and then sweep, systematically, all the way around. And then, she said, you do again and find out what you missed the first time. And then you do it again. And then, you do it again.

What Minna Proctor described seems to me a deeply contemplative method of study—a method of attention, even devotion. A method that acknowledges that no matter how many times we move our eyes or our imaginations around the room, or across the desert, no matter how richly we observe or imagine, there will always be something that eludes us. It will always be worth going around again, because there will always be things we missed during our first or second or third time.

The most elegant, convincing arguments are never completely watertight, but instead leave a door or window cracked open to allow possibilities as yet unimagined to enter and possibly transform the whole business. But, speaking for myself, I’m not always sure how to invite students to work and think and create in that liminal space between what we can know and what we can’t. As a scholar, I may cherish the unknowable more, but as a teacher, I want to know what I’m talking about. I lean more often in the classroom towards what I know, and my students take a cue from that, and lean towards the knowable themselves.

The unknowable more was the great subject of the novelist Virginia Woolf. Woolf sought new literary forms that were capable of acknowledging the invisible presences that shape all our lives, from the history of the unremembered, to the source of the moments of being by which she felt her life to be punctuated, to the mysteries that we are to one another. In her novel To the Lighthouse, the painter Lily Briscoe despairs of capturing Mrs. Ramsay, a woman she had known and loved, in a painting. “One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with.” Fifty pairs of eyes, and, even then, you would need some “secret sense, as fine as air” to allow you to slip through keyholes and into the secret places where you could discover Mrs. Ramsay’s “thoughts, her imagination, her desires.” “What did that hedge mean to her,” Lily wonders, “what did the garden mean to her, what did it mean to her when a wave broke?” Lily is contemplating the unknowable more, the mystery of another.

It’s what the lovers do in the Song of Songs, that great erotic poem at the heart of the Bible. Your breasts are like gazelles, your legs are like alabaster columns, your lips are like lilies, your hair is like a flock of goats running down a hill. Those lovers are nothing if not richly observed. But even having looked each other up and down, seen each other again and again in every kind of light, some-
thing escapes. Something that can’t be captured in a catalogue of their beauties. They have to keep asking one another: where are you? Who are you? Even in this intimate relationship, there is always an unknowable more that is as worthy of the lover’s reverence and care as what they can see and describe.

One of the goals of the education we offer our students, it seems to me, should be to help them care about and contemplate the unknowable more—from the unremembered histories that have shaped the world we live in to the mysteries of others and of ourselves. George Eliot famously wrote that the good of the world depends upon those mysteries—that our lives are better than they would have been because of the lives lived by those who rest in unvisited tombs. But the good of the world also depends upon recognizing that there is more to history that we can ever imagine and more to each other than we can see with our eyes.

The results of the inability to contemplate the “unknowable more” are painfully visible in our day. Hollywood has Harvey Weinstein, but every college and university has the same problem: an epidemic of sexual harassment and violence marked by an inability to care about another person as anything other than the object of one’s own desire—a cruel and grasping disregard for the mystery of who we are that is made possible by a culture that allows such disregard to go unchecked.

And of course the failure to contemplate the “unknowable more” has repercussions in the political, global realm. The New York Times reported last October that, as the Trump administration discussed how many refugees they would allow into the country annually, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly—the one we were supposed to believe would keep things from degenerating too far—said that if it were up to him, the number of refugees allowed into the United States each year would be between zero and one. This is a perilous time, when we seem not only unable to recognize and honor the unknowable more of unrecorded history and our fellow humans, but even seem unable to access or be shaped by what we do know, the very knowable history of oppression and tyranny.

This is a perilous time, when we seem not only unable to recognize and honor the unknowable more of unrecorded history and our fellow humans, but even seem unable to access or be shaped by what we do know, the very knowable history of oppression and tyranny.

Virginia Woolf knew that the presence of the unknowable more in history and in other people presented not only an artistic challenge but a moral one as well. In the last months of the First World War, after millions and millions of deaths, she wrote in her diary that she thought that “the reason why it is easy to kill another person must be that one’s imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him—the infinite possibilities...furled in him.” Just as she imagined in Three Guineas a new university that would teach its students to be repelled by war, her literary project cultivated nonviolence by exploring the hidden, interior lives of her characters, asking us, her readers, to contemplate what is hidden in every person—their “wedge-shaped core of darkness,” as she put it in To the Lighthouse; their interior “treasure” as she described it in Mrs Dalloway; their “unacted part” as she wrote in Between the Acts. When we lift our eyes from one of her novels, we see each other differently, at least for a moment or two. We see that everyone, as Teresa of Avila once put it, has an interior castle within.

If contemplation of the unknowable more in the work of Virginia Woolf is a practice that might help shape a commitment to nonviolence, for the great philosopher and theologian of the civil rights movement, Howard Thurman, it is nonviolence itself that compels contemplation of the unknowable more. The purpose of nonviolent resistance, Thurman wrote, “is to open the door of the heart so that what another
is feeling and experiencing can find its way in.” For Thurman, this opening could go in both directions. The violent person could be so arrested by the nonviolent response of the person resisting them that they suddenly have access to that other's feelings and experiences. And the nonviolent per-

How can we cultivate a contemplative orientation in our classrooms that opens students and teachers alike to the unknowable more?

son, in taking another's violence without reacting violently, as a young woman shoved up against the wall during a lunch counter protest told Thurman, can find themselves with unexpected access to another’s desperation. Nonviolent resistance, Thurman argued, exposes our unknowable more to each other in unexpected ways.

Surely this is the purpose of education, too. To open the door of the heart to those things to which we do not have direct access: histories that have gone unrecorded, the feelings and experience of others.

S O HOW CAN WE DO THIS, AS EDUCATORS?

How can we cultivate a contemplative orientation in our classrooms that opens students and teachers alike to the unknowable more?

I know there are people who know much more about how to do this than I do. But I'll tell you how I've been trying to experiment with this theme this semester. I'm teaching a course on contemplative prayer in Christianity, a subject for which there is a vast literature. But I disciplined myself, for once, and chose only six short books to read. We read them one after another during the first six weeks of the term. And now we're reading them again, discovering what we missed the first time through, finding out what they sound like when they've been brought into conversation with each other, listening for how their meanings shift and change as we read them in each other's company, now that we've come to know each other better. This is my version of my friend's writing exercise: going around each text once, and then going around again. I wish we could read them yet again, but we're going to run out of time.

During our first journey through these six books, the students wrote one-page papers each week on one sentence or brief passage from each book. And at the beginning of each class, they paired up and shared their sentences with each other and something of what they wrote in response. And then we'd hear three or four reports about these conversations. Sometimes the themes of our discussions rose out of those initial conversations, and sometimes we just took off in another direction all together.

During our second time through these books, the students are making presentations that intensify their reading. Some are memorizing passages and reciting them to us, and then telling us what new things they learned about the text by writing a portion of it on their hearts. Some are taking up the prayer practice the book commends and telling us what they discovered through trying to integrate the teachings of the book into their lives. Some are praying portions of these texts, repeating them, chanting them, breathing them in and out. Some students are studying the gaps in the texts and filling them in with their own writing. Some are creating florilegia, collections of what medieval readers sometimes called “sparklets,” bits of the text that sparkled up at them as they read. The students are writing down their sparklets as they find them, and then reading through the new text they have made from those fragments. And some students are purposefully shattering these texts and then piecing them back together into new texts on prayer, texts we have never read before, even though we have read the texts from which they're made. All of these forms of engagement are ways of going around the room, contemplating the text and trying to draw near to the unknowable more that is always overflowing from these texts and our engagement with them.

The disassembling and reassembling of these texts is particularly interesting to me as a contemplative practice that acknowledges and illuminates
the unknowable more. One of my colleagues, Amy Hollywood, is teaching a course this semester on poetry and the archive, and her students have been reading a book called *Zong!* by the poet M. NourbeSe Philip. The *Zong* was a slave ship whose captain, in 1781, ordered the murder by drowning of more than 150 Africans on board so that the owners of the ship could collect the insurance money. There’s only one public document related to this atrocity in the historical archive—a legal decision called *Gregson vs Gilbert*. From fragments of this document and this document alone, Philip tells the story of what happened and more than what happened—she uses the language of the legal decision to offer a lament, a cry of anguish, and an account of a largely hidden trauma, honoring and mourning the unknowable more.

This seems to me a deeply contemplative practice oriented both to what can be known and what cannot. In many ways, it’s an intensification and intentionalization of something we already do—hold fragments of what we read and learn in our minds, shaping them consciously or, more often, unconsciously, into new combinations. Philip does more than reshape the fragments she has been given, though. She offers a way to mourn a past atrocity in the present. She reassembles a work that makes a claim on us.

Woolf was also interested in how fragments might be reassembled into new combinations that offered new possibilities for how we live in the world. When she was twenty-six years old, still named Virginia Stephen, still in the midst of her apprenticeship to writing, still four years away from publishing her first novel, she stood before some frescoes of the early Renaissance painter Perugino in Perugia, Italy, and thought about the relationship between what he was trying to do as a painter and what she was trying to do as a writer.

Perugino’s figures are beautiful, grave, still. She was both drawn to them and troubled by them—it’s as though, she wrote in her diary that evening, that “beauty had swum to the top” of those figures and blocked our access to everything else—speech, the past and the future, the paths these figures might take, the relation of one’s mind to the other’s. Woolf would mistrust beauty’s power to smooth over agitations and distortions and shadows throughout her life. Those fifty pairs of eyes Lily Briscoe felt she needed to see all the way around Mrs. Ramsay? One of those pairs would need to be, Woolf wrote, “stone blind to her beauty.”

But Woolf also wanted, like Perugino, to express beauty in her art: “but beauty,” she wrote, “...of life & the world, in action.” I want to create beauty, she wrote in her diary, “by means of infinite discords, showing all the traces of the mind’s passage through the world; & achieve in the end, some kind of whole made of shivering fragments.”

She remained true to this understanding of her vocation throughout her life; it was her way of seeking to express not only beauty, but the unknowable more. Like the ancient rabbis who knew that “more” was often to be found in the gaps, where meaning broke the dam of words and overflowed, Woolf sought to create a whole...
FOUR YEARS AGO OUR COUNTRY WAS SHOWN the nonviolent potential of contemplative education when a woman named Antoinette Tuff, the bookkeeper at an elementary school in Decatur, Georgia, talked a young white man, armed with an AK-47 and five hundred rounds of ammunition, into laying down his weapons and surrendering before anyone got hurt. It was just a few weeks after the not guilty verdict of the Trayvon Martin trial in which the killer of an unarmed African American teenager argued successfully that he was justified in his violence because he had been afraid. Antoinette Tuff’s ability to reach across the fragmented, discordant boundaries of race and fear with the whole of her humanity felt like a miracle at the time. What made her so skillful and so compassionate when confronted with a heavily armed man who told her he wasn’t afraid to die? What allowed her to see the infinite possibilities furled in him, rather than seeing him solely as an all-too-familiar type? What made it possible for her to speak to him as if he were a member of her own family, to call him “baby,” to tell him she loved him, to promise to stay with him until the police arrived and to make sure they didn’t shoot him? “I’ve never been so scared in all the days of my life,” she told the 911 operator when it was all over.

Antoinette Tuff obviously has deeply nonviolent instincts and a lightning-quick ability to bring the whole range of her experience to bear on a dangerous situation; the mystery of her skillful, compassionate response is part of the unknowable more of who she is. But when she was asked to explain how she did it, she talked about a contemplative practice that she had been taught by her pastor. The previous Sunday, she told Anderson Cooper, her pastor had begun a sermon series on how to anchor yourself in God as you move through your life. And it inspired her so much that she got up early on Monday morning so she could study and practice before she went to work. By the time the gunman walked into her school on Tuesday morning, she had been practicing anchoring herself in God, praying on the inside no matter what was going on around her, for two or three days. When that young man walked into her office and pointed a gun at her, she could pray for him and talk to him at the same time. And that’s what she did, anchoring herself in God in the midst of chaos, keeping the gunman in view as a struggling human being as clearly as she could see the danger he posed.

The practice of praying on the inside, of anchoring oneself in God, has long history. Desert monks knew how to do it, and people crossing the desert in these days do, too. Antoinette Tuff learned the practice from her pastor. And we learned from her something about the infinite possibilities furled within the unknowable more of our humanity.

We’re going to need more and more of such contemplatively-educated people in our world. We always need more. Last week I heard the scholar Andre Willis speak at a conference on Christianity and mass incarceration. For him, Howard Thurman is a crucial voice in these days because he was so concerned with what Willis called “inner transformation.” Because oppressive systems bring us into distorted relationship with ourselves, Willis said, we’re going to need to cultivate practices that support resilience, practices that help us gain some control over our inner lives as we live within the system of the carceral state. Contemplative education is not just a nice extra that you can get at a church-related school. It’s a matter of life and death.

As teachers and administrators in schools with rich religious histories, it’s time to reclaim much more than our denominational identities. We need to reclaim what those histories have to teach us about the multiple and radical possibilities our
humanity holds. It’s time to reclaim a contemplative education that opens us to the unknowable more in the past, in the present, in ourselves and in others. It’s time to reclaim an education that builds inner resilience and compassion, that invokes both our thought and our love.

A recent graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Tim de Christopher, applied to divinity school from federal prison, where he served two years for an act of civil disobedience that protested our government’s selling off of public land to oil and gas developers. He’s a well-known climate change activist; there’s already a documentary about him. And so people asked him, why is going to divinity school the next thing you want to do? And he said, because the question for me is becoming less about how to stop climate change and more about how we’re going to remain human as these changes overtake us.

And here we are: living on a planet whose climate is changing faster than the scientists thought it would, and living in a country whose democracy is under threat. We won’t be able to hold onto our humanity during whatever is ahead of us if we can’t honor the unknowable more in past history, in the history unfolding around us and in each other, and if we don’t cultivate a contemplative orientation that shapes both our interior lives and convictions and how we move our bodies through the world. This is slow, even painstaking work. It’s the beginning of a permanent quest.

I find hope, though, in William Kentridge’s Triumphs and Laments. Because I think his tribute to the unknowable more in history is perhaps not only a memorial to what we do not remember, but also a kind of ark bearing God’s own memory through history. Our histories are always partial, no matter how many times we move our imaginations through them. But God remembers everything. To carry God’s memory with us through our processions of triumph and lament is to know that our own accounts of our histories and our understandings of ourselves are never complete. But that is good news. If the Ignatian magis includes the unknowable more, then it also includes the possibility that we are more than we believe ourselves to be. It includes the possibility that we can change.

Almost immediately after Kentridge’s frieze went up on the wall, weeds and wildflowers starting pushing through the cracks between the bricks, delicately disrupting those monumental images. And last summer, when I saw it again, it had already faded quite a bit because the grime is accumulating again on the wall. In five or six years, you won’t be able to see the frieze at all. The past is always being swallowed up. We reclaim it where we can, on walls, in books, through education. This is sacred work—the work of prayer—because only in God are any of our stories fully known. If we want to know who we have been and who we might become, if we want to know the stories that have been lost, and what they call us to do and be, we’re going to have to search not only our collective memory but the fathomless depths of God’s as well, where every story is remembered and every forgotten thing is held.

We won’t be able to hold onto our humanity during whatever is ahead of us if we can’t honor the unknowable more in past history, in the history unfolding around us, and in each other.

Stephanie Paulsell is a professor at Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice and co-editor of The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher. This essay is adapted from her plenary address at the 2017 Lilly Fellows Program National Conference at Loyola Marymount University.
Why Mission Matters Today

Susan VanZanten

The year 2017 was not a good year by any reckoning. The earth, our island home, suffered high winds, earthquakes, mudslides, flooding, record heat spells, and wildfires. Ten hurricanes in ten weeks swept across Central and North America. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2017 was the costliest year on record for natural disasters in the United States, with sixteen separate events causing damages in excess of $1 billion. The total price tag? An estimated $306 billion.

 Humanity's frailties and follies further contributed to the darkness. London alone suffered four major terrorist attacks. A lone gunman perched in a hotel room window in Las Vegas killed fifty-eight people and injured more than 500 others. Terrorist attacks occurred in Somalia and Stockholm, Manchester and Nigeria, Afghanistan and Paris. Wars continued to rage and threats of war grew ever more belligerent. Fake news, election hacking, social media abuse, divisive public discourse, name-calling, ad hominem attacks, and violence against people on the basis of their physical appearance, religion, or national origins proliferated. For example, in June, The Guardian reported that Islamophobic hate crimes in Britain were up fivefold after the London Bridge attacks.

College campuses have not been immune to this growing darkness. An increasing number of racially charged incidents occurred on campuses across the United States in 2017, and white supremacy movements and alt-right groups sowed discord and disruption. The 2017-2018 academic year began in August with the violence that broke out in Charlottesville, Virginia. Hundreds of neo-Nazis, Klu Klux Klan members, and other white-supremacist groups first marched across the University of Virginia campus carrying torches one night, and then attempted the next day to hold a downtown rally that was disrupted by counterprotesters. The violent clashes injured many, killed one young woman, and plunged Virginia into a state of emergency. Charlottesville epitomizes every college and university administrator's worst nightmare.

The year 2017 was also the year of the total eclipse, and many avidly followed the complete veiling of the sun across much of North America. Thousands descended on the zone of totality to witness the eerie silence, the sudden drop in temperature, the daytime stars, and the strange half-light and shadows. The eclipse seemed an apt symbol of our world, covered with a cold, dark shadow, unfamiliar and foreboding.

Yet in such dark times, Christians remain people of hope, and mission matters to Christian educators because of that hope. In times such as these, we need frequent reminders of this fact. We need to read and re-read Psalm 33: "The eyes of the Lord are on those...who hope in God's faithful love, to rescue their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine...May your faithful love be upon us, as we hope in you, O Lord" (18-19, 22). In terms of eternity, we are living through a brief, albeit painful, moment. When we step back and view the cosmic picture, we remember God's providential care and love for creation and its creatures. Even in the terror of an eclipse, we can be confident that the light will emerge.

I find great comfort in the words of the unparalleled Emily Dickinson:
“Hope” is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all –  

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –  
And sore must be the storm –  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm  

Part of my tuneless hope in the midst of the current storm stems from a belief that colleges and universities with a mission inspired by Christian faith can be part of the reappearance of the light. Unlike James Burtchaell, who lamented “the dying of the light” in mission-based colleges and universities in his 1998 book, I see possibilities for brighter days. Mission matters now in three key ways.

Mission Provides a Foundation

Even though Christian institutions of higher education embody and express their Christian identity in a plethora of ways, our institutions all affirm and embrace Christian belief. We share a common profession of a creator God, an incarnate Son, a Spirit at work in the world. We believe in grace, forgiveness, and the resurrection from the dead. We affirm a common vision for human flourishing and share a sense of obligation to love our neighbors. The strong Christian intellectual and theological tradition that we collectively draw upon, with individual institutions representing different strands, provides a raison d'être for life goals, vocations, and ethical behavior. When we see people and the natural world in the light of creation, fall, and redemption, it frames everything we do. We have solid ground from which to speak in troubled times.

Mission Leads to Formation

This common foundation and governing narrative results in our focus on student formation. Mission-driven institutions do not exist merely to instill knowledge and skills, to prepare people to get good paying jobs, or to produce research that increases the wealth of the 1 percent. In teaching and scholarship, we are concerned about the formation of students and ideas: people and practices that will change the world, often only one mere inch at a time. Our colleges and universities challenge and prepare students to work for a better world in their jobs, family life, community engagement, and leisure time. Of course, we are concerned with how students think (intellectual growth), but we also challenge them to make wise choices concerning the direction of the steps of their lives (vocational growth) and the stories on which they base their character (ethical growth). We not only are in the vanguard of a growing concern for character development, ethical formation, and spiritual growth in the twenty-first century academy, we are well supplied to lead the way.

Mission Grants True Freedom

Seattle Pacific University’s opening convocation traditionally features a speech made by a retiring faculty member. This fall’s address was delivered by a history professor, Donald Holsinger, who had started his career at George Mason University before moving to SPU, where he taught for almost three decades. Reflecting on the narrative arc of his career, Professor Holsinger spoke of his initial trepidation about leaving a tenured position at GMU for a “religious” institution, only to discover, to his surprise, a much greater freedom at SPU to talk about the things that most deeply mattered to him as a person steeped in the Mennonite tradition.

We not only are in the vanguard of a growing concern for character development, ethical formation, and spiritual growth in the twenty-first century academy, we are well supplied to lead the way.
During the many years in which I led the SPU New Faculty Seminar, I heard similar sentiments from other faculty who had previously taught at major research universities and state land-grant systems before landing at a private institution. They found a greater sense of freedom to talk about their deepest beliefs and commitments at a mission-based school. If they held certain faith-informed positions on economics, aesthetics, war, poverty, human personhood, globalization, death, and genetic modification, to name only a few, they encountered more latitude and even encourage-

Authentic Christian belief acknowledges our frailty and requires humility. It teaches us that we are limited and make mistakes. It reminds us that we need to hear multiple points of view.

American to be represented by a New York gallery, Lawrence is known “for his modernist depictions of everyday life as well as epic narratives of African American history and historical figures,” according to the DC Moore Gallery. Yet what the DC Moore biography as well as the Wikipedia entry on Lawrence fails to mention is the crucial role that the African American church played in Lawrence’s art and life. A friend of mine collects the work of Northwest painters, including Jacob Lawrence, and spoke with Lawrence several times about the importance of faith and Christian tradition to his art. One of Lawrence’s more stunning later works, seldom discussed in the critical literature, is a series of eight illustrations commissioned for a limited edition of the King James version of Genesis. In the Genesis series, Lawrence drew scenes based on his memories of the preacher at Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church. In each panel, the impassioned orator is proclaiming the word to his congregation; a Bible is always prominent, and in the background, four church windows show scenes related to the specific act of creation that is the verse’s focus.

Lawrence is rightly acclaimed as one of the greatest African-American painters of the twentieth century. But why, my friend asks, is Lawrence not recognized as one of the greatest Christian painters of the twentieth century? The modern art world has lacked that freedom.

The freedom found at mission-based institutions allows for the practice of true plurality, if done well. All Christians, including myself, can be just as closed-minded as anyone else, thinking our own understanding is the absolute truth. But authentic Christian belief acknowledges our frailty and requires humility. It teaches us that we are limited and make mistakes. It reminds us that we need to hear multiple points of view and be especially sensitive to different ethnic and cultural perspectives. We should not keep out other theories, stories, and perspectives, but welcome all to the table of conversation. As Jane Austen writes in *Emma*: “Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised or a little mistaken.” We need the collective wisdom of our communities.
A Case Study

If mission matters especially today because it provides a foundation, prompts formation, and grants freedom, let's consider how this plays out in a specific instance—the white supremacist march, protest, and violence in Charlottesville. In the August 14, 2017, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Chad Wellman, an associate professor of German studies at the University of Virginia wrote a illuminating essay called, "For Moral Clarity, Don't Look to Universities." Wellman described witnessing the torchlight march on his campus from his residential housing and spoke of his (and others') disappointment in the initial response of the university president, Teresa A. Sullivan, to the white supremacy gathering and ensuing violence. She did not "express moral outrage" but spoke of "vague values and general disappointment."

Wellman continues:

The contemporary university, at least in its local form in Charlottesville, seems institutionally incapable of moral clarity.... Sullivan's missives, especially her initial ones, read like press releases from the bowels of a modern bureaucracy, not the thoughts of a human responding to hate. And that makes a lot of sense. What can the president of a contemporary university say? The University of Virginia is many things—a health center, a federal contractor, a sports franchise, an event venue, and, almost incidentally, a university devoted to education and knowledge. It is most often, as Clark Kerr wrote in 1963, a multiversity, with little common purpose but the perpetuation of itself and its procedures. Why should my colleagues and I look to our chief executive for moral leadership?
The essay continues by citing Max Weber's admonition to his students that "they should not turn to the university for ultimate meaning or a world view." The modern liberal university does not exist for guidance on how to live. Consequently, Wellman expresses that he must separate his personal and professional identities and actions:

When I welcome my students this Saturday, I will discuss white supremacy and the march, but I will use language different than the one my wife and I used with our three children. To them we spoke in the language of our faith tradition—in terms of the image of God, the church, and Christian love. When I speak to my students, I will do so in the language of the university and its traditions—in terms of open debate, critique, and a love of knowledge.

Educators and leaders of faith-based institutions are bound to a common moral mission. They are free to speak in the language of your faith tradition. They can condemn white supremacy, and unjust responses to natural disasters, and incivility, sexism, and mendacity by appealing to the image of God, the church, and Christian love. When I speak to my students, I will do so in the language of the university and its traditions—in terms of open debate, critique, and a love of knowledge.

A recent article on pedagogy in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "How to be Political in Class," by David Gooblar, affirms, "It’s not our job to change our students’ beliefs." Gooblar’s position resembles that of Stanley Fish, who writes in *Save the World on Your Own Time*, that professors can "legitimately" introduce their students to bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry, and equip them with analytical skills, but professors should not try to instill virtues or beliefs in their students, such as a commitment to social justice.

Might the job of teacher-scholars at institutions informed by a sense of Christian mission entail changing their students’ beliefs? If one has a white supremacist student, shouldn’t one try to change his or her beliefs? In a writing course that focuses on the topic of homelessness, one of my objectives is to encourage students to have more compassion for the homeless and feel convicted to help them. Of course I’m introducing them to a lot of facts and history, as well as theories and proposals for solving the problem; I spend the greatest amount of time on teaching them writing and researching skills; but I also deliberately keep in mind an affective goal. I don’t prescribe how the problem of homelessness in America today should be addressed—that’s a matter for research and debate—but I do want my students to feel convinced that they should love and care for their neighbors who happen to be without homes.

Clearly, we cannot assess students’ academic progress based on their opinions, but I believe that a mission-based institution should try to change students’ beliefs—by appealing to facts, logic, and reason; by instilling a historical consciousness, an analytic mind, and a spirit of creativity; by exposing them to a variety of viewpoints and experiences—but also by helping them to form beliefs, values, and actions based on a love of God and neighbor.

It matters today, more than ever, in this dark world.

Susan VanZanten is the incoming dean of Christ College—The Honors College at Valparaiso University. She previously served as professor of English and interim co-chair of the Department of Languages, Cultures, and Linguistics at Seattle Pacific University. This essay is adapted from her address at the 2017 Lilly Workshop for Senior Administrators at Loyola Marymount University.
GETHSEMANE

The centuries will float to me out of the darkness.
And I shall judge them.

Boris Pasternak

Did He notice the twisted starlight,
the crack in the arch, the storm coming on
like news? The apostles' steady breaths

nick the silence—they dream
of hillside sermons and deliverance.

Between their humped forms
and the garden's writhe lines, He sees
a faceless creature with reptilian eyes and gait
emerge. It offers his life vesseled

in an envenomed cup. The throes:

He cries out—
the close air swallows the sound.
Abba, the thud of fallen fruit.

Through the broken arch,
the glint of hilts, the flourish of nodding plumes.
The sky over His shoulder breaks.

Matthew Porto
Dante in the Woods
The Potential of the Para-University

Christopher S. Noble

I am a scholar in the woods. My classroom, nestled fourteen miles south of a main entrance to Yosemite National Park, is the High Sierra Humanities Program of Azusa Pacific University. My curriculum is composed of "core texts"—Dante, Augustine, Confucius, Teresa of Avila, William James, Dostoevsky, Zora Neale Hurston—even though no one in higher education today seems able to agree about what precisely those texts form the core of. Perhaps they are like the core of an apple, inedible and discarded? Or perhaps they are like the core of a nuclear reactor, dynamic and combustible?

My program is traditionally described as an "off-campus experience," but I prefer to conceive of it instead as an experimental lab for testing new pedagogies and institutional structures to serve the advancement of Christian humanistic study in an age of widespread corporatization. It is a para-university. The hue and cry surrounding the declining economic and social status of the humanities in the twenty-first century seldom produces any feasible proposals for reorganizing the structures that are primarily responsible for that decline. More commonly, attempts to explain the embarrassing scarcity of, say, English and history majors, fall back on abstract cultural polemics or hand-wringing eulogies for the classics.

For instance, William Deresiewicz's much-discussed book about the disadvantages of elite education in the Ivy League, Excellent Sheep (2015), is long on trenchant diagnosis, but painfully short on effective prescription. "With credentialism," argues Deresiewicz, "comes a narrow practicality that's capable of understanding education only in terms of immediate utility," and he proceeds to recount the sordid history that transformed scholarship into utilitarianism. But what to do about the problem now? The solution is unclear.

Similarly—and somewhat paradoxically—perspectives arising from professional programs are similarly vague on this crucial point. Stephany Schlachter, provost of Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois, wrote eloquently in the Easter 2017 issue of the Cresset of the positive impact studying the humanities has had on her own professional perspectives as a nurse and administrator. She nevertheless acknowledges, in a graciously framed understatement, that "we continue to face challenges to making this integration [of liberal learning with professional programs] successful." Schlachter contends that today's undergraduates "do not always understand the full value of general education requirements," and urges that "we need to help them better understand." But, again, how?

I would like to propose, somewhat less graciously, that today's undergraduates "do not always understand" the full value of general education requirements precisely because they are not receiving that full value. In other words, they do understand that the current economic structures
they inhabit mean to cheat them out of a valuable experience, even though they cannot yet imagine what that valuable experience might be. It is as if hungry diners who had never tasted Thai cuisine decided to venture out in pursuit of Massaman curry, satay, and pad thai. Imagine them arriving at their chosen restaurant only to find drab décor and a demoralized wait staff. They have no reason to doubt the delights of Thai food in principle, but they will not be eating here.

Para-university educational models offer a specific solution to the challenges facing the humanities today by reorganizing existing resources to support new pedagogical and disciplinary structures so that the tarnished value of our current general educational offerings might be polished and restored.

What is a para-university? It is helpful to begin with negative definitions. It is not the same as an "off-campus program," although the para-university I work for happens to be housed in one. It is not an honors college; it is not an independent entity like the Oregon Extension; it is not an academic department or school; it is not a service department, such as the registrar or bursar, whose role is to support everyday functions. Rather, a para-university is better likened to the R&D department of a tech company. It is a developmental space set aside to insure innovation and future competitiveness.

The "para" of the term is a Greek prefix meaning "alongside" or even, in some cases, "protecting against." Thus, lawyers have paralegals and airborne infantry have parachutes. (And even
parasites have their uses, when they establish symbiotic relationships with their hosts.)

A para-university, then, is any university program that exists alongside its institution’s mission but outside its institution’s entrenched presuppositions. It serves as a check against the inevitable cultural inertias that plague all large organizations, against the tendency to collapse into a logic of mere precedent: “That’s how we do it, because that’s how we have always done it.” Para-universities are adaptive and experimental zones, but on a scale small enough to prevent major disruptions to the whole. Because of this scale, they will never be profit centers, but neither need they be financial sinkholes. They prove their worth in terms of their added value to a university’s overall educational product, in the intellectual capabilities, reshaped desires, spiritual flourishing, and, dare I say, customer satisfaction of the humans it graduates.

The particular para-university I work for, the High Sierra Humanities Program, is experimental in precisely this way. Not everything we try works. However, the successes, both anecdotal and quantitative, are so remarkably potent that the failures pale by comparison. For example, students who

I can remember camping with my students by an alpine lake at 10,000 feet as eighteen inches of snow fell softly around us overnight, burying our equipment, seeping slowly into our tents as we tried to sleep. Dante’s Commedia reads differently in class after a shared experience like that.

attend our program are far more likely to graduate from Azusa Pacific University than the average—by about fifteen percentage points.

The para-university model is particularly well-suited to address the contemporary crisis in the humanities in faith-based institutions because this crisis has actually been sustained by the staleness of our regimented disciplinary entrenchments, prejudicial and outdated forms whose existence can now be justified only by institutions with luxurious endowments. The question now is whether humanities departments can invent ways to collaborate on curricular decisions without compromising the intellectual depth that can only be produced by disciplinary specialization. If such a collaboration could be cultivated, more undergraduates would seek out the general education experience at the college level, because it would actually provide the value it has the potential to deliver. In para-university spaces, it is possible to experiment with practical approaches to such collaboration without disturbing (at least not yet) the disciplinary turf.

Let me illustrate how my para-university functions with two examples:

The first example involves an interaction between traditional general-education academic work and an experiential outdoor component of the High Sierra Humanities Program. In my fall literature seminar, I teach three core texts: Homer’s Iliad, Virgil’s Aeneid, and Dante’s Commedia. So far, so good. Courses like this can be found at colleges and universities all around the country, and possibly even for free online. But in the second week of my semester, students leave the
classroom for a week to embark on a five-day trek in the Ansel Adams Wilderness. Sometimes the weather conditions cooperate; sometimes they don’t. I can remember camping with my students by an alpine lake at 10,000 feet as eighteen inches of snow fell softly around us overnight, burying our equipment, seeping slowly into our tents as we tried to sleep.

Dante’s *Commedia* reads differently in class after a shared experience like that. As readers of Dante know, his masterpiece begins in failure, by losing the straight path. Dante’s pilgrimage makes progress only through a series of radical reorientations from hell to paradise, transitions which demonstrate to him experientially that down is really up and that his ways are not God’s ways.

The curricular structure of my para-university provides enough flexibility so that we can briefly extricate ourselves from the often predictable and numbing ebb and flow of the traditional academic semester just long enough to prepare students affectively for what they are about to receive intellectually and spiritually. Like Dante, my students and I share a pilgrimage, and they can now begin more readily to accept that professors—their guides—are not, despite decades of hard-earned expertise, immune to the material rigors of the communal journey.

In a celebrated essay first published in 1995, “The Autonomy of Affect,” Brian Massumi set the stage for what has now become the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of affect theory. Massumi pointed out the fundamental difference between emotion and affect, the former being phenomenological, the latter being physiological. In other words, what we are conscious of “feeling” and how our bodies actually react to affective stimuli are not always congruent.

Massumi’s insights are central to the para-university approach to the humanities followed in my program. My students don’t always “like” reading Dante. Similarly, they don’t always “like” hiking at 10,000 feet. As you might imagine, students tend to run the gamut in their emotional responses to both of these activities. But my students’ affective orientations to Dante and other core texts in the humanities have altered drastically by the end of the semester, whether they liked reading the *Commedia* or not. Even if they find the reading difficult and confusing, their membership in a small cohort community gradually converts initial frustration into curiosity and enlarged capacities for attention. Their preconscious dispositions about the literary experience are even more important than the intellectual content they retain from it—indeed, the latter depends upon the former. As Aristotle foresaw long ago, it is possible to educate desire without dictating taste. But such an endeavor cannot proceed merely on the basis of expert intellectual instruction or disciplinary savvy. Those are necessary conditions of humanities education, not sufficient ones.

One need not, of course, go hiking with students in order to create conditions of affective engagement. However, the current status quo of “cafeteria” general education requirements, taught largely by overworked and underpaid adjuncts, or by professors who would rather be elsewhere, is almost guaranteed to fail. Such a system creates a negative feedback loop: disenchantment with general education leads to shrinking humanities departments which then can justify their budgets only by teaching more lackluster general education courses.

Despite the criticism it has received for its statistical methodology, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa’s *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (2011) correctly diagnosed the institutional dilemma underlying the affective shortcomings in humanities pedagogy: “No actors in the system are primarily interested in undergraduate student growth, although many are
interested in student retention and persistence” (125). In a para-university, however, it becomes possible to model future changes that might bring our professional incentives into greater alignment with graduating the kinds of students Christian universities claim to produce: spiritually mature critical thinkers with marketable skills.

My second example of the functioning of my para-university, therefore, focuses on the creative way we have sought to integrate our institution’s general education requirements in a “plenary” format. Azusa Pacific University requires all undergraduates to take one course in “Intercultural Competence” and another in “Civic Engagement” before graduating. Many colleges have such requirements. And, on the main campus of my institution, these requirements are generally met within individual majors in courses like “World Religions” (for the former) and “American Government” (for the latter).

The faculty and staff of my para-university, after much discussion, concluded that these two separate requirements were too closely related to be considered in isolation. How can one be genuinely civically engaged in twenty-first century America without also learning some intercultural competence? Our solution was to combine the two requirements into a single syllabus that studies environmental ethics from the perspective of cultural privilege. Together we read Carolyn Finney’s book *Black Faces, White Spaces*, which argues that the historical denial of land to African-Americans has constructed geographically privileged areas, including the national park just down the road from our campus. At the conclusion of the semester, we invited Professor Finney to come speak to us about her work during a “mini-conference” that was run in part by the undergraduates themselves.

After the mini-conference, all our students had earned college credit toward either “Intercultural Competence” or “Civic Engagement.” But, more importantly, they were actually more competent and engaged. The difference was achieved not by a shift in intellectual content, but rather by a shift in affective orientation, communal learning, and institutional structures.

It seems increasingly likely to me that the future of the humanities in higher education will depend on our ability to redesign the *packaging* of general education course requirements in the ways described above, and that para-universities are the institutional spaces required for invention. Such reformations promise deeper student learning and affective engagement, more efficient paths to graduation, more numerous opportunities for faith integration, and greater intellectual rewards for faculty. Despite the commercial connotations of the word, such “repackaging” need not acquiesce to a production-line ideology in which students are conceived of merely as commodities.

And, even if it did acquiesce to such pressures, it might still constitute an improvement. For, sadly, in purely administrative terms, that is the reality many Christian scholars in the humanities already regularly confront. 

Christopher S. Noble is professor of English at Azusa Pacific University, where he has taught since 2001. He lives in Oakhurst, California, with his wife, two daughters, and one headstrong cat.

The High Sierra Program of Azusa Pacific University will host a Lilly Fellows Network Exchange for ten faculty and administrators from March 27-31, 2019. The Network Exchange will showcase this program’s para-university model and engage participants in conversations about the future of humanities education in Christian colleges and universities. Applications, due October 1, 2018, are now open. Visit www.lillyfellows.org/grants-and-prizes/network-exchange for details.
EASTER MORNING

Jim Harrison wrote that in America
peasants fry potatoes in bacon grease.
But this morning we eat eggs
drizzled in hollandaise
asparagus sautéed in salt and lemon.

Our plates look like art projects,
English muffin centerpieces.
We wear work-boots with our best clothes:
mustard tights, hand-me down dresses, hand knit ties.
We go outside to freckle.

Today, in America, potatoes sizzle on fast-food griddles,
catsup pours, Jesus drives a salt-glazed highway
in a Pontiac that smells more like old coffee
than frankincense,
and we sit on porches
in front of houses filled with other people's furniture.

In dirt-soaked snow, fir needles float.
Melt laces ice. Cedar branches baptize
soaking us in spring.

Rachael Button
"Use Nothing Only Once"
Believing Again with Roger Lundin, Emily Dickinson, and Ron Rash

Martha Greene Eads

As a twentieth-century Christian aspiring to become an English professor, I probably couldn't have been luckier than to enter graduate school in the 1990s. The Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company had made a fortune on Prozac, which went on the market in 1988, and soon thereafter the Lilly heirs established a foundation that to this day supports a number of Christian higher education initiatives, including the postdoctoral fellowship program that led me to my position at Eastern Mennonite University in 2001. Around the same time, the Pew Foundation developed what seemed then like an endless stream of grants for Christian scholars, one of which matched me as a Ph.D. student at UNC-Chapel Hill with M.A. student Anthony Wilson at Vanderbilt and then-assistant professor Hal Bush at St. Louis University for mutual support and mentoring by Roger Lundin of Wheaton College. Pew gave us each a generous stipend for three years and covered our travel for a series of meetings, during which we shared both professional and personal concerns. One piece of advice Roger repeated to us then and in the years that followed was “use nothing only once.” Especially if you end up teaching at a small Christian college with a heavy teaching load, the only sure path to publishing productivity is to find a rich vein of scholarly inquiry and to tap it again and again.

Roger attributed this insight to his dear friend and colleague, historian Mark Noll. We all cheered when Alan Wolfe proclaimed in The Atlantic in October 2000 that “[b]ecause of the work of historians such as Noll, George Marsden, Joel Carpenter, and Nathan Hatch, the provost of Notre Dame, no serious student of American history can any longer dismiss evangelical Christianity as little more than a backward reaction against modernity” (61). Wolfe called his article “The Opening of the Evangelical Mind” in a nod to Noll’s 1994 book, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind. Although Wolfe wrote bluntly in the Atlantic about some shortcomings he saw in Christian higher education, his article largely refuted the assumption, increasingly popular as the twentieth century unfolded, that church-related schools were second-rate and that Christian scholars must be closing their eyes to the hard truths twentieth-century physicists, evolutionary biologists, psychologists, and sociologists had revealed. Mark Noll’s bold book, as well as his subsequent gigs at Harvard and Notre Dame, further challenged the conventional wisdom. Even secular religious skeptics could not deny that he and fellow-historian Nathan Hatch, as well as Roger Lundin and Alan Jacobs, all then at Wheaton; along with philosophers Nicholas Wolterstorff and Alvin Plantinga at Calvin College; and, a little later, sociologist Christian Smith, then at UNC, were phenomenally productive and closing their eyes to nothing.

Another piece of advice Roger gave to my Pew Foundation cohort was to think, speak, and write as honestly as we could about the truth before us. He often quoted a phrase from Richard Wilbur’s poem “Lying”: “In the strictest sense, of course, we invent nothing, merely bearing witness/ To what each morning brings again to light” (qtd. in Beginning with the Word 10). For Roger, a scholar of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, what the morning usually
brought to light were texts about the difficulty of religious belief. The skepticism that largely ruled in twentieth-century academia had taken root in the nineteenth century, and Roger read carefully, respectfully, and even lovingly the poetry, novels, essays, and letters of nineteenth-century women and men whose Christian faith often wore thin under the pressure of scientific advances, new streams of philosophy, and the everyday horrors of life. Drawing from the work of historian James Turner, Roger asserted in his 2009 book *Believing Again: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age* that the good news of Christian faith was no longer a surety for many educated people by the mid-nineteenth century. He wrote, "[O]pen unbelief became for the first time an intellectually viable and socially acceptable option in the countries of the North Atlantic.... Agnosticism entailed both a ‘permanent suspension of belief in God’ and a stubborn inability to rest in the reality of God. It quickly ‘became the distinctively modern unbelief’ and established itself as a ‘self-sustaining phenomenon’ in the decades after the American Civil War" (104).1 One exemplar of this perspective was the poet Emily Dickinson, the writer to whom Roger gave the most scholarly attention and about whom he published his award-winning biography *The Art of Belief* in 2004.

Among the Dickinson poems Roger regularly quoted was "Those—dying then," which he asserted describes the spiritual loss many have experienced with the rise of unbelief. The poem, which he dated to 1882, observes:

Those – dying then,
Knew where they went –
They went to God's Right Hand –
That Hand is amputated now
And God cannot be found –
The abdication of Belief
Makes the Behavior small –
Better an ignis fatuus
Than no illume at all –

Lundin explains, “Dickinson here refuses to place the blame for the loss of belief. She renders the amputation of God’s hand in the passive voice, and with the word ‘abdication’ she leaves it unclear whether God’s disappearance is a result of divine self-mutilation or a parricidal act of human aggression. What is clear is that belief’s abdication has created a void in the lives of many who had once rested in its assurances” (114). Fascinated by this poem’s account of Emily Dickinson’s spiritual struggle, Roger mined it for all it was worth in his lectures, articles, and books.

As an English teacher eager to draw connections and parallels (even when they might not be entirely justified!), I could not help but think of this poem’s central image when I read North Carolina poet and fiction-writer Ron Rash’s short story “The Dowry,” which he published first in his 2013 collection *Nothing Gold Can Stay* and then a year later in *Something Rich and Strange: Selected Stories*.2 In the story, set in rural Marshall, NC, just after the Civil War, a pastor named Boone gives his own hand when a Confederate veteran demands that

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1 Lundin notes that Huxley “coined the term agnosticism to describe what was at that point a strange phenomenon having to do with the sudden, widespread loss of belief” by 1869.

2 In keeping with the spirit of this article’s title, I discuss this story similarly alongside others in “The Christ-Abandoned Landscape of Nothing Gold Can Stay” in *Summoning the Dead: Essays on Ron Rash* (ed. Randall Wilhelm and Zachary Vernon, USC, 2018).
his daughter’s sweetheart, who had fought for the Union, offer his as a sort of a reverse dowry. In developing this story, Rash operates as if on Roger Lundin’s “use-nothing-only-once” principle; he had already written a poem called “The Dowry.”

When Pastor Boone comments on the speed with which Dr. Andrews’s new pipe has reached him from the United Kingdom, the doctor responds, “I only wish ideas could cross the ocean as quickly.” which he published in the 2002 collection Raising the Dead. Although the characters’ names and the outcomes are different in the poem and the story, Rash is obviously circling round and round his knowledge of nineteenth-century social and political conflict in North Carolina, much as Roger did with Emily Dickinson’s poetry and letters.

The image of the severed hand, however, is not the only link between the Dickinson poem that haunted Roger and the postbellum animosity that haunts Rash. Whether or not Rash had Dickinson’s poem in mind when he wrote “The Dowry,” the two works function similarly to illustrate unbelief’s tightening grasp since the U.S. Civil War, the unbelief that developed in response to what Roger called in Believing Again “the materialist narrative” (7). Among the central influences on this narrative, according to Lundin, are Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley (Believing Again 79, 104), two writers whose works are at least on the periphery of Pastor Boone’s thinking. Boone’s physician-friend Noah Andrews, whose office “served as a salon for the best-educated men in Marshall to discuss everything from literature and politics to science and religion” (184), keeps on his office shelves Darwin’s On the Origin of the Species and Huxley’s Man’s Place in Nature alongside works by Shakespeare, Scott, and Thackeray. “An oil lamp,.... its flame alive” illuminates this temple of learning, and “a lacquered darkness gave the office the aura of a confessional booth, which, like the room’s seeming immutability, no doubt made it easier to speak of fears too often confirmed” (185). When Pastor Boone comments on the speed with which Dr. Andrews’s new pipe has reached him from the United Kingdom, the doctor responds, “I only wish ideas could cross the ocean as quickly” (187). Dr. Andrews is bucking against the strictures of a traditional Christian worldview, and he wants to pull his friend Pastor Boone out along with him.

From the opening image of “The Dowry,” however, Rash signals that he is depicting a world in which traditional Christian faith falters. “The garden angel’s wings were submerged,” Pastor Boone observes through his window, “the red-bud’s dark branches damasked white” (173). As Pastor Boone braces himself to visit a parishioner in the bitter weather, his housekeeper Mrs. Newell warns him about catching “the ague” and threatens that “[i]nstead of hearing yourself read the Good Book, you’ll be hearing it read over your coffin.” Teasing her gently about her eschatological interpretation, he sets forth in his buggy and begins planning the next week’s sermon. “Instead of a chapter of Acts on mercy, he pondered the opening verse in Obadiah, The pride of thine own heart hath deceived thee,” Rash writes.

Already, in just five pages, Rash has invited readers to interpret Boone’s change of plan as a rebuke of the man he is preparing to visit, Leland Davidson. Davidson has refused to let his daughter Helen marry Union veteran Ethan Burke unless Burke will amputate his own hand. Pastor Boone seems to be on his way to talk sense into Davidson—to secure permission for the star-crossed childhood sweethearts in his congregation to marry apart from such a condition. In a battle of the Bible in the Davidson parlor, Colonel Davidson and Pastor Boone each reach for scriptural support, the former citing eye-for-an-eye passages from Leviticus and the latter preaching forgiveness from Colossians. Certainly, their debate illustrates the struggle to reconcile the apparent tension between the Old Testament’s emphasis on justice and the New Testament’s on mercy. Rash
is, however, going beyond illustrating this tension to pointing out another: the modern tension between belief and unbelief exemplified by the struggle between Pastor Boone and Dr. Andrews.

When Pastor Boone convinces Dr. Andrews to perform the amputation, the physician fumes, "I can't believe I've allowed you to talk me into this barbarism, and for no other reason than some bundles of papyrus written thousands of years ago. We may as well be living in mud huts, grinding rocks to make fire. Huxley and his X Club will soon end such nonsense in England, but in this country we still believe the recidivists not the innovators bring advancement in human endeavors" (190).

As the surgical procedure begins, Dr. Andrews returns to the subject Mrs. Newell had broached as the story opens: the resurrection of the dead. Clearly, he is more skeptical than she about its likelihood.

Whether the dead—Christ, specifically—can be raised is central to this story's conflict. Passages about mercy in the New Testament book of Acts—one of which Pastor Boone has rejected for his next week's sermon—follow closely upon assertions about Christ's resurrection. The book opens with a description of Christ's ascension forty days after His resurrection, and the next chapter recounts Peter's Pentecost sermon, in which he identifies Christ as not only as David's descendent but also the fulfillment of his prophetic vision of resurrection. Those who heard this sermon and subsequently trusted in Christ were baptized, witnessed and performed miracles, and established a radically joyful, hospitable, and merciful community (Acts 2:41-47). Throughout the book, followers of Christ affirm His resurrection, linking it to David's messianic prophecies. Biblical scholar N. T. Wright asserts in *Acts For Everyone* that "[t]he good news, the great news, of Jesus is that with his resurrection it becomes clear not only that he is Messiah and Lord, but that in his death he has dealt evil itself a blow from which, though it still retains some power, it will never recover" (39).

An inability—or a refusal—to believe in Christ's literal, physical resurrection is a hallmark of the new nineteenth-century decline in conventional Christian faith, as Dickinson's poem demonstrates. In "The Dowry," Doctor Andrews exemplifies this new agnosticism, but even Boone, a pastor, is not immune to it. Boone's shift in sermon text from Acts serves as evidence. Of course, Obadiah is a judgment passage, and most readers of "The Dowry" would agree that Davidson deserves some kind of judgment. Rash soon makes clear, however, that Pastor Boone reads Obadiah as a judgment of his own life rather than of Davidson's. Rash writes, "To hold together what frayed benevolence remained in the church, a pastor need appear neutral.... Yet [there] were times [Pastor Boone] suspected his silence [about his Union sympathies] had been mere cowardice" (175). A few pages later, he reflects, "Even in the war's brutal last winter, he had never lacked firewood and food, and, childless, no son to fear for. No outliers had abused him. Almost alone in that dark time, he, Christ's shepherd, had been blessed" (177). It is in glimpsing the prints of young Ethan's poorly repaired boots in the snow from his own relatively luxurious buggy, not a direct encounter with the cruel Davidson, that prompts Pastor Boone's consideration of Obadiah 1:3: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?"

Thus Boone determines, when Davidson will not agree to lift his hand-for-a-hand demand, to
sacrifice his own hand—not only as a dowry but as a payment for his own war-time idolatry—congregational conflict-avoidance and material comfort. Confronted with the suffering resulting from the Civil War (as well as the suffering Colonel Davidson is inflicting on Helen and Ethan), plagued by guilt, and deprived of the spiritual resources a more robust Christian faith might have offered him, Pastor Boone has no choice but to sacrifice himself. When Dr. Andrews observes that “it always comes down to guilt, does it not,” Pastor Boone replies, “I suppose, though I would add that hope is also a factor” (190). He himself, however, must undergo amputation to claim that hope. If Christ’s crucifixion has not resulted in a sure triumph over evil and death, Pastor Boone must embrace some sort of salvific sacrifice of his own.

In “The Dowry,” Pastor Boone thus comes to the limits of his wisdom, ability, and strength in the face of evil. Rash hints, least obliquely, in other stories as well as this one that the hope Christian faith once offered cannot meet the particular demands suffering poses on men and women in the agnostic cultural context that dawned in the nineteenth century. For him, William James’s account of religious experience seems to offer a measure of hope in the form of existential heroism, a heroism that Pastor Boone exemplifies.

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body’s blood. Your religion, I mean,” Pastor Boone replies, “I suppose, though I would add that hope is also a factor” (190). He himself, however, must undergo amputation to claim that hope. If Christ’s crucifixion has not resulted in a sure triumph over evil and death, Pastor Boone must embrace some sort of salvific sacrifice of his own.

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In a general way, then, and “on the whole,” our abandonment of theological criteria, and our testing of religion by practical

common sense and the empirical method, leave it in possession of its towering place in history. Economically, the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world’s welfare. The great saints are immediate successes; the smaller ones are at least heralds and harbingers, and they may be leavens also, of a better mundane order. Let us be saints, then, if we can, whether or not we succeed visibly and temporarily. But in our Father’s house are many mansions, and each of us must discover for himself the kind of religion and the amount of saintship which best comports with what he believes to be his powers and feels to be his truest mission and vocation. There are no successes to be guaranteed and no set orders to be given to individuals, so long as we follow the methods of empirical philosophy. (377)

William James, Roger Lundin asserts, deserves credit—along with Friedrich Nietzsche—for dissuading Western intellectuals from “search[ing] for truth [that] involved confident efforts to uncover the worded order God had woven into the fabric of the reality” (Beginning 17). For James, the only thing humans can learn for certain from examining religious practices would be more about ourselves.

Although Rash acknowledges an intellectual debt to James, he has accepted the label “a religious man” in an interview with Thomas Aernold Bjerre (222), and Anna Dunlap Higgins notes that his “own particular background, passed down to him via his mother’s line, was Southern Baptist, although not the staid version one might imagine.” She asserts that “[t]he poet is a deeply spiritual man, believing in the grace of second birth” (53). The nature of such birth, however, at least as it appears in stories from Something Rich and Strange, is uncertain, and Rash has been cagey when interviewers ask him about his faith. When I dared, however, to send him a copy of the Michaelmas 2015 Cresset article in which I assert that one of his darkest novels, The World Made Straight, ultimately points to Christ’s redemptive power, he thrilled me with this email response:
Dear Marti, ...[T]hanks so much for understanding the book’s true core. Ron, who is among the believers” (email to the author, October 14, 2015).¹

**How did I recognize this deeply Christian element in Rash’s work?** From heeding Roger Lundin’s advice, taken from Richard Wilbur, simply to “bear witness.” Like me, Rash is an English professor who grew up in the Scripture-saturated Blue Ridge Mountains in a Baptist church. In fact, we’re sixth cousins two different ways. Having pursued higher education (and then some), we’ve both been steeped in the materialist narrative. Thanks to Roger, I don’t have to be afraid of experiencing a dance, of sorts, between belief and unbelief, and I was able to glimpse a similar oscillation in Rash’s fiction. For Emily Dickinson, Lundin points out, as for many other modern poets, novelists, and dramatists, unbelief has become a way station within belief. He quotes a line from a letter she wrote around the same time as “Those—dying then”: “On subjects, of which we know nothing, or should I say Beings—we both believe, and disbelieve a hundred times an Hour, which keeps Believing nimble” (115). Many scholars have called attention to the poems in which Dickinson explored her doubts about the existence and benevolence of a traditional God, but Roger called attention to those in which she celebrated her love for Christ. It makes sense to me that Ron Rash might similarly still look to Christ as Savior, even if he’s not always sure why.

My friend and mentor Roger Lundin’s own immersion in the materialist narrative familiarized him with doubt, too, but witnessing and experiencing the effects of sin in this broken world directed him to the Cross and beyond to the empty Tomb. He found companionship, challenge, and inspiration in literary accounts of belief and unbelief, and his love for Christ animated not only his scholarship but also his many friendships and his deeply satisfying family life until his death two and a half years ago. He was a professor who had truly Good News to profess—one whose example has left me unwilling to give up the label “evangelical,” despite its recent negative associations. I am grateful to have this opportunity now to bear witness to Roger’s gift to so many, including me: his example of literary study as a means of testing our assumptions, facing our fears, cultivating compassion, and growing in gratitude. 

Martha Greene Eads is Professor of English at Eastern Mennonite University.

Works Cited


¹ http://thecresset.org/2015/Michaelmas/Eads_M15.html
LET GO AND LET GOD

Our father who fills our stockings with coal
like it's some sort of hobby,
who sends us to the pallid hospital
labs on a regular schedule
of worry, take your scourges and scorpions
back onto the flat-paged essays

of theology, the dusty old essays
sprayed with the coal-black venom of judgment's scorpionic
words. I've made a hobby
of shrugging on schedule
when a friend texts from the hospital:

*How could God send us to the hospital again?* I could compose an essay
of explanations. The nurse on schedule
needed to stroke your child's charcoal
hair and consider how that sweet little Holly Hobbie
of the Spirit caresses scorpions

of pain like prairie flowers, sighs at Scorpio
pinned up in the sky outside the hospital
window. Or you needed to take up a hobby,
like writing hope-filled personal essays
on the tray table next to the cole-slaw congealing for hours past dinner’s schedule.
But I know the cosmic Scheduler
of all things new can unleash scorpions
through the hallowed scarf racks at Kohls
or send every patient at the hospital
dancing home to assay
the happy injustice of heaven. Hobble
back to your exquisite hobby
of prayer, to your regularly scheduled
lifting of hands and unessayed
final trial of faith: scorpion
stingers from your hospitable
God studded in diamonds from coal.

This is not an essay on the Redeemer’s hobby
of heaping coal on our heads or scheduling
scorpions to attack. It’s a report from grace’s hospital.

Tania Runyan
A Job Description for a Christian Scholar in the Twenty-First Century

Jennifer L. Miller

As almost any college or university faculty member will tell you, the job of an academic requires wearing quite a few different hats. My calendar for this upcoming week confirms this. I move from class to committee meetings, office hours to faculty development sessions. My to-do list includes articles I want to write alongside department planning and syllabi I need to revise. A college faculty member is simultaneously a teacher, mentor, researcher, author, and advisor—not to mention possibly also a conference organizer, hiring manager, assessment leader, and instructional technology expert.

For Christian academics, both those at church-related colleges and universities as well as those at secular institutions, the number of hats worn is even larger. Not only does a Christian faculty member foster academic skills such as research, contextual understanding, and critical thinking, but he will also encourage students to consider the larger implications of what they are studying, the ways in which the facts and ideas they encounter speak to a larger purpose in life. A Christian scholar will develop a keen understanding not only of how her work fits into the larger context of her discipline, but also how both individual scholarship and the collective work of those in her discipline shape both students’ spiritual virtues as well as the overall character of religious higher education.

The finalists for the 2017 Lilly Fellows Program Book Award reflect this wide range of roles played by those in Christian higher education. These four volumes, which in turn consider the concept of vocation, explore the standard for truth in American Evangelicalism, offer reflective practices to renew classroom teaching, and analyze the historical place of women in higher education, together provide a sampling of the many facets found in someone working in Christian higher education. They also highlight timely themes and best practices for Christian scholars and teachers. At the same time, each volume, in its own way, provides insights that extend beyond Christian colleges and universities, contributing to broader conversations about the nature and purpose of higher education as a whole.

The first of these volumes, At This Time and In This Place: Vocation and Higher Education (Oxford, 2016), is a collection of essays that tackles a question central to the work of a Christian educator: “Can one ‘teach’ vocation?” (xiii). The collection, edited by David S. Cunningham, is the result of a year-long seminar sponsored by the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), a group that arose in 2009 out of the Lilly Endowment-funded Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation. Recognizing the importance of helping students discern their calling beyond basic career counseling, the seminar participants compiled this volume to help campuses that are engaged in vocational discernment...
and to “engage the broader public in an ongoing conversation about the meaning, purpose, and relevance of higher education today” (12). The essays in At This Time and In This Place recognize the ways in which Christian theology has shaped current conversations about vocation. At the same time, they acknowledge that many students and faculty come to these conversations without this set of beliefs. The result is a wonderfully varied collection that looks at vocation as a concept useful to students both within Christian higher education and outside of it. The essays engage with foundational authors in the conversation about vocation (Luther, for example) as well as slightly less expected figures (Malcolm X and J. R. R. Tolkien). The volume’s authors consider issues related to today’s students. Cynthia Wells, for example, begins her essay, “Finding the Center as Things Fly Apart,” with the recognition that the increasing reliance on technology by both students and faculty leads to dramatic changes in the way that they engage with the course material and with each other. In “Vocational Discernment,” Caryn D. Riswold challenges the ways in which identifiers such as race, social class, and sexuality provide limitations on the way students are able to think about their calling. And Charles Pinches opens his contribution, “Stories of Call: From Dramatic Phenomena to Changed Lives,” with Muhammad and Black Elk, illustrating how the experience of being called “spans religious traditions—in this case, Islam and Lakota beliefs”; Pinches also includes stories from the “more familiar” traditions of Judaism and Christianity (123). As a result, this collection truly considers what it means to talk about vocation in the twenty-first century, and is useful for those at four-year Christian liberal arts colleges, two-year public community colleges, and everywhere between.

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The next of the finalists, Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism (Oxford, 2014) by Molly Worthen, examines another key question for the Christian scholar—the nature of truth. In this volume, Worthen “takes up the riddle of anti-intellectualism” (2) in American evangelicalism that Mark Noll famously described in The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind. She provides an historical examination of the question of intellectual authority among U.S. evangelicals over the last seventy years. Worthen opens by laying out the conflict between the emphasis on revelation in evangelicalism and the Enlightenment ideals of modern intellectual life—a struggle to reconcile “heart with head” (2). Through an examination of evangelical leaders and intellectuals ranging from Carl Henry (first editor-in-chief of Christianity Today) to Noll himself, Worthen traces various standards
of truth within the movement. While biblical inerrancy serves as the obvious starting point, both for Worthen's book as well as for evangelical leaders themselves, Worthen also examines how post-World War II evangelical leaders turned away from the isolation of fundamentalism and, in so doing, connected with other sources of truth that complicated the relationship between American evangelicalism and intellectual pursuits. In engaging, elegant prose, Worthen examines forces such as Francis Schaeffer's use of popular history as "a weapon in the culture wars" (216), the conservative Catholic argument of natural law, and the relativism of postmodernism, exploring how these forces stemmed from, conflicted with, and shaped a biblical worldview predicated on inerrant Scripture.

Through this examination of the interplay between a belief in biblical authority and various cultural sources of truth, Worthen concludes that "the problem with evangelical intellectual life is not that its participants obey authority," but rather that "evangelicals attempt to obey multiple authorities at the same time" (258). The "anti-intellectualism" of American evangelicalism comes, Worthen argues, not from its emphasis on biblical inerrancy, but instead "from deep disagreement over what the Bible means, a sincere desire to uphold the standards of modern reason alongside God's word—and the defensive reflexes that outsiders' skepticism provokes" (261). In some regards, then, Worthen's book offers an evangelical extension of a previous Lilly Fellows Program Book Award finalist: Brad Gregory's The Unintended Reformation, which identifies the absence of a unified understanding of Scripture among various post-Reformation Protestant movements as inadvertently leading to the larger secularization of Western society. For Worthen, though, the attempt to reconcile multiple sources of truth pushes American evangelicals not toward secularization, but instead, toward an imagination that remains firmly rooted in biblical truth. Given the influence of American evangelicalism on public policy in the last several decades, as well as the role that Wheaton College and other members of the Christian College Consortium played in shaping the intellectual leaders of this movement, Worthen's study should be of interest to U.S. evangelicals as well as non-evangelicals who are involved in broader conversations about higher education, cultural influence, and intellectual history.

David I. Smith and Susan M. Felch explore the more reflective side of the life of the Christian scholar in Teaching and Christian Imagination (Eerdmans, 2016), a collaborative effort that brings together writing from six Calvin College faculty members. In this volume, the interdisciplinary team explores a variety of metaphors from the Christian tradition as a way of providing renewal for faculty in the classroom. As they explain in the introduction, rather than offering a how-to guide or technological resource, they are offering a more meditative road to this renewal. The book is "an opportunity to refresh your imagination, to step back and see differently. It invites you to explore how your faith and your imagination can dance together in ways that bring grace and truth into your daily service to your students and your school" (2).

To create this dance between faith and imagination, Felch and Smith, along with their colleagues Barbara M. Carvill, Kurt C. Schaefer,
Timothy H. Steele, and John D. Witvliet, explore metaphors of journeys and pilgrimages, gardens and wilderness, buildings and walls. Each of these metaphors was selected because of the potential for "biblical echoes and Christian resonances" (7). In their examination of what sustains the intellectual journey, for example, the authors move from the story of the Hebrew people in the wilderness to Jesus's commands of hospitality in the New Testament to Johan Comenius's 1623 account of his pilgrimage, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*. This variety of texts and influences helps faculty consider what to consume (either physically or intellectually) to sustain a journey, and also the importance of fellow travelers and places of rest.

While this volume uses the language and imagery of the Christian tradition, *Teaching and Christian Imagination* also offers practical classroom strategies alongside its metaphorical meditations, providing a way for faculty at any institution to pause and reflect. By thinking about the classroom as a way-station on a pilgrimage, the authors suggest faculty will need to develop "a more robust image of what it means to be hospitable" in the classroom; they will need to ask questions such as, "Have the students in this class thought about how what we are studying relates to their larger life-questions? Have I created tasks or experiences that encourage them to do so? Do students feel an appropriate sense of safety?" (71). While these questions get at many of the same ideas found in current research on pedagogical best practices, the more introspective nature of the volume invites faculty themselves to slow down and consider ways in which the classroom can be a space of rejuvenation both for themselves and for their students.

The winner of the 2017 Lilly Fellows Program Book Award, Andrea L. Turpin's *A New Moral Vision: Gender, Religion, and the Changing Purposes of American Higher Education, 1837-1917* (Cornell, 2016), speaks to the multiple roles of the Christian scholar as well, both in content and in form. Turpin provides her readers with fresh scholarship on the multiple forces that shaped the development of American higher education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while also creating a reflective space in which readers can consider how these debates affect the shape of their own institutions and pedagogical practices today.

In *A New Moral Vision*, Turpin argues that scholarship on the declining role of religion in
American higher education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries overlooks the ways that the entry of women into these institutions affected this trend. Her study, an attempt to rectify this oversight, ultimately argues that, contrary to expectation, the entry of women into higher education did not lead to a “more egalitarian social order where women and men worked side by side for the public good” in a variety of fields. Instead, religiously liberal leaders at all types of institutions actually “articulated the moral purposes of collegiate education in more gendered terms than had past evangelical leaders,” which resulted in men and women being encouraged “to advance the public good in sex-specific ways” (4).

To ground her analysis of the religious and cultural influences on women’s place in higher education, Turpin proposes a new framework for understanding the shift from evangelicalism to modernism. Drawing on scholars who see this shift as a movement from belief to action, Turpin recasts these discussions in terms of “relational spirituality”—that is, focusing on “people’s ‘vertical’ relationships with God and their ‘horizontal’ relationships with one another” (17). This framework enables Turpin to account for the impact of religious belief on higher education as well as for how women’s entry into higher education intersected with gender roles and social reform.

The bulk of Turpin’s ambitious project, however, is her series of comparative case studies of institutions: Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, Oberlin College, Princeton and Evelyn Colleges, Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges, Wellesley College, Bryn Mawr College, the University of Michigan, and the University of California, to name a few. Covering women’s colleges, men’s colleges, and co-educational institutions, Turpin examines the various influences on these colleges and universities, including curricular offerings, institutional history, the background of campus leaders, and social roles for men and women on campus. While at times it can be difficult to keep the differences between institutions clearly delineated, the intertwining of various aspects of each institution’s treatment of both religious belief and female students actually enables readers to insert their own institutions into this complex narrative. Rather than simply writing an historical account of several key colleges, Turpin describes the conflicts and decisions made at these institutions in a way that invites readers to consider how these conversations play out on campuses today. As Turpin exhorts in her conclusion, “We would therefore do well to reflect on the implications—from the strengths to the trade-offs to the potential for unintended consequences—of the moral commitments exhibited by our own institutions of higher education” (271).

As a result, in both content and in framework, Turpin’s illuminating work embodies the ideals of the Lilly Fellows Program Book Award. Even more importantly, it acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of the work of the Christian scholar, inviting these readers with many hats to consider both the multiplicity of student identities at their institutions, and how the programs and courses that they offer respond to the influences of religion and gender roles in the early decades of the twenty-first century.

Jennifer L. Miller teaches English at Normandale Community College in Minneapolis.
RIVER

You could call it a church, but it's more womb than temple, a home for weary men and women to step from the world into a structure built to house otherness. Where children suffer the basement classrooms fumigated by coffee, and cans of lemon disinfectant breathe over a Pentecost of toys. A home where the people receive what is believed to be the fist of the Holy Spirit delivered square onto the forehead, oh, the prayer, the prayer. A home, no less, because the familiar has made of itself a holiness, a place easy enough to forget the Lord was a baby who became a boy who became a man who became a river. An untameable body our hands can't grasp. An abundance one fears, this endless flowing, the subject of many books, of much studying from beyond his chiggered banks. Men drawing schematics and offering dissertations on potamology, the properties of water and, finally, the sea that receives all —explanations spilling from the halls, where children learn to down a drinkless drink, a hermeneutic, or whatever name men soon will think to give what they have ceased to swim within. But God, that river: both water and fire burning up the hell we put ourselves and neighbor through. Dear God—who can say how it is, what it is to fall into the rush of your black rapids and be swept away?

Cameron Alexander Lawrence
The American Protestant Missionary Century
A Review of David Hollinger’s Protestants Abroad

Joe Creech

DAVID HOLLINGER, Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, has written one of the most important books about religion in twentieth-century America to appear in the last decade—a book that will reshape the way we think about the historical arc of American Protestantism in this period. While many of the most important books written in the past forty years on religion in twentieth-century America have focused on Protestant evangelicalism, Hollinger pays that branch of Protestantism little attention except as it appears as a foil to mainstream Protestantism. Instead, he focuses on foreign missionaries (along with their children and sending agents) from mainstream Protestant denominations, from roughly 1920 to 1970. Hollinger argues that this missionary circle constituted an almost singular force, along with urbane Jewish intellectuals, that brought about a new cosmopolitanism in American arts and letters, Protestant theology and ecclesiology, academics, and, perhaps most importantly, U.S. foreign policy. In their mission fields, these mainline missionaries, and especially their children, grew uneasy about privileging their own religion and culture above that of their neighbors. In doing so, they moved away from an emphasis on evangelism to focus on medicine, literacy, agricultural reform, and other forms of service, not as a means to evangelization but as an end in itself. In the process, they transformed their sending agencies, their denominations, and eventually U.S. society. With this story, Hollinger not only uncovers a lost narrative within American Protestantism but forces us to rethink how we tell the story of American religion in the twentieth century.

It is not surprising that we might underestimate the impact that these “missionary cosmopolitans” had on U.S. society—an impact often greater than their actual numbers would indicate. In the first place, there is the perception that western missionaries constituted a cultural and military vanguard for western imperialism. While Hollinger notes there is some truth to this, this imperialism was not the end of the story; as just noted, mainline Protestant missionaries boomeranged back as a force that “advanced domestic programs that would later be called ‘multicultural’ and foreign policies that prioritized alliances with nonwhite, colonized peoples” (1). Second, we might also underestimate the role of missionary cosmopolitans because the cultural and political role of mainline Protestantism (especially in comparison to Protestant evangelicalism) has so diminished since the 1960s. Nevertheless, missionary influence was tied at mid-century to a vast Protestant establishment in which Protestant leaders and their denominational apparati consti-
tuted the most important religious-cultural force in American politics, academics, and reform. As leaders within these denominations, missionaries had access to the halls of power. Third, their unmatched knowledge of Asia dovetailed with strategic U.S. needs during the Second World War and the Cold War. Finally, missionary influence connected with the rise and influence of anthropology, civil rights agitation among African Americans, and the expansion of post-secondary education.

In addition, we might also underestimate the significance of cosmopolitan missionaries because we forget just how parochial the United States and its citizens were prior to the Second World War, especially regarding Asia. For example, when former missionary to Thailand Kenneth Landon (whose wife, Margaret, wrote *Anna and the King*), was approached by the Office of Strategic Services (precursor to the CIA) for information about Thailand, he found that the agency's entire intelligence on the nation was contained in a "slim folder" that bore three articles written by Landon himself (187). Landon went on to serve in Washington's military, diplomatic, and intelligence services in Southeast Asia, becoming "the single person most responsible for the postwar alliance between the United States and Thailand" (188). Another example: in 1941, "the U.S. Navy could find only fifty-six individuals [who were not of Japanese ancestry] in the entire country between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who knew enough of the language to justify possible training in the interests of national defense" (358, fn.28). Almost all Anglo Americans who knew the Japanese language were missionaries or missionary children, and these missionary cosmopolitans became the cornerstone of military intelligence in the Pacific theater, of the academic study of Japan, and of postwar foreign policy in Japan.

At the heart of Hollinger's book are the missionaries and missionary children themselves, who might have set out to make their mission fields more like home but in the process were themselves transformed, and from this inner transformation came a drive to change U.S. Christianity and the United States itself. What made mainline Protestant missionaries so malleable on the field? For Hollinger, there are two main answers to this question. First, unlike U.S. diplomats and business people who engaged indigenous people at arm's length—typically never learning the language—missionaries actually lived with indigenous people, learning multiple dialects, adopting cultural mores, and, importantly, raising their children in these cultures (most missionary children considered the indigenous language of their mission field their first language). In this deep engagement with diversity, missionaries and their children recognized the historically contingent nature of their own faith and culture and subsequently rejected their Christocentrism and sense of cultural/political superiority, embracing in exchange what we would now call a multicultural outlook. Second, Hollinger argues that the multiculturalism was a direct extension of their liberal-leaning theology that stressed God's immanence and universal "brotherhood." Hollinger notes, too, that in this process of transformation, almost all missionary cosmopolitans became ecumenical or interfaith in their theological outlook and many more became post-Protestant in some way, either as loosely committed to their denominations or as agnostics. Perhaps most importantly, even though these cosmopolitan missionaries rejected their Christocentrism and sense of cultural superiority, they nevertheless retained an overarching drive to do good—a kind of secular missionary impulse to change the church and world and especially the United States in a single generation.

This secular missionary impulse drove missionary cosmopolitans to impact American society, and Hollinger spends most of the book detailing the specific ways in which they did so. He begins with profiles of three archetypical figures: Henry Luce, whose career as a magazine publisher...
was unequalled in the twentieth century and who understood his work to be that of a secular missionary espousing “the American Century”; the novelist Pearl Buck; and John Hersey, author of *Hiroshima*—the latter two of whom were both a bit more ambivalent about America’s moral authority than Luce. Hollinger then moves to lesser-known figures who built some of most important religious, educational, and reform institutions in mid-twentieth-century America. He details how the missionary cosmopolitans shifted their aims from evangelization to service, a move that found its full institutional expression after 1960 in nongovernmental organizations, mainline denominational and interdenominational relief agencies, and, most notably, the Peace Corps. From this shift, the missionary cosmopolitans went on to forge the ecumenical movement that found institutional expression in the Federal and National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Ultimately they arrived at a concept of “world Christianity” that rendered useless the distinction between sending countries and mission fields. Missionary cosmopolitans were involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and built from scratch the most important centers for “area studies”—especially for Asian studies—in higher education. These centers, led by figures such as W. Norman Brown, Edwin O. Reischauer, and John K. Fairbank, moved the study of India, Japan, and China, respectively, away from “orientalist” preoccupations with archeology and the like to the study of contemporary society and politics.

HE MOST COMPLEX AND FASCINATING SECTIONS of the book examine the role of the missionary cosmopolitans in U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic endeavors during the Second World War and the Cold War, especially in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. Missionary cosmopolitans consistently sided with indigenous peoples seeking self-determination in these regions, often putting themselves at odds with entrenched powers in Washington. For example, they insisted on the humanity of the Japanese people in the face of a racism that affected the treatment of Japanese Americans and Japanese POWs, and that treated Japanese imperialism as different from that of the French or English (an outlook that helped precipitate Pearl Harbor). In China, they usually sided with Mao against what they saw as the corrupt government of Chiang Kai-shek. In Vietnam, they supported Ho Chi Minh under the wrong assumption that the United States might forge an enlightened post-war regime that supported self-determination. In perhaps the most fascinating chapter, Hollinger details how missionary cosmopolitans broke with the cosmopolitan Jewish intelligentsia to oppose Zionism and support self-determination for Arabs—efforts reflected in the unique relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia brokered by Colonel William Eddy, himself a missionary kid. As we can see, despite their advocacy for indigenous self-determination and opposition to colonialism (and especially to French and English imperialism), the missionary cosmopolitans, whether because they lacked political savvy or faced stronger opponents—often had mixed results in influencing foreign policy and were, Hollinger notes, unable to prevent American blunders in Iran and Vietnam.

While Hollinger tells a vital and fascinating story, he also wants to push the larger narrative of religion in the twentieth century in two new directions. First, for whatever reason, the primary story of twentieth-century U.S. Protestantism has been one that chronicles evangelical ascent and mainstream ennui and decline. For Hollinger, this perception is preposterous.

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ongoing positive relationship with Saudi Arabia, no decision to retain Hirohito as emperor after the Second World War, no Japanese and Chinese Studies programs at Harvard, no world relief agencies, no Time or Life magazine, no Hiroshima or The Good Earth. You get the picture.

For Hollinger, the primary narrative of Protestantism in the twentieth century is not the persistence of Bob Jones University, the rise of the Moral Majority, or Southern Baptist battles over fundamentalism; rather, the most important national and international story of American religion in the twentieth century is the ultimate victory of theological liberalism and its assault on Western cultural superiority, which found full expression in a secular imperative to change the world for the better. In other words, for Hollinger, mainstream Protestantism’s theology reached its natural conclusions and won the day where it mattered most—in education, reform, and, though the results were mixed, in international affairs. Second, Hollinger weaves this missionary narrative into his larger work on secularization (see his important article, “Christianity and Its American Fate: Where History Interrogates Secularization Theory,” in Isaac, et. al. The Worlds of American Intellectual History [Oxford University Press, 2016]). For Hollinger, secularization is not a social theory tied to modernization; rather, it is an historically contingent process that takes on different forms in different places. Hollinger thinks that the United States in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century has undergone an historical process he understands as secularization, which he describes as the “decline of dependence on supernatural authority and institutions ostensibly authorized by that authority” (295). For Hollinger, this secularization is necessarily linked to cosmopolitanism, ushered into the United States by “Protestants Abroad” and by the urban Jewish intelligentsia, which “forced a gradual and deepening recognition of the historically particular status of Christianity” (295). In other words, Hollinger understands Protestant liberals and especially missionary cosmopolitans to have been drivers for a modern cosmopolitan and necessarily secular American society, expressed in everything from multiculturalism to civil rights and human rights advocacy to globalization to religious “nones.” This is a narrative with which we must certainly contend.

Joe Creech is program director of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts at Valparaiso University.
Come Learn with Us

David L. Parkyn

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, handles requests from people around the globe who desire to become U.S. residents and citizens. Until February, its mission statement included this paragraph:

USCIS secures America's promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.

Earlier this year that paragraph was replaced with the following:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the nation’s lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.

The rewriting of this small paragraph represents a substantial shift in the federal government's perspective on immigration. While much of USCIS’s day-to-day work no doubt remains the same, this updated mission statement shows that how we connect with others has changed. Once we were a nation that welcomed others to our shores; going forward, we will be a nation that secures our borders with the purpose of keeping others out. USCIS once facilitated immigrants’ arrivals to the United States and fostered the vision of America articulated in 1958 by John F. Kennedy as "a nation of immigrants." Now, USCIS stands as a sentinel on our borders, to "safeguard," "protect," and "secure[ ] the homeland."

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by this change. Congress can't agree on a national immigration policy. The vacuum of leadership resulting from this indecision coupled with the priorities of the current presidential administration open the door for unwitting changes in immigration practice.

My perspective on the decision to eliminate from our national narrative this bedrock principle—America as a nation of immigrants—is framed by a life of service in American higher education.

Why should those of us working in higher education in the United States be concerned with our nation's evolving practices on immigration? First, many of our students have a personal stake in these practices, either for themselves or on behalf of their families. And those of us at historically faith-based institutions have an important second reason: our commitment to immigrants is often informed by the teaching of scripture. But the intersection of the broad higher educational community with national immigration practice reaches beyond personal interests and institutional mission. Indeed, the immigrant experience has profoundly marked American colleges and universities, both individually and collectively, for nearly two centuries.

This simple factor provides a lens through which to measure the proposals by the Trump administration—whether to "build the wall," crack down on undocumented immigrants, void the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), slash the number of legal immigrants and refugees welcomed each year to our borders, order deportation of hundreds of thousands of documented refugees who have lived in our country for two decades, give preference to immigrants
who speak English and bring certain skills, or favor prospective immigrants from certain (white) countries while diminishing the number of immigrants of color from other parts of the world.

Many U.S. colleges and universities can tell their own version of this story. It is a narrative that is easy to illustrate from the 125-year history of the campus I served as president for the past eleven years—North Park University in Chicago.

On a Saturday afternoon in January 2017, I attended a memorial service for Professor Frank Steinhart. He had been our teacher, colleague, and friend. Frank had recently announced his plan to retire after more than four decades at North Park, where he had served as faculty member in sociology, registrar, and assistant dean.

Yet there is something more. I learned at this service that Frank was born in Latvia. When he was six months old, his mother (along with his aunt, grandmother, and great-aunt) fled with Frank from their home to Hamburg, Germany. For several years little Frank and his mother lived in camps for displaced persons. When Frank was eight, they came to the United States as refugees and settled in Chicago. Here he went to school, learned English, and eventually became a college professor.

In a twist of irony, on the same weekend as Frank’s memorial service, the Trump administration proposed an indefinite halt of immigration for citizens from Syria, a 90-day suspension of immigration for citizens from seven countries, and a 120-day suspension of refugees from anywhere in the world. This coincided with the administration’s decision to abandon the DACA program, which protects some 700,000 individuals who had been brought to America as young children without required documentation.

As I sat in the service that Saturday afternoon, listening to stories about Frank and simultaneously contemplating the news from Washington, it struck me so clearly: if eight-year-old Frank and his mother had landed at a U.S. airport on the day of this memorial service, they would have been turned away. Any potential little Frank held for teaching students in an American college, for contributing to the American academy, would have been crushed.

This realization made me understand why Frank loved the American higher education community, and this particular school, so deeply. Frank loved teaching at North Park because of its connection to the American immigrant experience. Throughout his career, Frank saw his own refugee immigrant experience reflected in the lives of so many of his students and their families, as well as in the lives of the immigrants who started the school nearly a century before Frank came to the United States.

In 1862 President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Homestead Act, which made 160 acres of federal land available to an individual or family willing to settle and farm the land. During this same period, many Scandinavians, especially from Sweden, emigrated to the United States, driven by years of crop failures, high unemployment, and the yearning for independence from a state-church. The Homestead Act made their relocation possible.

Though this invitation to settle in America was robust, it was limited primarily to immigrants from northern Europe. This initial act of welcome, however, set the stage a century later for adoption of the far more inclusive Naturalization and Immigration Act of 1965.

Between 1870 and 1900, many new Swedish immigrants cleared farmland and cultivated crops in the Great Plains, while others chose to settle in cities, particularly Chicago. Some also started churches, including in 1885 a new American church: the Mission Friends. Just six years later, this small immigrant church community started a school, which eventually grew into a college, which eventually welcomed Frank Steinhart to its faculty.

Two years after the school’s founding, David Nyvall, its twenty-eight-year-old president, was invited to participate in the 1893 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. Organizers of this ecumenical, interfaith gathering—the first of its kind—believed that people of different faiths held more commonalities than differences. The participants came together to learn from each other and, by doing so, to advance the commitment of religious faith around the world.
The published record of the Parliament summarizes Nyvall's description of his infant school. "There is no common or fixed creed or special doctrine that binds [the school together].... Differences are permitted to exist as unavoidable in our imperfect knowledge of truth.... [That we have] harmony in the midst of this diversity is largely owing to the [fact that]... hospitality is especially insisted upon."

Despite the young president's assessment, the school at this time was hardly diverse—all the students were Swedish immigrants more comfortable speaking and writing in Swedish than English. Yet by drawing on his personal immigrant experience and those of his students, Nyvall outlined an educational philosophy for our country and its academy that acknowledges, in a spirit of intellectual humility, that our understanding of truth is always "imperfect." In these settings there will be differences among us, he noted, yet because we are the academy, we will own this diversity of thought and language, culture and faith, and we will embrace these differences through a deep commitment to hospitality.

Over the past fifty years, the cover of Time magazine has twice featured a North Park graduate. In a 1964 cover story, "Massacre in Congo," Time carried a cover portrait of Paul Carlson, a North Park alumnus with family roots in Sweden. "He was a highly skilled physician who ... had gone to the Congo to treat the sick," the article read. In the country for less than a year when civil war broke out, Carlson planned to leave when danger came near. He unwittingly stayed too long, and was caught in the gunfire and killed.

Forty-nine years later, in April 2013, Time magazine ran a cover story titled "The Latino Reformation," which provided a look "inside the new Hispanic churches transforming religion in America." Central to this report was a profile of another North Park alumnus, Wilfredo "Choco" de Jesús, whose two hands, clasped in a spirit of prayer, appeared on the magazine's cover.

Five decades apart, Carlson and de Jesús were both sons of immigrants to the United States, each first in their families to attend college, each speaking English as a second language. Together, along with many others, they provided an immigrant sensibility for their alma mater, and gave evidence to the enduring positive impact immigrants have on shaping America and its academy.

Universities in the United States today, as in decades past, lead the way in welcoming those new to America and new to the academy. When we uniformly welcome communities of disparate languages, cultures, ethnicities, and races—as well as expressions of faith—both our nation and its universities are nudged toward affirming our differences as a gift, an expression of national and institutional strength rather than weakness. When we recognize that these differences form our essential identity, they become a means to unify our nation, affirming that hospitality is to be our norm, even in the midst of difference. We welcome to our campuses those whose families are new to America because we share a confidence that as people from around the world we have more in common that we hold in difference, that we are greater together, and weaker in isolation.

As educators, we have little immediate influence over executive orders issued in Washington. What we can and must do is ensure that our institutions welcome all who desire to study with us. The American learning community, birthed within the immigrant experience and re-imagined by each generation, extends hospitality to all students as equals in the great American immigrant experiment. Our responsibility is to acclaim—to shout loudly from the cupola of every Old Main—our enduring American welcome. Immigrant, refugee, undocumented, Dreamer, Muslim, those from Scandinavia, and many others from every land around the globe: our campus is yours, our classroom doors are flung open wide for you to enter. Come learn with us.

David L. Parkyn retired in 2017 as president of North Park University in Chicago. He is now visiting lecturer of higher education in doctoral programs at Gwynedd Mercy, Immaculata, and Cabrini universities.

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Unmasking the American Dream
A Review of The Refugees by Viet Thanh Nguyen

John Ruff

A recent New York Times op-ed piece by Ariel Dorfman, "A Lesson on Immigration from Pablo Neruda," reports how, nearly eighty years ago, Neruda, then only thirty-four but already the greatest living poet writing in Spanish, rented with his own money a cargo ship and raised funds to transport to Chile more than 2,000 Spanish refugees who were fleeing Franco's forces. Neruda was serving as the Chilean Consul to Spain at the time. Dorfman recalls how, despite strong opposition within Chile, high unemployment, and a recent earthquake that left 28,000 dead and many others homeless, then-president of Chile Pedro Aguirre Cerda still chose to accept those refugees and even arranged for their welcome at the docks in Valparaiso when they arrived.

Dorfman, an American citizen of Argentinian-Chilean descent, ended his piece urging Chileans to remember that moment in their history as current political leaders in Chile contemplate measures to keep out immigrants, measures that would include building physical barriers on their borders with Bolivia and Peru.

Sound familiar?

In 1975, President Jimmy Carter found himself facing a similar situation, with public opinion polls reporting strong opposition to accepting Vietnamese refugees—stronger than the opposition reported in similar polls conducted last April about accepting Syrian refugees. Despite that opposition, Carter authorized the resettlement, and in the first year approximately 150,000 refugees from Southeast Asia were given temporary shelter in four large refugee camps in the United States. Viet Thanh Nguyen, then four years old, with his parents and older brother, were part of that first wave of refugees who received shelter at a converted military base at Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. From there his family would move first to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and then in 1978 to San Jose, California, where Nguyen's parents opened one of the first Vietnamese grocery stores in San Jose. At that time, San Jose was a rough and tumble city. Today San Jose is the capital of Silicon Valley. It is also home to the largest number of Vietnamese Americans in the United States.

In her review of the book, Doree Shafrir wrote, "there was no way that Viet Thanh Nguyen could have known that just a week and a half before his new story collection The Refugees was published, President Donald Trump would issue an executive order temporarily banning refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries, and protests would erupt in cities across the country in opposition to the ban." According to Shafrir, Nguyen has written "the most timely short story collection in recent memory."

I agree with Shafrir. It is timely and it is excellent. But I doubt very much it would have been published had Nguyen not won the Pulitzer Prize.
in 2016 for his debut novel, *The Sympathizer*, which won a host of awards despite being turned down by thirteen of the fourteen publishers to which it was offered. That same year, Nguyen was a finalist for a National Book Award for Non-Fiction and a National Critics Circle Award for *Nobody Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Harvard University Press). Nguyen’s second novel, *The Committed*, a sequel to *The Sympathizer*, is set for release next spring. No wonder the MacArthur Foundation awarded Nguyen one of its genius grants in 2017.

For me, his genius is on full display in *The Refugees*, though none of the eight stories ever appeared in the *New Yorker* or the *Atlantic*, the two most prestigious places to publish short fiction in America. According to Nguyen, he wrote these stories to learn how to write fiction, and it was a long, lonely ordeal. During that same period, he steadily achieved success as a teacher and scholar of Asian American studies at the University of Southern California, and received notice for the 2014 publication of *Trans Pacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field*, which he edited with USC colleague Janet Hoskins. In 2018, yet another book edited by Nguyen will appear, this through Abrams Press, entitled *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*.

**The Eight Stories Collected in *The Refugees*** were written over two decades, beginning about the time Nguyen became a faculty member at USC, fresh out of the University of California, Berkeley, where he completed undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in English and ethnic studies. Unlike most contemporary American writers I can think of, Nguyen became a scholar to become a writer of fiction, without benefit of apprenticeship in an MFA or Ph.D. program in creative writing, though he has added creative writing to the subjects he teaches at USC. What unifies his critical and creative writing is his commitment to giving voice to the experience of Vietnamese refugees, whose story is largely unknown, not entirely because it has been untold. For most Americans, Vietnam is a place where we fought a long and bloody war and left before it was over. For the refugees who lost their homes, family members, and homeland, the Vietnam War has been memorialized in the United States mostly by and for the Americans who fought there. What the civilian population suffered gets left out of the story.

So it is fitting the first story in the collection is narrated by a Vietnamese American ghostwriter, still haunted by the trauma twenty-some years later, whose childhood memories include listening to an older brother’s ghost stories in a bomb shelter, with jets called “Phantoms” dropping bombs from above. The story arcs between that bomb shelter in Vietnam and the ghostwriter’s mother’s basement in California, where the ghostwriter lives, works, and continues to hide from the world. The ghostwriter is working on the memoir of another traumatized survivor: a man who was the only survivor of a plane crash that took more than 170 lives, including those of his family. That memoir the ghostwriter writes serves as an important subplot Nguyen braids with the ghostwriter’s story of survival—the ghostwriter who is visited in the basement by the older brother’s ghost.

This story, “Black-Eyed Women,” named for the old crones with betel-stained teeth who told the narrator’s brother the ghost stories he shares in the bomb shelter, was the last of the eight stories to be written. In terms of technique I think it’s the best story and the one I find most compelling. No story in the collection is more ingenious at storytelling: particular turns in the plot and shifts in tone almost knocked the wind out of me. As skillful as Nguyen is in his plots, the power of his stories resides even more in the characters. The ghostwriter, the ghostwriter’s brother, and the ghostwriter’s brother’s ghost, are incredible conjuring acts. No set of characters in the whole collection intrigues me more, and I haven’t even mentioned their mother, who’s in league with the black-eyed women in her strong belief in ghosts. Nguyen introduces her as a somewhat comic figure, but she emerges as the first of a number of female characters in the collection—mothers, wives, sisters and step-sisters—whose capacities for love, insight, virtue, endurance, and grit far surpass those of the males in their lives. I see this most and best in the third story, “War Years,” my second favorite in the collection, that climaxes in a face-to-face confrontation between the two stron-
gest women in the book. The story is narrated by an eight-year-old boy whose mother and father run a Vietnamese grocery store in San Jose. (To the extent of this story's autobiographical trappings, I have a suspicion that Nguyen's mother was a force of nature.) In other stories, wives tend to be stronger, more loving, and far more sympathetic than their husbands, and often forgiving. There is much to forgive: infidelity in three of the stories, a gambling addiction in another. Every story somehow exists because there's trouble in the family, and Nguyen's depiction of family life is one of the things I admire most in the work.

The males in the story tend to be flawed, somewhat feckless, and, at worst, frauds. In fact, the only noble male we meet is the narrator's brother in "Black-Eyed Women" and his sudden death is related with blunt force.

The first story ingeniously establishes two themes that resound throughout Nguyen's fiction, non-fiction, and scholarship: the need to remember, and the equally compelling need to forget. Perhaps the most interesting twist on this theme beyond "Black-Eyed Women" occurs in "I'd Love You to Want Me," about an aging professor in the early stages of memory loss, who begins to confuse his wife with another woman she never knew existed. It's one of the saddest stories in the book; he is more to be pitied than condemned for his unfaithfulness, which ennobles even more her fidelity as he becomes more incapacitated.

Identity also emerges as recurring motif. We deal with issues of ethnic identity, sexual identity, what it means to be American, and what it means to be Vietnamese American. Though most of the stories focus on Vietnamese Americans, the story "The Americans" does not. The married couple at the center of the story—a retired African-American pilot who flew B-52s over Vietnam and a Japanese woman he met in Japan on R and R—travel to Vietnam to visit their biracial daughter, whose crisis of identity has led her there. It's a crisis she feels most intensely in her relationship with her father, who has a whole set of issues of his own. That story is worth reading for the way Nguyen brings to a boil both the father's issues and the daughter's. In another story, "The Transplant," the lead character is a Mexican-American man with a gambling addiction. By some bureaucratic error he learns the surname of the donor of his transplanted liver. When he seeks the family to express his gratitude, he becomes an easy mark for a Vietnamese American con man who traffics in smuggled knockoff goods. Nguyen is a gifted satirist: no story in the collection skewers our expectations like this one. Louis Vu is short for Louis Vuitton: my favorite fraud in the collection, though not the only one.

Do not imagine these stories are mere apprentice work. I would predict The Refugees will take its place in the canon of Asian American literature along with Toshio Mori's Yokohama California, Jhumpa Lahiri's The Interpreter of Maladies, and Ha Jin's The Good Fall. When I consider certain female characters in the collection, I am reminded of my favorite novel on the American immigrant experience, Willa Cather's My Antonia, though that book, for me the quintessential American epic, is a romance. In contrast, Nguyen is a realist in the mold of the great Europeans; he highlights disillusionment and disappointment in his immigrant stories, and, much more than Cather, works to unmask the American dream. Though at the end of "Black-Eyed Women," the ghostwriter comes out of the basement. At the end of "The Americans," there is hope for the father and his daughter. That daughter is involved with an engineering student also in Vietnam, who helped design robots that are drawn by specially trained mongooses to demine the countryside. Perhaps that is a good metaphor for these stories: de-mining operations.

On the dedication page, the book is inscribed "for refugees, everywhere." According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there are at present more than 22.5 million refugees in the world, over half of them under the age of eighteen. It is incumbent upon those of us with leisure to read, with roofs over our heads, with instruction from these stories and the cautionary tales they provide, not to forget them.

John Ruff is professor of English at Valparaiso University.
WINDY WALK WITH ESPRESSO AND GLOBALIZATION

"I have forgotten my mask, and my face was in it."
-Kenneth Patchen, The Journal of Albion Moonlight

In the coffee shop on the second floor of the mall with the big Iki grocery, the traveler read on his phone that maybe Dylan read Patchen in the sixties. The music, raucous, is “I work my ass off.” The clerk just said “one” to him, so he furrowed his brow. His espresso was one euro, she meant. Absurd. With a glass of water and a little tray, in a cup that says il Pellino del caffè. His face and mask are quite in place, plenty of euros holding them up. Despite his ignorance of the language, he can get anything he needs as long as he only needs things.

A former student wrote, You’re so close to Poland now, come and see us! The Soviet apartments are ugly but the women are beautiful, the girls too. There’s Carlsberg on tap—six months ago he drank it with his son in China. The wind outside is not cold but still brutal, it blew over a dumpster by the old apartments, he hefted it but no way could he lift it. There’s golf from South Africa on TV, Fitzpatrick in third place is -9 and just hit a fine approach. There’s Jägermeister, Johnny Walker Red. The blond girl scampers up the aisle and back to her mother, who feeds her a bite. There is at most one world, said somebody. The girl runs up the aisle and back to her mother, accepts another bite, drinks Coke through a straw as her mother steadies the glass, runs again, nearly crashes into the waitress. A man says something quiet to the other waitress as he pays. She smiles with her whole face as she clears his table, sits to eat her own lunch, leans to whisper to the other waitress. There is at least one world.

Jeff Gundy
Surprising Even Still
Bruce Cockburn's Bone on Bone
Josh Langhoff

Near the end of Bruce Cockburn's thirty-third album, Bone on Bone, the singer-songwriter and his band find themselves in a moment of musical transcendence. To end "False River," one of the loveliest songs ever written about the environmental devastation wreaked by the oil industry, Cockburn plays a three-minute acoustic guitar solo while his band jams on a single chord. Snare drum and upright bass punch out a staccato rhythm, splashes of accordion and cymbal thicken the texture, and Cockburn's restless fingers turn over his strings, uncovering idea after idea. Together they inhabit a place where luxurious comfort and roving exploration feed off one another.

Musicians reach such places through indirection and large resources of faith. If they practice hard enough; if the band plays enough gigs to gel as a unit; if the players drink (or don't drink) various substances before they play—maybe, just maybe, transcendence awaits. Both musicians and listeners know the feeling of finding a performance gloriously "in the pocket." It's notoriously hard to predict. Sometimes a gig seems to be going in a tedious, workmanlike direction until, all of a sudden, the musicians look up from their instruments and realize transcendence has arrived, and they have no idea how it got there.

If this aspect of music seems to have clear parallels to our spiritual practices, it should. In the jazz world, John Coltrane's albums A Love Supreme and Meditations explicitly linked group improvisation with divine revelation; last year saw the release of The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda, who played piano with her husband before his death, then went on to record devotional jams with her Los Angeles ashram. Religious rock typically shies away from these ecstatic musical connections; but then, Cockburn (pronounced "Coburn") has never been a typical Christian rocker. After releasing several albums of mainstream, if little-heard, folk fingerpicking on Canadian label True North, Cockburn began writing songs that reflected his evolving Christian faith. The first of these was 1974's hymnlike "All the Diamonds in the World." In terms of Christian rock, it was miles away from Keith Green's prophetic praise music or Larry Norman's worldly metaphors and proselytizing. As you'd expect from a poetry aficionado like Cockburn, the songwriter decided to forego preaching for evoking an opulent vision of divine revelation:

Like a pearl in sea of liquid jade
His ship comes shining
Like a crystal swan in a sky of suns
His ship comes shining.

In fact, Cockburn's faith was rooted in a revelation he'd experienced in 1969, on his wedding day. He later explained it to Sojourners magazine:

As we were exchanging rings, I suddenly became aware that there was another presence that was not visible but was as
palpable as if it were visible, standing in front of us at the altar. It wasn't in any way shocking or threatening or even overwhelming, it was just that there was definitely somebody there, and I could only assume it was Jesus because we were in a Christian church.

What followed was a lifetime spent working out the demands of that revelation. First Cockburn committed to intentionally following Christ, reflected in his decision to record songs of Christian mysticism. Later he would devote his work to social causes, including environmental activism and traveling among poor revolutionaries in the Global South. These two subjects run like twin arteries through Cockburn's immense body of work. His songs are full of divine encounters; next to his impressively high revelations-per-album quotient, other Christian artists sound like jaded realists. At the same time, Cockburn evinces a deeper understanding of current events—especially the ways intractable power systems consign millions of people to poverty and desperation—than all but the most politically engaged rappers and punk rockers. His biggest U.S. hit, "Wondering Where the Lions Are," was inspired by a vision that came to him in a dream; it recounted "thinking about eternity" and being caught up in "some kind of ecstasy." His second biggest, "If I Had a Rocket Launcher," was about how much he wanted to kill Guatemala's right-wing death squads.

The prevailing stream throughout Bone on Bone is epiphany—but these are the epiphanies of a septuagenarian wryly looking back at his life and marveling at how much he's moved around. Nearly half the songs mention journeys, including "States I'm In," a chugging minor-key travelogue about life's vagaries, and "40 Years in the Wilderness," a gentle folk ballad in which the angels urge Cockburn to "cover some ground before everything comes undone." Cockburn's journeys even transcend language. "Encore je cours/ Je cours toujours," he sings in "Mon Chemin"—"Still I'm running/ Always running." The album ends with two footloose spirituals: Cockburn's original "Jesus Train," in which he rides the title train to the City of God, and a cover of the Rev. Gary Davis's "Twelve Gates to the City," in which he arrives.

Cockburn's unusual small band propels these songs. The keyboards, Chapman sticks, and even most of the guitar delay from his '80s and '90s work have long since disappeared. In their place is a dry, crisp ensemble of mostly acoustic guitar, bass, and drums, produced by Cockburn's longtime second guitarist, Colin Linden. On this album, they're augmented by accordion, cornet, and a group of singers from Cockburn's San Francisco church. (Faithful readers will note the cornetist is jazzman Ron Miles, last seen in the Lent 2018 Cresset playing on Matt Wilson's album Honey and Salt.) The musicians dig into their grooves and make the songs, with a few exceptions, skip right along.

Over his career, Cockburn has also recorded dozens of virtuosic instrumentals, and the title song is just the man and his acoustic, reeling off ominous modal melodies over a humming E string. He's cited several influences on his playing: "a combination of Mississippi John Hurt and futile attempts at playing jazz," he once said, plus Indian and Arabic music, "where they don't care about chords at all. I really related to the hypnotic quality of droning sounds, and the geometric shapes you can build by placing melodic movement on top of a droning bass part" (Eyre).

At least one song suggests Cockburn is running low on epiphanies. The midtempo "Looking and Waiting," a song about wanting a revelation but not getting one, is a drag; it telegraphs its narrator's dissatisfaction too accurately. Generally, though, Cockburn and his band still sound capable of surprising themselves, especially on two glorious character studies. The bluesy "Café Society" works as a parody of the songwriter's activism, depicting him and a group of friends meeting outside a Peet's Coffee, grumbling about "the caliphate of perverts and the flight of refugees/ the growing ranks of homeless and the disappearing bees:" Also great is "3 Al Purdy's," narrated by an imaginary homeless man, ranting on the street about the poet Al Purdy and trying to unload volumes of Purdy's poetry for cash. The song opens and closes with lengthy recitations from the poet's work. When people refer to rock lyrics as poetry,
"3 Al Purdy’s” isn’t usually what they mean—but maybe they should.

Because his lyrics are so metaphorically rich and his social analyses so smart, it’s tempting to want more from Cockburn than what he offers—to wish he’d draw, say, an explicit and systematic link between his lyrical epiphanies and the causes he champions. But unlike many Christian songwriters, he doesn’t see dogma and evangelism as part of his job. “My responsibility as a Christian is to do some good in the world. My responsibility as an artist is to do good art,” he told Sojourners.

Looking back over the past forty-odd years of Cockburn’s work, as he so frequently does during Bone on Bone, creates a mini-revelation of its own. Moments of transcendence never solve everything, but they help keep us going; and when we look up from our work, we may be surprised at where the Spirit has led us, without understanding exactly how or where we’ve arrived. ¶

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

Works Cited


Submission Guidelines

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

Guidelines for Authors:
1. Our readership is educated, most with some church connection, most frequently Lutheran. Articles should be aimed at general readers interested in religious matters.
2. The Cresset is not a theological journal, but a journal addressing matters of import to those with some degree of theological interest and commitment. Authors are encouraged to reflect upon the religious implications of their subject.
3. Style is governed, in most cases, by The Chicago Manual of Style.
4. We do accept unsolicited manuscripts; however, before submitting a manuscript, you may want to contact the editor at cresset@valpo.edu about the suitability of your topic. Our review columns (film, popular culture, music, and so forth) are usually supplied by regular columnists.
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6. The use of notes is discouraged. Notes of supporting citations should be placed in parentheses in the text, listing author last name, year of publication, and page numbers where appropriate, e.g., (Wright 1934, 232).
7. In a separate section entitled “Works Cited,” list alphabetically by author (and, within author, by year of publication) all items that are cited in the text. Provide complete bibliographical information, including author’s first name, publisher, and place and date of publication. Examples:


"HEART IN A BOX"

CNN story; July 9, 2016

No picnic cooler look-alike, the kind transporting a dead man's heart
to my father in '93 after his thirty years of near-death when
the blizzard-driving really-dead anonymous donor
said Yes to a life not his. No, today's latest medical advance
keeps the dead's bloody valentine pa-pa-pumming
all the way to the sterile stretched-out-on-the-table almost-
corpse, knocked out while the crying bystanders pray for mercy, for miracles,
and outside in the real bloody world of Baton Rouge, Falcon Heights,
Dallas, my town/yours,
no heart pa-pa-pums

in Alton, Philandro, Lorne, Michael,
Brent, Patrick, Michael J.,

while waiting bystanders pray
for "advances" and "miracles."

And no heart pa-pa-pums in the dead-silence of the dug-up ground

where they’ll be transplanted,
bloody organs in another box,

because some said No
to a life not theirs,

while others—between the beats
and the beatings, the rat-a-tat-tats,

and the pa-pum, pa-pum, pa-pums—
tried to say Yes.

Marjorie Maddox
Easter in the South

Anthony Easton

My dad and I spent three weeks together in the spring, traveling to seven cities in the South. He and I don’t often agree. In recent years he has been prone to grand gestures, a dramatic change from a slipshod parenting style he exhibited while I was growing up. Even now, in my mid-thirties, I haven’t learned how to handle this bifurcated relationship, and I hoped that this trip would provide insight. It was the same hope I had felt on other trips before this.

We found ourselves in three places during the Easter Triduum: Savannah, Sapelo Island, and Brunswick, Georgia. Going with my dad—who was doing the best he could, but who is organizationally challenged and unable to tell me what he wanted—made Easter complicated.

My time in these places was holy and lonely; it made me think of hospitality, race, and money in unexpected ways. I was continually being sold on this idea of the South, but also that any idea of the real, authentic South was a hustle. In order to enjoy the geographical region, you had to be okay with the idea that nothing was real, and enjoy the artifice of it.

If you read stories of medieval pilgrimages, you get the same sense—the indulgence sellers, tour guides, and innkeepers along these sacred routes became part of the sacred route itself. This is different from travel essays where someone spends a few days (or a week, or a season) wandering through a city and writes what they see. For essays about the South, that often means snake handlers, greasy spoons, grotesqueries. Writers see what they choose to see, so the location becomes a mirror for their own ambivalences. These essays don’t talk about how self-aware the South is and how it constructs itself for outsiders.

The South performs southerness in order to preserve its own interiority. While visitors want the authentic place, the South values its privacy. So the essays go out and the people come in, and the cycle perpetuates itself.

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday

The geographies of Charleston and Savannah look similar in some ways. Each has a wealthy downtown, then rings of progressively less wealthy neighborhoods, until you reach the much poorer inner suburbs, and then the money expands again—money on the inside, money on the outside, and a stretched poverty in the middle.

Downtown Savannah is on a grid, with large parks in the middle of public squares. It’s lovely, and it’s been colonized by tourists and the Savannah College of Art and Design. Everything seems slightly out of central casting, including the Anglo Catholic chapel—The Collegiate Church of St. Paul the Apostle, on St Thomas Square—warm red brick exterior, warm oak interior. I went to two church services there, one on Thursday and one on Friday. Women wore knee-length Lilly Pulitzer dresses and men dressed in pastel oxfords, chinos, blue blazers with brass buttons. The Maundy Thursday service was quiet, even with organ accompaniment. There was no foot washing. This ritual, perhaps the oldest in Christendom, seemed too corporeal for that space.

Afterward, I rambled through Savannah’s squares. Each one seemed to host a garden party that evening. These small shoals of white southerners, presumably residents of the houses surrounding the squares, drank and talked in hushed church tones. As I walked toward them, they silently moved away, returning afterward—to the conversation, to the wine in real glassware, to the tiny sandwiches and even tinier cakes.

On Good Friday I attended an outdoor sta-
tions of the cross at the same church. The garlands at the door contained real flowers, a mix of perennials and a few lilies. The lilies gave a hint of death, but lacked intensity; the garlands communicated gentility more than death. We walked around the quaint square quaintly, singing hymns at low volume. Tourists exiting trolley buses stopped and looked at us. People peeked at us from the windows of the Hilton on the other side of the square. SCAD students traipsed from building to building. My dad stayed in the hotel.

Holy Saturday

Dad and I took the Greyhound out of Savannah toward Brunswick, and then a cab from the Flying J Truck stop to the ferry station, where we waited to embark for Sapelo Island. Dad is an atheist, and he doesn't spend a lot of time thinking or talking about God. He's also an old leftist. So it was surprising to me when he talked about his previous trip to that island, and about how deeply he felt the religious experiences he had there.

I understood the sacredness he felt because of the island's beauty and history. Sapelo was one of the first places West African slaves would see after the middle passage. It is also reportedly the place where the first Muslim theological work was written in America. It has a tradition of folk religion that was violently, repeatedly suppressed yet has cautiously returned time and again, something new added each time.

Our trip to the island was a disaster. We got the wrong times for the ferry. We didn't arrange transit to where we were staying, and we didn't have reservations. There was no grocery store. We didn't bring food. I was snappish, exhausted, unkind, and impatient. Dad and I had been fighting for days. The only internet service on the island was on the porch of the public library.

The island was muggy and thick with bugs, but the porch was cool, with breezes from the ocean. Kids rode golf carts nearby, and I overheard free-flowing conversation. I sat on the porch, wrote, watched the sunset, and listened to crickets and cicadas. I heard horses at nearby farms. As the breezes seemed to carry the gloaming, more people came to the porch, cell phones lit like lanterns.

The people who came to the porch were related to our hosts. Before my dad and I settled in for the night, our hosts fed us a dinner of pit beef, wrapped in tin foil and cooked in the coals of a fire. There was liquor and grape soda, crackers and black rum cake. The cell phone lights were as much of a metaphor as a fire, but it was not a metaphor intended for us. It was intended for the family members home for Easter. The homecoming felt thick, and I felt like we were interlopers. We were interrupting the family time with our whiteness, our bickering, and our lack of preparedness.

But, authenticity is performed. They put us up in someone's house, small and spare. They charged us for the place to stay, for the ride to the ferry and the ride back. We overpaid for our lodging, but I had the sense the farming and fishing weren't great and we were subsidizing. They were not obliged to feed us but they did, and the food was brilliant. The land was one of the most beautiful places I have been.

Our trip to the island was a disaster. We got the wrong times for the ferry. We didn't arrange transit to where we were staying, and we didn't have reservations.

There was no grocery store. We didn't bring food. I was snappish, exhausted, unkind, and impatient.

The pit beef, the lack of the internet, even the poverty—this all amounted to a kind of seductive tourism that claimed authenticity. Even this claim of pit beef as being authentic was problematic. It's what they called it on the island—it was roasted slow in a flame pit, in the sandy soil. But Maryland also lays claim to pit beef, and some Sapelo residents had moved to Maryland during the northern migration after World War II.

Experience allows for a simple understanding of things—like barbecue or Blues music, or the lived experience of religion—to become very muddy.
Think of this foil-wrapped beef, of people moving between Maryland and Georgia, of who brought what to whom—even the possibility that it was originally pit fish or pit goat. Think about that in terms of prayer, or the lived experience of religion. Think of pit beef as a metaphor.

Also remember, pit beef tastes good.

Easter Sunday

We planned to stay in Sapelo for Easter, but we didn’t. I don’t quite know why. Dad wanted to go to a church there, but the church had moved to the mainland. Maybe it was that simple. Our hosts invited us to their church, but we didn’t go. We didn’t go to church at all. When Dad gets an idea, we move forward with that. We don’t argue.

We took a cab from the ferry terminal to a hotel in Brunswick. It was closed. We stopped at another; it was full. We stopped at a third, and they had a waiting list. The fourth had room. It was in one of those unincorporated places outside of town, where interstates push together and everything seems to be in a state of neglect. Our hotel shared a parking lot with four other hotels, all cheap franchises in need of renovation. Inside, the decor was brass, with Nagel-style prints of irises. Only the omnipresent heat and humidity and the palmettos in the parking lot indicated that this was the South rather than anywhere else.

I stayed in bed and watched television, then I looked up nearby churches to see if any were open on Easter Sunday evening. Everything was forty-five minutes away. I was sad and exhausted, frustrated, far from anything resembling home. I prayed as I could, reading the Book of Common Prayer off a laptop in a nondescript hotel room. It was in that moment that God became present to me—maybe moreso there than at any other point in the trip.

I had dinner with Dad in a not-great seafood restaurant with a solid salad bar. People at the restaurant were dressed for Easter—actual hats, bright colors, little boys in pastels, women with bolero jackets over long, cotton-print dresses. It was a working-class version of the outfits I had seen in Savannah, which read Easter and the South, as much as the sweet tea.

On our last day in Georgia, Easter Monday, we took a long drive outside of Brunswick. We traveled deeper and deeper into the forest until we eventually reached the end of a road. On the left was a white clapboard church, with a giant Spanish moss-laden oak in front of it and around it a nineteenth-century graveyard. The church itself was dark and cool, with stained glass that told difficult tales of missionaries, and had emblems of pelicans and lilies. In the front of the church was a cross, overwhelmed with live flowers.

I spent two hours there, on the porch, praying in the chapel, looking at the graveyard, before I discovered that John and Charles Wesley had founded this church.

The Wesleys came to evangelize Georgia, and no one listened. There was hostility from both indigenous people and white colonists, and the pushback was strong enough to send both John and Charles back to England. The church that was built in Wesley's honor is its own success—but a wealthy, moneyed, papering over—the idea of history, more than the actual history.

I wonder if that is how Christians now deal with the church, regardless of how—or if—we travel. We have an idea of a place, we see the place, and it fits into these concepts. These narratives of what public Christianity is, or what private Christianity is, about who we follow (aside from Jesus), and about the stories we tell about those followings. About the sanctity of some places over the others, and the failures that we paper over on our attempts to be Easter people.

The messy refusal of a tight narrative—maybe that is the closest we have to the divine.

Anthony Easton is a writer and artist from Hamilton, Ontario.
Matthew Porto is from Long Island, New York. He holds an MFA in poetry from Boston University. His work has most recently appeared in Crosswinds, SWAMP, Strange Horizons, and in the anthology A Packet of Poems for Ezra Pound, published by Clemson University Press. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in creative writing (poetry) at Texas Tech University.

Rachael Button lives and works with her husband, Peter Kraus, at Conserve School, an environmentally-focused semester school in the northwoods of Wisconsin. She graduated from Valparaiso University and holds an MFA in creative writing and environment from Iowa State University. Her essays and poems have appeared in The Rumpus, Painted Bride Quarterly, Pank, The Collagist, Creative Nonfiction, Diagram, Redivider, and other journals.

Tania Runyan is the author of the poetry collections What Will Soon Take Place (Paraclete), Second Sky (Cascade), A Thousand Vessels (WordFarm), Simple Weight (FutureCycle), and Delicious Air (Finishing Line), which was awarded Book of the Year by the Conference on Christianity and Literature in 2007. Her poems have appeared in Poetry, Image, Harvard Divinity Bulletin, The Christian Century, Saint Katherine Review, and the book Light upon Light: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany (Paraclete). When not writing, Tania plays fiddle and mandolin, drives kids to appointments, and gets lost in her Midwestern garden.

Cameron Alexander Lawrence is a graduate of the University of Arizona and lives in Decatur, Georgia, with his wife and three young daughters. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in West Branch, Forklift, Ohio, Whiskey Island, Pittsburgh Poetry Review, Image, Asheville Poetry Review, and elsewhere.

Jeff Gundy’s seven books of poems include Abandoned Homeland (Bottom Dog) and Somewhere Near Defiance (Anhinga), for which he was named Ohio Poet of the Year. His most recent prose book is Songs from an Empty Cage: Poetry, Mystery, Anabaptism, and Peace (Cascadia). His essays and poems appear in The Georgia Review, The Sun, Kenyon Review, Christian Century, Image, Cincinnati Review, Artful Dodge, and other journals. He teaches at Bluffton University and spent a recent sabbatical at LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania.

Marjorie Maddox is professor of English and creative writing at Lock Haven University. She has published eleven collections of poetry, including, most recently, True, False, None of the Above (Poeima Poetry Series and Illumination Book Award Medalist); Wives’ Tales (Seven Kitchens Press Editor’s Series), and Local News from Someplace Else (Wipf & Stock). More than 500 of her poems, stories, and essays have appeared in journals and anthologies. Her numerous honors include Cornell University’s Chasen Award, the Paumanok Poetry Award, and an Academy of American Poets Prize.