

Reviews



HERE I WALK: A THOUSAND MILES ON FOOT TO ROME WITH MARTIN LUTHER, by Andrew Wilson. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. Pp. 240. \$17.99 (paper)

People who visit the place they grew up are often surprised at how much things have changed. Not everything has changed, of course. A building or a house might still stand from the old days. But for the most part demographics, traffic patterns, housing developments, and more have rearranged remembered reality. You may try, but you cannot recover the past; you simply can't go home again. Andrew Wilson certainly came to understand this inevitable change when he walked the one thousand miles from Erfurt to Rome with his wife, Sarah.

Wilson wrote *Here I Walk* to give an account of what Luther might have seen and experienced while traveling to Rome on business for his Augustinian order. Many words have been written by Martin Luther and about his life and times. But it seems that relatively little has been written (even by Luther himself) about that walking tour to Rome in 1510 (or 1511).

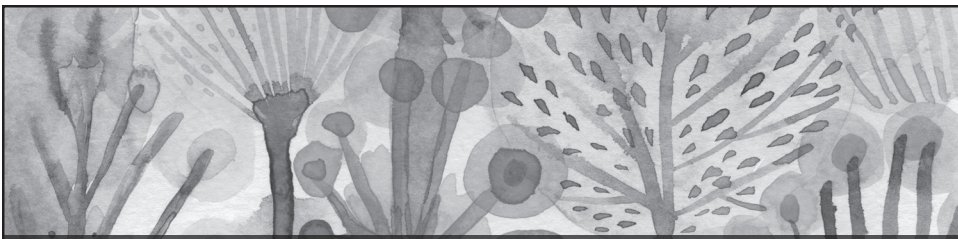
An experienced hiker and a student of history, Wilson decided in 2010 to walk the pilgrim route of Luther to see what he could see. But, like anyone who tries to visit the past, he quickly discovered that nearly everything had changed.

Much of Luther's country route from Erfurt to Rome has been vastly altered by factories, housing complexes, urban growth, and especially high-speed automobile roads.

Yet, Wilson did find a few authentic or inferred-authentic evidences of the past: a couple Augustinian monasteries along the way, an occasional church in a village or a city, perduring tourist sites in Rome. Wilson speculates that much of the countryside remains the same; small villages, lakes, farms, mountains, and some old buildings still dot the land even after five centuries.

Reading Wilson's evocative account of his pilgrimage, the reader becomes a companion on the journey. That "companionability" is one of the appealing aspects of the book. On one level, it is a travelogue that points out significant highlights for the living-room traveler. The Wilsons ran some risks that the armchair traveler will not regret missing: bad weather in the Alps, occasional lack of room for them in the inn, tricky, even dangerous, footing on high-speed roadways. But they also experienced expansive vistas in several countries from Germany to Italy, and they had numerous serendipitous encounters with people in unexpected places.

The book has great appeal as a travelogue, since Wilson describes people and places with a kind of poetic intensity. He especially wishes to frame the pilgrimage



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as an ecumenical endeavor, seeking signs of reconciliation after five centuries of mistrust or misunderstanding.

As he describes the unfolding landscape, Wilson also inserts pertinent insights into Luther's thought. Readers will be captivated by the many ecclesiastical and ecumenical conversations along the way. Wilson was surprised and warmed over and over again that people from all walks of life—many of them Roman Catholic—were interested in and sympathetic to Luther's life and thought. As pilgrims—a status honored in Europe—Wilson and his wife experienced frequent hospitality, being welcomed in many different homes, hostels, and monasteries.

The journey takes the pilgrims to and through many cities: Nuremberg, Milan, Florence, and other locations where Luther almost certainly traveled.

Especially engaging is the stopover in Pavia, the site of Saint Augustine's burial place. To stay on track obviously required a great deal of advance planning; they set a schedule that had to be maintained for the seventy-day journey. Still, there were occasions (like an unexpected snow storm in the Alps) when plans had to be altered, and the travelers had to bail out by taking a bus or, later, a boat and automobile.

Members of the Wilson family (including their young son) usually met them at the end of a day's hike. Such family solidarity provided food, support, and respite along the way. We discover, for example, how the family bonded with each other in a special, earthy way. The camper-van that accompanied the pilgrims contained a receptacle that regularly accepted their bodily waste. But from time to time, the receptacle would

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get filled to overflowing, necessitating a search for an environmentally safe place to deposit the load. One of the charms of the book is the weaving of such domestic details with discussions of Luther's down-to-earth theology.

Here I Walk is obviously a play on Luther's famous stand at the Diet of Worms. It is an accessible and amiable book to read and discuss to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. Wilson's writing style is easy to read, though there are one or two caveats. The long pilgrimage is well described in words, but there is no clear comprehensive map for the reader to follow. The map at the beginning lacks clarity. Some other readers have noted that the brownish text and gauzy pictures make it somewhat difficult to follow the narrative. Wilson writes expressively, even poetically, yet some readers in good humor found his word usage opaque, with words like *bombinate*, *chthonic*, or *katabatic*—meaning buzz or drone, out of the earth, and descending (wind), respectively.

These observations should in no way deter readers from taking the trip with Andrew and Sarah Wilson. Their walk of one thousand miles, though supplemented occasionally with other means of transport, is a real and impressive achievement. Their trip does not resolve the issue of what the pre-Reformation Luther visited, saw, or thought on his journey to Rome, but it does offer food for creative speculation. While the landscape has vastly changed in the last five centuries, Wilson admirably highlights what remains of the places Luther must have, or might have, seen. He offers imaginative pictures for us. In our imagination, we can accompany Luther and the Wilsons on foot from Erfurt to Rome. Discussion groups and adult

classes might profitably read, discuss, and learn much by taking the journey.

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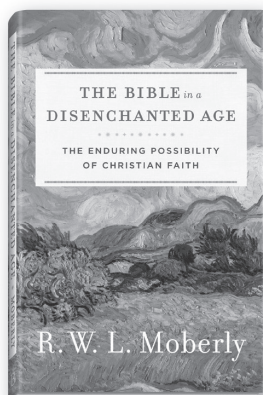
THE PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY AS A RATIONAL RELIGION IN SINGAPORE: A MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION, by Clive S. Chin. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. Pp. 244. \$35.00 (paper).

Clive Chin's *The Perception of Christianity as a Rational Religion in Singapore* is a welcome and valuable addition to the growing body of literature on missiology in Asian context. The book was first written as a dissertation at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and was later revised and published in a monograph series of the American Society of Missiology.

Chin holds PhDs from Dallas Theological Seminary and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and is currently academic dean and professor of theological and intercultural studies at Singapore Bible College. In addition to his academic work experience, his involvement in church ministry as a pastor and a teacher in Chinese churches in America, South Korea, and Singapore adds significant depth to the well-researched and provocative arguments in his book.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach, Chin's research explores "the perception of Christianity as a rational religion in Singapore [and] the extent and ways to which this is a factor for Christian conversion among Chinese Singaporeans" (ix). The book also evaluates the

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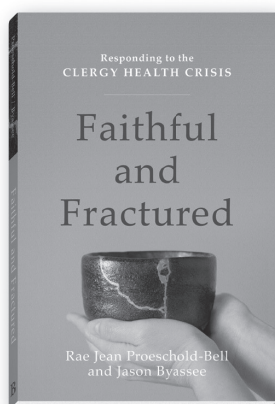
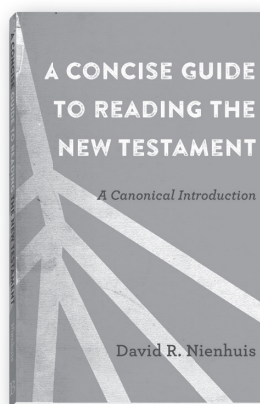
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common criticism that Christianity in Asia is westernized and is therefore contextually inappropriate. Chin explores this issue through the employment of the social science research method known as “narrative inquiry.” After conducting thirty-five private interviews across denominational lines, which involved Chinese Singaporeans who converted from Buddhism and Taoism to Christianity, and analyzing domains of literature on the contextualization of Christianity in Asia, Chin concludes that “the perception of Christianity as a more rational religion is, to a large extent, an important factor for conversion” contributing to the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Singapore (ix, 4).

This work is comprised of eight chapters. In the first chapter, Chin introduces the research problem, indicating how the experience of Christian converts in Singapore contradicts the Asian missiological assumption that Christianity in Asia is widely westernized. The chapter also discusses research limitations, approach, and the overall structure of the book. The second chapter focuses on a review of Asian musicologists’ discourse on contextual theology and discusses why they regard certain elements of Western theology as inappropriate for Asia.

The third chapter discusses the interrelationship between the concepts of modernization, globalization, and religious change within social science literature. In this chapter, Chin “clarifies that globalization does not necessarily lead to Westernization, and underscores the process of religious change in modern society” (10). The fourth chapter examines major theories advanced by social scientists on conversion from other religions to Christianity.

The fifth chapter offers a brief introduction to the empirical methodology

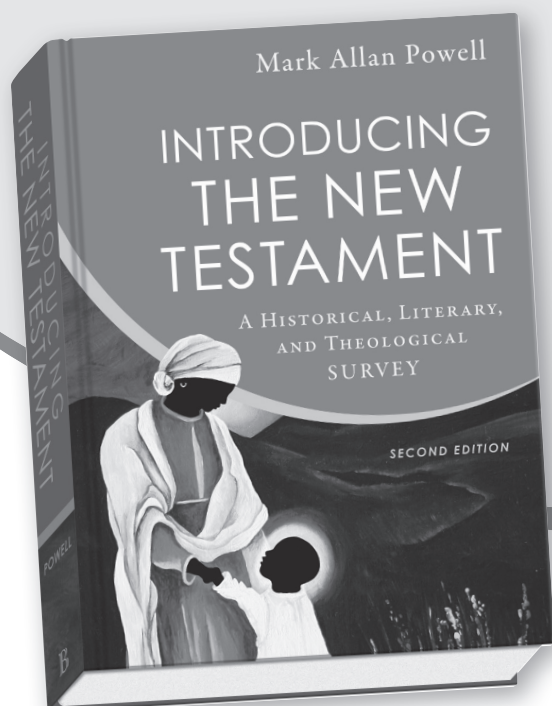
of qualitative research utilized, which includes data-gathering techniques and analyzing qualitative data. The sixth chapter explores the research findings. The seventh chapter analyzes the major findings and explains the meaning and importance of the data. The eighth and concluding chapter of the book summarizes major points in addressing the central research question, offers conclusions on the challenge of evangelical contextualization in Asia, and draws several missiological implications from the study toward “the development of effective mission in Singapore and beyond” (11).

My only critique to Chin’s generalized argument is that he narrows down Asian theologians’ critiques of Western Christianity to the issue of rationalism, which he defines as “philosophical commitment that regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge” (12). Asian theologians, however, criticize Western theology for issues that are more complex than this, including the reduplication model of church planting, administrative (leadership) systems, liturgy, theological education, and so on, that are incompatible with non-Western contexts.

On the whole, Chin has written a highly stimulating work on “a missiological analysis of Christian conversion” in Singapore. Although this book focuses on Asia, its key concepts apply globally. It is full of details and rich in insights. The book also provides helpful appendixes and bibliography. I recommend this book for seminary students, pastors, and theologians interested in the development of Asian Christianity.

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THE END OF PROTESTANTISM: PURSUING UNITY IN A FRAGMENTED CHURCH, by Peter J. Leithart. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016. Pp. 233. \$21.99 (cloth).

Peter J. Leithart has long been recognized as an ingenious, creative, and challenging voice within contemporary Protestant theology in the English-speaking world. The author of many books—and previously active in ministry as a Presbyterian pastor—Leithart approaches his task with both a commitment to the ecclesial ramifications of theological reflection and also with a generous, learned sensitivity toward the academic subject matter involved. In this respect, *The End of Protestantism* is vintage Leithart, constituting an array of imaginative and creative analyses, reflections, and proposals regarding the question of Christian unity. Guiding this most recent offering is Jesus's prayer in the Fourth Gospel that his followers might be made one by the Holy Spirit he gives them (John 17:21). From this vantage point, Leithart lays out an argument in four "movements" (as he calls them) for the rectification of the church's presently stagnant ecumenical situation.

Leithart's initial remarks focus on the interim nature of our current ecclesiological state of affairs. In this, he articulates the purpose of the book as an exhortation to the church amidst this interim situation. Following this opening set of reflective comments, Leithart then proceeds in the first movement of his argument to lay out his own vision for what a future, undivided church might look like. Notable about this section of the book is both the expansiveness of Leithart's critical reflections on the nature of a future reunified church and also the concreteness and

particularity with which he allows himself to imagine. Without giving away too much about the specifics of his proposals, he wishes for the establishment of a reformational, catholic church—one marked by the visible unity enjoyed by the church in the patristic era, yet also thoroughly reformed according to the proposals, broadly construed, set forth by the sixteenth-century Reformation.

The great enemy, therefore, in Leithart's analysis, is the problem of denominationalism raised by the Protestant Reformation—a problem to which he devotes the book's second movement. At this juncture, Leithart proposes an account of the present, denominationally configured situation as he sees it. Interestingly, however, Leithart does not say that denominationalism is completely without purpose. Even so, he contends that denominationalism has outlasted its usefulness and that the church must push forward to embody more faithfully Jesus's desire for his followers to be made one in the Holy Spirit—a reality in which the present condition of denominational separation and schism cannot viably persist. While I cannot detail all of Leithart's theological criticisms of denominationalism here, it is instructive at this point to note that his vision faults all three streams of the Christian tradition—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant—for their mutual culpability in perpetuating the church's ongoing, fractured condition.

The middle of Leithart's study consists of an "intermezzo" in which he recapitulates some of the biblical stories that supply, at least in his view, a measure of background for his hopes for a reunified Christian church. God is, after all, providentially involved with his creation, bringing forth life from death, order from chaos, and unity from

disunity. Movement three contains some of the more interesting chapters in the whole book, wherein Leithart discusses recent developments in ecumenism, missions, and global Christianity that prefigure the coming end of the church's divided state and the rebirth of a new kind of catholicity.

Finally, the book's fourth movement wraps up the argument by proposing concrete ways forward in the hope of achieving the reunification of Christendom in correspondence to Jesus's prayer that his followers be one. He lays this out in "Reformational Catholicism for Theologians," "Reformational Catholicism for Pastors," and "Reformational Catholicism for Lay Christians." An interesting dimension of Leithart's argument at this concluding juncture is his contention for a traditional, Protestant understanding

of justification by faith alone. While he affirms the church-dividing character of disagreement about this particular question, Leithart also seems to attribute much of the ecumenical misapprehension between Roman Catholics and Protestants to the slogans and traditions of condemnation that have grown up since the time of the Reformation—not to some ultimately insurmountable disagreement. Still, at this point, Leithart believes that the achievement of Christian unity can only be realized if all Christians can acknowledge the fundamental legitimacy of those critiques that catalyzed and sustained the Reformation.

The End of Protestantism is, no doubt, an interesting read. Leithart's style is direct, if somewhat idiosyncratic at times, and his thoughtfulness is evident

INTRODUCING

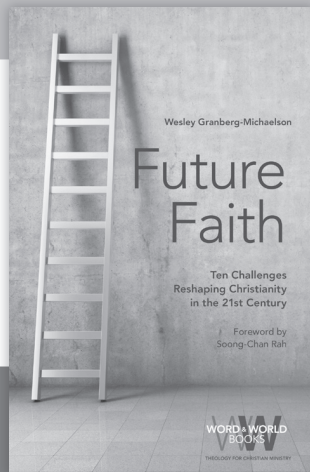
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throughout the book (as with many of his other works, too). Even so, I found myself unpersuaded by the book's basic proposals about the condition of Christian disunity as it presently exists, as well as the solutions he proposes to remedy the situation. Jesus's prayer for his followers to be one (John 17:21) is a demand that requires obedience, according to Leithart's reading. However, Jesus addresses this as a prayer to his Father, not as an admonition to the disciples. Ultimately, the achievement of Christian unity is an action accomplished by *God*: it is a promise that God makes and fulfills in Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments (Lutherans: see AC VII 1–2). Christians confess their belief in this promise every time they say in the Nicene Creed that they “believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” This doctrine of Christian unity is confessed on the basis of God's promise entirely in spite of the visible reality of brokenness, sin, and division that characterizes the institutional church here and now.

A second issue I take with Leithart's proposal is that his vision for a reformational catholic church looks to me like a church in which most traditions must leave behind crucial, constitutive elements of their theological identity. Yet I have a hard time seeing how much an ecumenically minded Reformed Christian such as Leithart would really have to sacrifice were this actually achieved. In the end, while Leithart's book contains rich and thought-provoking reflections on the problem and task of Christian unity, I remain persuaded that it is enough (*satis est*) for unity in the church that there be agreement in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nothing—especially

not the institutional configuration of the church—can become a likewise essential precondition for the church's oneness.

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**HEALING SPIRITUAL WOUNDS:
RECONNECTING WITH A LOVING
GOD AFTER EXPERIENCING
A HURTFUL CHURCH**, by
Carol Howard Merritt. San Francisco:
HarperOne, 2017. Pp. 232. \$25.99
(paper).

The purpose of this book is to help those who are wounded by religion (particularly Christianity) and looking for healing. Carol Howard Merritt, pastor and author of the award-winning book *Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation*, analyzes her neighbors' and her own experiences of being wounded through the lens of her mature theological thinking. Each chapter recounts the story of the wounds inflicted, shares life experience, and suggests steps toward healing and wholeness.

In the first chapter, Merritt presents a story of suffering and confusion experienced in the church context. The church becomes hurtful when its teachings appear useless in the face of a difficult situation. Healing the spiritual wound requires being open to God's work, which the author describes figuratively as gently removing a scab. This restores one's feeling of being surrounded and embraced by God.

The second chapter discusses the reasons why people are heartbroken and tempted to abandon God, even though they were born to a Christian family

and raised in the church. People sometimes hate Christianity because of mistreatment experienced in the church, which gives less attention to the dangers of “sexism, homophobia, racism, greed and violence” (22). Merritt describes the healing experience as a restoration of the peace one finds through faith in God and substantiates it with her personal experience of a transformation from brokenness by God’s healing intervention. This encourages a victim to integrate healing with their faith even though the wound was inflicted by the church. The author argues that being healed involves learning to “look for our own shattered pieces, collect them, and appreciate them. In their sharpness, pain, and brokenness, we will search for ways to put our lives back together. We will make a conscious decision to join that global historical longing and commit ourselves to that yearning for peace” (34). In other words, it is recommended to seek spiritual healing that attracts the religious person and communities that violated “the love of God, self, and neighbor” (31).

In chapter 3, Merritt argues that peaceful relationship with God and our neighbor depends on what shapes our understanding of God. In our experience of being wounded in the church, if we regard the abusive pastor as representing God and ourselves as deserving the mistreatment, there is a danger of developing the wrong image of God. Identifying God with what wounded us gives the real abuser a sharper edge so that they can cut us more deeply. In contrast, throughout this chapter, the author portrays God as a peaceful and loving God, who is for us. Therefore, our image of God can be healed when we realize “that God was being wounded alongside us. God’s part in our abuse was suffering in solidarity with us. Now, God loves us,

weeps for us, and longs to heal us” (59). For spiritual healing to take place, we have to be open to God’s loving presence and consider ourselves his loved and forgiven children.

Under the topic of “recovering our emotions,” the author demonstrates how a religious message can be an inhibiting force that fragments our emotional life by creating guilt and shame. When religious abuse is covered up by quoting Bible verses, people are denied the right to feel their anger and to invite God to heal them in the face of injustice. Merritt encourages a victim not to pretend that the wound is “just a misunderstanding” on their part but instead to allow themselves to “feel the force of the pain” (85) so that they can reclaim their emotions. Whenever the church harms us and forces us to keep silent, faith teaches the victims to feel and guides them to respond with wisdom and maturity. Merritt argues that for emotional healing to happen, one has to acknowledge, listen, and comfort oneself, beginning with prayerfully opening up oneself to God. Identifying and expressing our emotions in God’s presence is a healthier place than social media (including Facebook), which will result in a renewal of trust in God.

Chapter 5 is intended to show readers how they can love themselves by reaffirming God’s love for them. Throughout this chapter, the author focuses on demonstrating that this sort of restorative experience can only be attained when one realizes the truth that they are worthy of God’s love and obeys the Spirit’s call to love humanity, including oneself. The discussion was established on the themes of learning to love all humanity and recovering healthy metaphors as the two helpful practices leading to spiritual healing. This may not immunize us from



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the feeling of being a victim of everything around us, but it implies that we have come to the point at which we need to utter words “asking God for strength” (113). Merritt testifies that in the midst of such frailty, God intervenes and changes one’s name from victim to survivor.

The sixth chapter underscores the significance of confession and absolution in reclaiming one’s body. A guilty conscience sometimes makes us think we cannot fit with an institution or envisioned profession, particularly when different rules are applied to men and women. To illustrate this, Merritt recounts how her orientation-night experience at Moody Bible Institute, where “the women went to the chapel and the men to the theater for welcoming” (126), helped her to absolve her neighbor. Besides confession and absolution, the author points out that viewing oneself as a person made in the image of God helps to develop a renewed understanding of Christianity as a religion that affirms our body and desires.

Chapter 7 aims at identifying religious threats, particularly the idea of “the rapture,” to future hope. Hearing a lecture or a sermon portraying the rapture as a due date for God’s vengeance causes uncertainty about one’s ultimate salvation. When the Scriptures are interpreted from a perfectionist standpoint rather than as a guide to the future, it is very easy to be exposed to unhealthy feelings of being a loser and consequently abandoned by God. For example, Merritt says, “When people predicted the rapturous events, I rarely imagined myself on the winning side” (154). Later, realizing that salvation is God’s longing for all humanity to have abundant life, rather than an “entry ticket” earned by good individuals, helped her to regain her hope. Human beings regain their hope

through participating in this “longing” alongside God for the renewal and liberation of all mankind.

Under the topic of “reassessing our finances,” in the eighth chapter, Merritt addresses the spiritual crisis Christians go through when they misunderstand their relationship with God as transactional, dependent on their financial status or bank balance. The chapter reveals that a transactional view of God’s love for us leads to a danger of misinterpreting our financial struggles as the loss of God’s favor and to the temptation to identify Christianity with the prosperity-gospel teaching. In this case, spiritual healing involves not letting financial insecurity cut us off from our loving and beloved community. Instead, we have to “affirm God’s love in the midst of it all. Growing in beloved community means that we turn away from the lie that we can flourish independently and turn toward one another and God in absolute dependence” (184).

In the last chapter, Merritt speaks about how being born again should lead one to courageously speak up in the face of religious injustice. The discussion aims at getting rid of a harmful worldview that promotes a practice of hiding a wound inflicted by abusive religious treatments of women. As articulated by Merritt, “We blamed ourselves for the assault, just as we were taught, as the guilt crushed us. . . . Even when we became victims of sexual violence, our religious tradition heaped guilt on us, and injured us all over again” (193). The author suggests that taking off a patriarchal lens while reading and interpreting the Scripture is significant in building “theological systems” free from gender inequality and promoting personal relationship with God, which allows all people to experience God’s loving kindness.

The book effectively addresses issues facing the church today. The author not only writes about what she experienced and lived but also provides readers going through similar situations with various practical options at the end of each chapter. Merritt carefully indicates that the religious wound she refers to as a “spiritual wound” is inflicted by religious leaders, individuals, or the community of believers rather than by Christianity itself. Therefore, the book is relevant and worth reading.

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KATIE LUTHER, FIRST LADY OF THE REFORMATION: THE UNCONVENTIONAL LIFE OF KATHARINA VON BORA, by Ruth A. Tucker. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. Pp. 208. \$19.99 (paper).

“Katharina has left us nothing—at least nothing that was deemed worthy of saving” (27). With these words, Tucker sums up the roadblock all biographers face when attempting a biography of Katharina von Bora Luther: there is almost no record of her own words and thoughts on which to draw. We know her almost entirely through the writings of those who knew her, and most of that from Luther himself. A few others include occasional comments about her, including family friends and others who lived in the Luther household or sat at Luther’s table.

There are, of course, facts that we do know about Katie’s life from early on to her death. We know she was born January 29, 1499, and died December 20, 1552.

We know that her mother died while she was very young, and she was sent away at age five first to boarding school and then to Marienthron, a Cistercian cloister in Nimbschen. She escaped the convent in April 1523, eventually married Martin Luther, and became not only his wife but a successful farmer, brewer, and businesswoman. More could be added to this list of facts—births and deaths of children, for example—but the list of facts regarding this woman with whom so many are fascinated is quite simply a short one.

Facts being scarce, biographers seeking to reveal Katie Luther must depend primarily on what her contemporaries, including Luther, wrote about her. From these rare references, it is possible to glimpse her personality and sense aspects of the relationship she had with Luther, the children, and a few others. From Luther’s own words, we learn how much he came to love and depend upon her, for he states it in numerous ways and places. Altogether, however, this amounts to very little on which to build a biography. Tucker’s attempt to do so is laid out from the beginning: in addition to the little we do know, she will draw on the lives of other women.

In taking this approach, Tucker does give us an interesting and informative read. Along with insights into typical roles and challenges of women from Katie’s time and place, we foray into the lives of other nuns (some of whom also left the convent), including not only contemporaries of Katie but modern-day figures such as Patricia O’Donnell Gibson, an ex-nun from Michigan. We meet, too, famous saints such as Hildegard of Bingen and other women of the Reformation, several of whom played much more active public roles than did Katie. Through all this, we are to surmise what

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Katie herself must have thought, felt, wanted, feared, hoped, and done. In general, the author is generally careful to make clear that surmising is all we can do. Is it fair to assume Katie was devastated at the loss of a child? Yes. Unlike Luther, does she leave letters expressing this? No.

In illuminating Katie's mind and heart, the author is on firmer ground when drawing inferences from Luther's letters to or comments about Katie. When he writes her to calm her fears, it is fair to assume she worried about him. When he jokes with her or writes to someone else of a humorous episode with her, we likewise can assume she had a sense of humor. Perhaps the area where Tucker most clearly takes liberties is in trying to describe Katie's spiritual life, a chapter based almost entirely on assumptions that seem more based in the author's identification with whom she imagines Katie to be than anything else.

It must be noted that Tucker has done her research in her biographical attempt. An average of more than thirty footnotes per chapter gives evidence of that. She also has created an intriguing and informative weaving together of this research in her attempt to provide a sense of who Katie Luther was and her influence on the Reformation. I would argue she is wrong in her early assumption, however that Katie was "the most indispensable figure of the German Reformation, save for Martin Luther himself. Take her and their twenty-year marriage out of the picture and his leadership would have suffered severely" (11). The truth is that Luther almost certainly would have received the support he needed elsewhere, just as he had before marrying Katie and continued to have during his marriage. Having married Katie, her support of him and their family was vitally

important; if he had not married, however, it is doubtful his leadership would have suffered. Dubbing Katie "First Lady of the Reformation" is truly appropriate only for her role as Luther's wife.

Having said all this, I would recommend the book. It is an interesting and informative perspective from which you will learn much. Factually, however, what you will learn least about is Katie Luther. Like others, Tucker simply cannot deliver what she does not have.

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PROTESTANTS: THE FAITH THAT MADE THE MODERN WORLD, by Alec Ryrie. New York: Viking, 2017. Pp. 523. \$35.00 (cloth).

Church historian Alec Ryrie's recent book, concurrent with the anniversary of Martin Luther's landmark disputation, effectively conveys Protestantism's restless half millennium of history as one unfolding, never standing still. Ryrie jettisons across the centuries, from Luther, Muentzer, and the Anabaptists to Zwingli and Calvin, on to later pietists and then early modern communitarian and eschatological movements, such as those founded by John Humphrey Noyes, William Miller, and Charles Taze Russell. Moreover, he takes on a panoramic vista of political, social, and theological causes related to the movement: abolition versus proslavery, suffragists and the patriarchal adversaries, the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, and Germany's pre-World War II "struggle" between the *Deutsche Christen* and Confessing Church. Throughout

the work, Ryrie stays on course in his simple thesis of a movement involving a “love affair with God” and a concerted “quest for God’s power.” Ventures through this overall pursuit, he argues, helped usher in philosophical, political, social, and economic forces that launched the modern world and its democratic institutions.

As sweeping as *Protestants* is, however, a flaw surfaces early on in the work and continues throughout, namely, of failing to acknowledge that a core theological tradition did, in fact, develop during the Reformation and subsequent centuries among principals like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, Cartwright, Smyth, and Wesley. Starting with Luther’s earliest writings, Protestant thought generally conceived of the church as a congregation of believers initiating or evolving out of the proclamation of God’s word through the scriptural theme of God’s grace revealed in Christ. Knowing the “word,” both through Scripture and incarnation, would propel structural reform that behooves authentic spiritual community, a body of believers manifestly local but also “hidden,” of universal dimension. Such a definition saw the church carrying out its mission through principles and norms of New Testament Christology, Pauline justification, Confessions from the Reformation, and the ecumenical Creeds. Significantly, divergent churches did appear, but the common code, though not fully appreciated until the early twentieth century, prevailed. One may garner personal fascination with sixteenth-century radicals of Muenster, the messianic visions of

Mother Lee, or the rise of nineteenth-century Adventism, as Ryrie does, but this does not represent mainline or “classical” Protestantism.

Sparkling as Mr. Ryrie’s narrative is, then, the author goes far enough but not deep enough. To represent the broad Protestant movement as simply an infectious stream of quarrels, schisms, and denominations, beyond mutual doctrine or belief, is to represent in its more conservative moments assumptions of the Roman Magisterium that Protestantism, in the end, is little more than a modern Hydra endlessly carving up the body of Christ. Tellingly, Ryrie gives no quarter to the modern ecumenical movement and its successes among liberal Presbyterian and Lutheran communions, for instance, in acknowledging full and mutual recognition of ordination and pastoral office or to the histories of institutional reconciliation of the United Churches of Canada and Australia. And most striking, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) and its ambitious wave of dialogues on a range of key topics between Rome and mainline denominations is absent—mutual accords that would never have materialized if the old mainline communions had not harbored the universal Creeds. *Protestants*, then, is keen on dynamic diversity but parsimonious on shared principles and practices. It is on target on the movement’s impulse to divide (tragically in our era with respect to social policy) but not its power to unite.

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