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Reflections on Honest History

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St. Olaf College's Land Acknowledgement statement calls for honest storytelling about injustices toward the Wahpekute Band of the Dakota Nation, including accepting responsibility for past harm.[1] That call is linked to acts of healing and an intention to interrupt ongoing injustice. Taking this admonition seriously, in 2021 my teaching partner and I assigned our students to investigate this history and construct projects that told the story honestly. Together we reflected on the notion of honest storytelling and historical narrative's potential to promote healing. Among the projects was one that delved into the Doctrine of Discovery and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's repudiation of it. Another looked at historical markers that represent encounters between natives and settlers in Minnesota. A third investigated the use of the Algonquin term *Manitou* (meaning something like "life force" or "Great Spirit") on our campus. Although I cannot say how much healing was accomplished, I'm confident that students became more aware of injustices and of the difficulty of repair.

Those students' work also prompted me to think more carefully about the relationship between various sorts of storytelling, my work as a historian and scholar of religion, and the potential of historical narrative to promote healing.

[1] "St. Olaf Land Acknowledgement, St. Olaf College," accessed March 28, 2022, https://wp.stolaf.edu/education/land-acknowledgement/.

History is prone to interpretive agendas that sometime do not give an honest account of the complexities and traumas of the past. It is not true that "time heals all wounds" if the wounds themselves are not addressed in a forthright and responsible manner. If the past is not examined truthfully, then the present and future difficulties cannot be addressed and repaired.

I do so at a particular moment in American culture, in Christian life, and in my own career. The nation is in social and political turmoil. Christians are wrestling with our involvement and our responses. I will soon conclude my vocation as a college professor. What follows is not an argument in support of a firmly held thesis; it is an essay of exploration, in conversation with historians, sociologists, theologians, and others who have informed my teaching and scholarship.

Painful, Shifting Stories

The history of Native and non-Native interactions in Minnesotans is told in various forms, oral and written, fictional, documentary, and critical, from contrasting perspectives and for differing purposes. Focusing on "the meeting and melding of Indian and European cultures," historian Mary Lethert Wingerd goes beyond legends and popular images. In her book *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*,[2] she examines two centuries of relatively peaceful exchange before American expansion in the 1850s generated increased tension and then war. Healing Minnesota Stories, a program of the Minnesota Council of Churches, is premised on a conviction that "the listener and storyteller are both healed by their acts" of telling, retelling, and hearing painful stories.[3] Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs (Mohican) and Bob Klanderud (Dakota) lead tours of sacred sites along the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, including the location where hundreds of Dakota were interred in the winter following the US-Dakota War of 1862. Standing where it happened, they speak plainly about the war and its deadly aftermath. They recall the harms inflicted on Native people who lost land, language, and culture and the roles non-Native people played. From the often-neglected perspective of Native people they recount this dreadful episode in Minnesota's history to groups composed mostly of non-Native listeners. This storytelling not only promotes human healing, as recounted in Wingerd's book, but it also repairs holes in the shared history of Native and non-Native Minnesotans, resulting in a more complete story.[4]

Another mode of repair might return to older tellings with new awareness: to reread, for example, *Giants in the Earth*, Ole Rolvaag's novel about Norwegian immigrants on the Dakota prairie, with an eye to his portrayal of the newcomers' attitudes toward and interactions with those already present.[5] In the 1920s, Rolvaag wrote the story from the perspective of immigrant settlers whose initial attitudes toward Indians were based on secondhand information: All were wary to some

[2] Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota (*Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), xiv.

[3] "Healing Minnesota Stories," Minnesota Council of Churches, accessed February 21, 2022, https://www.mnchurches.org/what-we-do/healing-minnesota-stories.

[4] For an insightful analysis of how historians might contribute to such healing see Sherry L. Smith, "Reconciliation and Restitution in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 5–25, https://doi.org/10.2307/westhistquar.41.1.0004.

[5] O. E. Rolvaag, *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

degree. Having heard "the tale of the horrors of '62," Kjersti was afraid, but her husband thought such fear was nonsense.[6] Protagonist Per Hansa's first encounter was not with a person but with a grave and some stone fragments, likely arrowheads. Instead of being frightened by the grave, his wife, Beret, responded with a deepened sense of "how unspeakably lonesome" the place was.[7] Although his friends regarded the grave's location as "rotten luck," Per Hansa determined that "no ghost of a dead Indian would drive him away!" and filed his claim adjacent to an established Indian trail.[8] Rolvaag presented a range of attitudes toward Indians, but he conveyed most vividly Per Hansa's ambivalence, his complicated mixture of fascination and arrogance, his willingness to benefit from trade while disregarding the Indians' prior claims. If incomplete, this is an honest story about immigrant experience, one that does not look away from Per Hansa's flaws. Whether rereading the novel now offers any remedy for the real injuries inflicted more than a century ago by people like him is debatable and uncertain.[9]

What is not debatable is that the stories we tell about ourselves and about the past shape our personal and collective identity as Americans and inform our public policies. Historian Jill Lepore demonstrates this eloquently in *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*.[10] In various genres, from personal letters to formal historical accounts and theatrical performances, she analyzes shifting stories about this merciless conflict in the 1670s. Beginning with contemporaneous narratives of the war, Lepore examines portrayals of Native people: first by colonial English eager to distinguish themselves from those they regarded as degenerate, heathen Indians and barbarous, Catholic Spaniards; then by nascent Americans in revolt against the English, now seen as "more savage enemies than the Indians;[11] and in the nineteenth century by patriots claiming the virile virtues of Philip's (seemingly) vanished descendants to show themselves superior to Europeans' enervated, effete culture. That romantic view both depended upon the false assumption that Philip had no descendants and promoted Andrew Jackson's Indian removal policy. Neither removal, nor reservations, nor even violence such as the US-Dakota War vanquished all Natives; nonetheless, for decades they were invisible to many Americans except as exotic adversaries of settlers and cowboys in Western film and fiction. More recently Native writers, such as Minnesotans novelist Louise Erdrich (Chippewa) and anthropologist David Treuer (Ojibwe), have told different stories about past and present Native

[6] Rolvaag, 62.

[7] Rolvaag, 41

[8] Rolvaag, 35.

[9] Relatively little scholarship has considered the interaction of Natives with Scandinavians (or other immigrants) as distinct from other white settlers. For discussion of the few instances and the lack, see Gunlög Fur, "Indians and Immigrants—Entangled Histories," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 3 (Spring 2014), 55–76, https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerethnhist.33.3.0055.

[10] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

[11] Lepore, 187.

experiences and encounters with non-Native Americans.[12] Engagement with those stories demands that non-Native readers revise their images of Native life, as well as their self-understanding as constituted relative to Natives.

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Stories Make Identity

This ongoing process is affirmed by sociologist of religion Nancy Tatom Ammerman: "Telling stories reminds hearers of where they belong, but it also creates moments when belonging can be redefined."[13] Along with Ammerman, social theorist Margaret R. Somers expands our thinking about the importance of honest storytelling, asserting that narratives constitute identity. In other words, stories are not merely representations of what happened or what was experienced to be evaluated for their accuracy; rather, stories make us who we are and guide our actions. Attentive to historical scholarship and narrative theory, Somers identifies four dimensions of narrative: ontological, public, meta, and conceptual.[14] The first, which Ammerman calls autobiographical, has to do with the stories we each tell about ourselves, stories that define us as individual persons. Public narratives are about the often-overlapping groups and communities to which we belong, such as family, church, and ethnic group. Metanarratives are "overarching cultural paradigms" such as progress or secularization or civil religion.[15] Conceptual narratives are devised by scholars for the sake of analysis and explanation. Recognition that identity is constituted by the interaction of these narratives in specific times and places generates a flexible understanding of identity, Somers argues, one that contrasts with potentially static or essentialized identities based in categories such as race, gender, and nationality. These narratives constrain as well as enable identity and action, but they are not fixed or absolutely prescriptive. Because narratives

[12] Louise Erdrich's more than two dozen books of poetry and fiction include the Pulitzer Prize winner *The Night Watchman* (New York: Harper Collins, 2020); David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (New York: Riverhead, 2019).

[13] Nancy T. Ammerman, "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 186. See also Ammerman, "Narratives in Religious Practice," in *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 166–206.

[14] Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Construction of Identity," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994), 605–49. She introduces these dimensions on pp. 617–20. See also Somers, "Where Is Sociology after the Historic Turn? Knowledge Cultures, Narrativity, and Historical Epistemologies," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 53–89.

[15] Ammerman, "Religious Identities," 214.

overlap and sometimes conflict, improvisation is possible—even necessary. Patterns of identity and action constituted by one narrative can be imported into other temporal and social contexts or revised in response to new circumstances.

Somers and Ammerman provide insight into narratives' potential to constitute and reconstitute identities; however, they give little attention to various types of narratives or to the task of writing formal history. Neither does the St. Olaf Land Acknowledgement statement distinguish between different sorts of storytelling. Nonetheless, the standards that determine the honesty of fiction are not precisely the same ones that regulate the writing of professional historians. If twenty-first-century historians no longer make the same bold claims about truth that their predecessors did when so-called "scientific history" was dominant, they still strive for factual accuracy. If they accept that the available evidence is always partial and subject to multiple interpretations, they also recognize that what they write requires evidence that supports and restricts what can be claimed. Although contemporary historians are less likely to write in support of national identities, they have identarian concerns, whether based on race or ethnicity, gender, class, or something else. In recent decades historians have become more self-reflective about the ways their point of view—whether ideological or demographic—influences their selection of topic, weighting of evidence, and interpretations. Increasingly, one facet of honesty in writing history is willingness to acknowledge the partiality of any narrative and the ways in which one's own point of view, experiences, and interests inform and limit what one writes.[16]

Without abandoning the task of constructing an accurate representation of the past, contemporary historians also provide a narrative that addresses the significance of what happened. Historian Hayden White makes a similar point when he argues that "the annals and chronicle forms of historical representations . . . are alternatives to . . . the fully realized historical discourse that the modern history form is supposed to embody."[17] That certain events took place in a certain order may be recorded in an annal or a chronicle, but neither provides a sense of closure or conveys their significance. Looking backward, the historian places pieces of the past in a plot in which discrete events become related episodes moving toward a conclusion. The resulting narrative claims to provide true knowledge about what happened, reveals a plausible explanation for why and how things happened, and offers a persuasive proposal about their meaning. This sort of narrative is only possible, or necessary, if the pieces could be related in more than one order and if the meaning of the plot is susceptible to multiple understandings. The meaning may be moral, particularly when it is informed by expectations about how the world should be or when it makes critical judgments about how the world is. It may confirm or call into question "overarching cultural paradigms," the metanarratives

[16] An overview of changes in historical writing since the mid-twentieth century is provided in the first chapter of the following volume: Stefan Berger, *History and Theory: How Historical Theory Shapes Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[17] Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980), 10.

discussed by Somers. Although White contends that such a historical narrative offers a sense of completion, he also admits that such "coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure . . . is and can only be imaginary."[18] No less than autobiographical and public narratives, metanarratives are potentially flexible and fluid, subject to revision when retold in changing temporal and cultural circumstances. If that were not so, the linkage of storytelling and healing in the St. Olaf Land Acknowledgement statement would be nonsensical.

Telling Alternative Stories

The call for honest storytelling is, of course, not unique to one institutional statement or to stories about Native and non-Native interactions. It resembles earlier demands for a usable past and for alternatives to historical projects focused on elite men and institutions. Since the mid-twentieth century practitioners of new modes of history have brought the experiences and actions of previously neglected persons and groups into the center of history, both in works devoted specifically to them and in those that provide their perspective on general topics such as American history. In his *History and Theory: How Historical Theory Shapes Historical Practice*, Stefan Berger surveys these changes. In the first chapter he discusses several theorists who have influenced historical writing and in the following chapters considers various emerging subfields such as histories of gender, memory, and material culture. He notes that feminist historians have explored women's identity in the past and discovered instances of women exercising agency. Already in 1981 theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether articulated three critiques feminist scholars would make of religious studies. She observed that after the "historical reality of female exclusion and male ideological bias" are documented, the stories of notable and exceptional women are told, leading to "an alternative history and tradition that supports the inclusion and personhood of women."[19] Alternative narratives are not merely an enrichment of previous history; they also signal the need to revise standards for what is worthy of historical notice. Ruether firmly insisted that the "'bad' history" of exclusion and oppression remain: "We need to remember this history," she wrote, "but as examples of our fallibility, not as norms of truth."[20] The same sorts of critiques are implicit, if not explicit, in more recent calls for honest storytelling that includes the bad as well as the good, the painful stories as well as the pleasing ones.

These recent developments in historical writing attest that the meanings historians offer are subject to debate and revision. Moreover, the contested nature of historical narrative is on display not only in academic journals but also at school board meetings and on the floor of state legislatures, to say nothing of online

[18] White, 27.

[19] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Feminist Critique in Religious Studies," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64, no. 4 (Winter 1981), 391.

[20] Ruether, 394.

exchanges. At stake: How shall we understand the long history of the United States, and the century and a half (more or less) before the colonies declared their collective independence? When does the story begin? Who are the major actors? What is the primary plot? And, ultimately, who are we? The metanarratives offered in response to such questions, interacting with autobiographical and public narratives, constitute American identity. Because they have the power to inform and shape us, both the accuracy of these representations and the meaning attributed to them matter.

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Rather than reviewing the entire range of histories of the United States, perhaps here it is enough to note that the Puritans' self-identification as the New Israel—chosen by God for a special mission in a new land—often provides the germ of the narrative. Cultural historian Jim Cullen has observed, "The Puritans' dream, however strange and even repellent, was an exceptionally powerful one that had tremendous consequences, most of them unintended. In a palpable sense it is only because of their dream that those Americans who followed had theirs."[21] To some degree, that dream informs the two American master-narratives historian Gary Gerstle presents in *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. One is the pursuit of "core political ideals, [including] the American belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings, in every individual's inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and in a democratic government that derives its legitimacy from the people's consent." The other is the preservation of a "racial nationalism that conceives of America in ethnoracial terms, as a people held together by common blood and skin color and by an inherited fitness for self-government."[22] While not every effort to tell the national story follows either the civic or the nationalist metanarrative precisely, many lean toward one or the other. Informed by the same Puritan narrative of the "New Israel," these competing national stories are complex histories that unfold over time and in response to specific circumstances. Whether developed according to a nationalist or a civic theme, even when separated from their explicitly Protestant origin, they can—and often do—take on a triumphal tone. Precisely their claim to factual authority and truthful meaning may be what prompts calls for a usable past and for honest storytelling.

National narratives such as Manifest Destiny, the American dream, the Kingdom of God in America, and civil religion have not been without their critics,

[21] Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13.

[22] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 4.

however—not even among those who have shaped them. In his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*, historian James Truslow Adams not only introduced the notion of the American dream "of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position," but he also warned against how easily it could be degraded into mere materialist gains.[23] Six years later, theologian H. Richard Niebuhr was more attentive to religion in *The Kingdom of God in America*. Having traced his theme through three phases, he lamented that by the nineteenth century, "the old idea of American Christians as a chosen people who had been called to a special task was turned to the notion of a chosen nation especially favored. . . . Christianity, democracy, Americanism, the English language and culture, the growth of industry and science, American institutions—these are all confounded and confused."[24] As the United States prepared to celebrate its bicentennial, the title of historian Martin E. Marty's *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* had an ironic, perhaps oxymoronic twist. Some reviewers took exception to his suggestion that the alliance of Protestant support of "an American way of life" required critique.[25] More recently sociologist Philip Gorski refined Robert Bellah's notion of American civil religion. Noting Bellah's failure to do so, in *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* Gorski drew a firm line between religious nationalism and civil religion.[26]

Gorski understands narrative as "an interpretation of the past that generates a vision of the future." Together with a canon of "widely known and read" texts that "serve as focal points for civic discussion and public debate," a pantheon of "founders, heroes, saints and martyrs," and an archive of additional texts, stories, and persons, narratives comprise a living tradition.[27] His theory of tradition, in Somers's terms, is a conceptual narrative that aids analysis and explanation of alternative metanarratives. The existence of additional "archival" resources and the expectation that narratives generate vision contribute to the dynamism of a tradition, which Gorski compares to a river. He provides a critical, historical analysis of three traditions: radical secularism, as well as religious nationalism and civil religion. Highlighting civil religion's dual sources—the prophetic religion of the Jewish and Christian Bibles and the civic republicanism of Western, secular philosophy—he draws upon its archive to revise that tradition and point

[23] James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), 415.

[24] H. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1937), 179.

[25] See Martin E. Marty, "Righteous Empire Revisited," Robert C. Baron Lecture at the American Antiquarian Society (October 18, 2006), 52, https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44574366.pdf, in which Marty quotes several reviews in this vein, including this one from Gilbert E. Dean in *The Lutheran*. There is something odd about a Lutheran making this objection, given that a Lutheran notion of the two kingdoms might restrain a more Calvinist tendency to conflate social and moral good in the public realm with the advancement of God's reign. See Mark A. Noll, "The Lutheran Difference," *First Things* (February 1992), 37–38.

[26] Philip Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 30–33.

[27] Gorski, 31.

toward the future. Without assuming that all Americans regard these Scriptures as authoritative, he demonstrates how biblical narrative informs American identity. His analysis of the rival traditions, including his diagnosis of the corruption of civil religion, might well be understood as the sort of honest storytelling called for in the Land Acknowledgement statement that launched this essay. So too, his commitment to a narrative that "generates a vision for the future" and his proposal for rebuilding a vital center can be understood as a prescription for healing.[28]

Knowing Stories

Gorski's clear linkage of narrative with vision points to a dimension of narrative beyond constituting identity. Narrative is not only telling what is known; it is dependent upon a way of knowing. Put more technically, narrative has both ontological and epistemological functions. Each is dialectical. Ontologically, the stories we tell make us who we are, and who we are informs the stories we tell. Epistemologically, the stories we tell reveal what we consider to be worth knowing, and what and whom we regard as valuable informs the stories we tell. Epistemology, like Gorski's theory of tradition, is a conceptual narrative that aids analysis. Theologian Mary M. Solberg put it concisely: "Epistemologies act as 'lenses' or frameworks, implicitly or explicitly shaping our sense of what can and cannot be known, what is and is not worth knowing, who can and cannot know, whether some knowledge is or should be used, and so forth."[29] Notice the addition of an ethical dimension, such as the intention "to interrupt ongoing injustice" in the St. Olaf Land Acknowledgement statement. The narratives that constitute us and the ways we know affect how we act on what we know. Following her encounter with human suffering and the political realities of El Salvador in the 1980s, Solberg drew upon feminist philosophy and Martin Luther's theology to develop an epistemology of the cross presented in *Compelling Knowledge.* An epistemology of the cross enables us to consider honesty not only as a quality of the story told, but also as an aspect of how it is known.

Solberg's theological turn brings Luther's theology of the cross into creative, constructive conversation with feminist critiques of philosophical claims to objectivity and universality. Like Gorski's attention to prophetic religion, she shows the potential of the central Christian story to reform other narratives, both national and personal. Her "draft" of an epistemology of the cross takes up "considerations of power, experience, objectivity, and accountability."[30] Although her proposal addresses contemporary situations, it can be applied also to the past. A historian guided by an epistemology of the cross will be accountable both before God and before humanity, as a Christian lives both *coram Deo* and *coram mundo.* Accountability to God

[28] Gorski.

[29] Mary Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 8.

[30] Solberg, 109.

involves admitting one's entanglement in the long and still-unfolding history one narrates. It also places one at the foot of the cross, a location that directs one's attention particularly to "the sort of knowing that comes from the lived experience of struggle at the margins."[31] An epistemology of the cross engenders suspicion of narratives composed by those with power or intended to protect domination. It imposes a responsibility to attend to the experiences of those who have been invisible or rendered mute. To be accountable to persons long dead is not unlike accountability to one's contemporaries, but neither is it precisely the same. While one's own views about the dead may change, their ideas and actions are set. They cannot object, correct the stories told about them, or defend themselves. Neither can they repent. This is the case relative to historical actors and to earlier historians.

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Practicing an epistemology of the cross requires recognition that all knowing is embodied in real bodies—in specific relationships, times, and places—that inform and limit what is and can be known. Niebuhr's observation seems apt: "The evil habit of men [*sic*] in all times to criticize their predecessors for having seen only half of the truth hides from them their own practicality and incompleteness. Thought and faith remain fragmentary; only the object is one."[32] An honest historian must take responsibility for one's own experiences and admit what one does not know of others' experiences or of God's intentions.

Solberg explains that an epistemology of the cross guides an understanding of knowing as a process, composed of three parts, separated only to show their mutual interdependence. First, for the historian this involves knowing, even incompletely, what "is the case" about the past, including what is painful or pleasing, disturbing or delightful. To echo Luther himself, it involves not calling evil good or good evil but, rather, calling a thing what it actually is. This truth-telling extends beyond accurate information to frank admission of the historian's own limits and perspective and to the meaning conveyed by the story told. It also involves, secondly, recognizing one's own complicity in the past and in the construction of a narrative about the past—that is, calling one's own involvement, and that of other people like oneself, by its right name, even when that requires confession rather than congratulation. Here the theological becomes, in my view, vital. Although Solberg does not

[31] Solberg, 114.
[32] Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God*, xv.

evoke Luther's *Freedom of a Christian*, she might have drawn on his insistence that a Christian is obligated to the neighbor in her discussion of "Knowing One's Self Compelled to Act," the third part of the process. This responsive accountability is what moves storytelling toward healing and interruption of ongoing injustice. It is the innovative, creative reappropriation and revision of narratives—meta, public, or autobiographical—that changes identities, realigns relationships, and contributes to cultural change. As Solberg writes, "Finally, an epistemology of the cross, like its theological foundation, directs us to its hope in God's transformative solidarity with the world in its brokenness, and to the possibility that it may serve to guide our knowing and our doing so that '[our] love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help [us] determine what is best." (Phil 1:9–10).[33]

As my reflection on honest history nears its conclusion, I note that the Land Acknowledgement statement that prompted it may bring to mind several actions by the ELCA: the "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" (2016) and the related "Declaration to American Indian and Alaska Native People" (2021), the "Declaration to People of African Descent" (2019) and the social statement "Faith, Sexism, and Justice" (2019). Each of these documents calls members to confession and action toward reconciliation and healing, as does the earlier "Declaration to the Jewish Community" (1994, revised 2021).[34] Recently, Kathryn Lohre, who serves as executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations & Theological Discernment of the ELCA, spoke of the "long, slow work" of knowing and acting honestly about the past.[35] She observes that living out a vocation to love one's neighbor in the context of Jewish-Lutheran relations is not a perfected state of being, but a practice that gives witness for the human capacity for growth. Like Solberg, she sounds an identifiably Lutheran note of hope without utopian expectations for human achievements. Lutheran theology and practice suggest both more and less than the St. Olaf Land Acknowledgement statement calls for: less, in recognizing the limits of what human effort can accomplish toward repair of a profoundly broken world, and more, in that the hope for healing and redefined belonging is fueled by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit. ✠

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[33] Solberg, 139.

[34] "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery," https://tinyurl.com/5n6u5dvh; "A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to American Indian and Alaska Native People," https://tinyurl.com/3t685cpj; "Explanation of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent," https://tinyurl.com/mretz2cp; "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action," https://tinyurl.com/mretz2cp; "A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community," https://tinyurl.com/ycknyv9z; all accessed May 14, 2022.

[35] Kathryn Lohre, "Luther's Legacy of Anti-Judaism and Contemporary Jewish-Lutheran Relations" (video), Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College, March 8, 2022, https://www.stolaf.edu/multimedia/play/?e=3790.