Protest for Protestants Today

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Speyer

The first time the word "Protestant" came to international attention was in 1529. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V summoned the electors and princes of the Empire to an Imperial Diet in the town of Speyer on March 15. To be discussed at that meeting were the religious reforms expanding into various territories in Germany. While the previous Diet of Speyer from 1526 had resulted in generosity toward reform, the climate culminating in 1529 was increasingly hostile. Charles V wanted to consolidate a military unity among his territories that would protect them from the encroaching Ottoman Empire. The religious dissidents presented a serious problem and had to be reined in.

In 1529 Charles V was preoccupied with the defense of Vienna and sent his brother Ferdinand to preside over the Diet. Things did not go well for the dukes who had aligned themselves with Luther's reformation. The final decision from April 19 was dictated by the Catholic majority. No further development of the reformation was allowed; the punishment would be the imperial ban. The Edict of Worms from 1521 that had placed the ban on Luther was, in effect, reinstated, and its 1529 reiteration explicitly included proscriptions against Zwinglians and Anabaptists.

The Protestant princes had to act. They responded with two documents. The first, a "Letter of Protestation" from April 20, was signed by four of the nobles. It went unacknowledged by Ferdinand. The second document, the "Instrumentum Appellationis," was issued on April 25. In it, the elector of Saxony, among other dukes, and representatives of fourteen imperial cities announced their protest of the Diet's decision.[1] From this time on, the reform movement would be labeled "Protestant."

Protest

Just as Martin Luther demonstrated extraordinary courage in standing firm against pope and emperor at the Diet of Worms in 1521, so too the German nobles in 1529 protested the curtailing of religious freedoms by papal and imperial forces. These protests were political and religious. In the medieval west, Christendom and empire each represented one of the two "swords"; the spiritual sword was wielded in constant negotiation with the other political sword. A religious protest was thus a political act; a political protest was infused with religious commitments.

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The historical events in the earliest phase of the Protestant reformation should give us pause to think today about protest. In these times in which truth and falsity, evidence and rhetoric, power and despair are at war with each other in unprecedented ways, protest from religious perspective will necessarily convey a political message; political activism will conversely have a religious dimension. When the gospel is communicated in this world, religious and political forces are unleashed. Luther and the German nobles recognized that religious reform would necessitate the creation of a political alliance, namely the Schmalkald League; the political defense of the Protestant territories was based on commitments to reform. In thinking about protest today, we must recall the interbraiding of religious and political perspectives at the very origin of the word "Protestant." This article has the following aim: to outline how protest is central to mainline Protestantism in North America and in the world. I will offer some reflections on the significance of critical thinking and new scholarship on Luther for guiding necessary protest.

Margins

Protest has a place. Where? It has been said that Luther uttered his protests from the geographical margins of the Holy Roman Empire. This Augustinian friar lived at the empire's northeastern outskirts, far away from Rome. The University of Wittenberg at which Luther taught would later attract students from all over

1. For the German text, see: https://archive.org/stream/dieappellationu00stgoog#page/n59/mode/2up (accessed March 19, 2017).

Europe; but in its early days in the 1500s, it was unknown and far away from Paris. In spite of the reputation concerning Wittenberg's distance from the halls of power and learning, there is historical evidence that shows Frederick the Wise's ambition in making Wittenberg an important center. He was keen to found a university attractive to some of the brightest minds, like Luther and Philip Melanchthon. He also knew how to play his political cards to his advantage. Charles V had a lot to lose if he alienated one of the German nobles, charged with electing the next emperor. The Protestant nobles at Speyer, for example, represented powerful cities and territories of the Empire. What on one hand might be seen as protest from the margins, can from historical perspective be deemed as protest at the center.

The way in which protest's place is conceived has implications for the message. A common way of understanding protest today is "prophetic critique from the margins." Protest, at least in some circles of liberal mainline Protestant America, connotes a critical voice speaking truth from the margins of power. The center is corrupt; the hegemonic culture is oppressive towards people of color, women, the disabled, and the gender queer. Economic privilege dictated from the center allocates existence at the margins to all other others. The place for protest cannot be the center; it is too drunk on its own power to acknowledge its original sin. Protest must thus arise from the margins, from places of oppression and suffering.

Prophetic critique is thus the usual term for protest. Like the prophets who invoke God's judgment on the dominant class, criticism of exploitative power comes from the margins. Here, the reality of exclusion is experienced in suffering bodies weary from overwork, bodies that are colored and gendered and thus require, so the center holds, mechanisms that insist on their inferiority. Where suffering at the margins is precipitated by the center, there at the margins, the center's reality can be unmasked for what it is. While the margins are marginal to political power, they become sites of protest.

But how might protest be understood if the center/margin binary were challenged? If critique from the margin is deemed "prophetic," how might it be characterized when it moves to occupy the center? Would critique then entail a prescription for change?

Today's times are unprecedented. All times are perhaps unprecedented in a specific sense; while there is nothing new under the sun, each historical moment has its own unique reality. Today a radical global shift is taking place. New geopolitical relations are being driven by economic interests. Violence and religious-political wars have precipitated the most extreme refugee crisis the world has ever seen. Women's rights are being actively suppressed around the globe, and slavery and exploitation continue to dehumanize the poor.

How are mainline Protestants to protest today? In North America, the culture wars have left the churches splintered into more denominations. Yet the new political reality requires another kind of protest. The "prophetic critique from the margins" garnered by progressive mainliners in the past is no longer useful.

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The center itself, the very root and shape of contemporary society, must be reimagined. If human society is indeed to endure past this century, if it is not to destroy itself with short-sighted greedy gain, then its prophets must speak powerful truth to reclaim the center. The term "protest" is at the root of western Christian identity. Protestants must use this word powerfully to take up responsibility for humanity. Humanity is at stake. Prophetic critique can be no less than changing the very center of what it means to be a protesting Protestant.

Center

How can mainline Protestants protest? Centers of Protestant Christianity that have emerged over the past decades as politically influential have been evangelical, not mainline. Whether this influence is a function of sustained commitment to political engagement, or the result of successful marketing models, or the movement of the Spirit is a topic that has been addressed at length by historians and sociologists of religion. Evangelical Christianity is visible, political, and powerful. Its public presence contrasts with the increasing decline of mainline Protestantism on the American social, political, and religious landscape. When looking around for Lutherans in public American life today, there is a noticeable absence.[2] Whereas thirty years ago, Lutherans were a visible and influential presence in the social-political arena, today very few self-identified Lutherans are making a mark.

The same decline is evident in academic institutions training the next generation of Protestant clergy and doctoral students. Twenty-five years ago, Lutheran professors of Bible, church history, and systematic theology were on faculties of tier-one research institutions of divinity and the study of religion. Today only a handful of Lutherans are having an impact on the broader academic discussion in theology and in training doctoral students for service to Lutheran seminaries and colleges. Lutheran seminaries once were healthy institutions, contributing serious scholarship to the broader academy. Now, they are beset by troubles exacerbated since the financial crisis of 2008.[3] Recent years have witnessed dramatic

2. See the new assessments of Lutherans today in the various articles in Richard Cimino, ed., *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

3. Remember when Fortress Press was financially viable enough to pay for a breakfast at the American Academy of Religion annual meetings for Lutheran theologians, an event that was accompanied by food for thought, namely a serious academic lecture?

shifts in imagining solutions to financial difficulties. New institutional alliances have been created, such as the linking of troubled seminaries to more financially viable college counterparts: Three examples are Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary's joining with Lenoir-Rhyne University, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary's affiliation with California Lutheran University, and Trinity Lutheran Seminary joining with Capital University. Other denominational seminaries have connected to non-denominational or university divinity schools, such as Andover Newton Theological School, one of the oldest seminaries in the nation, recently moving to and affiliating with Yale Divinity School and a similar move planned for Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary.

Institutional shifts have been accompanied by drastic experiments in seminary curricula. Weekend classes have accommodated to second-career students who work full-time in more lucrative fields. Online and hybrid courses are replacing the traditional classroom teaching environment. Required courses, particularly in the more abstract fields of church history and systematic theology are being weeded out, while courses that claim functional results, such as pastoral and biblical courses, are for the time being welcomed. Financial exigencies and curricular shifts are together eroding the tradition of an educated clergy represented by the classical four-year Master of Divinity degree. Is this the beginning of the end of theological education as we have known and appreciated it?

In the field of religious studies, scholars view religion as a human phenomenon that is inextricably bound together with cultural, political, and social issues. Religion does not exist in a vacuum. While religion is a phenomenon that is not reducible to any other aspects of human nature, such as culture or politics or art, religion is permeated with the cultural and political issues of the day. What might be construed as a merely and solely religious issue, for example, the decline in esteem for rigorous theological education, expresses, as our religious studies colleagues teach us, a broader cultural and political value. The current climate in America that lauds celebrity and exorbitant wealth is hostile to education and teachers. The culture wars of the 1990s with their impact on the splintering of larger Protestant churches, the public denigration of evidence-based science and critical rational thought, and the privileging of money as sole standard for measuring value have all contributed to the erosion of traditional Protestant values on the landscape of contemporary American politics. With the mainline dispersed, where is the center now?

Protest claims a center when it articulates a vision. "Without a vision," the biblical saying goes, "the people perish" (Prov 29:18). A vision is required to lift eyes up toward something that is "not yet," which offers spiritual and rational power to orient and guide emotions, actions, and rational reflection. A vision is important in times like this—it is a glimpse into what is not-yet reality, but what might and can be. Vision has a specific kind of existence. While it exists in a modality other than spacetime, it is powerful in the imagination. Its possibilities and its "ought" guide the work of turning it into spacetime reality. Decisions are made; plans are invoked; the center is claimed, by applying vision to reality. "Thy kingdom come,… on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

Leaders are required who dare to imagine a new reality that is peaceful and just. Leaders are needed who protest what is broken, crushed, and defeated. ...Leaders are called to be attuned to God's vision for the world, one that pronounces judgment on its evil, one that heals and makes whole. God is the center of the vision.

Who sees and articulates the vision? Leaders who hear, see, and speak. Leaders are required who dare to imagine a new reality that is peaceful and just. Leaders are needed who protest what is broken, crushed, and defeated. They imagine beautiful and powerful ways to embody the gospel's attributes in the world. Leaders are called to be attuned to God's vision for the world, one that pronounces judgment on its evil, one that heals and makes whole. God is the center of the vision. Leaders who see and hear God must then claim the divine vision for the center of personhood, community, and world. This vision began centuries ago with the spirit's brooding over the void (Gen 1:2). God implemented the original vision by creating forms and infusing them with life. The vision continues today. Mystics and theologians need to be spiritually ready and intellectually trained in order to articulate God's vision at the center of creation. Protest begins when God takes up the center.

Reason

Reflection on and articulation of vision as protest is an intellectual exercise. Ecclesially affiliated institutions of higher learning, such as colleges and divinity schools, have maintained robust intellectual traditions. The western theological commitment to locating theology in academic institutions is an inheritance that continues to characterize mainline Protestantism. While reality has eroded the vision, institutions still hold onto a particular formation of the intellect for its theological elite. Higher degrees are still required for clergy; and these degrees are awarded in institutions at which professors with advanced degrees teach. The protest of the current debasement of public rhetoric, the denial of scientifically based rationality, and the contempt for truth must be articulated at centers that have historically been dedicated to the inquiry into truth.

As an academic theologian, I am committed to reason and reason's production of ideas. While, admittedly, reason is embodied, which means gendered and colored, there is a universal humanity capacity to think, to produce ideas, and to bring ideas into relation with each other. Reason is humanity's tool to rise above personal

reaction to the present and to enter into the realm of the possible. Theologians create possible conversations by bringing thinkers from the past, who might never have met each other, into conversation. What are the similarities and differences, for example, between Luther and Teresa of Avila? Reason can dwell in the realm of the possible and imagine alternatives to a problem. If Luther's theory of justification is supposed to be by grace alone, then why does he insist on the daily asceticism of the flesh to tame the old Adam? If justification is truly unmerited, then why is it so cheap? Reason can ascertain empirical evidence; it can be conscious of itself and determine rational truths, and it can be allied with the imagination, in order to articulate a vision that can be examined from different sides.

Reason is a powerful human capacity, and one that has been sadly castigated by a Protestant tradition that insists on reason as place of fallen degradation. Fallen reason, so the tradition goes, is so corrupt that it cannot present any content to the will. The will in consequence insists on choosing evil every time. Faith fortunately saves humans from this predicament. But faith comes by hearing, and not by thinking. Reason operates in the realm of everyday fallenness. Faith does not perfect reason, but completely reverses its course.

This pervasive Protestant view of reason has, however, not been central to the robust intellectual tradition represented by traditional Protestantism. At the center of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestant Orthodoxy was the idea that theology was a *habitus*. Through the practice of applying oneself to the rigorous study of the Bible and theology, the mind would increase in the knowledge of God and world and the heart would be oriented to its salvation. The language of *habitus*, while proper to the field of ethics, became significant to theology as a practical science in this intellectual tradition. Knowledge was something to be cultivated by sustained reflection, meditation, and linguistic articulation. Criteria for knowledge were to be applied to the subject matter in order to articulate truth claims. Yet knowledge was practical; theological knowledge consisted of the practice in orienting mind and heart to the one who saves, the living God. This exercise in intellectual habit took a lifetime. The goal of salvation was only reached at the end of life, at the threshold of eternal life. The doctrine of justification involves dedicating one's heart to the life of mind and the mind's proper object, God.

Faith alone saves. Yes, but faith presupposes the clear preaching of the gospel by people who have grasped it intellectually and spiritually themselves. Faith has a content—the object of the confession of faith. Curiosity about the object and the quest to understand the meaning of the confessed words lead to learning. Faith also is knowledge of action to be applied in the affairs of daily life. When heart and mind are captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5), the theologian is free to think through the vision, to articulate its different sides with the resources from the past, and to protest. An adequate grasp of the vision and an honest articulation of its truth can serve the protest demanded today.

A renewed commitment to the life of mind requires a new dedication to educational priorities. The gift of mainline Protestantism to America has been higher education. Protestant seminaries founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became the basis for elite colleges and universities. A robust intellectual tradition inherited from theological education in Germany and Britain has informed both the training of clergy and religious leaders as well as the contributions of theology and the study of religion to the university. In an age in which younger generations of evangelicals are asking sophisticated theological questions, mainline Protestant theologians can be helpful in articulating answers as they have learned theology through a long tradition of applying academic tools to the religious subject matter. In an age when urgent social and political questions are being asked by people terrified of an apocalyptic future, Protestant theologians who have been trained in the history of thinking about such questions can help address them today. If Protestantism reneges now on centuries of commitment to an educated religious leadership, then who will be the salt of the earth?

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The humanities are the area of study that has traditionally been associated with an educated Protestant elite. With the emergence of the significance of biblical education for Protestant clergy, academic disciplines that aided both the study and the application of the Bible became central to the curriculum. Knowledge of biblical languages—Hebrew and Greek—in addition to hermeneutics, logic, and rhetoric, were also integrated into the curricula of the newly founded seminaries of the past. As seminaries expanded into colleges, these disciplines became foundational for the humanities. The academic study of human personhood in society was at the basis of a liberal arts education. Religion and philosophy, art and literature, history and the social sciences contributed knowledge about humanity to the university and society in general. Today, as an economic agenda is driving the metric of an all-encompassing dollar sign, the humanities represent a powerful protest. Human personhood is characterized by a wealth of riches other than monetary value! The humanities have inherited this truth that has as its origin the theological idea that humans are created by God. Mainline Protestants can join in the protest against the monetary reductionism by reaffirming the centrality of the humanities.

How can these values cultivate the next generation? The task requires paying attention to both undergraduate and graduation education. A curriculum that focuses on the biblical languages and the languages of theology (German, Latin, French) together with the classical humanities helps undergraduates practice the art of critical and constructive thinking. A liberal arts education is generative for learning how to negotiate between different perspectives, how to make sound arguments, and how to appreciate what it means to be human in society. Financial incentives should be of major concern to teachers and administrators, particularly if talented young people are to be lured away from lucrative careers to follow a calling in religious leadership.

For postgraduate education, Protestant mainliners need to be even more attentive to intellectual formation. In an age in which the institutions of truth are under assault, seminaries and universities should be protesting falsity by renewing commitments to the sound and rigorous search of knowledge into truth. A robust intellectual tradition carefully cultivated over centuries can easily be lost in one generation. If Augustine is replaced by media studies, if Luther is replaced by literature, then who can we learn from to speak theological truth to power? It might also be that denominationally affiliated teachers and administrators can learn from Protestant colleagues working in the academy away from ecclesial notice. The faithfulness of lay doctors of the church should serve as inspiration for those who are confronted with ecclesial complacency regarding education. In various centers of learning, whether denominationally affiliated or not, Protestant educated leaders must protest in favor of education in the skills of critical thought and the pursuit of true knowledge. The centrality of this vision must be claimed today.

Luther

Recommitting educational institutions to a vision of intellectual vitality is part and parcel of clear protest. Another aspect of protest concerns content. How can reason's content be imagined in an ecclesial culture that has privileged faith over reason? Part of this reclaiming is to recognize that traditional ways of viewing Luther and the tradition he allegedly inaugurated need critical reorienting. New scholarship in Luther has precisely demonstrated that Luther himself can be garnered to support an intellectually robust vision for mainline Protestants. The faith-based anti-philosophical thinker has, actually, been exposed by recent scholars to be a construction of Luther; this Luther is a twentieth-century product of distinctive German theological interests. But this Luther is no longer historically tenable, as scholarship is now showing; this Luther is perhaps even harmful to effective protest. If Luther can be seen as promoting reasoned inquiry into faith and truth and knowledge, he can be claimed as central to an intellectually robust vision today.

It might seem that given the extraordinary amount of primary and secondary texts on Luther, no rock has been left unturned. In the wake of the intensity of activities in 2017 commemorating the 500th anniversary of Protestantism's origins, enough has perhaps been said of Luther for quite a while.

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There has, however, been careful historical work on Luther for quite some time that offers an image of Luther contrasting with the one lauded by the anniversary celebration. This Luther, one who thinks highly of reason, does not fit neatly into an agenda that co-opts Luther's faith for Protestant identity. Luther is, after all, reported to have denigrated reason, Aristotle, and philosophy. Yet the view of Luther as highly skilled in philosophical-theological logic is emerging as consistent with the Luther who proclaimed justification by faith through grace. Reason, as the scholars who study Luther's relation to late medieval Catholicism insist, is the tool by which Luther makes distinctions, explains the content of faith, and elucidates doctrine. A primary text that has been rediscovered in this conversation is Luther's *Disputation on the Human*.[4]

Reason according to Luther is God-given: "And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine." Luther praises reason's achievements. Reason is "the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life."[5] This appreciation for reason governs all areas of human existence, even the knowledge of God. While theological rationality differs in some respects to the distinct philosophical reason applied specifically to temporal reality, reason is indispensable for articulating truth claims and making judgments about doctrinal propositions. In order to know the content of doctrinal mysteries, such as the Trinity, a distinct type of theological reason is necessary.

Once Luther's use of reason is acknowledged to be informed by sophisticated philosophical rationality, then his understanding of the will's capacity can also be appreciated. Luther's thought has been recently mined to support a theological anthropology that explains how humans are capable of ethical action and political protest. Scholars, notably Finnish theologian Risto Saarinen and American theologian Candace Kohli, have demonstrated that Luther had a sophisticated notion of how the will and reason cooperate as operations in the soul to act in ways oriented toward

4. LW 34:137 (*The Disputation Concerning Man*; 1536). The English title given in the LW translation is "man," although the term, "human," is a more appropriate translation of the Latin, "homo."

5. LW 34:137 (thesis 5).

the good.[6] Justification leads to good works, as Luther claims in the second part of his *Freedom of a Christian*; faith leads to love; the inner spiritual and psychological reconstitution in Christ grounds external works of service to neighbor. This ethical dimension of Luther's thought was dominant in Luther scholarship at the turn of the twentieth century, only to recede as the works-faith correlation took center stage beginning in the 1950s. The view of Luther as strong in faith was tied to a quietist view of political action. In today's political climate, however, such a view of Luther is both historically inaccurate and theologically irresponsible. Theologians need a theological anthropology to explain how human individuals can think, feel, and act; they need an ethics to show how human thought and feeling can be motivated toward good actions; they need an understanding of sanctification that is closely attuned to justification.

In order to get to a point at which Luther can be claimed in ways contrary to usual stories, a new approach to Luther is needed. Luther scholarship has admittedly been quite insular. The bar is set very high by the keepers of the tradition. This might be the case in any religious tradition—there is so much to learn, in addition to the insider issues that require nuance and competence of insiders. In work on Luther, the familiarity of the tradition, the ethnic parochialism that plagues a tradition that never quite became a world historical power in the way that Calvin did, and the minutiae of scholarly debates over specific words, passages, dates, and influences, have created a body of discussion that is prohibitive to those not in the know. Yet a Luther tamed by the Lutherans has created the illusion that there is nothing new to discover. Terms that become too familiar are clichés; there is a loss of descriptive capacity that turns Luther's story-telling into a series of nouns, his capacious innovations in language to mere words, and his revolutionary ideas into systematic-theological pegholes. There is nothing new to discover because Luther has already been rendered predictable.

Thankfully, Luther's significance extends beyond the circle of theologians influenced by German Protestantism. He is, as Risto Saarinen poignantly described in his contribution to *The Global Luther*, an urban legend.[7] Luther has something to do with Shakespeare—Hamlet, after all, studied in Wittenberg—and with Copenhagen, an influence that reaches into modern existentialism. Bach would not be Bach without Luther, and Luther's influence on the visual arts—as art historian Joseph Leo Koerner has shown—innovated new ways in which Protestant theology gained visual influence in its spread throughout Europe.[8] Max Weber's theory of modern capitalism would not be the same without his study of Luther on vocation, and the influential philosophical trajectory in Germany between the 1780s and the 1830s was dominated by Lutherans Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. There is a list of biographies written by many luminaries, many of them non-Lutherans, namely Roland Bainton, Lyndal Roper, Andrew Pettigree, Dyron Daughrity, and Michael Massing.[9] Each of these biographies adds distinctive exciting aspects to the well-worn story of Luther in Lutheran circles.

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The reception history of Luther shows activity beyond the sphere of Protestant theology. Protestants should be cognizant of and engage with this in their search for inspiration for protest. Luther as urban legend inspires, provokes, and challenges. It is difference, not sameness that inspires conversation. The production of knowledge has to do with negotiating difference; difference inspires curiosity, sets up questions, identifies disagreement, and yields to the desire to learn from the other. Sameness washes up in clichés, as one can see by the indifference with which the Lutheran doctrine of justification is regarded by many contemporary Lutherans. Difference, however, invites new questions, new ways of seeing, and the possibility of new knowledge.

Luther's connection to Catholicism is a case in point. For much of the twentieth century, research on Luther by Lutheran theologians drove the thesis that Luther was innovative in his understanding of justification, the priesthood of all believers, and the invisible yet true church. The Protestant Luther of Christian freedom was

6. Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University, 2011); Candace L. Kohli, *Help for the Good: Martin Luther's Understanding of Human Agency and the Law in the Antinomian Disputations (1537-40)* (PhD Dissertation; Northwestern University, 2017).

7. Risto Saarinen, "Luther the Urban Legend," in Christine Helmer, ed., *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 13–31.

8. Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

9. Bainton's biography from 1955 is still an incredible bestseller in many languages: Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Penguin, 1995);Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther* (New York: Penguin, 2016); Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2017); Dyron Daughrity, *Martin Luther: A Biography for the People* (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 2017); Michael Massing, *Fatal Discord: Erasmus, Luther, and the Fight for the Western Mind* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018).

constructed in opposition to a caricature of Roman Catholic servility to human papal structure. Yet in the wake of Vatican II, Roman Catholic theologians, such as Otto Hermann Pesch, argued that Luther's understanding of justification was not as different from Thomas Aquinas than had been assumed by Lutherans.[10] Dutch historian Heiko Oberman demonstrated how ideas that scholars had assigned to Luther's innovation were actually deeply rooted in medieval theological traditions.[11] Risto Saarinen explained how much of a twentieth-century picture of the Protestant Luther was actually shaped by a modern neo-Kantianism,[12] and British theologian and mathematician Graham White demonstrated with close textual analysis how Luther's doctrinal convictions were reached in conversation with late medieval theologians.[13] The search for the Catholic Luther has been undertaken by scholars outside of the confines of German Lutheranism, and their new perspectives are opening productive research inquiries today.

If Luther's Catholicism is one area in which Protestants can learn from Roman Catholics, then his anti-Judaism is another area in which Protestants can learn even more. Luther's anti-Judaism is the most serious case of convenient forgetting in Luther scholarship. While scholars have intuited a problem for decades, the connections between Luther, German nationalism, and the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) have only recently been studied with any seriousness. It is becoming increasingly clear to scholars that Luther's anti-Judaism was central, not merely marginal, to his theological innovations and politics. Furthermore, scholars such as Canadian historian James M. Stayer, American historian Susannah Heschel, and German theologian Heinrich Assel have studied the work of German Christians during the Nazi era, including their use of Luther to mount a racist program of antisemitism in academy, church, and politics.[14] Stayer and Assel have studied particular figures, such as Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch, and Werner Elert. Heschel has shown how a National Socialist institute, deliberately intended to eradicate Jewish influence in Lutheran piety and theology, was founded at the University of Jena, with its inauguration held at the Wartburg Castle on May 6, 1939. A recent catalogue accompanying an exhibition at the Berlin museum "Topography of Terror" shows Luther's words used by the Nazis to support antisemitism and the Holocaust.[15] This research, initiated by scholars outside of Luther scholarship, has pointed to the elephant of Luther's anti-Judaism in the room of scholarship. From now on, any further work on Luther's gospel of Christ's mercy must contend with the centrality of his hatred of Jews.

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Conclusion

The signs of the times are clear. It is time for mainline Protestants to claim the center of religious and political protest. This protest will require a vision, perhaps many creative visions, that can be communicated with clarity and purpose. An appreciation for the reformation legacy is compatible with a determined effort to create a new center for protest today. Protest is inscribed into the term Protestant. This identity can still be grasped as central to Protestantism today.

10. Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin: Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Walberger Studien/Theologische Reihe 4; Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1967).

11. Heiko A. Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1963; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000).

12. Risto Saarinen, *Gottes Wirken auf uns: die tranzendentale Deutung des Gegenwart-Christ-Motivs in der Lutherforschung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989).

13. Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist: A Study of the Logical Methods Used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of Their Medieval Background* (Schriften der Luther-Agricola Gesellschaft 30; Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1994).

14. James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Savior: German Evangelical Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917–1933* (McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion; Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2010); Heinrich Assel, "Theologische Diskussion um Martin Luther im NS-Staat," in *Überall Luthers Worte… Martin Luther im Nationalsozialismus/Luther's Words are Everywhere… Martin Luther in Nazi Germany*, Catalogue to the Exhibition at the Topographie des Terrors in Berlin (Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 2017), 183–198.

15. Ibid.