

Editor's Notes

Recently my wife, our puppy, and I travelled to Ucluelet on the west coast of Vancouver Island to attend the wedding of young friends. As often happens on such road trips, my wife and the puppy fell asleep, leaving me to navigate the changing character of Highway 4 as it crosses the spine of the Island. I drove by lakes, fjords, rivers, and water pouring down the steep banks that bordered the highway. From time to time the rain came down heavily. Our Jeep was like a water bug, safe within its bubble of air, as it traversed its aquatic environment.

Water is precious to all life, and British Columbians, especially those of us who live in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, experience three rainy seasons and one very rainy season. We sometimes take this for granted, so I felt the touch of God's wisdom when a memory of something our youngest child said at the wise age of five broke into the Zen of my driving.

I had been having a conversation with a visitor to Vancouver who was complaining about the rain. "How can you bear it?" he asked. Before I could answer, Owen, who had been sitting quietly nearby, piped up, "It rains on us so that everyone has enough water." In one short sentence this native Vancouverite spoke of an acceptance of the realities of one's environment, a commitment to a theology of abundance, and the importance of witness. My family and I live in a temperate rain forest. Its waters not only supply our needs but the needs of our neighbours far and wide. There is enough for all of us, if we exercise faithful stewardship. One aspect of that stewardship is to witness to the abundance and the fragility of "our island home" in a spirit of generosity.

For far too long people of faith have been fearful of engaging in a fruitful conversation about the implications of contemporary scientific thinking for how we do our theology. The irony is that our historic creeds, especially the Nicene Creed, are themselves the product of Greco-Roman philosophical discourse, a discourse that blurred the distinctions between what we now would call "science"

and “the humanities.” **Joel Daniels** invites us to participate in just such a conversation as it affects our thinking about the person and work of Christ. Rather than fear, Daniels believes that this conversation “should give [Christians] confidence . . . because it shows the ongoing vitality of the Christian tradition in a world that continues to change in unpredictable ways.” Just as Owen reminded me of the reality in which we lived, so Daniels reminds us that we live in a post-Darwinian society that requires “real constructive engagement with the natural sciences.”

At the heart of much contemporary discussion concerning the relationship between human and non-human creation is the notion of harmony and right relationships. **Rachel Erdman** tackles one dimension of this question by responding to George Sumner’s essay, “Why Anselm Still Matters” (Winter 2013). Erdman suggests that “satisfaction,” a key term in Anselm and Aquinas, is not about exacting vengeance for offended honour but the restoration of harmony. God’s honour “makes possible not merely the well-being of people in a society, but the well-being of every single thing that exists. Without God’s honor . . . there is no reliability in creation, sending everything into chaos.” “Satisfaction” is not punishment but an alternative to punishment that restores the harmony of the relationship between human beings and God, thus restoring the balance within all of creation. Thus, the sacrifice of Christ is not the vicarious punishment of sinful humanity; rather, it is a generous and humble act of self-giving that makes possible a new humanity and a new creation.

If the sacrifice of Christ is a remedy to the disharmony that human sin inflicts on the whole of creation, then greed is surely the polar opposite to the self-giving love of Christ. Although the events of the economic crisis of 2008 continue to send their not insignificant ripples out into the lives of billions of people, we cannot be naïve about the deeply-seated canker of self-interest that awaits an opportunity to erupt in each one of us. **Mark Slatter** explores “greed’s subterranean existence and effects on human beings and their personal development.” Perhaps Slatter’s essay will cause us all to reflect more on the words of the “Litany of Penance” found in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) and *The Book of Alternative Services* (1985), where we confess our “self-indulgent appetites and ways . . . our exploitation of other people . . . [our] intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts.” Greed, in its many disguises, affects us

- by putting into motion lifestyles that sacrifice meaningful but lower-paying work for existentially-empty but better-paying jobs;
- by inaugurating a “Sisyphus-like” ritual of unrequited fulfillment; and
- by collapsing the distinction between one’s deepest personal identity and what one owns or wants.

In an unexpected fashion **John Wirenius** continues this reflection on greed in his exploration of the hermeneutics employed by critics of same-sex marriage in an essay published in the Winter 2011 issue of the *Anglican Theological Review*. Wirenius argues that there is a grave inconsistency in how the critics use scripture and reason to interpret how Christians deal with the issues of usury and same-sex marriage. If scripture is to be understood as the primary source of authority in this matter, then how shall we account for the more numerous condemnations of usury in the scriptures than those regarding same-sex relationships? If the notion of harm is to be considered as a criterion, then how shall we compare the supposed harm caused by same-sex marriage to the actual and quantifiable harm inflicted on millions if not billions of people by the usurious behaviours of financial institutions and individuals throughout the world? While the critics strain at the gnat of same-sex marriage, Wirenius suggests that they have swallowed a camel that chokes us all.

So what shall we do in a world that either revels in or suffers from a plethora of truths, some complementary, some competing, some perplexing? In his Practicing Theology essay **Charles Scriven** invites us to consider the importance of religious witness in such a time as ours. Religious witness, Scriven believes, involves

- making a case one really believes in;
- living one’s convictions as well as speaking them; and
- believing that one’s witness may actually succeed.

His is a counsel of hope in a time when some Christians may wonder what value our witness has in this pluralist, postmodern, and “wired” world.

Whether you are going to the beach or to your cabin, staying at home or continuing to work, the Summer 2014 issue contains some

special treats to sweeten your summer months. As is our custom, the Summer issue contains a larger number of poems to entice your imaginations. We also have a fine review essay by **Tim Vivian** on the poetry of Denise Levertov. If, as Irenaeus of Lyons stated, “the glory of God is a human being fully alive,” then you will want to read Vivian’s essay carefully. In it he traces Levertov’s own exploration of what it means to be a “human being” through her poetry.

This issue also contains a review article by **Joseph Lenow** on the some of the latest trends in the study of the life and teaching of Augustine of Hippo. Whether you are a regular reader of Augustine or one who has struggled to understand this formative teacher, you will find Lenow’s essay a useful guide to diverse approaches recent scholarship has taken in its reassessment of Augustine’s theology and its sources.

“It rains on us so that everyone has enough water.” Friends, let us engage the realities of the world in which we live. Let us seek to live in harmony with God’s purposes so that we and all God’s creatures may be free. Let us resist those forces of self-interest that lead us to deny the dignity of every living creature, human and non-human. Let us witness to that harmony we know as God’s beloved in Christ, as human beings who seek to be fully alive.

Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth;
 give freedom’s light to captives, let all the poor have worth.
 The hungry’s hands are pleading, the workers claim their rights,
 the mourners long for laughter, the blinded seek for sight.
 Make liberty a beacon, strike down the iron power;
 abolish ancient vengeance: proclaim your people’s hour.¹

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¹ William Whitla, “Let Streams of Living Justice,” *Common Praise* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), #575.