

## Editor's Notes

Our Summer 2016 issue brings a bouquet of theological delights. The Poetry section, expanded for the season as is our custom, offers ten compositions that will surprise you with their turns of phrase (“Suddenly I considered lilies”), haunt you with stark images (“a heart,/ long with hunger”), and make you laugh with their playfulness (“o understanding that falls so far short of heaven and peaches”). As usual, our poets contribute to the *ATR*'s expanding invitation to theological conversation by the very performance of their art: for what is so theological as surprise, starkness, and play?

You will find in the Book Review section a collection of the latest noteworthy books in the fields of theology and ethics, pastoral theology, historical theology, biblical studies, religion and culture, inter-religious studies, poetry, and liturgics. Significant especially this time are reviews of books by recognizable names like James Dunn, Stanley Hauerwas, Catherine Keller, Michael Welker, and Lauren Winner; also be sure to read the review of an important edited collection on new dimensions of global Christology, *Jesus without Borders*.

Editor Emerita **Ellen K. Wondra**'s Practical Theology offering brings a surprise of its own: a constructive theological move in the midst of a reflection on current Anglican politics! For those wondering how to interpret the recent primates' resolution against participation or representation in certain aspects of the life of the Communion by members of the Episcopal Church, this is required reading. Wondra argues that for Anglicans moral authority is more important than formal authority, and the former is most powerful where it is incarnate, personal, and communal.

We will move forward as a church, she suggests, not once we find the formal language that will bind us all into ecclesiological accord, but only as we attend to the difficult yet “wise practices of negotiation, persuasion, influence, and disagreement.” These are the practices that acknowledge and thus allow moral authority. They are ways that Christians name and exist within the relationships that bind us together before God.

The essays in our Articles section treat the perennial subjects of theological anthropology, the doctrine of the Trinity, and revelation: What is it to be human before God? What is it to be God beyond humans? How do humans learn the divine truth about themselves and God? **Jeania Ree V. Moore** suggests that African American quilting allows an anthropology to materialize amidst pressures that suppress its very expression. “Quilting indicates the power of the margin,” and the artists discover and express this power as they take up a tradition of patient iconographic storytelling. There is a new epistemology that comes to the foreground through the work of the hands of black women, a communal knowing embodied in the stitching and patching and assembling. And because what we come to know truly always shares in the being that comes from God, epistemology is inseparable from ontology. So the scene of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters bent over fabric names a subtle truth about the creation itself. Even perhaps about God: the “quilt is a striking image of the perichoretic Art of Trinity.”

**Shawn Strout** writes in “Jesus’ Table Fellowship, Baptism, and the Eucharist” that in Mark’s Gospel, “The eucharist is communion with Christ as the crucified-risen One.” Here again is our anthropological theme, asking now how it is that humans enact sign-laden liturgies that open out on divine grace. We miss something important, the author suggests, if we read the feast accounts in the Gospels as histories of proto-eucharists, and so move on quickly to the argument that the absence of any explicit baptism requirement in these passages permits the liturgical practice of open table, or communion for the unbaptized. In fact, Mark’s entire argument for a eucharist open to all genders and ethnicities hinges on the inclusion of all who identify with the community formed by cross and resurrection—and it is baptism that marks this act of identification. With this article the *ATR* continues to offer Christians of the Anglican tradition valuable resources for considering the many facets of the open table question. The “Conversations” section of our website contains an archive of such materials, one of which is cited in this new article.

**Jason M. Smith’s** article moves us into what at first may seem rather different territory, reminding us that “theology” is about God before it is about humans. “Must We Say Anything of an ‘Immanent’ Trinity?” is a very clear-thinking study of Schleiermacher’s objections to speculative accounts of the relations of the Trinitarian Persons “within the divine life of the Godhead.” The great nineteenth-century

Protestant theologian rejected such forays on two grounds, the author tells us: first, because it amounts to a Faustian pursuit of knowledge beyond human grasp, and second, because it bears no fruit in human life. There is a kind of obviousness to the critique, once we have understood it: God is beyond human knowing, and so any speculative attempts to name God in God's immanence—as opposed to the “revealed God” apparent in creation and most fully in Christ—is a worthless pursuit. However, using the work of Rowan Williams, the author suggests that the “immanent” and “economic” trinities do not divide quite as neatly as all that (and neither, perhaps, do the doctrines of God and theological anthropology!). God's revealed desire is for human salvation; but human salvation turns out to be an incorporation of humans into the “deflected” desires of the persons of the Trinity for one another. Thus any rule of silence about the interactions of Persons within the divine life will turn off our speech about human salvation as well. We must, then, speak about the immanent Trinity, if we are to do any theology at all.

In this issue we are also proud to present the 2015 winner of the Charles Hefling Student Essay Competition. **Sarah Miller** received her Master of Divinity from the School of Theology at Sewanee. Miller's study of the great Austin Farrer's account of revelation continues our line of inquiry: Can we speak divine language only by receiving and repeating words too great for us, or can our human acts of making and composing channel this language for us? Farrer, she tells us, understands the “apostolic comment” on Christ's life in the Gospels to be the ongoing life of God's very revelation in Christ. And yet Farrer is unsure what to do with the work that is inspired by these writings. Can the *use* of scripture, and not just its content, be an occasion of revelation? This is less a challenge to Farrer's visionary theology than it is an extrapolation toward a conclusion that he himself did not reach: the creative act of opening and expanding on the gospel, especially in works of poetry, carries its own revelatory capacity. Using perhaps the greatest work of Anglican poesy, Herbert's *The Temple*, Miller demonstrates a use of imagery and performative involvement that aligns with Farrer's account of revelation, now showing that the post-biblical poet, and not only the biblical prophet, can provide “apostolic comment” that opens and expands the revealing voice of God in the world.

And thus I end where I began, as Eliot says is always the case. Herbert's work reveals by attending to the way love draws our language

and our emotion up short and stalls out as it waits for God; our poets in this issue invite moments of revelation by attending to the way an aging bumblebee clings “for dear life” to a petal. As another of our poets hints, in what might be a fitting image for the place where revelation intersects the life of God and humans: I myself, standing in the shadow of the cross, am the lesson of the fig tree.

This is the first issue for which I have the privilege of writing your Editor’s Notes, as the first two installments of my new tenure (“Creating Common Good” and “Anglican Women at Prayer,” both brilliant issues!) were guest edited. As with the two previous 2016 issues, the content offered here once again invites us to join the conversation, in the unique way that the *ATR* has worked for nearly a century now to open an Anglican window onto a broad, ecumenical, historically informed, interdisciplinary, theological landscape.

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