

Editor's Notes

What sort of gracious space does the gospel open up within the world? How do Christians live and practice grace within this space? The articles in this issue of the *ATR* are all attuned to the urgency of these questions, and a guiding focus on divine grace leads them to articulate questions on how we relate to wealth, how we live with church division, and how we relate to the language of our tradition as we imagine the future of Christian and Anglican worship.

Awet Iassu Andemicael directs our attention to three puzzles of Paul's appeal for financial assistance to the Corinthians for the Christians living in Jerusalem. Why does Paul say he does not want to make them beggars, and then challenge them to give to others as completely as Christ gave to them? He then argues for distribution of resources, using a quotation from the manna narrative in Exodus that, firstly, is not about equality of resources, and, secondly, is not so much about a gracious sharing as about God imposing just measures.

From these difficulties, Andemicael does something both simple and remarkable. She allows the language of Paul's epistle to challenge our understanding of some very fundamental doctrines. From the question about Christ "becoming poor" for our sakes, she ends up asking what kind of poverty is Christ's. We lose Paul's metaphor if we forget that it is, indeed, a comparison of two unlike structures: the exchange of his wealth for our poverty is not actually an economic exchange between two parties on a balance sheet, so that one will end up taking on a loss. Christ is wealthy with self-giving love, and this changes what it means to give as Christ gives. Similarly, when she turns to Paul's use of the manna distribution, she finds that both the Exodus passage and Paul's gloss end up redefining possession and need as a gracious structure for hospitable exchange.

Eugene R. Schlesinger asks next what it means to live graciously in the midst of ecclesial division. The trouble with appeals either to draw lines in the sand or to "embrace diversity" is that neither option is sufficiently rooted in the self-giving act of Christ, and in particular in the eucharistic event at the center of Christian worship. The Christian body is broken; theological language, though, knows what to do with broken bodies: it invites them to confess their brokenness

and pray for the miracle of resurrection. The only possible way of insulating the church from this paschal promise is to insist on a finality to the brokenness itself—as if the fragmentation were the end of the eucharist. Schlesinger’s key insight here takes Augustine’s theology of the *totus Christus* as an invitation to a divided church to find itself figurally in the broken body of Christ. He concludes with a suggestion of practical adaptations that might help bring this self-figuration into the imagination of worshipping Anglicans.

We then move to two articles that address the theological issues embedded in the liturgical reforms that are now on the horizons of the Episcopal Church. **Matthew S. C. Olver** takes up the Standing Committee on Liturgy and Music’s invitation to reflect on the trinitarian language of *Enriching Our Worship 1*, the late 1990s liturgical text offered to expand the language of God and humans, especially with regard to gender. Key to the argument is an irony he uncovers: liturgies that attempt to remain trinitarian while avoiding the abstractions of trinitarian metaphysics can sometimes wind up leading with the very metaphysics they seek to avoid—that is, beginning with an assumption that threeness and oneness must somehow coexist, and adapting new expansive language that allows for this coexistence. But trinitarian theology is not first of all an answer to the question “How is God three and one?” It is rather a dynamic three-personed answer to the question “How does the one God of Israel save?” The inadequacies that Olver finds in *Enriching Our Worship 1* are not failures of metaphysics, but failures to enliven Christian liturgy with the insistence that the metaphors of scripture which the church puts into its prayers are reflections of God’s being. If the relations of persons to one another is constitutive of God’s being, then our common prayer needs to attend to what its language reflects, even while it attends to the ways it can and must expand. To frame it in terms of the question with which I began: Olver is concerned that our liturgies will form us to share a graciousness that has no articulated source in the triune God.

There is undeniable tension between Olver’s challenges to *Enriching Our Worship 1* and **Bryan Cones**’s prescription for thoroughgoing prayer book reform. Cones argues that if the Episcopal Church hopes to strengthen the connection between its liturgy and its mission in the culture, it must opt for almost boundlessly expansive language. What we have in the present prayer book and supplements like *Enriching Our Worship* is the beginning of an intentional effort at postcolonial reform in a church always shaped by its history of colonialism. Cones urges various practical ways to unsettle the implicit

model of an English, male, heteronormative center, surrounded by satellites who have adapted and mildly revised this norm for differences of language, culture, gender, and sexuality. Perhaps rather than a new prayer *book*, we ought to be considering a new prayer *library*, whether physical or virtual, on which our common prayers might draw. (I should note that Cones is aware that expansive language for the Godhead need not exclude the traditional gendered language, and so gestures to, without fully treating, a critique like Olver's, that expansion can open the door to exclusion.)

Our two Practicing Theology offerings carry on this theme of divine grace mediated through Christian worship. A degree of tension exists between these two offerings as well, as here we have **Kit Carlson's** essay arguing for a new, low-impact catechetical offering to generations of Christians disillusioned with the institutional structures of the Episcopal Church, and **June Osborne's** piece on the evangelistic function of the very "instituted" character of Anglican cathedrals.

Carlson suggests that "sacred conversations" can help post-Boomer Christians develop a faith that is "owned," rather than simply experiential, affiliative, or searching. Here we see the grace theme, along with hints of the questions of the tradition and expansion: "To invite post-Boomers into a pilgrim's journey in the Episcopal Church is to invite them into a tradition where they can discover the scaffolding of tradition and scripture upon which to stand as they build their own faith, using their reason and experience to construct that personal credo they will insist upon, yet building it upon the teaching of two thousand years of Christianity."

Osborne, writing a third installment in our occasional series on the working theology of cathedrals, envisions a cathedral as a kind of theological intrusion into civic life. Further, this intrusive character of cathedrals makes them uniquely situated to address some of the anxieties of present generations. They are a "visible symbol of confident Christianity." Cathedral deans are "custodians of . . . manifestations of the divine life" in the midst of the great cities of the world, and so when these cities need to celebrate or mourn together, it is to the cathedrals that they turn. And here the ancient pomp and haberdashery of Anglicanism can provide a certain balm to a wound or a challenge to a secular celebration. Cathedrals insist upon the strange yet wide path that God's mercy takes on its way to intersect our lives together on this planet.

The review essay by **Rebecca Copeland** treats several new publications addressing the planet Earth itself, as the place from which

we do our reflecting on God's mercies. How might the fragility of our physical world affect the way we tell our story of the Incarnate God? What does "the future of Christian ethics" look like on such a planet? Is Christian ethics a large-scale attempt to out-narrate the designs of late capitalism, an address to nations to stand up to destructive corporations, or a smaller insistence that local communities seek the local practices that transmit God's care to all God's creatures around them? Does the scale of eco-devastation make this a time for Christian ethics to nurture a certain pre-Constantinian model of church as a tactically-based resistance movement?

Three of the poems we publish this month call to mind the natural world's vocation as transmitter of grace: a cat listens absurdly to his master's theodicy rant; snow shows the path of creatures trekking after God; and a poet hears crickets, using their wings "for song instead of flight," channeling the double "correction" at the center of the gospel. We also follow our poets as they navigate grace in "privileged" human routine, mourn the disappearance of a simple happiness, and imagine the Easter Christ as a trans-galactic meteor.

You will also find reviewed this fall our usual array of key texts in the various fields loosely contained under the theological umbrella. Read them all of course, but be sure not to miss the review of Sarah Coakley's new book, and two new "recoveries" of the pastor as theologian reviewed by Lyndon Shakespeare.

This is a very poignant and, I think you will find, insightful issue. For those public and professional theological thinkers across churches and academies, what question cuts deeper into the Christian faith than the question of human life (solitary, economic, ecclesial, political, planetary life) as it is shaped and transformed by the grace of God in Christ?



I am delighted to announce that Jillian Jackson is the 2016 Charles Hefling Student Essay Competition winner for her essay, "The Intersection of Trinitarian Thought and Eating Disorders." A native of Melbourne, Australia, Jackson is a Master of Divinity student at the Vancouver School of Theology. In addition to her studies, she works as the ethics assistant at the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. Her essay will be published in a forthcoming issue.

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