

Editor's Notes

For more than a decade I have been part of an ongoing community of Jewish and Christian clergy and laity in Metro Vancouver who gather to discuss both theological and political questions. We do not always agree and we are not as diverse a group as I would like us to be, but I love the questions we ask and the passion with which we share our thoughtful and sometimes not so thoughtful observations.

One of the potentially heretical observations that I have been led to is this: What if Christian attitudes toward the apostolic writings we call the New Testament resembled Jewish attitudes to those authoritative writings known as the Mishnah and Talmud? In other words, what if we realized, as did the apostolic writers, that the “scriptures” meant what we Christians know as the Hebrew scriptures? Could we engage Judaism in a different fashion if we read the New Testament as *halakah*, the way of walking with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as this God is revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth?

As a retired professor of liturgical studies and a practicing parish priest, I continue to be both astounded and dismayed by the attitude of some clergy and many laity to the Hebrew scriptures. Recently I participated in two gatherings in which the suggestion was seriously made that our lectionaries be revised to reduce the number of readings from the Hebrew scriptures to those that “had meaning” in the light of the New Testament. I reminded the participants that we have a word for this in the Christian tradition—“Marcionism”—and it is considered one of the more seductive heresies the Christian movement has ever encountered.

It was in light of this experience and many similar ones that I rejoiced to receive **Carolyn J. Sharp**'s Jackson Lectures given at Perkins School of Theology in February 2014. The *Anglican Theological Review* has published addresses on occasion, and these two lectures are well worth appearing in this journal. In clear and challenging prose Professor Sharp calls upon those of us who teach and preach to take seriously the erosion in the Christian community's knowledge of

and engagement with the Hebrew scriptures, the rock from whence our earliest ancestors drew sustenance and insight.

In her first lecture, “Wrestling the Word: Submission and Resistance as Holy Hermeneutical Acts,” Sharp asserts that “the Word of God is living and powerful not because we treat the content of the Bible as a simplistic set of rules . . . , but because we wrestle with it faithfully. . . . Submission to Scripture and resistance to Scripture are both holy hermeneutical acts.” We submit and resist because these texts are the living presence of our ancestors in the faith who, in their own times and contexts, wrestled with the Holy One.

Carolyn Sharp’s second lecture, “‘Be Strong and Resolute!’: Reading Joshua in the Contemporary Church,” serves as a case study for dealing with so-called “difficult texts.” Contemporary Christians may be tempted to dismiss the book of Joshua as an irrelevant mythic text that justifies the expansion of Israelite power, but Sharp sees this as an unhelpful approach. “As believers we must wrestle with this text, praying for God-given creativity and resilience whenever we feel that we might be overpowered, seeking those moments when holy submission is made possible for us and those moments when holy resistance will yield new fruits of the Spirit.”

Although I will resist the temptation to fit forcibly all of this issue’s content into a Cinderella-like glass slipper, there is nonetheless a thread that runs through all of this issue: how scripture, reason, and tradition mediate the presence of God in time and space.

Carol H. Poston’s contribution, “Evelyn Underhill and the Virgin Mary,” examines how Underhill incorporated Mary into her Anglican spiritual life. Given that Underhill considered the Incarnation to be the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, Mary, as the embodiment of a human being agreeing to be the bearer of the Word, is the prime Christian icon of one who becomes an agent of God’s presence in the world. Mary, for Underhill, is also guide, mentor, and exemplar for both women and men as all seek to mediate the presence of Christ in their daily lives.

If presence is a thread running through this issue’s essays, then it is most fitting to have a contribution that examines the question of “absence.” As in the case of Poston’s essay on Underhill, **Travis Dumsday** turns to another mainstay of recent Anglican tradition in his essay, “C. S. Lewis on the Problem of Divine Hiddenness.” Using

Lewis as his guide, Dumsday explores the philosophical arguments used by contemporary atheists to dispute the existence of God.

Daniel Marrs continues this exploration of presence in the works of significant Anglican figures in his essay, "Real Presence, Spiritual Presence: Assessing Thomas Cranmer's Appropriation of St. Ambrose's Eucharistic Doctrine." The number of articles and monographs devoted to the disputed question of Cranmer's understanding of the presence of Christ in the eucharist grows in each generation, but the fundamental question remains of how we explain our experience of the presence of Christ as the gathered community shares in the eucharistic feast. Marrs delves into Cranmer's use of Ambrose and, in the end, concludes that Cranmer did not see Ambrose's teaching as an obstacle but as a resource in the development of a reformed understanding of eucharistic presence.

In "Place, Power, and People in Twenty-first Century Theological Education," **Simon James Mainwaring** reminds us that the primary symbol of the presence of Christ in the world is the Christian people in their life and witness. This people lives and serves in diverse contexts with differing access to resources for theological formation. Drawing upon his experience in the School for Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, Mainwaring invites us to consider new ways of empowering the baptized to participate in the mission of God.

It has been my privilege to have Sallie McFague as a colleague at Vancouver School of Theology. She has transformed my life, not only through her scholarship, but through her participation in the life of the school and her wise counsel given respectfully, humbly, and gently to her colleagues and students. In this issue **John T. Harwood's** review article, "Theologizing the World: A Reflection on the Theology of Sallie McFague," is a thoughtful consideration of her latest work in the light of her earlier contributions. If you do not know her work, then here is a great place to become acquainted with this gifted scholar and writer.



Finally, I must acknowledge the many donors whose financial contributions make the publication of this journal possible. Their generosity extends well beyond the boundaries of North America,

sending the *Review* into seminaries far and wide as well as into the hands of those serving God's mission throughout the world. May their generosity be remembered as a blessing and may their tribe increase!

So here you have the Winter 2015 issue of the *Anglican Theological Review*. In keeping with our commitment to the Anglican ethos in a broader ecumenical and religious context, you will find reflections on scripture, reason, and tradition as agents of the One who has promised to be with us in all times and in all places. May that Presence touch you as you read these pages.

RICHARD GEOFFREY LEGGETT
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