

Editors' Notes

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“The difficulty with the Church is that too many people have great convictions about little things, and it is time that we have great convictions about great things.” These were the words of Henry Knox Sherrill, twentieth Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and founder of the Episcopal Church Foundation. His aim was to create an institution that would help the members of the church keep their focus on great things. In 1964, barely fifteen years after its inception, the Foundation initiated what was first called the Graduate Fellowship Program and in more recent years is known as the Fellowship Partners Program. Through this program, scholars have been able to pursue doctoral degrees and a cadre of potential faculty for the church’s seminaries has been raised up. Today, the program has expanded, as fellowships are awarded for both academic study and transformational ministries, and the list of Fellows from that first class in 1964 through today, found at the back of this issue, is an impressive one indeed.

The development of such thoughtful leaders has been a gift to the church, as it has opened the door to learned and faithful approaches to the opportunities and challenges before us. Drawing upon their respective expertise in Holy Scripture, church history, and theology, the Fellows collectively have opened up fresh, new dimensions in Episcopal theology in the late twentieth and, now, early

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twenty-first centuries. At times they have pointed the way to an earlier tradition or understanding, and at other times they have helped us envision the new things that God is doing in our midst. Fellows have been appointed to international study commissions and have participated in fruitful discussions with bishops and church leaders. And they have been faithful pastors, teachers, and spiritual companions.

And so it is appropriate that an issue of the *Anglican Theological Review* be comprised of writings by some of the ECF Fellows, including longer scholarly articles, shorter pieces on practicing theology, a liturgical drama, and book reviews. This is only a sample of the thought and practice that ECF Fellows engage in as part of their ministries. This “all-Fellows issue” of the *ATR* allows us to consider firsthand the exciting theological work that is being done in the early years of this new century, and gives us hope for the future of Episcopal scholarship.

The section of major articles begins with **Robert Hughes’s** approach to the challenging issue of whether and how God suffers in the crucifixion. The question here is not merely whether or not God in some sense experiences the pain caused by the innocent suffering of the Word of God, but also what happens within the life of the Triune God at the moment that Jesus commends his Spirit to the Father and breathes his last. What happens to Jesus’ spirit? Is this a moment of dereliction and abandonment not only by followers and the Father, but by the Spirit as well? Might it also somehow be a moment in which God catches the divine breath, taking in all the suffering of Jesus? Through a disciplined interplay of traditions and theological possibilities, Hughes suggests that God is both fully engaged in the suffering of creation and also not subjected by it. Indeed, in catching the divine breath, “God catches and breathes in the breath and Spirit which Jesus gives up, and with it all the suffering of the world, but even more the great act of suffering in which Jesus absorbs all the evil of the world without sending it back out magnified. . . . God takes it all in, and survives.” And this reorients the whole of a suffering creation toward what comes next, waiting to catch its divine breath again in the continuous coming of the Spirit.

In a very different vein, **Rima Vesely-Flad** explores how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed theology provided the justification for the racialized perception of criminality in the United States. John Calvin’s understanding of human depravity supported a social hierarchy in which enslaved Africans were seen as lacking an

adequate work ethic and therefore inherent qualities that fitted them for redemption. This perception, coupled with particular readings of Scripture, warranted a code of honor for slave owners that allowed, if not encouraged, harsh treatment of slaves. Through the postbellum period and beyond the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, how the association of dark skin tone with laziness and criminality was expressed changed many times, but with the same effect: disproportionate numbers of African Americans in the penal system. Today nearly half of the seven million adults in the American “penal-industrial complex” are African American. This reality and the theological understandings that help shape it call for a liberationist ethic that dismantles both the “correlation between pale skin and moral action” and that of dark skin and moral frailty and criminality. In practice, this requires Christian engagement in “uplifting the humanity of people with criminal convictions”; protesting and changing community policing practices (including racial profiling); and strengthening the social covenant that values and enhances the well-being of all people.

With the phrase “mystery meeting mystery” as a touchstone, **Ellen Aitken** offers a personal reflection on the work of biblical scholarship that embraces the silences and gaps in texts and contexts, the mutability and complexity of the lives of persons who receive and respond to the Scriptures, and the “enigmatic revelation and elusiveness of a God beyond human knowing.” In the context of the community of faith, where participants bring to bear a rich diversity of experiences, histories, understandings, and desires, the biblical text offers up multiple possibilities for edification, meaning, and further engagement. Approaching Scripture instrumentally—studying it in order to find guidance or wisdom on a particular topic by focusing on passages that concern that topic—is by no means the only or even the best way for Scripture and faith to inhabit each other. In liturgy, for example, we receive Scripture as part of prayer that influences how we hear, and we take it into our everyday life, making it part of our ordinary conversation, whether or not it appears to be directly pertinent to what concerns us. What formal biblical scholarship contributes is a particular kind of intimacy with the text that deepens and expands Scripture as an integral, grounding contributor to the church’s memory and its sense of itself.

Christopher Wells continues the discussion of the interweaving of Scripture with sacramental and ecclesial life in his study of 1 Corinthians. Wells takes his cue from Oliver O’Donovan’s recent

collection of sermons, *The Word in Small Boats*. There, O'Donovan outlines "a discipline of living constantly with, and out of" the Word, a discipline of study and speech as important for theologians as for preachers. This provides the methodological basis of Wells's essay. Wells claims that Paul's proposal for reconciliation sets a pattern for how Christian communities may and should move toward that ecclesial communion that embodies the communion created and sustained by baptism, Eucharist, and the whole of the church's sacramental life. The problem at Corinth is verbal dissonance, "a lack of harmonious 'mind' and 'purpose' amid a quarreling cacophony of proud parties" that embodies the possibility that Christ is divided. And yet, Paul argues, Christians know, through their baptism, that Christ is *not* divided, and this is the reality that Christian life must express. Wells tests and refines this initial proposal through Thomas Aquinas's commentary on 1 Corinthians. He then returns to Paul's reiteration of "the word about the cross" as an exhortation to the Corinthians to orient all their eating and drinking—their common as well as their sacramental life—toward showing forth the Lord's death until he comes again. Paul's very concrete approach, Wells concludes, provides practicable as well as theological guidelines for how members of the contemporary church, with its own verbal dissonance, may learn to "wait for one another" rather than each part of the body going its own way.

In the final major essay, **James Perkinson** addresses "the way white identity continues to be embodied in a manner that perpetuates a default presumption of superiority, even outside of conscious intentionality." Perkinson begins autobiographically at the intersection of the sacrament of baptism with the social context in which the baptized are immersed. That is, with whom do we share life? And for whom may we be willing to die? In a context of deeply embedded racism that presumes white normativity, the themes of renunciation, exorcism, death, and resurrection that interweave so powerfully in the sacrament of baptism map the complicated and difficult journey from unexamined whiteness to real communion with communities of color. For Christians, this is a process of theological as well as socio-economic and political transformation, given the multiple ways in which European and North American theologies have shaped and been shaped by notions of race and practices of hegemony and oppression. This process begins with the rigorous discipline of listening that "involves interpersonal relations and economic accountings, political positionings and cultural

habituations, aesthetic presumptions and erotic terrors, spiritual outings and theological conundrums.”

Perkinson's interweaving of theology and practice opens the way for the second major section of this issue, "Practicing Theology." For this section we asked a variety of Fellows to reflect personally and theologically on the ways in which their ministries have interacted with their studies and their quite particular contexts. **Harold Lewis's** reflections on forty years' experience in ministry open this section. Lewis identifies ways in which themes of justice, mission, scholarship, and worship have run through his ministry and his reflection, a living example of what Christians have in mind when we speak of a "learned clergy" or, less frequently, the art of the divines.

In a similar vein, **G. W. Kimura** writes of being a scholar with "a priestly vocation that from the outset never promised comfort." As a teacher-priest, Kimura is able to bridge the gaps between a number of communities: church, university, chaplaincy, the nonprofit sector. This places him somewhat outside the perceived "mainstream" of the Episcopal Church—he is not primarily a stipendiary priest—but this allows him to take a long view of controversies, trends, and developments, and to advocate for religious points of view that are often marginalized.

"Dialogical relationships" are what **Lucinda Mosher** seeks to foster in her work with interreligious relations. Dialogue takes place through more than speech; it also involves other forms of transformative activity such as shared service, common cause in areas of social justice, and other practices that help us "be with" our neighbors. Mosher's understanding of the importance of dialogue is rooted in the Prayer Book's Baptismal Covenant.

Daniel Vélez Rivera devotes his ministry to bridge-building of a somewhat different sort: founding and fostering Hispanic ministries in the Episcopal Church that integrate Spanish and English speakers into a multicultural church and community. Working with Latinas, Vélez Rivera has used women's faith and life experiences, along with the pedagogical theory of Paolo Freire, to develop teaching/learning workshops that cultivate faith, hope, and love of a sort that brings participants to a deep longing to pass along to others what it is they have received.

As the founder of the Common Friars at the Good Earth Farm, **Paul Clever** lives and ministers at the juncture of two somewhat

distinguishable cultures that are both in great need of deliberate transformation. As has often been noted, the Episcopal Church, along with other U.S. denominations, is at a point where familiar forms and practices seem less and less compelling and effective. At the same time, middle- and upper middle-class Anglo culture has become oversimplified, too distanced from the complexities and struggles of actual human life. The form of the “new monasticism” of those living at the Good Earth Farm reconnects the rigors of bringing food from the earth to the table with the church’s most fundamental, if sometimes ignored, spiritual roots in the mission of God in the world.

Similarly, urban ministry requires constant adjustment to the rapidly changing realities of today’s cities, and therefore a vision that is transformative, not only responsive or reactive. **Altagracia Perez** finds that such vision develops in situations where leadership is shared among church members, and where stories of ministry provide the basis for identifying specific areas of mission in which the congregation is called to be involved. Developing a careful program of formation that tackles complicated and delicate matters of economic, gender, and racial difference can encourage a congregation to find in its diversity the riches that it needs for mission.

Following the Practicing Theology section is a section titled simply Drama. **John Addison Dally**’s “Therefore” uses a teenage cast to explore the cacophony of disconnection and its deathliness. Yet the moment of waiting in horror yields to laughter, dance, celebration—to joy centered at a table around which many can gather, however cautiously, and there find the means of forming connections that were previously apparently impossible.

Dally’s play likely provokes some Christological reflections. In his review article, **Charles Hefling** identifies some key perennial questions in Christology and discusses how three quite different contemporary works address them. Faith prompts affirmation of the saving power of the Incarnation, and then pushes to understand its affirmation in terms that make sense in the particular times and places in which it is made. Marilyn McCord Adams, Oliver Crisp, and Kathryn Tanner’s books were not developed in explicit conversation with each other, but they are part of the same series. Hefling’s review juxtaposes their accounts of Christ’s full divinity and full humanity, of human nature and the human condition, and of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. What emerges is not a synthesis, but a set of possibilities that

themselves prompt further consideration of the relation of philosophy and theology.

The book reviews that follow are all written by ECF Fellows—many of them familiar to the journal's readers. Some reviewers chose to review books written by Fellows, others did not; we expect you will find this a very rich collection. Considered here are books on global mission, Latino/a ministry, metaphors for God, ethics and world religions, theology proper, and the lives and witness of particular individuals. These are only a few of the reviews, which together deal with some of the most pressing and fascinating issues of theology, history, and Anglican identity today.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We hope you find yourself intrigued, provoked, and eager to explore further some of the new dimensions in theology that are available to the Episcopal Church.



A final word from the Editor in Chief: I am most grateful for this opportunity to work with C. K. Robertson and Stephanie Spellers on this issue of the *ATR*. Each of them has given great thought and energy to every aspect of this issue: its general focus and overall plan, its particular authors, and all the careful work that takes place once the articles are submitted. It has been a pleasure working with these colleagues and friends.

We are also grateful for the support of the Episcopal Church Foundation, of Donald V. Romanik its President, and of Anne Ditzler, Senior Program Director, who has provided help and counsel on much that is involved in bringing an issue into print. The generous support of donors, listed at the end of the journal, has made this issue possible.

