

## ***From the Editor***

“We human beings do real harm. History could make a stone weep.”<sup>1</sup>

John Ames, fictitious pastor from Gilead, Iowa, has challenged me many times since celebrated writer Marilynne Robinson conjured him. His quiet passion to live his form of Christianity deeply and authentically is as inspiring as it is demanding. As an ailing septuagenarian penning a letter for his young son whom he will not live to see mature, Ames offers us an extended examination of conscience, a personalized theological anthropology. I read Ames’ letter as a beautiful and fraught reflection on grace and sin.

It is seemingly without rancor but with awe that Ames observes the real harm that we do and have done throughout our personal and collective histories. The damage we do, our sin, is a burden he recognizes and carries (as an individual and as a pastor). Yet, he struggles to understand “the true gravity of sin” in light of existence and “the free grace of forgiveness”: “If the Lord chooses to make nothing of our transgressions, then they *are* nothing. Or whatever reality they have is trivial and conditional beside the exquisite primary fact of existence.”<sup>2</sup>

The daily headlines, however, do make us weep even in the face of or perhaps because of the “primary fact of existence.” We confront complex familial, workplace, community, and global problems that force us to consider how our responses will emerge from the wellspring of the grace of forgiveness and not contribute to harming the world. How do we give full weight to the reality of sin but full rein to the reality of grace?

This issue of *Horizons* takes us from sixteenth-century Carmelite mysticism to twenty-first-century public theology, from the Catholic Tübingen School to Jean-Luc Nancy, and from *Gaudium et Spes* to a theological memoir beginning in 1968. Our authors, while not necessarily writing theological anthropologies, provide us with rich resources for thinking about the myriad dimensions of sin and grace in our time. Mary Frohlich brings the wisdom of Saint John of the Cross to bear on the wound we have inflicted on the Earth. Frohlich identifies a dynamic process of coming to know God, noting that “activation of creation’s full capacity to mediate divinity, however, depends on the full fruition of the human person in God.”

<sup>1</sup> Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Peter Fritz's illuminating comparison of Jean-Luc Nancy and Karl Rahner reflects in a different way on how Christianity has and can approach the material world. How does Rahner's analysis of spirit and matter respond to Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity? Fritz reminds us of Rahner's "Copernican turn" in sacramental theology: that sanctifying grace is there for those who do not consciously and deliberately reject it—an insight that John Ames would aver.

Massimo Faggioli asks, "Can Christianity be modern or up-to-date? Should Christianity be modern or up-to-date? Or should it be anti-modern? What are the criteria for solving this issue?" He urges us to understand *Gaudium et Spes* as "a *modus procedendi* for the church facing the future," and in so doing proffers a path toward easing divisions with the Roman Catholic Church.

An exploration of how the metaphor of "organism" functions in both German Romanticism and liturgical theology yields yet another perspective on seeking wholeness and union with God. Joris Geldhof writes that "the liturgy and the celebration of the sacraments can generate the transformative power that is needed to renew humanity according to the ideal of divine love—on the condition that liturgical theology is understood Romantically and liturgy itself organically."

Our authors plumb the treasures within the tradition to help us heal the harm we do in the world. When navigating the mystery of sin and being in God, we remember "grace is the great gift. So to be forgiven is only half the gift. The other half is that *we* also can forgive, restore, and liberate, and therefore we can feel the will of God enacted through us, which is the great restoration of ourselves to ourselves."<sup>3</sup>

I thank our authors for sharing their scholarship with our readers, and I thank all the members of the editorial team for their creativity, diligent work, and commitment to excellent scholarship.

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With this issue of *Horizons*, the editors thank someone who cannot be adequately thanked: Martine Walsh, senior commissioning editor for humanities and social science journals at Cambridge University Press. It was through her initiative and vision that Anthony J. Godzieba (now editor emeritus) and I were able to engage a process of consultation and review that launched the relationship between *Horizons* and CUP. Martine's keen understanding of the many dimensions of publishing academic journals in both print and electronic formats, her business acumen, and her utter commitment to top-tier scholarship facilitated a seamless transition to Cambridge for *Horizons*. We

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

have benefited time and again from her creativity and thoughtful guidance. Unfailingly gracious, Martine has been a trusted partner and invaluable sounding board. *Horizons* is all the better for having had her as a friend and supporter. We wish her all success and fulfillment as she leaves the Press to use her many and impressive talents in a different area of academic life. To Martine Walsh go our admiration and deep gratitude. *Ad multos annos!*