

Editorial preface

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While many theists engage in petitionary prayer, and would not if they thought it was not efficacious, a question arises as to the nature of this efficacy. If such prayers are to have any degree of efficacy, they must make some difference in what God does. However, how can this be so when God always does what is best anyway? Defenders of petitionary prayer have argued that it is logically possible for such prayers to make a difference in what God brings about. Shieva Kleinschmi accepts these defenses of logical compatibility but raises experiential problems involved in actual cases that the logical solution does not address. In such cases we see that the efficacy of petitionary prayer may be too weak or too strong.

In the second article in this issue, the theological doctrine of penal substitution is revisited. That doctrine holds that human beings deserve to suffer death as the wages of sin. God, however, inflicted the suffering and death we desire on Christ, punishing him in our place in order to free us from death and bestow eternal life. The problem with the doctrine is that it seems unjust to punish an innocent person; and surely Christ was innocent. In our next article, William Lang Craig defends the doctrine by arguing that it was not unjust for God to inflict suffering on Christ.

Our next article is by David Carr. Even though he is not exactly sanguine about recent attempts to develop conceptions of spirituality that are independent of religion, in this article he undertakes to show that such a “religiously-untethered” spirituality can nevertheless be sustained as a capacity for non-instrumental interpretation and as a capacity for transcending natural needs.

Appropriately enough, our next article takes up a defense of a religiously-untethered spirituality. Jeremiah Carey argues that we can make good sense of a non-religious spirituality if we are careful to make it clear what it means to be spiritual. For him, the key is the idea of spirituality as an “inward turn.” On this

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view, a non-religious spirituality is a way of life that is focused on an inner transformation based on an inward encounter with something taken to be ultimate. Religion is also a matter of an inward transformation, but unlike mere spirituality in being centered in cultic practices. And this does not mean that religions cultic practices cannot be spiritual: they may or may not be. But religions are never *merely* spiritual since they are intrinsically connected to cultic practices. But we must be careful to note that a genuine non-religious spirituality, like religious spirituality, is also necessarily connected to communal practices and is impoverished and shallow if it is confined to a single individual's inner life. Like religious spirituality non-religious spirituality requires a developed communal tradition minus a central cultic element.

As we all know, Christian love purports to be universal. We are even supposed to love our enemies. This looks like an impossibility if not an absurdity. Ryan Davis argues, however, that we the command to love all can be satisfied and can be seen as coherent and even rational, if we follow the lead of two scriptural examples, Matthew's trilogy of parables and the Feast of the Tabernacles in John. These examples show that God is always willing to collaborate with every (equally vulnerable) human agent. God expects no less from us.

Christianity has bequeathed to us paradoxical, if not contradictory doctrines. What is a God-man? How can one God also be triune? Can Christians embrace these doctrines without throwing reason away? James Nicholas Anderson thinks the answer here is yes. However, Dale Tuggy has attacked Anderson's view and called it "positive mysterianism." Tuggy says that to be a 'mysterian' about a doctrine is to claim that it lacks understandable content. To be a negative mysterian is to hold that the doctrine is simply too poor in content to be understandable. To be a positive mysterian is to hold that a doctrine is too rich in content to be (fully) understood. The human mind is too limited to take in all the rich content of the profound truths of revelation. Anderson argues that Tuggy's critique of the positive mysterian position fails, leaving his own position intact.