

Editor's Introduction

The mind of the nation has been firmly fixed on the economy for the last several years. The Great Recession, as the recent financial collapse has often been called, has determined much of the political and religious dialogue during this period. From anger, to anxiety, to tepid optimism, the United States and the world have been left wondering what can be done to recover economically, and perhaps more importantly, how to prevent such economic catastrophes from recurring in the future. To this end, the current issue of *USQR* begins with three pieces in close conversation, based loosely on a dialogue that occurred in 2011 between Joerg Rieger of the Perkins School of Theology, Gary Dorrien of Union Theological Seminary, and Kathryn Tanner of Yale Divinity School. Together, these three pieces form a response in a trajectory that seeks a proper Christian critique of and challenge to rampant capitalism driven to the point of inflicting destruction and suffering.

Rieger specifically takes up the question of desires and how Christianity can offer alternate visions of what desire is, what should be desired, and what the proper limits of desire are. Using biblical passages and theological precedent, especially from Luther, he proposes that Christianity can offer an overhauled version of desire that is not unnaturally inflated by advertising and respects that one's God is "that to which your heart clings and entrusts itself." With revised visions of who God is and the purpose and function of desire, Christianity can offer a strong counterbalance to the greed-driven culture of finance and material driven economies that prioritize wealth and things over people, our relationship with the earth, and our standing with God.

Next, Dorrien offers a history of the Social Gospel movement and its justice legacy that Christianity needs to reclaim in order to offer a suitable response to the economic crisis and the injustices entailed within it. He offers a wide-ranging analysis of what caused the crisis, both in terms of technical factors and the cultures and attitudes that made it possible. He then makes proposals—religious, political, and cultural—that could help to defuse the current potential for market overreaches, especially with respect to the finance sector, and exploitation of what has come to be called, often, the "99 percent." He concludes that there is hope in emerging creative forms of cooperatives and movements like Occupy Wall Street who reserve the right to challenge the very assumptions of our current economic norm.

Finally, Tanner ties the history and theory of the first two articles together by discussing Occupy Wall Street, mentioned in both of the previous articles, and why its vision is something Christians should very strongly consider supporting. She does this by examining the mission statements and goals of Occupy Wall Street and viewing them in the light of a Christian theology that concerns itself with just economic systems. While Occupy Wall Street resists alignment with any religious tradition, Christianity and its history of critique of unjust economic

systems and social inequality, she shows, have roles to play in supporting Occupy and its mission.

The last two articles depart from the explicit Economics and Theology theme. Steven Jungkeit, however, relates the critical theoretical idea of “Junkspace” as a reality in modernity and challenges the contemporary church and its liturgical practices to reconsider the role of space, especially given that, as he sees it, some churches mimic the category of Junkspace he explores. He proposes a new relationship with sacred spaces that allows for greater freedom and play in what constitutes Christian worship.

To finish, Sergey Trostyanskiy offers a historical-philosophical look at the Neo-Arian Controversy of the late fourth century C.E. He examines the styles of argumentation and logic found in some of the major thinkers involved in that controversy and offers a new reading of their philosophical and rhetorical sources.

The heart of this issue deals with the pressing matters of our present (and any present) as those who confess or study a faith try to make sense of their beliefs in the midst of the controversies and arguments going on around them. Theology, economy, postmodernity, and where we stand with respect to faith are perennial problems. This issue, especially concerning the difficulties of our contemporary economic and financial systems, is bound up with the belief that Christianity can evolve, be introspective, and in turn, offer critiques and strategies for the larger world.