

we might see this process of redemption that relies on both memory and hope as a prophetic activity leading us toward a renewed creation.

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MORAL THEOLOGY

MORAL TRUTH: REASON, EXPERIENCE, FEMINISM, AND AUTHORITY

Presenters: James F. Keenan, Weston School of Theology
Maura A. Ryan, University of Notre Dame
Christine E. Gudorf, Florida International University
James J. Walter, Loyola University of Chicago

The theme of this workshop was how various perspectives influence the way in which moral theology is practiced. Reason, experience, and authority are traditional themes, but contemporary developments have enriched these perspectives. Feminism is such a development and has had a critical impact on new material, perspectives, and experiences to be included in discussions of Roman Catholic moral theology.

James Keenan focused on two dimensions of reason. One was reason in relation to the virtues, in particular prudence. The key issue here was prudence as a mediator in the resolution of cases and is related to a larger project of the role of the virtues as the basis for moral theory. Second, and more critical, was the distinction between the deductive or geometric reasoning in the manualist tradition of the nineteenth century and the inductive or taxonomic reasoning characteristic of the age of high casuistry, as well as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the former we have the application of a principle to a case to resolve it, while in the latter we have the principles emerge from a comparison of cases. The method of reason in casuistry was also influenced by doubt raised either from changing socioeconomic circumstances and the relevance of past principles to them or the status of one's salvation consequent to the Reformation emphasis on justification by faith. Thus reason emerged as inductive, to resolve doubt, to appeal to experience, and to be utilized by both clergy and laity in resolving problems. Keenan concluded by noting that we have in common with sixteenth-

century casuistry the experience of doubt as well as the seeming uselessness or inapplicability of principles. We, like the people of that century—moralists and laity—need to think through the ordinary situations of life with the aid of a reason that is inductive and analogous, which leads to the practice of the virtues.

Maura Ryan highlighted four difficulties with the move from human experience to moral experience: (1) The fluidity of experience can frustrate discernment rather than help. Several issues are critical here. One is experience understood as the immediate response to an event; a second is experience as a medium through which persons exist as subjects in space and time; a third is practically acquired moral wisdom; and finally is the shaping power of events such as childbirth or a near-death experience. (2) The relation of the particularity of experience and the general or universal applicability of what is learned. (3) The fear that the validation of the plurality of experience will foster divisiveness or moral relativism. (4) The question of how to evaluate claims to morally privileged experiences, i.e., privileged with respect to what and for what purposes. Ryan suggested an acceptance of an inductive, interdisciplinary, pluralistic, historically and culturally sensitive, and collegial use of experience in the practice of moral discernment.

Christine Gudorf focused on several themes that feminism highlights in its search for moral truth. The presentation began with a consideration of characteristics which feminism shares with traditional Catholicism. First is natural law which expands its traditional biological focus to include history, anthropology, psychology, literature, etc. Second is human sociality which emphasizes that we bring each other into being through relationships which are not only biological, political, and economic, but are all these and more, all of which are intrinsic to the human. Third is the common good and the dignity of the person which is to lead to solidarity, particularly of women of different class, race and ethnicity. Fourth is sacramentality understood not only as the expression of already known truths, but also the source of new truth. Finally is optimism, which is based in a positive assessment of the human capacity for conversion from sin. The second part of the presentation focused on characteristics which feminism shares with lay theological movements in Catholicism: a democratic appreciation of the necessity to decentralize the traditional institutional power to name the truth; a rejection of dualism and acceptance of pluralism and enculturation; historicity, which produces humility and interrelatedness; pluralism, which recognizes the moral significance of new and different experiences; and finally a holistic approach to the human person which rejects a dualism and affirms persons as subjects in their own right.

James Walter began by identifying the tension between morality and authority by noting that some locate a moral authority in the one who dictates morality and then rewards or punishes or in the autonomous agent who is responsible for his or her self. Then he turned to a definition of authority which followed Rahner and Vorgrimler: "the palpable, demonstrable trustworthiness or

legal claim of a person or thing (a book) capable of convincing another person of some truth or the validity of a command and obliging him or her to accept it, even though that truth or valid character is not immediately evident." Walter then identified three criteria that determine the legitimacy of authority: authenticity which results from a sustained exercise of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility; the degree to which it is trustworthy and promotive of the common good; and the degree to which it preserves and promotes unity. Walter's fourth point focused on authorities in morality. Historically these have included Scripture, tradition, philosophical accounts of the human, moral principles or norms, a peer group, experts, moral teachings, and the magisterium. A key question under contemporary debate is whether or not the magisterium has the authority to teach the natural law infallibly. Finally the views of D. Maguire and G. Hughes were considered with respect to the role of authority in discovering moral truth. The former argued that authority is part of a system of reliance and trust that intensifies relationships and institutions. Additionally Maguire recognized that we need help in discovering truth. Hughes identified four criteria for a legitimate appeal to authority: whether (1) we have not satisfactorily resolved the question ourselves; (2) external grounds for believing the authority will be correct; (3) grounds for believing the authority are strong enough to outweigh the tendency to disagree; (4) it is undesirable to rely on authority when one can resolve the issue without such an appeal.

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NONFOUNDATIONALISM AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

CATHOLICS AND NONFOUNDATIONALISM

Presenters: John E. Thiel, Fairfield University
James J. Buckley, Loyola College, Baltimore

The two presenters each read a brief paper. Thiel's paper, entitled "Nonfoundational Theology in Confessional Perspective," set out to explain the term "nonfoundationalism," to show some examples of nonfoundational theology, and finally to argue that the nonfoundationalist sensibility in theology must respect confessional differences. Buckley's presentation, "The Knowledge of God by