

grace answering an exigency with nature for true personhood is revealed rather than deduced from nature. This is evident from Zizioulas's starting point with personhood in god, but something similar occurs in the theology of Thomas Aquinas where he defines persons as relations in the *Summa*, but where the persons in question are the persons of the Trinity. To compare human persons with persons in God is to speak analogously, but, nevertheless, relationality is constitutive of the personal.

Michael Stebbins responded by questioning how advisable it is to frame the discussion about the communal effects of grace in terms of "nature and person" rather than "nature and grace." He suggested that the basic elements of Aquinas's understanding of grace, including the natural-supernatural distinction, ought to remain an integral part of any future theology of grace. Stebbins claimed the communal dimension within Aquinas's theology of grace is in his understanding of the beatific vision since cognition is a kind of communion and in knowing God one knows and therefore communes with all that God knows. To bring the scholastic insights into our own context, Stebbins suggested that the work of Bernard Lonergan would be helpful.

The presenter and respondent engaged in discussion with the other members of the seminar on the issues raised.

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## MORAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Love and the Discernment of the Spirit  
Conveners: Dolores Christie, Ursuline College  
 Philip J. Rossi, Marquette University  
Moderator: Brian F. Linnane, College of Holy Cross  
Presenter: Edward, C. Vacek, St. John's University, New York  
Respondent: Anne E. Patrick, Carleton College

In a presentation drawn from a much larger work in progress, Vacek argued that friendship with God is a more effective ground for discernment than a well-ordered harmony or congruence to self, since friendship is the best vehicle to understand and to become like another. The key test for discernment should be resonance with God's self and with our mutual relationship with God. The dis-

cerner's questions move from, "What I am to become?" or "What is God's will? to, "To whom do I belong?" Relationship with God modifies the perspective of discernment into a world view that scans beyond the individual self to all aspects of creation—including our own thoughts, desires, etc.—which speak to us as grace.

Vacek's approach took seriously the mutuality of the relationship with God, offering a model of friendship . . . love rather than the agapic love that Rahner uses. Movement through life's choices takes place on a "shared journey" of discernment with intellectual, affective, volitional elements. Presence of a friend, either actual or remembered, shapes behavior. Congruence to the demands of divine friendship motivates good actions. "We care because God cares." Resistance to the moral order implies a distancing of the person from God, leading not only to an experience of guilt, but to the need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

While Vacek did not jettison traditionally defined helps to decision making, reason, affections, tradition, authority and the like, he viewed them as insufficient. It is the growing friendship with God that provides the necessary context for the use of these and other tools. Divine friendship is not foolproof—saints and sinners alike suffer neuroses, make mistakes, act unwisely—but it is "the final criterion of our discernment."

In response to Vacek's paper, Anne Patrick noted the significance of his project: the importance of friendship love, the unity of the spiritual and the moral life. She defined the "subtext" of the paper: the Holy Spirit. The presentation raised some questions, however. The Spirit represents a challenge for moral theology: does not the Holy Spirit convict us of sin? Patrick noted that some sin may not become evident in the personal relationship with God, but requires insight and testimony from other sources. She listed several areas of sinfulness for consideration: anthropocentrism, injustice, and abstractionism. How can we correct for a limited, species-centered vision? Do we not need the insights of the those who have experienced injustice, especially within the Christian community? Are we able to translate our abstracting language to name and to address concrete injustice, such as is found in Mexico, the black community, racism in education, immigration, and social welfare?

The lively discussion which followed the formal presentations did not significantly address the questions Anne Patrick raised, but it did engage the points offered by the initial paper. Next year's session will be coconvened by Philip Rossi (Marquette) and Patrick McCormick (Gonzaga).

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