

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY (I)—TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Grace in the Patristic and High Medieval European Eras  
Convener: Scott D. Moringiello, DePaul University  
Moderator: Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland  
Presenters: Ian Gerdon, University of Notre Dame  
Shawn Colberg, St. John's University  
Donald M. M. Collins, Western University

The Historical Theology session received paper proposals spanning the Christian intellectual tradition. For grouping purposes, we placed the papers in chronological order, creating a session about grace in Patristic and High Medieval European settings.

Ian Gerdon delivered a paper on the role of friendship in the conclusion of Maximus the Confessor's early work *Chapters on Love*. Gerdon argued that, for Maximus, faithful human friendship is the culmination of Christian life because, as the result of prior friendship with Christ that allows one to imitate God's unwavering love, it becomes a participation in divine providence, i.e., God's salvific grace at work in the world. Further, Gerdon argued that Maximus's theology of friendship parallels the key features of Pope Francis' notion of "accompaniment" and can shed light on its practice.

Two papers on Thomas Aquinas followed. Shawn Colberg gave a paper that explored how Thomas might consider prayer, particularly the prayer of impetration, as an expression of everyday grace in the movement toward union with God. Specifically, the paper considered how prayer might be effective in the sinner's conversion or justification. It concluded that, while justification is always an operative effective of grace for which God alone can receive credit, the language of impetration illustrates the way in which grace perfects human nature and confers a special dignity on human nature by drawing it into the causal sequence of justification and overarching economy of salvation.

Finally, Donald M. M. Collins presented on the alignment of the will of the saints and the will of God through prayer in Aquinas' *Commentary on the First Letter of St. Paul to Timothy*. The paper suggested an antecedent will of God, which willed the salvation for all, and it is this will that saints are hoping for in their prayers. This allows the saints to pray in hope despite the knowledge that there will be some who are damned.

There was a spirited discussion about Aquinas, particularly God's knowledge and will vis-à-vis salvation, and the power of friendship in Maximus' theology. Conversations continued well beyond the session.

NICOLE REIBE  
*Loyola University Maryland*  
*Baltimore, Maryland*