

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY (II)—TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Grace in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe
Convener: Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland
Moderator: Andrew Salzmänn, Benedictine College
Presenters: Julia A. Lamm, Georgetown University
Elissa Cutter, Loyola Marymount University
Grant Kaplan, St. Louis University

The second Historical Theology topic session included papers on the complicated ways that grace moves in human lives from figures of late Medieval and Early Modern Europe.

Julia A. Lamm delivered a paper on “kinde” in the longer version of Julian of Norwich’s *Showings*. Julian of Norwich (1342–ca.1416) developed a notion of nature and grace that departed from the usual way of things, and the fluid ways that she played with the Middle English word for “nature”—kinde—was at the heart of that departure. The relationship Julian established between nature and grace was one of continuity and compatibility, healing and hopefulness, rather than one of opposition and tension. Like everything else in her theology, her understanding of nature as kinde and God as kindness-itself followed from the primacy given to the divine attribute of love.

Elissa Cutter presented on Mother Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661), who had a reputation as a reformer in early seventeenth-century France for her reform of the convent of Port-Royal, located just outside of Paris. This reputation ultimately connected her to Jansenism, an allegedly heretical movement based on an Augustinian theology of grace and rigorism in sacramental practices. However, the writings of Angélique demonstrate that her theology of grace differed from a strictly Augustinian view, in part due to her monastic context and the variety of influences on her spiritual life. Unfortunately, because Angélique wrote in monastic and traditionally feminine genres instead of systematic treatises on theology, scholars have yet to account for her theology in the study of early modern Catholicism.

Finally, Grant Kaplan rounded out our historical overview of grace with a paper on the debate concerning nature and grace between Johannes Kuhn, Franz Celmens, and later, Constantin von Schüzler. This debate was one of the liveliest in nineteenth-century Catholic theology. It produced a flurry of articles and eventually engulfed the Holy Office. The paper re-examined this episode to recover how nineteenth-century theologians retrieved the teaching of Aquinas on grace. Much like de Lubac, Kuhn argues that neo-Thomists had confused Aquinas with later, early modern scholastic iterations. Kuhn, not self-styled neo-Thomists, was the true heir of Aquinas.

There was a wide-ranging discussion following the papers, including the role of Calvinist thought in relation to the Jansenist movement and the ongoing debate about the role of nature and grace.

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