

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

Topic: Divine Providence, Chance and the Problem of Evil

Convener: Nancy A. Dallavalle, Fairfield University

Presenters: Joseph A. Bracken, Xavier University

Elizabeth A. Johnson, Fordham University

Moderator: Barbara A. Finan, Ohio Dominican University

This session was the first of two focusing on the Johnson-Bracken exchange (Johnson, "Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance," *Theological Studies* 57 [1996]: 3-18; Bracken, "Response to Elizabeth Johnson . . .," *Theological Studies* 57 [1996]: 720-30). The discussion continued in a second session hosted by the Theology and the Natural Sciences group. Johnson's article brings the theology of Thomas Aquinas into dialogue with contemporary science to give a fresh reading of the God-world relationship, Bracken's response suggests that his appropriation of the system of Alfred North Whitehead better serves contemporary concerns for human agency.

Bracken summarized the differences between his position and that of Johnson as "a choice between two world views, with one world view basically governed by the logic of objective cause-effect relationships and the other ruled by what I call the logic of intersubjectivity." The first, the world view of Thomas Aquinas, is governed by a "theological determinism" played out in a series of causes and effects. The second, the world view of Whiteheadian process, allows for the possibility of genuine self-creation as each moment of experience exercises its own integrity within the context of other causes. In the first, God orders all creation as the sole primary cause, in the second, the creature exercises primary causality, and God is dependent on creation for the realization of the divine plan.

Johnson responded by noting several areas of agreement with Bracken: that the world proceeds from God (as ontological first principle); that neither dualism nor monism suffices as a world view; that some form of panentheism expresses the relationship between God and world; that trinitarian *perichoresis* is a key insight; and that the integrity of the creature must be honored. Johnson also recognized that both she and Bracken were adapting the systems of others. Critically, however, she found his rejection of Aquinas to be the rejection of an ahistorical "Cajetan" reading which overemphasizes the role of determinism and ignores recent Thomas scholarship. Johnson argued in particular that her use of the term "being" follows Thomas's analogical use, in which being is a "limit concept," not a noun. In addition, her understanding of being is intrinsically relational, as God's being is being-in-relationship. Thus there is no distinction between nature and person in God, divine nature is not a "fourth thing" behind the Trinity. Finally, Johnson argued that the discussion of Thomas's understanding of the one God must be read with the mind of faith. Providence, for example,

does not mean that God plans everything in advance, as if God were merely a bigger and better secondary cause.

Several issues were raised in discussion. Noting that there are other modes of causality, one questioner asked Bracken whether his understanding of causality was not "pathologically univocal." Another cited the Pauline elements of Aquinas's thought to argue that Aquinas was not a strict determinist. In addition, could not the notion of concurrence, as the movement of the Holy Spirit, be a resource for a Whiteheadian? With regard to the experience of evil and suffering, one participant observed that an initial anguish over questions of efficient causality can, over time, give way to a more tenable understanding of "sustaining" causality, possibly articulated with process thought's notion of the divine lure. Asked to identify precisely his problem with Johnson's approach, Bracken answered that his problem was that he found the Thomistic system, as he reads it, to be logically flawed. This response led another to suggest that the real sticking point in the discussion concerned the relationship between philosophy and theology: Johnson seems to have theology in control of the categories, Bracken seems to give philosophy and logic the first and last word. The discussion closed with two caveats: one questioned whether the systems proposed ignored that there must be an asymmetry in the divine-world relationship; another advised an "epistemic humility," citing Catherine LaCugna's foregrounding of the economic over the immanent Trinity.

Dallavalle conducted a short business meeting at the end of the session, requesting the names of possible members for a panel discussion on the immanent-economic distinction at next year's annual meeting.

NANCY A. DALLAVALLE

*Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut*

RENAISSANCE/MODERN THEOLOGY

Topic: Romano Guardini's Theological Anthropology

Convener: Bradford E. Hinze, Marquette University

Presenter: Robert A. Krieg, University of Notre Dame

Respondent: William Madges, Xavier University, Cincinnati

Romano Guardini (1885-1968), was a Catholic priest and professor of the philosophy of religion and the Catholic world view at the universities of Berlin, Tübingen, and Munich. But more than that, he was a public intellectual, whose numerous writings on the human person, liturgy and the spiritual life, and Christology reached wide audiences during the second and third quarters of this century. Robert Krieg initiated his reflections on this figure by posing the question