

transform homosexual persons and others who relate with them toward fullness of life in Christ. Specifically, how does the homosexual person live the experience of the faith in light of the claim that "the [homosexual] inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder"? Four spiritualities may be found in these documents: one pertaining to the homosexual person, one addressed to bishops and pastors of souls, one directed to the church as a body, and one directed to parents of gays and lesbians. Each of these spiritualities is conflicted in some way. The conflicts center around four factors: (1) the understanding of the person, (2) the pastoral approach to the homosexual person, (3) the use of scripture and the social sciences, and (4) the finality of the sexual act and the dimorphic condition of human beings.

The lively discussion which followed the presentations revealed great interest in the project of constructing a more adequate theology of homosexuality. While sympathetic to this desire, the convener invited those in attendance to return next year for a third and final session dedicated to a careful exposition of several additional theological implications of the church's teaching on homosexuality.

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THE CHURCH AND OTHER TRADITIONS

Topic: The Catholic Church and Other Religious Traditions
Convener: James Fredericks, Loyola Marymount University
Presenters: David B. Burrell, University of Notre Dame
Marianne Farina, Boston College
Respondent: Giv Nassiri, University of California, Berkeley

Diana Eck has recently noted that the United States is now the most religiously diverse society on the world. Christian theologians have begun to respond to this development by entering into friendships with those who follow religious paths other than their own. "Interreligious friendships" should be counted a sign of the times. The purpose of an interreligious friendship is in part *theological*: understanding the Christian tradition anew in relationship to the religious lives of Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, or, in the case at hand, Muslims. Interreligious friendship was once thought a vice. Today, it should be seen as a virtue that promotes new forms of solidarity, creates social capital, and offers the Christian community new opportunities for theological reflection. This selected session brought together two Christian theologians to reflect on their friendships with Muslims.

David Burrell has worked with Muslims in the United States, the Near East, and Pakistan. Based on these friendships, he has written on the doctrine of

creation, theological anthropology, and Christian spirituality. Burrell began by noting that, for Aristotle, friendship is more than the social interaction of two people. Friendships are of the utmost importance for ethics because in friendships we connect with that which transcends both the self and the friend, namely, the good. For Burrell, this means that a friendship with a Muslim offers to Christians the possibility of a mutual search for god that is both theological and multireligious. In addition, Burrell reflected on the fact that Christian friendships with Muslims are qualified not only by the religious teachings of both religious traditions, but also by contemporary historical circumstances. Given the occupation of Palestine by Israel, a friendship between a Christian and a Muslim, for example, will not have the same theological import as a friendship between a Christian and a Jew.

Marianne Farina began to befriend Muslims while working with Islamic groups in Bangladesh on social welfare projects. She is now completing doctoral work on Christian theology in light of Islamic doctrine and carrying on dialogue work with Muslims in the Bay Area. Farina is particularly aware of the social import of friendships with Muslims. John Paul II has called for a "civilization of love." In Farina's view, interreligious friendships with Muslims offer a genuinely religious way to resist violence and promote peace. In the act of befriending Muslims, Islam ceases to be an abstraction and comes to be known in the "face" of the Muslim friend. Building on David Burrell, and also on Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini's call for a "communication theology," Farina reflected on the impediments posed by history and doctrine to friendships with Muslims.

Giv Nassiri is a Shiite Muslim, born in Iran, and now teaching at UC Berkeley. He has a long-standing friendship with Marianne Farina. Nassiri noted that there is a rich tradition in Islam concerning friendship that can be retrieved and put to work in support of friendships with Christians. For example, Islamic saints are held to be "friends of God" (*wallillah*). The Islamic community (*umma*) is understood as a new society of friends that overcomes the divisions of language and ethnicity. Why aren't Muslims initiating friendships with Christians? Islam is currently divided by ethnicity and weakened by the legacy of Western colonialism. In addition, Muslims have had very negative experiences with Christians, especially Evangelicals. Islam also suffers from a lack of theological and spiritual leadership at this time in history. Islamic understanding of friendship, however, can draw from the same Aristotelian sources that David Burrell cited. Friendship is a movement toward the good and toward God. Therefore, interreligious friendships are not only possible, they are good for Muslims. Nassiri suggested that Christians and Muslims continue to seek one another out for friendships, in which the mutual journey to God becomes a journey in God and finally a journey together from God and back to the world for service to human beings.

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