

Grace & Nature: Contemporary Controversies

3-4 December 2021
Aula Minor, Angelicum



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Schedule

Friday, December 3

Session 1: Controversies Regarding the Universality of the Grace of Christ

- 12:00 Simon Francis Gaine, O.P. – *“Was Adam’s Grace Christ’s Grace?”*
- 13:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00 Giulio Maspero – *“Can God Work Through Other Religions? On Christ’s Unique Salvation, the Universality of Grace, and the Problem of Relativism”*
- 15:00 Coffee Break

Session 2: Controversies Regarding Tradition & Theology

- 15:30 Philipp Renczes, S.J. – *“Patristic and Ressourcement Contributions to a Renewed Theology of Grace and Nature”*
- 16:30 Coffee Break
- 17:00 Thomas Joseph White, O.P. – *“Chalcedonian Christology and the Concept of Pure Nature”*

Saturday, December 4

Session 3: Is Human Nature Naturally Open to God?

- 12:00 Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. – *“The Epistemological Question: Philosophical Theology and the Intellectus Fidei”*
- 13:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00 Judith Wolfe – *“Practicing the Presence of God: Imaginative formation and the sensus divinitatis”*
- 15:00 Coffee Break

Session 4: Supernature: On the Final End of the Human Person

- 15:30 Karen Kilby – *“The Continuing Significance of de Lubac’s Supernature for Contemporary Theology”*
- 16:30 Coffee Break
- 17:00 Mats Wahlberg - *“How Can a Good God Permit Eternal Damnation? Thomism and the Problem of Hell”*

Schedule with Abstracts

Friday, December 3

12:00 Simon Francis Gaine, O.P.

“Was Adam’s Grace Christ’s Grace?”

Catholic theologians have normally taught that, before the Fall, the first human beings were gifted with God’s supernatural grace. St Thomas held that this grace was bestowed on Adam and Eve from the very first moment of their existence. So grace was originally given together with nature. But was this grace also somehow the grace of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ? Was Christ somehow given together with nature and grace from the very beginning?

13:00 Lunch Break

14:00 Giulio Maspero

“Can God Work Through Other Religions? On Christ’s Unique Salvation, the Universality of Grace, and the Problem of Relativism”

The question of universal salvation has a starting point, even from a historical perspective, at the metaphysical level, because philosophy sought and proposed salvation. The essential question is what salvation? In the passage from the Old Testament to the New Testament we see a universalisation of that salvation, which is based on the identification between Jesus and the Creator. The Fathers of the Church explored this tension, developing the shift

from Logos-theology to salvation in Christ. In the Middle Ages, the confrontation between the three monotheisms and the philosophical instance lead to a confrontation between the Franciscan and the Dominican school. The dialectical tension between creation and salvation introduced by the Reformation had direct consequences on the question, which will explode first with the discovery of America, then with the Enlightenment and the numerous scientific and phenomenological data provided by positivism. This led to a rebirth of theological thought with the “ressourcement” that began in the 19th century and flourished in the 20th. Hence the question of the relationship between non-Christian religions and salvation run through the confrontation between Rahner and Balthasar, up to the genitive theologies, the postmodern critique of the logos and the trend towards post-humanism.

15:00 Coffee Break

15:30 Philipp Renczes, S.J.

‘Patristic and Ressourcement Contributions to a Renewed Theology of Grace and Nature’

In recent times, the question of the relationship between nature and grace has expanded into a search for the identity of Catholic theology in general and thereby into a struggle for its interpretive sovereignty, which moves between the commitment to "Tradition" or "aggiornamento" and thus not infrequently between a scholastic or patristic approach. Under the premise of a consensual warning

against supposed new editions of a Stockwerktheologie, this contribution shows, by means of some reflections on the pivotal concept of natura pura, how patristic-inspired thinking actually resists an often sweepingly made assignment of itself to Ressourcement theology and is able to develop a high degree of de-escalation capacity in this debate.

16:30 Coffee Break

17:00 Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

“Chalcedonian Christology and the Concept of Pure Nature”

In this essay I would like to think about both the ontological dimensions of the mystery of the Incarnation, and the philosophical implications of classical Christology. Can we speak truly of Christ the person of the Son as both true God and true man if we are incapable of positive philosophical and natural discourse concerning both the divine nature and human nature, that essence in virtue of which we are each human, and in virtue of which God who became human is one in nature with us?

Saturday, December 4

12:00 Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P.

“The Epistemological Question: Philosophical Theology and the Intellectus Fidei”

This lecture considers the relationship between philosophical theology, that is the metaphysical discourse on God, and Christian theology (or intellectus fidei) of the mystery of the triune God.

From a Thomistic perspective, the coherence and autonomy of the natural order justify the possibility of a philosophical theology formally distinct from the reflection of the intellectus fidei. However, this philosophical theology reaches its full dimension only by maintaining a vital contact with theological life and the intellectus fidei. Otherwise, it drifts towards a dangerous form of deism. Conversely, the intellectus fidei of the mystery of the triune God can reach its full dimension only by assuming, in its own light, the results of an autonomous philosophical theology.

13:00 Lunch Break

14:00 Judith Wolfe

“Practicing the Presence of God: Imaginative formation and the sensus divinitatis”

Though humanity may be naturally open to God, a sense of the divine is formed as well innate. This lecture discusses the formation of the imagination from theological as well as psychological perspectives. Doing so, it illuminates the necessity as well as the spiritual risks of a Christian imagination.

15:00 Coffee Break

15:30 Karen Kilby

“The Continuing Significance of de Lubac’s Surnaturel for Contemporary Theology”

This paper will explore Henri de Lubac’s Surnaturel and the way his thinking has been received and modified by two more speculatively inclined thinkers, John Milbank and Karl Rahner. I will argue

that one of these preserves, clarifies and strengthens the paradox at the heart of de Lubac's contribution, while the other unhelpfully dissolves it. Discussions of nature and grace can take on the appearance of self-perpetuating debates spun loose from anything relevant to the Christian life. I will try to counter this tendency by exploring the significance of a (properly paradoxical) nature/grace framework for our demeanor towards our own death and the death of those we love.

16:30 Coffee Break

17:00 Mats Wahlberg

'How Can a Good God Permit Eternal Damnation? Thomism and the Problem of Hell'

The most common explanation of why God might permit some rational creatures to miss their final end is the so-called "Free Will Defense" of hell. Unfortunately, this explanation depends on a problematic conception of free will that is foreign to the Thomistic tradition. Responding to David Bentley Hart's forceful case for universalism, I will in this lecture suggest a "Thomistic Autonomy Defense" that escapes the problems of the Free Will Defense and goes beyond traditional Thomistic explanations of negative reprobation.

Presenters



Born in Marseille (1961), **Fr. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P.** is a Doctor of Philosophy and of Theology. He was the Editor-in-Chief of *Revue thomiste* (1991-2012), professor of Medieval Philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Toulouse, and professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Dominican Studium of Toulouse. He was transferred to Rome in 2014, where he was Secretary General of the International Theological Commission (2011-2020). He is now President of the Accademia Pontificia di San Tommaso (2014) and Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University Saint Thomas Aquinas - Angelicum. Among his latest publications are *Dieu, Celui qui est* (2016), and *Saint Thomas lecteur du Cantique des Cantiques* (2019).



Fr. Simon Francis Gaine, O.P. is an English Dominican, Director of the Angelicum Thomistic Institute, and the Pinckaers Professor of Theological Anthropology and Ethics. He was recently appointed a member of the International Theological Commission. He is the author of *Will There Be Free Will in Heaven? Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude* (2003) and *Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God* (2015). Most recently he has published a chapter on the reception of St Thomas's Christology today in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas* (2021).



Karen Kilby is Bede Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom. She studied Mathematics and Theology at Yale and Cambridge Universities and did her doctorate under Kathryn Tanner and George Lindbeck. Kilby has published books on Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, and on a range of themes in systematic theology, including the doctrine of the Trinity, evil, suffering and the place of mystery in theology. Her most recent book is *God, Evil and the Limits of Theology*.



Giulio Maspero is full professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of Holy Cross (Rome). He is member of the Association Internationale des Etudes Patristiques (AIEP) and a full member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology (PATH). His most recent monographs are *Essere e relazione* (Città Nuova, Roma 2013), *Dio trino perché vivo* (Morcelliana, Brescia 2018), the latter devoted to the pneumatology of the Greek Fathers and the Mystery of Communion, and *Encountering the Trinity* (St. Augustine's Press: South Bend (IN) 2021). He also edited with Pierpaolo Donati and Antonio Malo the volume *Social Science, Philosophy and Theology in Dialogue* (Routledge, London 2019) and with Martin Schlag *After Liberalism? A Christian Confrontation on Politics and Economics* (Springer, Cham 2021)



Father Philipp Gabriel Renczes, S.J. is a German Jesuit, professor of systematic and patristic theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University and invited professor of historical theology at the Pontifical Augustinian Institute and current dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. With special interests in the theology of grace, Maximus the Confessor, and a theology of the Jewish-Christian Relationship, his

recent publications include: *Dal dialogo ecumenico al dialogo interreligioso. Orientare la riflessione sul dialogo interreligioso a partire da una lettura della Dichiarazione congiunta sulla Dottrina della giustificazione (DCDG)*, *Analecta Augustiniana* 81 (2018), and *‘Wie kann man eine Wasserscheide verschieben?’ Gregorianum und die Bedeutung der Eigenwirklichkeit menschlicher Natur im ‘natürlichen Verlangen nach dem Ubernaturlichen’*, in *Gregorianum* 100/4 (2019).



Mats Wahlberg is associate professor in systematic theology at Umeå University, Sweden. He has written two books, including *Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study* (Eerdmans, 2014). Last semester, he was the visiting Aquinas chair at the Angelicum. Currently he is working on a research project funded by the John Templeton Foundation, about the problem of evil and evolution.



Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. is the *Rector Magnificus* of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum) in Rome. He is the author of various books and articles including *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Sapientia Press, 2011), *The*

Incarnate Lord, A Thomistic Study in Christology (The Catholic University of America Press, 2015) *Exodus* (Brazos Press, 2016), *The Light of Christ: An Introduction to Catholicism* (Catholic University Press, 2017), and *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God* (Catholic University Press, 2022). He is co-editor of the journal *Nova et Vetera*, a Distinguished Scholar of the McDonald Agape Foundation, and a member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas.



Born in Vienna, **Judith Wolfe** studied in Jerusalem and Oxford and taught in Berlin and Oxford before joining the University of St Andrews, Scotland, where she serves as Professor of Philosophical Theology. Her research and teaching span systematic and philosophical theology, as well as theology and the

arts. She currently leads international research projects entitled Theologies of Catholicity (with Phil McCosker and Stephan van Erp) and Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology.



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