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TH604.OA

25 February 2023

### **“Three Motifs for Making Ethical Decisions” (5-3-1)**

#### Questions

1. **What is the assumption on which the deliberative motif rests?** The deliberative motif rests on the assumption that reason can be a moral guide because God implanted a natural law within human consciousness that all can comprehend, writes Hollinger.
2. **Name the four kinds of laws that Aquinas believed existed.** The four kinds of laws that Aquinas believed existed are eternal law, natural law, human law, and divine law.
3. **What was Reinhold Niebuhr’s take on the ethical ideal of love?** Niebuhr argued that the ethical idea of love could never become a reality on earth, especially in its social and structural dimensions.
4. **What was John Calvin’s approach to ethics, and what did he believe about following the law?** John Calvin was seen as applying a prescriptive motif to ethics. Calvin maintained that “following the law is not an end in itself but the means by which we glorify God and reflect gratitude” toward Him.
5. **What is Carl F.H. Henry’s viewpoint on love?** Henry sees “love in the Bible as a particularization of the will of God that finds its most explicit expression in Jesus Christ.”

#### Vocabulary

- **Motif:** a way of formulating ethical norms and making decisions

- **Thomas Aquinas:** a thirteenth-century theologian who is best remembered for synthesizing the philosophy of Aristotle with Christian thought. Aquinas believed the truths of faith and those of sensory experience are fully compatible and complementary.
- **John Calvin:** the most influential sixteenth-century Protestant Reformer. By the age of twenty-five, Calvin wrote the first edition of *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a work that profoundly influenced the Protestant movement.

### Summary

In this chapter, Hollinger outlines the three different motifs for ethical decision-making: deliberative, prescriptive, and relational. Hollinger then describes each motif. First, the deliberative motif treats reason as though it is complementary to divine revelation, rooted in the presupposition that reason can be ascertained on the level of human consciousness. Second, the prescriptive motif draws conclusions based on the “explicit rules, principles, or moral actions from divine revelation.” Third, the relational motif contends that “the content and direction of moral decisions flow from an immediate relationship with God and relationship with others.”

In the end, Hollinger underscores the role of the Holy Spirit and the importance of discernment in ethical decision-making. Hollinger states, “Ethics in experience ought to be an overflow of justifying grace, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the reflection or imitation of Christ within us, and the moral enablement of the Christian community.” Hollinger reasserts his point of view. Toward the end of the chapter, Hollinger states, “Prayer, the discernment of fellow Christians, and the leading of the Holy Spirit must play a role in the moral discernment amid the complexities of the world and our life together as Christians.”