

FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Theologizing Sacramentality Today
Convener: Karen Trimble Alliaume, Lewis University
Moderator: Susie Paulik Babka, University of San Diego
Presenters: Peter Fritz, College of the Holy Cross
Colby Dickinson, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Daniel Rober, Fordham University

What methods are most fruitful in theologizing sacramentality today? Situating their methodological proposals in postmodern, postcolonial, and postsecular contexts, this session's presenters contributed constructive answers to this question.

In a presentation entitled "Rahner vs. the Sacraments' Postmodern Despisers," Peter Fritz responds to a postmodern critique from French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, who contends that Christian sacramental theology and practice stray into the territory of over-spiritualization, thus obliterating Christians' esteem for materiality. Nancy opposes a sacramental/eucharistic worldview because he believes it involves an over-signification of bodies that robs materiality of any meaning. Using Karl Rahner's theology of symbol, Fritz argued to the contrary that Rahner's insistence on materiality's reality and abiding significance can dispel the postmodern myth that Christianity's devotion to spirit in principle denigrates materiality, and account for the tie between sacramental practice and care for the world.

In his paper "Sacrament as Fetish?: The Irreducible Singularity of Sacramental Presence from a Postcolonial Perspective," Colby Dickinson drew upon a genealogy of fetish-objects in order to examine how sacraments resist assimilation into structural-ecclesial norms. Because sacraments perpetually disrupt our sense of normativity, they are analogous to the historical place and role of fetish-idols. In his presentation, Dickinson formulated a postcolonial reappropriation of fetish-objects beyond their colonial labeling in order to perceive sacraments apart from the dichotomy of sacrament/fetish (icon/idol), thus reconceiving "sacramental presence" entirely. In the end, Dickinson followed this reading beyond the ideological distinctions often made between iconography and idolatry.

Finally, in dialogue with Charles Taylor's work on secularization, Daniel Rober's paper, "Rediscovering Sacramentality in a (Post) Secular Age: Listening to the Margins," examined the possibilities for the reemergence of sacramentality after the passing of secular modernity. After analyzing Taylor's work, which described the movement from the medieval worldview—in which religion, and with it a sacramental vision of the world, was an inescapable part of everyday life—to the modern situation where it became optional at best, the paper examined how sacramentality emerges after secularity once again from the margins, particularly in Jacques Dupuis's theology of religious pluralism and in the *mujerista* theology of Ada María Isasi-Díaz.

Questions both during and after the presentations of the papers led to lively interchange connecting and further clarifying the three projects discussed.

KAREN TRIMBLE ALLIAUME
Lewis University
Romeoville, Illinois