

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY (II)—TOPIC SESSION

Topic: 500th Anniversary of the Reformation
Convener: Scott D. Moringiello, DePaul University
Moderator: Shawn Colberg, College of St. Benedict/St. John's University
Presenters: R. Ward Holder, Saint Anselm College
Ian C. Levy, Providence College
James K. Lee, Southern Methodist University

Even though this year's convention theme was ecology, the Historical Theology session believed that we should commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in one of our sessions. Our three papers fittingly focused on the role of the theologian in the Church. Two papers focused on the Reformation era itself while one paper reached back to discuss third- and fourth-century north Africa.

Ward Holder began our discussion with a paper on John Calvin and the question of authority. In 1547, Calvin published his *Acts of the Council of Trent, with Antidote*. In 1549, he again took up his pen against Charles V's Augsburg Interim, publishing his *Adultero-German Interim*. In both of these, Calvin sought to deny Catholic claims to the sole authority to interpret Scripture, and to redefine tradition to a more evangelical role. Calvin, Holder noted, attacked the Catholic Church's authority as a sole arbiter of the tradition, but Calvin did not attack tradition itself.

Ian Levy turned to the question of the rights of theologians on the eve of the Reformation. Levy pointed out the differences between the role of the universities in late medieval Europe and their role today. He also pointed out the differences between theologians then and now. In late medieval Europe, bishops and kings would routinely seek the advice of theologians. Levy discussed how Godfrey of Fontaines, William of Ockham, John Wyclif, Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson all understood their roles and protected their rights as theologians.

James Lee was not able to attend the conference because of the birth of his first child. Nicole Reibe read his paper. In the paper, Lee compared the ecclesiologies of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. He focused on each theologian's views of readmitting lapsed Christians into the community. Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine also tried to balance the charismatic and sacramental aspects of Church membership.

Our conversation after the presentations focused on history. Holder and Levy helped the audience better understand the historical circumstances—both political and ecclesial—behind their papers.

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