

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY (I) – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: Capitalism as Competitor to the Sacramental Economy: Engaging the Work of Eugene McCarragher
Convener: Andrew Salzmann, Benedictine College
Moderator: Ramon Luzarraga, Benedictine University in Mesa, Arizona
Presenters: Christopher Haw, University of Scranton
Daniel Rober, Sacred Heart University

This year's first Historical Theology Topic Session was entitled, "Capitalism as Competitor to the Sacramental Economy: Engaging the Work of Eugene McCarragher." Our first presenter, Christopher Haw, delivered a paper entitled, "Dismal Science and the Bread of Life: On the Unnatural Enchantments of Mannon's Modern Growth." His paper revised narratives of the natural emergence accounts of capitalism, centered around the tumult of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which tend to frame its economic ascendancy as neutral, unforced, and bequeathing a univocally benevolent order. Considering the deleterious effects on both planetary and human justice, he contrasted the darker roots of capitalism—as our idolatrous enchantment religion, per McCarragher's accounts—with an attention to the realism dramatized in Eucharistic practice, and explored his own responses to these challenges, in his professional and personal life.

Our second presenter, Daniel Rober, read a paper entitled, "Social Catholicism and the Wages of Whiteness: Working Toward Solidarity." In it he explored how the European tradition of Social Catholicism made a notable impact in the twentieth-century United States both through promotion of organized labor by the institutional church as well as radical movements such as the Catholic Worker. He analyzed this movement through the lens of sociological discussions concerning race and ethnicity, tracing how the emergence of Catholic immigrants as "white ethnics"—precisely through their identity as workers—shifted their relationship to Social Catholicism. Rober considered how the tradition of Social Catholicism can influence a renewed advocacy for workers' rights as well as resistance to racism and nationalism.

A lively discussion followed the conclusion of the two presentations among the ten who were present at this session.

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