

POST-POST-CONCILIAR AND MILLENNIAL
THEOLOGIANS – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Post-Post-Conciliar and Millennial Theologians/Perspectives on Labor
 Convener: Katherine G. Schmidt, Molloy College
 Moderator: Daniel Rober, Sacred Heart University
 Presenters: Kevin P. McCabe, Seton Hall University
 Adam Sheridan, University of Dayton

This interest group continues to highlight the work of early career theologians, so-called “Millennial” scholars who were born after the election of Pope John Paul II (1978). This year’s panel focused on the convention theme of labor from the perspective of this demographic of theologians.

Kevin P. McCabe’s presentation, “Does Catholic Queer Theology Have a Future?”, queried the relationship between queer theology and notions of the future from both queer theory and theology. In this way, McCabe’s paper focused on the place and future of queer theology in the academy as well. He contextualized his discussion of queer theology within the larger “crisis of higher education in the United States.” McCabe engaged the discussion of future/futurity in secular queer theory, summarizing the work of Lee Edelman specifically. Edelman argues that political projects that orient themselves toward the future are “illusory.” According to McCabe, “Being queer, for [Edelman], is an uncompromising refusal, a point of perpetual critique that disrupts and exposes the exclusionary violence that lurks inside of hopes for a better future.” McCabe then turned to John McNeill’s queer theology, which argues “that we are entering the third age, a time of spiritual maturity in which all persons can know and experience God in the immediacy of their hearts without reliance on external authority.” Ultimately, McCabe proposed that Karl Rahner’s eschatological reflections provide a more helpful framework for considering the future of queer theology. Rahner allows adequate space for the important category of mystery when considering anything about the future. According to McCabe, mystery “is the condition that allows us to have genuine human freedom and act in the world with commitment and hope.” Such openness is helpful for queer theology, according to McCabe, because it provides a third way between Edelman’s dismissal of future-orientation and McNeill’s overly optimistic, almost realized-eschatological vision.

Adam Sheridan’s research focuses on the theology of labor, with specific focus on the papacy of Leo XIII and his interpretation and critique of Karl Marx. Sheridan began his presentation, “Contesting The Holy Queen: The *Salve Regina* and Catholic Imagination of Labor,” with an analysis of Marx’s comments on religion, providing new insight on the oft-quoted “Religion in the opiate of the people.” Sheridan argues that Marx’s perspective on religion must be understood in the context of the German labor class, which was predominantly Catholic. Evidence of Marx’s understanding here can be seen in his use of the “vale of tears,” which is a direct quote from the *Salve Regina*. By appealing to the devotional practices of the laboring class, Marx attempts to harness their awareness of earthly suffering and turn their attention away from heavenly redemption and toward earthly economic transformation. Sheridan ends his discussion with an analysis of Leo XIII’s response to Marx’s targeting of Catholic

devotional practices. Under Pope Leo, Catholics were compelled to recite prayers that included the *Salve Regina*. Therefore, as Sheridan writes, “inasmuch as Leo invokes the *Salve Regina* in his condemnation of Marxist socialism, the devotional practice that redounds the antiphon’s liturgical utterance serves to reinforce this condemnation amongst the Catholic faithful in general but also Catholic labor in particular.”

Fifteen participants engaged in a discussion of both presenters’ work. Of particular note are the multiple questions about the future of academic theology in light of consumerism.

KATHERINE G. SCHMIDT
Molloy College
Rockville Centre, New York