

CREATION/ESCHATOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Thinking Catholic Interreligiously
 Convener: Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M., Saint Mary's College
 Moderator: Chelsea King, Sacred Heart University
 Presenters: Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo, Wake Forest University
 Christopher Cimorelli, National Institute for Newman Studies
 Respondent: Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University

This session focused on interreligious dialogue, decolonial theory, feminist theory, and the development of doctrine within the context of theologies of creation. It consisted of two papers and a response, which focused on the theme of the convention: "Thinking Catholic Interreligiously."

Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo opened the session with a paper titled, "Redeeming the Commons of Creation: Towards an Interreligious, Decolonial, and Ecofeminist Theology of the Kin-dom of God." Gandolfo begins her paper with an introduction to the concept of the commons and then interrogates the history of Christian theology's complicity in the gendered and racialized process of enclosing the commons. After establishing this historical context, the paper takes a constructive turn in which Gandolfo highlights two ways in which Christian ecotheology can learn from dialogue with indigenous cosmovisions and practices of commoning in order to (a) deploy a decolonial logic of resistance against the coloniality of global capitalism and its reliance on patriarchy and racialized violence; and (b) reclaim "the commons of creation as a site of shared pursuit of human and planetary wellbeing." Gandolfo concludes by gesturing toward the ways that a commons-centered Christian theology may find paths toward interreligious dialogue with indigenous traditions and seek to share practical outcomes.

Christopher Cimorelli offered the second paper, titled, "The Fruits of Interreligious Dialogue on the Climate: Doctrinal Development and Creation Theology." Cimorelli opens his paper with an argument that global climate change is a unique focal point for engaging in interreligious dialogue because "it provides a common object to unite proponents of distinct worldviews." Additionally, climate change requires religious traditions, including Christianity, to engage in dialogue with the natural sciences. Drawing on the insights of John Henry Newman regarding the development of doctrine during particularly challenging moments in history, Cimorelli argues that climate change occasions such a challenge that may elicit mutual development of doctrine. The paper concludes with some consideration of what concrete developments might arise for theologies of creation from interreligious dialogue in this historical moment.

Daniel Scheid provided a response to the two papers presented in this panel. After highlighting several of the key elements of each paper and offering connections to additional resources in the theological tradition (e.g., deepening connections to Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* in Cimorelli's paper and engaging the work on the commons as found in John Hart's research), Scheid then makes a case for how comparative theological methodology provides a valuable resource in the developing theologies of creation. This is illustrated in the work of Francis Clooney who, in *Comparative*

Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders, makes the case that the aim ought to be striving to understand your dialogue partner or tradition on their own terms in order to return to one's originating tradition and see it anew. Pointing to the animist traditions Gandolfo references, Scheid notes that Christians might "see or hear resemblances in our Catholic tradition that may be otherwise hidden, neglected, unappreciated" prior to attending to such indigenous cosmovisions. Bringing together the distinctive contributions of both papers, Scheid concludes his response with the following assessment: "Climate change and mass extinction are indeed unique focal points for theological reflection, and we need continual dialogue with other religious traditions, and with the Earth and our fellow planetary creatures, in order that our Catholic tradition and doctrines of creation and eschatology might develop in a way that honors the Creator who calls us all to a greater fullness of life."

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