

<u>Topic:</u>	Postmodern Sacramental Theology
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The presentation discussed the shift from a premodern to a modern sacramental theology, the postmodern context for understanding sacramental worship, and a possible method for developing a postmodern sacramental theology.

An unspoken but defining feature of sacramentology, or more generally, sacramento-theology, is a Neoplatonic cosmology, or onto(theo)logy. According to the latter, everything—all creatures—are ordered by the quality of their being and can thus be located on a continuum flowing from God and returning to God. This presupposes an *analogia entis*, a consequence of the emanation of being from the original Being. More specifically, sacraments function as events which bring believers into harmony with this origin. This harmonization occurs against the background of a reality which, because of (1) the driving force which extends from the God-origin to beings, and (2) therefore the transparency from those beings towards the God-origin, possesses a general sacramental structure. In such a context, sacramental grace illustrates a scheme of metaphysical causality: sacramental institute harmony with the Origin.

Many modern theologians have reacted against the "beyondness" of the holy. They have primarily rejected this premodern, dualistic, static, and ahistorical conceptions in favor of an approach more attentive to modern sensibilities. Yet, here too and despite this modern accent, one finds an important, implicit, neoplatonically structured ontotheological premise. The work of both Karl Rahner and of Edward Schillebeeckx illustrate this approach.

In the context of this seminar, the term "postmodernity" centers on the manifest loss of plausibility by the so-called modern master narratives and by the erosion of the antimodern contranarratives. The loss of plausibility in the master narratives joins with a growing consciousness of (1) fundamental plurality of the postmodern condition, (2) the radical particularity and contextuality of narrative, and (3) the irreducible heterogeneity which emerges in the middle of that plurality and which instills a specific kind of critical consciousness.

If plausibility necessarily involves contextual plausibility, then the present Christian narrative may be no longer capable of offering a plausible theological orientation and integration. Until now, this narrative has answered the challenges of the postmodern context most often by grafting itself onto modern master narratives of emancipation, which has since lost their plausibility, or by hardening itself into an antimodern Christian narrative still embedded in premodern frameworks.

In postmodern cultural-philosophical reflection, theologians can find new impetus for interpreting the Christian tradition in such a way that within the

context of plurality it can again inspire people with integration and orientation. We can, however, recontextualize the Christian narrative only by deepening our sense of the thought patterns of the new context and searching for the shape of a recontextualization.

That recontextualization must acknowledge that heterogeneity can only be referred to within the limits of particularity. The tension which results from the escape of heterogeneity from the attempt to give it particular expression can provide the basis for a reconceptualization of the dialectical relationship between immanence and transcendence. Then theology will reconstruct itself along the lines of an "open narrative" standing in contemplative openness for whatever happens and bearing witness to this interruptive event through a confrontation with the open, nonhegemonic Jesus-narrative.

Discussion of this thesis focused on postmodern artistic expressions of transcendence and on the implications of a postmodern focus on particularity and irreducible concreteness.

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