

## RENAISSANCE AND MODERN THEOLOGY

Convener: William E. McConville, St. Francis/Raleigh, N.C.  
Moderator: Joseph Devlin, LaSalle University  
Presenters: Julia Fleming, Creighton University  
Anthony Sciglitano, Seton Hall University

Julia Fleming explores an issue raised in the various editions of the *Theologia Moralis Fundamentalis* by the Spanish Cistercian Juan Caramuel (1606–1882): is it acceptable for persons to read forbidden books, when they are certain they will not be harmed by doing so? Responding to Antonio Diana’s arguments against the legitimacy of such actions, Caramuel draws upon his own experiences as a missionary in Germany in order to ask whether rules that make sense in Catholic countries are equally applicable in areas marked by greater religious diversity. Without explicitly contradicting Diana’s position, Caramuel highlights its weaknesses. He asserts as probable (that is, solidly defensible) that, given the demands of theological disputation, “it is not only licit, but completely necessary that all theologians [and perhaps others] in Germany be learned and well versed in the books of heretics.” As he moved from Germany to Prague, and then to Italy as bishop of Vigevano, his views shifted and became more restrictive, more in accord with Diana’s. Fleming suggests that unresolved issues remain in Caramuel’s treatment of this topic, especially with regard to the role of conscience as well as the possibility of changing the law. Fleming also suggests that his style invites his reader to be dialogue with his earlier positions, positions that he may not have completely rejected. Questions in the discussion centered on the sources for Caramuel’s understanding of the role of law.

In his paper entitled “Immanuel Kant’s proto-Promethean theology of Religion,” Anthony Sciglitano argues that Kant’s philosophy of religion is a variety of Prometheism diagnosed by the likes of Albert Camus, von Balthasar, and David Walsh. He defined “Prometheism” as an intellectual “rebellion against a personal, transcendent divine for the good of humankind such that humanity replaces the divine as the center of meaning and value.” Sciglitano argues that the problem for theology is not that Kant limits the capacity of speculative reason to know God, but that he constricts divine freedom’s capacity for self-revelation and thus reduces Christian faith to a series of purely immanent realities. Central to this discussion is the relation between Kant’s practical philosophical discourse and what Kant calls “ecclesiastical faith.” Professor Philip Rossi raised important questions regarding whether there might be a more favorable reading of Kant’s doctrine of grace than that which Sciglitano presented.

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