

# Roman Catholic Social Teaching and Contested Domains Theologies of the Corporation and the Workplace

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## **Roman Catholic Social Teaching and Contested Domains:**

### **Theologies of the Corporation and the Workplace**

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This Symposium panel presentation takes up a specific aspect of the “Opening Governance” theme of the 2015 Academy of Management conference. Beginning with Michael Novak’s 1980s writing on a theology of the corporation, a particular, if not also peculiar, contested domain has developed concerning certain applied dimensions of Roman Catholic social teachings in the American context (Novak, 1990; Novak, 1991; Novak, 2010). We review the inspirational sources for what is referred to as *a theology of the corporation*, explore sources for its support in the U.S., and examine some of the extreme positions this research domain has produced – extreme in reference to actual historical corpus of Roman Catholic social teaching on the question of the worker. We then take up the key elements of a theology of the workplace (C. T. Tackney, 2012; C. T. Tackney, August, 2014), which initially developed from industrial relations field studies in Japan, and examine how this contrasting approach helps to both properly contextualize and formally challenge the peculiar elements of American exceptionalism that underlie certain features of the theology of the corporation corpus. The role of authenticity as a potential criterion variable for workplace relations assessment will be described. The

presentation will begin and end with one specific, simple proposal capable of revitalizing the U.S. workplace that is validly sourced in both post-World War II Japanese labor relations and Roman Catholic social teaching: enable the National Labor Relations Board to permit experimentation in employee participation and specify the forms taken in collective bargaining agreements (C. Tackney T., 2009).

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