

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM – CONSULTATION

Topic: Another World is Possible: Violence, Resistance and Transformation
Convener: Heather Miller Rubens, The Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies
Moderator: Matthew Tapie, St. Leo University
Presenter: Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland
Presenter: Richard J. Barry IV, Providence College
Jewish Respondent: David Mayaan, Boston College

Heather Miller Rubens began the session with a moment of silence for the local Jewish community. Rubens called on those present to remain committed to combating the evils of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in scholarship and dialogue. She called for those gathered to rest in the hope that “Another World” is indeed possible, and to strive to create the grammar for that world in dialogue and in partnership with Jewish friends and colleagues. She placed the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in global context, acknowledging the horrific religious violence around the world. From New Zealand to Sri Lanka, both Muslims and Catholics have been murdered in their houses of worship. Rubens asked those present to remember the eleven Jews murdered praying at the Tree of Life Synagogue (located in Pittsburgh where the CTSA convened), and asked for a moment of silence to honor their memories and the memories of all those who have lost their lives to violence motivated by religious hate.

Nicole Reibe offered the first paper, entitled “Blood and Water: Rethinking *Limpieza de Sangre* in Fifteenth Century Spain.” Reibe contextualized this particular paper as part of her broader methodological commitment to recover and reconsider medieval sources when examining contemporary theological and ethical questions. Reibe recognized that such a project should be done with humility, and in dialogue. She argued that those seeking different frameworks to understand Christian views of Judaism might fruitfully examine the work of Alfonso de Cartagena. Reibe observed that in order to quell the increasing violence against conversos stoked by the *limpieza de sangre*, Alfonso de Cartagena proposed a different conception of blood. Drawing upon the long-standing connection between blood and nobility, Cartagena fused it with Jewish covenantal theology and notions of election to create the idea of Jewish nobility. Reibe observes that this aligned Cartagena with political power and offered a non-supersessionist vision of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. While Cartagena’s ideas were obscured by the Spanish Inquisition, Reibe argued that reexamining them might offer an alternative Christian framework to supersessionism that may still prove relevant.

Richard J. Barry IV offered the second paper, entitled “The Jerusalem Temple as Icon of ‘Another World’: Beauty, Goodness, Truth.” Barry argued that Christian theologians, across the centuries, have imagined the Jerusalem temple as a site of violence: a mountain of death, divine wrath, and bloody vicarious punishments. However, modern Jewish biblical scholarship shows that, far from being a site of violence and fear, Zion was understood as the perfect icon of peace, the place where eyes were trained to perceive God’s glory, hearts trained in the way of right action, and minds trained to wrestle with truth, creaturely and divine. Barry argued that this

understanding of the temple can enrich Catholic theology in numerous ways and advance dialogue between Jewish and Catholic scholars.

David Mayaan, a doctoral student at Boston College, served as the Jewish respondent for the session. When considering Reibe's paper, Mayaan thanked Reibe for her methodological commitment to enter into the work of historical recovery in order to advance contemporary models of Jewish-Christian engagement with humility. In that spirit Mayaan offered that while he did not know Cartagena's work well, he was cautious about its possibilities. But, due to Reibe's research, Mayaan was prompted to explore Cartagena further. For Mayaan, Cartagena might be more of a cautionary tale than a model for future reframing because of Cartagena's reliance on blood. Mayaan was not confident that Cartagena's work was sufficient to counter the fractious history of blood imagery in Jewish-Christian relations. In addition, Mayaan observed that different generations of conversos on the Iberian peninsula had different levels of access to Jewish tradition and Jewish languages. In that framework, Cartagena's call to privilege Jewish blood gave him access to Jewish identity that he did not have through language or learning. In response to Barry, Mayaan challenged him to explore more robustly the temple in the Jewish imaginary and go beyond an exclusively biblical framework. Mayaan observed that Barry relied heavily on biblical views of the Temple, rather than exploring rabbinic interpretations of the temple. Mayaan observed that in order to challenge a Christian anti-Jewish imaginary of the Temple, robust engagement with rabbinic sources and Jewish colleagues was necessary for Barry's project. Mayaan concluded by offering Barry general guidance when exploring rabbinic sources around the Temple, as Mayaan observed that the temple can be a Rorschach test, with both positive and negative responses.

Matthew Tapie moderated a robust discussion of the papers, and concluded with words of gratitude for the participants in the conversation. Tapie observed how incredibly rare it is to find spaces where robust theological and historical thinking is done in true dialogue.

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