

## HISTORICAL THEOLOGY II – TOPIC SESSION

Convener: Kenneth Parker, Duquesne University  
 Moderator: Rita George-Tvrtković, Benedictine University  
 Presenters: Nicole Reibe, Loyola University Maryland  
 Wilhelmus Valkenberg, Catholic University of America  
 Respondent: Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University

Nicole Reibe's paper, "Troubled Waters: Bad Baptismal Theology in Fifteenth Century Spain," focused on two examples of what she called "bad baptismal theology" circulating in late medieval Castile, and various responses to it. The first example she discussed was forced baptism. She began with the story of Ferrán Martínez, who in 1391 whipped up a Christian mob that gave local Jews the choice of baptism or violence. That year, over fifty thousand Jews were killed, and between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand converted, creating a new group, the *conversos*. While forced conversion was not unknown to Iberian Jews, in general, the "good theology" of the universal church was against it; for example, the writings of Pope Gregory the Great, St. Augustine, and the bishops of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633 CE), all explicitly rejected the practice of forced conversion. Yet fifteenth century Spain saw a record number of forced conversions, and Reibe analyzed *converso* writings which dealt with questions such as: Did baptism erase one's Jewish heritage? Were Christians of Jewish heritage lesser Christians than others? This last question led to the second example of bad theology Reibe discussed in her paper: that baptism does not in fact ever fully convert those with "Jewish blood." This new *limpieza de sangre* idea undergirded laws such as Toledo's 1449 *Sentencia-Estatuto*, which prohibited converts of Jewish descent from certain positions. The law was rooted in a new distinction between "Old" and "New" Christians; Old Christians saw themselves as superior to New Christians, not only because *conversos* had Jewish ancestry, but also because they were (believed to have been) still secretly practicing Judaism. In these new laws and theology, the Old Christians ignored the Fourth Council of Toledo, which not only prohibited forced conversion of the Jews, but also affirmed the efficacy of their baptism.

Wilhelmus Valkenberg likewise began in medieval Spain but ended up in twentieth-century Egypt. His paper, "Means and Methods of Interreligious Engagement: Converging Goals and Diverging Methods of Ramon Martí O.P. (1220-1285) and Georges Chehata Anawati O.P. (1905-1994)," compared the efforts of two Dominicans known for their lifelong engagement with religious others. In the case of Ramon Martí, the engagement took the form of polemics, most famously his *Pugio fidei* (Dagger of faith) against Jews and Muslims. His works were part of an early Dominican effort to educate Christians engaged with Jews and Muslims in present-day Spain and North Africa. In order for this missionary effort to succeed, adequate knowledge of languages was necessary, and therefore the Dominicans set up language schools in these areas. What strikes the present-day reader of Martí's works is the pairing of polemical zeal and an effort at scholarly objectivity, since no Jew (or Muslim) could be won for the true faith if the sources used were not interpreted correctly. A similar pairing of zeal and scholarship can be found in the work of Georges

Anawati, the Egyptian Dominican singled out by Marie-Dominique Chenu to start a Dominican institute for oriental studies in Cairo. However, in the case of Anawati, his background as a Christian in Egypt helped him to focus on dialogue and friendship as a central means for engagement with Muslims, so that he became one of the leading influences in the third paragraph of *Nostra Aetate*. As a Dominican, he argued that outreach towards Muslims should be based on serious study of the theological language of Islam in the form of *kalam*, in parallel with the Thomistic heritage of the Catholicism of his days. Considered separately and together, Ramon Martí and Georges Anawati show how Dominicans could find inspiration in their religious heritage to engage in studious missionary and dialogical engagement with Jews and Muslims.

Our respondent was Amir Hussain, a Muslim scholar of the history of Islam in America. In responding to Reibe's paper about *conversos*, Hussain connected convert-polemicists such as the medieval Pablo de Santa María, with contemporary polemical works about Islam and Muslims, written by Muslims who either have converted to Christianity or become atheist. He noted that while these may be useful as polemics, they don't help us to understand why Jews remain Jews, or Muslims remain Muslims. For Hussain, the connection between Reibe's and Valkenberg's papers is the usefulness of studying multiple languages to cross interreligious divides, be they converts such as Pablo de Santa María, or theologians engaging with Islam and Judaism such as Ramon Martí and Georges Anawati.

The subsequent discussion focused on the connections between race and religion, and the transfer of *limpieza de sangre* thinking from late medieval Spain to the early modern Americas.

RITA GEORGE-TVRTKOVIĆ  
*Benedictine University*  
*Lisle, Illinois*