

WOMEN'S CONSULTATION ON CONSTRUCTIVE
THEOLOGY – CONSULTATION

- Topic: Dr. Eva Fleischner (1925-2020) and the Prospects for Interreligious Theological Thinking
- Convener: Kathryn Lila Cox, University of San Diego
- Treasurer: Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College
- Secretary: Jennifer Owens-Jofré, University of San Diego
- Moderator: Rosemary Carbine, Whittier College
- Presenter: Heather Miller Rubens, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies
- Respondents: Rabbi Dr. Ruth Abusch-Magder, Be'chol Lashon
Elena G. Procaro-Foley, Iona College

The panel began with brief comments from the moderator, who provided important context for the presentation and prepared responses that would follow. Rosemary Carbine reminded those present of comments made by María Pilar Aquino and M. Shawn Copeland at the previous year's convention in their presidential and plenary addresses, respectively, which invited members of the Society to continue to incorporate intersectional and anti-racist praxis into engagements with future convention themes. Carbine noted the ways in which anti-Black racism and anti-Semitism can be mutually reinforcing, citing recent atrocities by white nationalists during the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA, and the insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. She also pointed to the ways in which interreligious dialogue and expressions of solidarity can provide a significant counter witness to such violence, as the collaboration between the Rev. Eric S.C. Manning of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, and Rabbi Jeffrey Myers of the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, illustrates.

Heather Miller Rubens drew on the work of Eva Fleischner to make two claims. First, she argued that “dogmatic triumphalism is not the posture Catholic thinkers/practitioners should take when engaging thinkers/practitioners of other religions,” and raised questions about what “a more generous epistemic and theological framework” might produce. In doing so, Miller Rubens provided an overview of Fleischner's biography and work and echoed Fleischner's call to reject what she described as Christian supremacy, especially as it is manifest in supersessionism, dogmatic triumphalism, and evangelism that focuses on baptism and conversion. Second, she proposed that, “a rejection of theological supersessionism has direct implications for Jews and Judaism, and it also has implications for Catholic engagement with other religions, as well as Catholic engagement with racism and colonialism.” In such ways, Miller Ruben's presentation interwove thought and practice.

Ruth Abusch-Magder responded affectively, drawing on her experience as a scholar and a rabbi. She spoke to the challenge Fleischner's conversion from Judaism to Catholicism presented, likening it to a kind of abandonment, especially in the wake of the Shoah, which claimed the lives of some of her own loved ones. Abusch-Magder described the utter rage she experienced as a young person studying German in

Salzburg, when, in the absence of a Jewish community, she spent Shabbat on a park bench watching young Austrians enjoy the privilege of playing soccer. When she recounted her rage in the park to her Christian classmates, they encouraged her to forgive those who had participated in the genocide against her people only a generation before. That they would counsel forgiveness at that time added insult to injury. Even so, her reflection on Miller-Ruben's words alongside Krister Stendahl's notion of holy envy allowed her to recognize that walking toward forgiveness without letting go of her Judaism or her righteous anger can be a fruitful endeavor, one in which what is sacred can be present.

While Elena Procario-Foley's remarks were abbreviated, she focused on Miller Ruben's concerns regarding dogmatic triumphalism in Catholic theology, responding to her request "for a sorely needed epistemic humility" in reimagining Catholic relationships with Jews and Judaism, in practice and theologically. In addition, Procario-Foley acknowledged that many are able to join Miller Rubens in divesting from Christian supremacy. She also invited members of the audience who experience fear as a stumbling block to doing so to consider what letting go of that fear might entail.

The Ann O'Hara Graff Award was given to Francine J. Cardman posthumously.

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