



BOSTON COLLEGE
THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT

May 16, 2023

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to be writing this letter once again as *Associate* Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. My term as interim director concluded last summer as we welcomed the Rev. Dr. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski to the Center's directorship and Kraft Family Chair. He has brought new ideas, new energy, and a new level of professionalism to our work that will take us far. My life has filled up instead with other administrative responsibilities as Director of Graduate Studies in Boston College's Theology Department – but I am also thrilled to be working with our new director.

In the broader world of Christian-Jewish relations, this will be remembered as the year of transition back to relative normalcy as the pandemic has waned. We have resumed face-to-face dialogue meetings, though our pandemic induction into Zoom technology also continues to broaden our horizons and possibilities for impact. This has resulted in many opportunities to make contributions to the worlds of Christian-Jewish dialogue, in a number of different dimensions.

It has been my privilege to contribute this year to a number of seminars functioning as thinktanks about issues in dialogue. At an initial meeting of an international group in Philadelphia in September, titled "Christ Jesus the Jew: The Importance of His Jewish Identity for Christians and Jews Today," I explored some possibilities and parameters for a Jewish understanding of Jesus' ongoing (not just historical) Jewishness. For another gathering of dialogue partners in January in Salzburg (unfortunately via Zoom due to illness), I spoke on "Israel and Jewish Identity." A partially different group of colleagues gathered in Rome in March to discuss the implications of Karma Ben-Jochanan's book, *Jacob's Younger Brother* (our prepared remarks will be published as a review forum in *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*). While each of these seminars had its own dynamic, the overlap in participants is renewing relationships and creating new ones among an international community of scholars who are seeking ever-deeper understandings while addressing complex questions. This to my mind is one of the most important loci of our Center's work, one that requires our academic context.

There is also continuing overlap between my scholarship as a Jewish liturgist and Christian-Jewish dialogue. I continue to be a participant in the North American Academy of Liturgy, where I shared my work in progress on Jewish liturgical memory, a topic very much spurred by Christian liturgists looking to understand Jewish liturgy. I delivered a Zoom lecture on "The Normativity of Scripture in Jewish Liturgy" for an interreligious (Abrahamic focused) project on the normativity of Scripture that is a collaboration between scholars in Bonn and Zürich. One of this summer's tasks will be to convert this talk into an article for their anticipated publication. I have also just submitted an article on "Shifting Jewish Liturgical Responses to Plagues" for an historically focused volume of

contributions mostly by European Christian liturgists. Occasionally, I am also able to write purely for the Jewish Studies world. I delivered a paper in Hebrew at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem last summer on the early history of rabbinic liturgy that I hope will appear in the near future. My attention is turning now to a paper for a conference in Cambridge, UK, on the legacy of Jacob Mann on the centennial of his first major publications.

Teaching at Boston College continues to be an important part of my work as well. Israel's internal political struggles this spring deepened class discussions about the diversity of theological understandings of that land and state. The current American discourse around abortion provided a fruitful setting in which my "Judaism and Christianity in Dialogue" undergraduate core course could seek pathways to dialogue constructively across differences, a skill our greater world deeply needs. At the other end of the spectrum of teaching, I am thrilled that Dr. Bethany Slater has joined the ranks of Boston College Theology PhD graduates in Comparative Theology with a focus on Judaism and Christianity. She teaches at Denison College. Three more students are currently working on exciting dissertations, and I have just agreed to be an outside reader for another. And I too am very much looking forward to co-teaching with Dr. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski in the fall as we move our collaborations to the next level.

It is exciting to be a part of our new directions and to be playing a role in the shaping of Christian-Jewish understandings for the future!

With best wishes for a world of increased understanding and acceptance,

Ruth Langer

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