



Contact: Susan Cusick, Director of Communications

Phone: 773.896.2435

Email: scusick@ctschicago.edu

André LaCocque Book Event

CHICAGO, October 28, 2016 – students, faculty, and guests gathered at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) to discuss the historical Jesus and the role Judaism played in his life with Dr. André LaCocque, Hebrew Bible scholar and author of the new book: *Jesus, the Central Jew*.

Dr. LaCocque began his lecture with the story of how his father converted to Judaism and spent his final days in Israel. Having a Jewish father gave Dr. LaCocque unique insight into the relationship between Jesus and Judaism. Jesus's Jewish identity is not hidden in the Gospels, but Judaism's role in Jesus's life and in the Christian tradition has been the subject of scholarly interpretation for years. Dr. LaCocque explained that a frequent scholarly interpretation of Jesus's Jewishness is often analyzed in relation to how Jesus was different from Jewish society at the time. However, Dr. LaCocque noted that understanding the Jewish literature, how Jewish society worked at the time, creates a better understanding of the historical Jesus.

While rabbinic and intertestamental literatures do not focus on Jesus, they provide insights into what Dr. LaCocque called a "Jewish mentality" encompassing essential thoughts, values, and behaviors within Jewish society at the time. "I believe it is precisely when Jesus is akin with that Jewish literature, contemporary Jewish literature--or preceding Jewish literature, and even following that time of Jesus literature--that's where we find the Jewishness of Jesus and we have a chance to understand that this is what Jesus historically was and taught," Dr. LaCocque said.

Dr. Seung Ai Yang, Associate Professor of New Testament at CTS, joined Dr. LaCocque and she shared her response to *Jesus, the Central Jew*.

"[The book is] not just comprehensive, but really, very deep," Dr. Yang said. "Most scholarly books on historical Jesus have been written by Christian scholars. There are some Jewish scholars who wrote on historical Jesus from Jewish perspective. But prior to Prof. LaCocque, there was no Hebrew Bible scholar who could portray or dig out the historical Jesus as truly Jewish, engaging not only Hebrew Bible but also lots of Jewish resources. Prof. LaCocque's new book *Jesus, the Central Jew* is really unique."

After answering questions from attendees, Dr. LaCocque ended his lecture by emphasizing the importance of interreligious dialogue when interpreting the historical Jesus and that studying Jesus should not be restricted to Christians.

Jesus, the Central Jew is now available online and in stores.

View the entire lecture on the CTS YouTube channel.

About André LaCocque

In the mid-1960s, renowned Hebrew Bible scholar Dr. LaCocque joined the faculty at CTS; he launched a doctoral program in comparative religious studies to train a new generation of academics who recognize that one cannot understand early Christianity without an understanding of Judaism as well. He often co-taught with Rabbi Herman Schaalman, a prominent Chicago religious leader and activist. The principle that religious leaders need to understand traditions other than their own is now embedded in our master degree programs as well.

Responding to the urgent and ongoing need to advance mutual respect and cooperation across religious difference, Dr. LaCocque established a Center for Jewish-Christian Studies which coordinated a series of groundbreaking conferences. Among the first to recognize the importance of including Islam in the conversation among the “peoples of the book,” the expanded Center for Jewish, Christian and Islamic Studies (JCIS) now sponsors a broad range of lectures, symposia, holy day celebrations, worship, workshops, film series and social justice projects nurturing deep learning and engagement among Muslims, Christians and Jews.

ABOUT CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Based in Chicago’s Southside, Chicago Theological Seminary is committed to creating leaders for the next generation at religious leadership...whatever that may be. A leader in social justice, CTS is committed to LGBTQ and gender issues, interreligious understanding, and racial justice.

CTS is an affiliated seminary at the United Church of Christ. Since its beginning in 1855, CTS has pushed at the growing boundaries of the church in order to make faith more relevant and transform society towards greater justice and mercy. The student body now represents more than 40 different faith traditions, perspectives and denominations.



ctschicago.edu