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2019 ICCJ Lund Report  
Martin Buber House  
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*Transformations Within and Between:*  
*How Does Our New Relationship Affect Christian and Jewish Self-Understanding*  
2019 ICCJ Conference  
June 30-July 3, 2019  
Lund, Sweden

The 47<sup>th</sup> annual International Council of Christians and Jews Conference took place in Lund, Sweden from June 30-July 3, 2019. This was my first time in attendance at an ICCJ conference, and I was delighted to be welcomed with such warmth and hospitality. One of the first things that you notice at the conference is the familiarity and comradery that exists among the participants—this is a lovely phenomenon to behold, but it can also be a little bit intimidating as someone new to ICCJ and attending the conference for the first time. I was grateful that I had many prior contacts that were also in attendance, but had I not, it would have taken me even longer to warm up. A more structured welcome for newcomers could alleviate some of the pressure to meeting new people and getting involved in workshop sessions.

The amount of experience within Christian-Jewish relations that was gathered in one room is incredible, and for someone like me, who is at the beginning stages of their career, with an expressed and marked interest in Christian-Jewish dialogue/interfaith relations, it could be a little bit intimidating to try to break into some of the conversations when there exists such a deep and genuine connection between most of the attendees. However, just even having the opportunity to listen in on some of the conversations during the breaks and over meals was incredibly formative.

It seems to me that deep friendship has been built over many years, but perhaps there has not been as much intention in bringing along the next generation. It is good to see the ways some folks are forward thinking about the issue (especially as was demonstrated in the July 4<sup>th</sup> meeting for business), but there is definitely a gap in that respect. It can be a fine line between inclusion and tokenism of young people. I very much appreciated the intentionality of giving the “young people” time to gather together to chat over lunch, but that leaves out the others who could benefit from listening in on the conversation. I think it would be interesting to have an entire plenary panel (including moderator) from the “next generation”. The benefits of such a panel could be consequential for all attendees, while lifting up the profiles of newer scholars and expanding the scholarship shared.

I found a similar dynamic with regard to hospitality to manifest itself during the panel on Islam. It seemed to me that some of the questions asked of the panel were slightly tinged with—for lack of a better word—hostility. I know that this is a new conversation to start—thinking about how and when to include Muslims in to the conversation with Christians and Jews (as well as the complex relationship Christianity and Judaism each have to Islam), and all of the cultural, political, social, and theological implications of doing so. However, it felt like there was a dearth of hospitality shown toward the panelists. It cannot be easy being a religious outsider, let alone one with such a complicated history with respect to the group with whom you are engaging, to walk into a room full of people who have spent the better part of fifty years building trust and relationship. I wish I had seen more of that hospitable

energy and assumption of good will extended to that panel. To that end, I think Reuven Firestone and Heidi Hadsell did a fantastic job moderating and centering the group when the questions leaned too far in one direction.

The workshops were of much interest to me; it was a good problem to have between choosing which ones to attend! The two that really stuck out to me were B3 “Loving the Jews: ‘Judaizing’ and Philosemitism in Contemporary Christianity” as well as “How has Our New Relationship Affected Christian and Jewish Feminist Theology?”—both of these sessions touched on topics of great interest. David Sandmel and Friedhelm Pieper did a great job of presenting the topic of philosemitism, while also being mindful of the ways in which Evangelical Christians are often spoken about when it comes to this topic—I found this incredibly important given the ways in which Evangelical Christians were spoken of with broad brushstrokes within the larger conference. Because of my interest in both feminism and Islam, I would have loved to be able to attend the other sessions during Workshop C, but I realize that conference organizers cannot please everyone. I do want to note that I think feminist theology should not be necessarily relegated to a workshop, but that there should be a plenary panel on the topic, and there is nothing wrong with an all women panel.

Again, I would like to express my gratitude for being selected as a Martin Buber House scholar to attend the 2019 ICCJ conference in Lund, Sweden. It is an experience that will be formative for years to come in both the opportunities to learn and the opportunities to build connections with other scholars and practitioners in the field of Christian-Jewish relations. I hope I have presented my praise and criticism with an even hand, and to reaffirm that my positive experiences far out-weighed any negative ones. Please feel free to reach out if you have any clarifying questions or would like to speak further about any of the comments. I hope this is the beginning of a fruitful relationship between myself and Martin Buber House!