AGENTS OF THE DIVINE:
REFLECTIONS ON JUDICIAL, PAPAL AND
RABBINIC INFALLIBILITY

A PANEL DISCUSSION

THE JACOB BURNS INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES
THE CENTER FOR JEWISH LAW AND CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION
The American Constitutional, Catholic and Jewish traditions include important strains that impute absolute infallibility to authoritative figures. This controversial claim raises important questions, which will be taken up by panelists at this event: What is the basis for the view that human authorities are infallible? Is there some way in which a doctrine of infallibility is shaped by a view of judges, popes and rabbis as possessing divinely-endowed authority, as, in some way, drawing upon God’s infallibility? Does infallibility indicate that these figures are viewed as representatives for, or even embodiments of, God?

On the other hand, what, exactly, are the arguments offered by the opponents of infallibility—are they theological in nature, denying the possibility of divine presence in human deciders, or are they, instead, political in nature? Does the possibility of judicial infallibility in the American Constitutional context resemble, in its structure and foundation, the similar doctrine in the religious context? Is the image of the judge in the American imagination shaped by religious conceptions, or, ultimately, should the possibility of judicial infallibility in the secular context be distinguished from its counterpart in the religious context?

Join us as we host a panel discussion comparing claims of infallibility in the American Constitutional, Catholic and Jewish traditions.

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