Emma O'Donnell Polyakov (ed.).- *Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Interreligious Hermeneutics: Ways of Seeing the Religious Other* **(Leiden: Brill Rodop, 2019), 193p.**

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Interreligious Hermeneutics: Ways of Seeing the Religious Other looks into the hermeneutics of interreligious encounters in contexts of conflict. Comprised of eight chapters and an epilogue, this volume, which is the upshot of a three-day international conference held on December 4th through 6th, 2016, at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University, Sweden, accentuates how our understanding of the other is fashioned by the conflicts in the world and peculiarly in the Middle East and how this renders in the way we envision the other and conceive of the relationship between Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Addressing antisemitism and Islamophobia through the tools of interreligious hermeneutics, this edited volume delves deeply into the processes of interpretation, re-envisioning, and misunderstanding that necessarily crop up in any perception of the religious other, trying, hence, to underscore three discrete discourses: the study of ancient and new tropes of anti-Semitism as they become visible in today's world; research into contemporary expressions of fear or suspicion of Islam; and philosophical reflections on the hermeneutics of interreligious interactions.

In her introduction to the book, the editor, Emma O'Donnell Polyakov, emphasizes that in the past few decades there has been a shift away from soteriological concerns, in which theologians' questions have investigated non-Christian religions on the matter of salvation, toward hermeneutical questions, examining not how the religious other may be salvaged, but rather, taking the reflexive turn and examining ways of perceiving the other. So the focus is on the viewer's layers of perception and interpretation through which one attempts to comprehend this religious other. The book overemphasizes the ways that we see religious other in the increasingly religiously plural contexts of today's world. Polyakov regards hermeneutics as a tool that cannot be inscribed only within interreligious hermeneutics, the study of textual interpretation, especially biblical texts, but it can be deployed in and applied to non-textual, interpersonal contexts.

Interreligious understanding is marked by misperception or distortion, and that this serves as the central presumption of interreligious hermeneutics. In her "Types of Misunderstanding in Interreligious Hermeneutics," Catherine Cornille demystifies types of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, offering a typology of the various forms. The religious other cannot be represented in a neutral manner because the represener's subjectivity surely intervenes in the interpretation of this religious other. She postulates that the main presumption in interreligious hermeneutics is that all understanding of the religious other is stained by a degree of misrepresentation (innocent, negligent and fraudulent). This may be fuelled by either destructive or constructive intentions. On the one hand, these forms of misrepresentation may intend to essentialize, generalize, exaggerate and disparage this religious other, but they may also in some cases be used to idealize the Other, on the other. Though all interreligious understanding entails some degree of misunderstanding or misinterpretation, productive engagement with another religion presupposes certain principles of "constructive interreligious hermeneutics": humility, generosity and empathy.

In the same vein, Marianne Moyaert provides another perspective on interreligious hermeneutics, with a study of how narrative hospitality can be utilized to derail religious ideology. In her "Making Space for the Other: From Religious Ideology to Narrative Hospitality," Moyaert draws upon the hermeneutics of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, discussing how religious ideological discourse can influence the way one perceives and relates to the religious other. Moyaert uses Ricoeur's work to look at how the problem of this ideological discourse may be dwelt upon from a religious angle, and argues that hermeneutical strategies can be deployed to overcome triumphalist traditions, one-sided interpretations of scriptures and rigid accounts of founding events. These strategies are interreligious flexibility and narrative hospitality. The latter is, from a Ricoeurian stance, all about "taking responsibility, in imagination and in sympathy, for the story of the other through the narratives which concern that other (Ricoeur 7)." Ricoeur's ideal of narrative hospitality is epitomized in an interreligious practice, known as scriptural reasoning, in which Jews, Muslims and Christians come together to read and discuss portions from each other's sacred scriptures to encourage a receptivity to the religious other.

The second part of the volume, "Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and Anti-Zionism," is made up of case studies in perceptions of Jews and Judaism, covering the related but distinct phenomena of racial discrimination against Jews, theological disparaging and invalidation of Judaism, and anti-Zionist

sentiments as they relate to Jews as a collective. This section begins with a discussion of Christian theologies of Judaism, in a paper by Randall C. Zachman entitled "Identity, Theology and the Jews: The Uses of Jewish Exile in the Creation of Christian Identity." Zachman demonstrates that the theological category of the exile of the Jews comes to be used in three distinct but overlapping ways and models in the creation of Christian identity: (1) The Jews as the supreme example of divine punishment; (2) the Jews as uniquely rejected and abandoned by God; and (3) the Jews as unimpeachable witnesses to the Gospel of Christ.

Raymond Cohen investigates the way that these theological prejudices against Judaism occur in a political context in a paper, entitled "Was Theology to Blame? The Holy See and Israel's Stony Path to Normalization." Cohen underscores the sources of the dispute between the Vatican and the early Zionist movement, and later Israel, with the aim of unravelling the theological and political interests which were at odds in the history of this troubled relationship by comparing the two actors' policies and mindsets towards each other at four moments distinguished by very different international circumstances – 1904, 1943, 1947-1949, and 1991-1993. Cohen subverts the assumption that conflicts between Israel and the Vatican are deeply seated in religious differences. In addition to this source of contention between these two factions and entities, there are other sources of conflict mainly theological dissonance, political interests, and ingrained mutual antagonism.

In "Contemporary Antisemitism in Europe and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Connections and Misconceptions," Henrik Bachner throws light on how perceptions of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict are influential in fuelling anti-Semitism across Europe today. The author explains different examples of violence and expressions of anti-Semitism in Europe recently as a specific way of thinking about Jews, as a set of beliefs that are historically and culturally rooted and reproduced. He examines instances of antisemitism in distinct political and cultural contexts in Western and Eastern Europe, and carefully determines linkages with racist ideologies, religious prejudice, and political conflict in each context. He argues that while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict clearly affects antisemitism in Europe, in many instances the conflict serves as a context in which entrenched antisemitic prejudices unrelated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict find expression.

The third part of the volume revolves around "Islamophobia in Media." Exploring Swedish mainstream newspapers' coverage of the refugee crisis with particular emphasis on the connections made to Islam between 2011-

2016, Dalia Abdelhady and Gina Fristedt Malmberg offer a perspective from the social sciences in their "Swedish Media Representation of the Refugee Crisis: Islam, Conflict and Self-Reflection." Swedish national newspapers stereotype these refugees as fundamentally different, both religiously and culturally, with a constellation of symbols and images which are Islamophobic in essence. As a form of discourse and othering, Islamophobia subsumes representations that essentialize Muslims as having intrinsic qualities that cast them as inferior by using stereotypes, marking, hence, a stark boundary between Europe and Muslims.

If Abdelhady and Malmberg survey Swedish newspapers, Peter Gottschalk looks at the connection between emotion and cognition in responses to Islamophobic humour in the American media. In his "Affect, Thought, and Hermeneutics: Changes in the Views of Muslims in American Editorial Cartoons," Gottschalk avers that most research has focused on what non-Muslims *think* about Islam and Muslims, not what they *feel* about them, analysing, hence, the interplay between cognition and emotion. Indeed, cognitive and emotive realms mutually strengthen one another's dynamics of upholding associations among citizens and engendering difference toward non-citizens and suspect citizens. To substantiate this premise, Gottschalk examines the productions of ten contemporary American editorial cartoons between November 2015 and November 2016, peculiarly those addressing the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) and the Syrian refugee crisis. He comes to the conclusion that editorial cartoons serve as a useful vehicle to appraise the affective dimension of divergent opinions towards Islam and Muslims.

Jonas Otterbeck follows Peter Gottschalk's paper with an in-depth analysis of one particular cartoon strip, in "Islam in Satire: Representations, Taste Cultures, and Liquid Racism." Otterbeck considers the way that the Swedish cartoon strip, *Rocky*, humorously manipulates racial and religious stereotypes, particularly of Muslims. *Rocky* is a Swedish, so-called autobiographical comic strip written and drawn by Martin Kellerman, first published in the free newspaper *Metro* in 1998. Deploying a hermeneutical approach, Otterbeck argues that *Rocky* uses Islamophobic expression but does not necessarily send an Islamophobic message to the reader; different taste communities are likely to read the comic differently, and depending on the sensitivities of respective community. The author culls from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of taste culture and Simon Weaver's theory of liquid racism.

This volume closes with a riveting epilogue entitled "Jews, Jihad & Jesus: Dousing Fires Ignited by a Misremembered Christ," a public lecture

delivered by the American historian, journalist and Roman Catholic reformer James Carroll, on December 5, 2016, at Lund University. Carroll offers an ardent critique of the misrepresentations of Jesus that, he argues, have provoked distrust and hatred of the religious other throughout history. Carroll argues that a dichotomous ontological mindset has unleashed in Christianity, which manifests today in anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and multiple forms of hatred, constituting what he terms the "the soul-sickness of the West."

Carroll contends that to overcome this deep-seated pattern of opposition and "us against them" mentality or the "West against the rest" trope, Christians must work assiduously to re-construe scripture, and must re-envision Jesus in his Jewish environment, for the sake of interreligious and intercultural relations today. This volume is highly recommended in that the case studies the contributors dwell upon hermeneutically about thorny issues of Islamophobia, bigotry, anti-Semitism, *inter alia*, make us cogently believe that the more we exclude, essentialize, stereotype, disparage or pigeon-hole the religious Other, the more wretchedly unhappy we become. So, as James Carroll affirms, "Love your neighbor. Love your neighbor."

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