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Jenseits der Tradition?

Tradition und Traditionskritik in Judentum, Christentum und Islam, Boston/Berlin/München: De Gruyter, 2015. VII + 264 pages, € [D] 89.95, ISBN 978-1-61451-539-5

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The book under review goes back to a conference held in Münster in July 2010 and contains 14 articles and two prefaces, to which two indices are added. All articles are written in German, although the table of contents gives a German and an English title to each paper and the second preface is an English translation of the German preface. Each article commences with a very short English summary. Since the “publication does not aim for a comprehensive and systematic overview of the theme” (p. 3), the editors seem to have decided not to add an introduction.

The articles themselves are arranged into four groups. The first group which bears the heading “Preliminary Reflection” consists of one article by one of the series editors. George Tamer argues that the three religions in focus share a general idea, namely that they orientate towards a future and simultaneously look back to their past. The main arguments of this article are taken from Danièle Hervieu-Léger and Louis J. Hamman.

The second group of articles contains five articles on Judaism. Dagmar Börner-Klein scrutinizes Jewish law on the treatment of capital punishment. The point of interest is that Biblical and Talmudic law know death sentences in special cases, but the question remains as to whether this was put into practice throughout history. The author reflects on some examples from the Middle Ages which give evidence to the fact that—at least on the Iberian

Peninsula—Jews did execute delinquents. Regina Grundmann introduces the reader to Hiwi al-Balkhi's criticism of the Jewish tradition which can only be reconstructed from Saadya Gaon's criticism of that 9th-century writer. Al-Balkhi's arguments read like those of ancient and modern critics of the Bible in the tradition of Markion. Peter Sh. Lehnardt focuses on an excursus in one of Abraham ibn (or: aben) Ezra's Commentary on Qohelet in which the Iberian poet criticises the Roman poetic-liturgical traditions. Farina Marx displays the sources of the 12th-century exegetical compilation *Yalkut Shimoni* on Habakkuk. The conclusion of her paper, namely that the redactor offers a dynamic understanding of tradition is not only true for the Yalkut but for all medieval commentaries. All four papers on the Medieval traditions give valuable insights into the discussions in Judaism within its different cultural contexts and their respective definitions of tradition. The fifth paper on Judaism by Ephraim Meir turns to a 20th-century philosophical dialogue between Martin Buber and Franz Fischer. Fischer's thought formed an esoteric philosophical tradition on its own by replacing the prefix 're-' by 'pro-'. This analysis contains some interesting aspects of his meta-religious ideas, but I do not see a real connection to the volume's subject, if it is not defined as a trend beyond the mainstream.

The third group of articles contains five articles on Christianity. Hermut Löhr turns to the understanding of New Testament writers of the Decalogue tradition. Some of the dates provided and the understanding of Second Temple Judaism as reflected in that article remain disputable. Gerhard Althoff discusses a neglected aspect of the Crusade history, namely the popes' legitimization of violence and slaughter of non-Christians during the capture of Jerusalem. The article is a reprint from a recent book by Althoff. Klaus Müller and Jürgen Werbeck analyse aspects of the Roman-Catholic theology. Müller turns to the relation of reason and faith in history. Whether his categorization of the history of Christian theology into four phases (from

Judaism to a Hellenic environment, Aristotelianism in the high middle ages, philosophical modernity in the 16th century, a polycentric Church in the 20th century, cf. pp. 154-7) can be upheld remains to be discussed. Werbick turns to the hermeneutical question as to how to relate Holy Scripture and Ecclesiastical tradition. Finally, Assaad Elias Kattan analyses the Greek-Orthodox understanding of the role of women in the Church. Despite the fact that the consultation of Rhodos in 1988 at first sight seems to have canonised a rejection of women's ordination, Kattan holds that the rigid traditional positions begin to erode.

The fourth and last group of articles contains three articles on Islam. Angelika Neuwirth presents a first draft of her ideas of the Qur'ān as a product of Late Antiquity which she now has laid down in two monographs. The article seems to be written about a decade before the conference leading to this volume as the calculations on p. 195 show. Ursula Günther presents data from interviews with young Muslims in Germany and their understanding and treatment of their own religious tradition. A full analysis shall be published in the near future in monographic form. Finally, Perry Schmidt-Leukel reflects on the contemporary Muslim-Buddhist dialogue. After being written, the article became outdated because of new initiatives as the author states himself (cf. pp. 256-8).

As the brief survey of articles may have shown, the volume contains some contributions worth being read in their respective disciplines although the section on Judaism seems to be the strongest. Since the editors dispense with an introduction, the book is nonetheless incomplete. The reader would have expected a systematization of how to understand 'tradition' or, at least, first ideas of a concept of 'tradition'.

One has to ask whether a journal rather than a book would have been a better medium of publication.

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