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*Islam, Religious Liberty and Constitutionalism in Europe*

M. Hill KC and L. Papadopoulou (eds)

Bloomsbury Publishing, Oxford, 2024, 281 pp (hardback £95), ISBN: 978-1-5099-6695-0

Edited by leading Law and Religion scholars Mark Hill KC and Lina Papadopoulou, *Islam, Religious Liberty and Constitutionalism in Europe* is a collection dedicated to exploring the place of Islam in the legal and political framework underpinning Europe. The contributors to the collection range from academics to former judges and politicians, and many of the chapters are constructed from papers presented at the XXXI Annual Conference of the European Consortium for Church and State Research in 2021. The remaining chapters are designed to enhance the political, sociological and territorial coverage of the book, and do indeed achieve this. The chapters represent a comparative and international scope, and deal with a range of subjects spanning areas such as constitutional law, and human rights law in the context of religious freedom, securitisation and Islamophobia. The book very effectively investigates the ways in which Islam interacts with the legal system in Europe in a clear and concise manner, providing much for the reader to reflect upon. As such, the collection signifies an important and timely advancement in the law and religion scholarship.

The collection begins with an essential chapter dedicated to explaining the legal, political and cultural landscape in Europe as it relates to Islam. This chapter, authored by the editors, explores and explains the general themes underpinning the entire book: 'the history of European constitutionalism; the 2000-year history of Christian devotion and practice; and the history of Islamic faith' (p. 13). This initial chapter also outlines the extent to which legal doctrine is impressed upon by theological ideas, namely Christian tradition. The message behind this collection is succinctly summed up by the editors: 'We are informed by our history; we are moulded by our history; we are products of our history' (p. 13). As such, the collection underscores the importance of reflecting on our history to inform our future. Themes of harmony and integration are apparent throughout the chapters in this collection.

Each chapter focuses on a different element, encompassed by four key themes: constitutional challenges; religious freedom and other human rights; supranational and comparative approaches and; securitisation and Islamophobia. In the first part of the book, the chapters focus on the constitutional challenges faced by the place of Islam in Europe. For instance, Ali Rashid Al-Nuaimi comments in his chapter, from a historical perspective, on the significance of coexistence and the risk of isolation for Muslim communities: 'a new generation is starting to change this culture and become involved in interfaith initiatives and social service, but this is just the beginning. It needs encouragement, more involvement and a changing mentality...' (p. 40).

In the second part of the collection, each chapter focuses on an element of religious freedom or human rights law. In Chapter 8, Samia Bano examines key issues surrounding European Muslim women and religious practice. In particular, she looks at choice, consent, agency capabilities and autonomy: 'The relationship between agency and choice becomes even more complicated within wider debates of identity, belonging and citizenship for women living within minority Muslim communities' (p. 109). In the third part of the collection, each chapter takes a supranational or comparative approach and explores beyond Europe, setting up an important avenue for future comparative research on Islam in this context. In final part of the book, Islamophobia is confronted.

It is particularly encouraging to see the rigour with which several chapters confront Islamophobia. In the words of the editors, although Islamophobia is 'a topic which many try to avoid, fearing that the mere recognition of its existence might foster unrest and disharmony... several contributors to this volume address the matter head-on and without apology' (p. 9). For instance, Chapter 16 examines the spectrum that is Islamophobic speech, from the expression of political opinions that involve anti-Islamic rhetoric to anti-Muslim hate speech and the role of Articles 10 and 17 of the ECHR. This chapter raises the issue that Islamophobic speech has two potential consequences for Europe that, Papadopoulou argues, must be addressed: 'it can either lead to limitations of speech broader than those appropriate for a liberal democratic society, or, on the contrary, it can backfire and be abused by far-right-wing political forces in their attempt to justify anti-Muslim hate speech' (p. 224). Chapter 19, on the other hand, is the final chapter of the collection, and studies the interaction between religion and nativist attitudes, from a quantitative perspective. Anastasia Litina and Konstantinos Papastathis draw the conclusion that 'there is not a homogenous Roman Catholic or Protestant attitude vis-à-vis immigration and Islam, but the religious bodies from countries of the same creed follow different paths' (p. 270). The ways in which Islamophobia is recognised and handled by the contributors establishes a promising inauguration for future conversations in the field.

Overall, the collection can be described as a refreshing and stimulating advancement in the law and religion scholarship, and would be of particular appeal to those interested in the historical advancements of Islam in Europe. The book therefore brings questions about Islam's place in Europe to the fore of discussions within the law and religion discipline and beyond. Each chapter delves into a timely and important issue – many of which are often considered controversial. Significantly, the book offers no concluding chapter, allowing for the reader to draw their own conclusions from the vast range of topics discussed and arguments made.