

Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others, edited by Mohammad Hassan Khalil, with a foreword by Tariq Ramadan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xxii + 335 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-994541-2, \$99.00 (pb)

The problem of religious diversity is one of the most discussed issues in the philosophy of religion. *Between Heaven and Hell* examines the issue of religious diversity within the Islamic tradition. The book contains thirteen articles, most of which are the result of the “Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others” symposium held at the University of Illinois in 2010. The articles are organized into six thematic sections: Historical Dimensions, Diversity and Mercy, Supersessionism and Mercy, Reconceptualising Pluralism, Otherness and the Qurʾān, and Otherness and Inclusion/Exclusion.

The essays in the first section examine classical and modern Muslim approaches to the question of non-Muslim salvation. For instance, in his article, “Failures of Practice or Failures of Faith: Are non-Muslims Subject to the Sharia?,” A. Kevin Reinhart analyzes two different positions held by classical Muslim jurists. Reinhart argues that the development of Islam into a global religion by the late third century and growing concerns about equity caused most Muslim scholars to increasingly assert the position that – in theory, if not in practice – non-Muslims are subject to *sharīʿa*. In the second essay, entitled “No Salvation Outside Islam’: Muslim Modernists, Democratic Politics, and Islamic Theological Exclusivism,” Mohammad Fadel traces changes in Muslim scholars’ approaches toward non-Muslims from classical to modern times. He argues that, legally and soteriologically, these changes can be characterized by a shift from exclusivism to inclusivism. He indicates that the liberal democratic ideals of the modern world are the primary reason for this change of approach. This assertion supports John Rawl’s claim that democracies can tolerate theological exclusivity and that, far from subverting the stability of a democracy, liberal democracy is more likely to subvert theological exclusivity.

In the essays in the subsequent sections, contributors depart from historical analysis to present their own evaluations of the problem of non-Muslim salvation. William C. Chittick argues in his essay, “The

Ambiguity of the Qur'anic Command," that any claim to possess categorical knowledge about salvation implies the ability to interpret the divine Word and therefore stands on slippery ground. Chittick also claims that pre-modern scholars' interpretations of other religions were based on insufficient knowledge of these religions. His preferred solution to the problem of salvation is a Sufi approach, which views the problem in terms of self-knowledge or love, rather than a theological approach, which views the problem in terms of reward and punishment. In his "Beyond Polemics and Pluralism: The Universal Message of the Qur'an," Reza Shah-Kazemi also finds his solution in the Sufi tradition. For him, the universality of the Qur'ān, as understood by the Sufi tradition, provides the most effective way to transcend exclusivism without relativizing one's own faith. He claims that while a literal interpretation of key verses in the Bible leads to exclusivism, literal interpretations of dozens of verses in the Qur'ān incontrovertibly uphold a universal religious perspective. Shah-Kazemi adds that the Qur'ān defies a pluralist thesis, which claims that the diversity of faiths is the result of human responses to God. Rather, the Qur'ān asserts that God is the source of religious diversity, which God ordained so that the members of different religions could compete with each other in goodness. Yasir Qadhi in his "The Path of Allah or the Paths of Allah?" examines classical theological interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses related to the salvation of others and then argues that it is difficult to find support for soteriological pluralism in the Qur'ān and its classical interpretations.

The question of whether religious pluralism is compatible with Islam is approached from a different angle by Tim Winter in his article, "Realism and Real: Islamic Theology and the Problem of Alternative Expressions of God" Winter argues that religious pluralism is incompatible with Islamic monotheism because Islamic monotheism rejects the idea of a plurality of objects of worship specific to different human groups that mediate between individual worshippers and the ineffable Absolute, an idea that characterizes many forms of ancient paganism. Winter sees the source of pluralism in the paganism of the Greeks and the Romans, who believed in an ultimate deity beyond human knowledge or linguistic expression and accessible to human beings only when manifested in the form of a particular cult figure. Therefore, different nations worship different personifications of the Ultimate. This understanding, Winter argues, not only suited pagan philosophers but was politically advantageous to Roman emperors,

whose subjects worshipped a large variety of deities. Winter further contests that the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire suppressed this pluralist approach. The arrival of Islam also asserted in a particularly firm way the monotheistic exclusion of pluralism. Winter believes that Islamic theology also rejects the pagan assumption that language about the divine nature provides subjective information. Classical Sunnī orthodoxy teaches the objective reality of the divine qualities and is therefore incompatible with the pluralist claim. To escape from this difficulty, Winter notes, pluralists frequently turn to Sufi figures such as Ibn ‘Arabī. However, Ibn ‘Arabī’s view of other religions does not support a pluralist interpretation. For Winter, this does not mean that Sunnī orthodoxy excludes others, for although it claims to present truths about God and the world, it does not totally exclude the claims of other religions.

Criticism of pluralism continues in Muhammad Legenhausen’s article, “Nonreductive Pluralism and Religious Dialogue.” Unlike reductive pluralism, which dismisses the fundamental claims of particular religious traditions, nonreductive religious pluralism recognizes that some of the values held by various religious traditions cannot be reduced to common factors among them. Because there are many forms of religious pluralism, Legenhausen argues that nonreductive pluralism can be defended by Islamic sources.

Sajjad H. Rizvi, in “Oneself as the Saved Other? The Ethics and Soteriology of Difference in Two Muslim Thinkers,” evaluates religious pluralism by drawing upon the arguments of two contemporary Iranian thinkers, M. Mojtahed Shabestari and Abdolkarim Soroush. Rizvi criticizes the jurisprudential and scripto-centrist approaches to the problem of pluralism that dominate Muslim discourse. According to Rizvi, Shabestari and Soroush present an alternative approach. However, they fall short of providing definite answers to basic questions and therefore leave room for further discussion of the issue.

The idea of the ambiguity of the divine Word, mentioned earlier in Chittick’s contribution, reappears in Farid Esack’s article, “The Portrayal of Jews and the Possibilities for Their Salvation in the Qur’an.” Esack argues that the Qur’an does not take a monolithic position toward Jews. Because contemporary discourse on the Jews is dominated by polemic, Esack’s analysis avoids such an approach to show that because the portrayal of the Jews is not definite, any definitive interpretation of the issue should be considered as at best a selective read-

ing of the text. Consequently, he argues, there is a possibility for pluralities of understanding to exist in a pluralistic world. Esack elaborates that Qurʾānic verses related to the Jews should be read within their historical context. Such readings indicate that the possibility of salvation for Jews may be an equally legitimate interpretation as that supported by the polemicists. Historicizing the text also saves the Qurʾān. It is an inconsistency on the part of Muslim theologians, Esack notes, to reject Christianity's doctrine of original sin while believing that Jews are condemned because of the indiscretions of their forefathers.

In her "Embracing Relationality and Theological Tensions: Muslima Theology, Religious Diversity, and Fate," Jerusha Lamptey evaluates religious pluralism using Muslim women's interpretations of the Qurʾān, Jeannine H. Fletcher's Christian feminist approach to religious pluralism, and T. Izutsu's semantic analyses of the Qurʾān. Lamptey argues that contemporary Islamic discourse on religious pluralism, as exemplified in the writings of Asghar Ali Engineer, Mahmut Aydın, S. Hossein Nasr, R. Shah-Kazemi, and M. Legenhausen, prioritizes sameness over difference. She then evaluates three contemporary Muslim women's interpretations of the Qurʾān (Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan) as they relate to religious pluralism. The principle implication of their interpretations is that although the Qurʾān creates categories to describe religious difference, such as *muslim* and *kāfir*, these are not the same as those used in contemporary religious discourse. The Qurʾānic categories refer to dynamic patterns of belief, action, and interaction. Salvation is therefore not determined by membership in a particular religion but by participation in that dynamic pattern.

The discussion of otherness and inclusion/exclusion continues in the book's final section. In his article, "The Food of the Damned," David M. Friedenreich sets larger theological questions aside to examine a simple problem encountered by ordinary Muslims, namely, whether they may have lunch with their non-Muslim associates. He claims that medieval discussions about the food of non-Muslims did not consider actual cases. Rather, Sunnī Muslim jurists discussed imaginative cases for pedagogical purposes, and Shīʿī jurists discussed the issue as a form of anti-Sunnī polemic. Friedenreich argues that, unlike medieval Muslim thinkers, many contemporary Muslim writers pay considerable attention to the actual practices of non-Muslims.

In her “Acts of Salvation: Agency, Others, and Prayer Beyond the Grave in Islam,” Marcia Hermansen explores the prohibition of Muslims from praying for deceased non-Muslims. She argues that for an exclusivist Muslim, this prohibition can be tenable. For those who are inclined to pluralism, however, this prohibition may be challenged by means of historical contextualization and textual analysis. Hermansen notes that she, as a Muslim living in a modern pluralistic society, finds this prohibition untenable.

In the final article, “Citizen Ahmad among the Believers: Salvation Contextualized in Indonesia and Egypt,” Bruce B. Lawrence questions whether the pragmatic considerations of this world influence metaphysical reflections about salvation. He demonstrates that practical everyday structures influence and reflect textual interpretations and theological projections of the End. Lawrence suggests that one cannot imagine diversity in the next world unless he or she experiences it in this world. Experiencing diversity, however, does not mean embracing pluralism, which requires recognizing, respecting, and acknowledging diversity as a divinely decreed good. With this in mind, Lawrence examines how salvation is contextualized within two Muslim majority nation states, namely, Indonesia and Egypt.

These articles, together with the foreword by Tariq Ramadan, provide a balanced account of Islamic perspectives on salvation and the fate of others. Unlike earlier works on the subject that passionately advocated John Hick’s pluralist thesis without reservation, the contributors to this volume demonstrate the diverse range of interpretations within Islamic tradition. Most of the contributors are critical of Hick’s pluralist thesis and suggest alternative forms of pluralism.

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