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Book Reviews

Islamophobia: The challenges of pluralism in the 21st century. Edited by John Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 236. ISBN: 978-0-19-975364-2.

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French in origin, the term Islamophobia was first used by Etienne Dinet and Slima Ben Ibrahim (1925). In the English language, the word "Islamophobia" first appeared in an article by Edward Said in 1985 ("Orientalism Reconsidered," *Race and Class*, *27*(2), l-l5). Since then, and particularly since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon, the term has become increasingly prevalent and socially acceptable in the West, as well as in other parts of the world. A number of recent publications, including the OIC's Observatory report on Islamophobia ("The OIC Observatory on Islamophobia," *Fourth OIC Observatory Report on Islamophobia (Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims*, May 2010 to April 2011, Jeddah: OIC, 2011), portray disturbing coverage of attacks against Muslims, their families and their educational centres.

However, the term Islamophobia suffers from an agreed upon definition which has been imprecisely applied to very diverse phenomena, ranging from neo-Orientalism to cultural racism and anti-terrorism. In *Islamophobia* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), Chris Allen gives not merely a history of this disputed concept but devotes an entire chapter to developing a new definition for "Islamophobia" which still remains vague. No such attempt is made, however, by the editors – Professor John Esposito of the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding and Ibrahim Kalin serving as the faculty in the same Centre – of the scholarly collection under review. Despite Allen's contention of superficiality, the editors approvingly

made use of the 1997 Runnymede Report's definition of Islamophobia as "dread, hatred, and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetuated by a series of closed views that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims" (pp. xii-xiii). This definition is repeated on pages 8, 21 and 65. The editors, however, recognise the controversy surrounding the concept and hence tried to remedy this by making a virtue of multi-disciplinary and comparative approaches to Islamophobia, in hopes that greater scholarly rigour may help eliminate some of the controversies around the concept.

This edited volume is the product of papers presented in a conference at Georgetown University. It consists of an introduction by John Esposito, a foreword by Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and eleven chapters by European, American, and Middle Eastern scholars exploring the phenomenon from the perspectives of sociology, political science, religion and history. These scholars examine Islamophobia's growth and development through case studies and analyse the connections between present manifestations and their respective historical antecedents. They document this phenomenon in the chapters contributed by Esposito, Ibrahim Kalin, Jocelyne Cesari and Tahir Abbas and depict the Islamic "other" in literature, art, civil discourse, public policy and popular culture. The four chapters placed under the "Case Studies" attempt to explain how the Euro-American identities are affected by the presence of Muslims. Sam Cherribi (Chapter 3) compares the Dutch movie *Fitna* with the Danish cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and concludes that Islamophobic acts were "incubated in the Netherlands and replicated in other parts of Europe" and that Islamophobia is "a reaction of a body of thought to a foreign object" (p. 60). The last part of his argument comes out clearly in Ibrahim Kalin's thesis that the Islamophobic "debate is shaped and largely determined by the liberal-secular ideals of the European Enlightenment, which cannot accommodate a non-Western religion such as Islam" (p. 5). In Chapter 4, Tahir Abbas concurs with the first part of Cherribi's argument and concludes that in the United Kingdom, Islamophobia is fuelled by Rushdie's *Satanic Verses,* Danish cartoons and the former British Home Secretary Jack Straw's comments on Muslim women's dress. Tahir laments the discriminatory protectionist policies of the British government. Despite their suffering racist prejudice and hatred, Muslims "remain outside the domain of antiracist legislation" (p. 66). In the subsequent chapter

Mohamed Nimer finds a circular relationship between anti-American sentiment and Islamophobia.

Sherman Jackson (Chapter 6) finds the roots of Islamophobia in what he calls "racial agnosia," or Muslims holding on to their non-American racial identity. The solution he proposes is for Muslim immigrants "to exercise their own agency in adopting or crafting an indigenous American racial identity" (p. 104). Jackson's argument regarding the subconscious impact of Islamophobia on the post-9/11, second-generation of American Muslims is highly persuasive. Sunaina Maira carries the discussion further. Her "Islamophobia and the War on Terror: Youth, Citizenship and Dissent" is an ethnographic study of the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim immigrant youth from South Asia in a New England city. She argues convincingly enough that Islamophobia is very much linked to the war on terror and cannot be eradicated simply by means of promoting religious tolerance. This conclusion is echoed by Juan Cole through an analysis of the speeches of George Bush and Dick Cheney. Equally impressive is Anas Al-Sheikh Ali's depiction of Islamophobic discourse in the works of art and literature spreading "prejudice, falsehoods, stereotypes, and myths that incite people to conflict" (p. 147). Kate Zebiri's examination of "Orientalist Themes in Contemporary British Islamophobia" and Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg's examination of Islamophobia in the caricatures, cartoons, and stereotypes of Muslims are also interesting. Jocelyn Cesari's exploration of the structural causes for discrimination in "Islamophobia in the West: A Comparison between Europe and America" is highly informative.

Clearly, this edited volume succeeds in providing an understanding of the complexity of Islamophobia. It describes and meticulously documents the particular instances of Islamophobia, in addition to its manifestations in politics, culture and the mass media, as well as its historical roots and development, and its relationships with colonialism and imperialism. It succeeds in pointing out that Islamophobia, in the words of John Esposito, "is becoming a social cancer … and is a threat to the very fabric of our democratic pluralistic way of life" (p. xxxiv). Two consequences of Islamophobia pointed out by Ibrahim Kalin are also worth noting. One, Islamophobic acts prevent Muslims from active participation in the socio-economic and political life of societies in which they live, thus leading to the creation of parallel societies. Two,

Islamophobic acts compel Muslims to defend, rather than criticise, some of the most un-Islamic ideas and actions. These two consequences demand more space than is provided in the volume. Inclusion of chapters on Muslim extremism, which has been alluded to by John Esposito in his "Introduction", and the debate on religious freedom among Muslims, would have improved the quality of the volume. The second edition of the volume will hopefully be free from editorial lapses. Moreover, the referencing system should be used uniformly throughout the book. Authors should not repeat their sentences verbatim. Furthermore, typographical errors ought to be eliminated to facilitate smooth reading. These lapses notwithstanding, the volume under review is of great value to those who cherish democratic principles and values. It deserves attention from scholars and laymen alike in both the West and in the Muslim world.

God and logic in Islam: The caliphate of reason. By John Walbridge. New York**:** Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 211. ISBN: 978-0-521-19534-8 (Hardcover).

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The book delves extensively into rationalism, and particularly scholastic rationalism in the Islamic intellectual synthesis. The author focuses mainly on the proposition that Islamic intellectual life has been characterized by reason and that the core intellectual tradition of Islam is primarily rational in spite of being deeply based on revelation. Many non-Muslims, especially in the Western world, and even a number of modern Muslims tend to see Islam as inherently anti-rational in nature. The main contention of the author is that the logic inherent within central ideas of Islamic life drove relentlessly toward a situation where Islamic religious knowledge was placed in a rational context; with reason providing the guiding principles for bodies of knowledge whose origin was non-rational. The book contains useful information of significance to the Muslims.