PART III

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Christian Moe and Samim Akgönül
This volume stems from a project on Christian-Muslim relations in twenty-first-century Europe, based at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy. It is interdisciplinary, though the approaches mainly fall under sociology and international relations. The geographical scope ranges widely across Europe on national and transnational levels. The varied topics include the problematic notion of ‘Euro-Islam’, the factors shaping Muslim identities in Europe, generational transformations among Turks abroad, ideological divides in Bosnia, the European Commission’s engagement with Islam, effects of EU integration and regional change in Southeast Europe, and the EU reluctance to admit secularised Muslim Turkey as a member. With all this variety, it might at first sight be mistaken for just another incongruous collection of workshop papers.

However, these papers are framed as representing nothing less than “a consensus amongst all the contributors in terms of their shared aim for the literature on Islam in Europe” (p. xi). In the introduction, Effie Fokas describes this aim as “methodological rigour” in order to counter “cultural differentialism” and “monist conceptions of identity” (p. 2), seeking to locate the study of Islam in Europe within the study of religious change in Europe in general. In the afterword, Aziz Al-Azmeh warns against culturalism and exaggerating the role of religion in the lives of Muslims, rampant tendencies in both non-Muslim and Muslim representations of the otherness and alienation of Muslim communities (e.g., the French riots of 2005). The watchwords are diversity, identity, and specificity.

These admonitions, multiplied in the individual chapters, will by now be familiar to any student in the field and “somewhat boring” (Werner Schiffauer, p. 69), but they bear repeating; even with the most rigorous of intentions the researcher can all too easily fall into what Jocelyn Cesari calls the “snare of exceptionalism”. Moreover, the contributors