



TODD PETERS, REBECCA/KAMITSUKA, MARGARET D. (eds.): *Abortion and Religion: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, London: T&T Clark, 2023. – xv, 452 p.

Todd Peters, Professor of Religious Studies at Elon University, North Carolina, and Kamitsuka, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Oberlin College, Ohio, have edited a comprehensive 452-page study, work, and text anthology about the relationship between abortion and various Jewish, Christian, and Islamic denominations in the US context. The main goal of their anthology is “to help reframe the abortion debate in the United States by providing a different range of materials than previously gathered in other anthologies on abortion” (10). With these materials both editors hope to overcome “tired binaries of prolife versus prochoice, fetal versus women’s rights, or women’s freedom from the shackles of religion versus women’s religious subjugation” (14). To accomplish this, the anthology is guided throughout by a feminist-

intersectional approach and organized in five chapters. These are preceded by an introduction, in which T. and K. explain the aim, method, and structure of the anthology. Additionally, each of the five chapters has a short, separate implementation with key questions that invite the reader to deepen and continue the excerpts presented. The 54 excerpts from different authors are limited to between 1000 and 3000 words to facilitate their use in the classroom.

In the first chapter, six persons tell their experiences, feelings, and thoughts about their abortions. Each of the six stories is contextualized in a different religious setting in the United States. Four of the storytellers are Christians (two are Catholics), one is a Sufi-Muslim, and one a Jewish rabbi. Four of them have given their names or a pseudonym, and one remains anonymous. The chapter aims to reveal in first-person accounts “the thought processes, emotions, and faith struggles experienced by those who have terminated a pregnancy” (21). The second part of the volume turns to social science. In this section, the editors present various social sciences studies that reflect the issue of abortion in the US context. The main goal here is, to create “a more robust public conversation about abortion and religion” (47). The studies help accomplish this in three different ways: First, they correct and dispel ingrained stereotypes and expose the real harm underlying abortion stigma. Second, they reveal the importance of religion in people’s deliberations and decisions. Third, the studies show how religion is connected to other identity markers and framings, and how the attention to these connections helps to get a more substantial view of the relationship between religion and abortion. The third chapter deals with abortion and religion in the past. On the one hand, the essays here explore the intellectual history of abortion, on the other hand they analyze the cultural, political, and economic context of the issue. In doing so, they help to illuminate the various influences that frame our conversations about abortion today, and to determine whether these framings are still helpful.



In the fourth section, the volume presents different theological views on abortion. These excerpts from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theology reflect “the ways in which scholars and religious experts seek to weigh and balance a variety of factors in their consideration of the moral issues related to pregnancy, abortion, and childbearing” (195). They are set alongside first person-accounts and the social and historical research to show how religious arguments about abortion, whether progressive or conservative, are shaped by and responsive to social, cultural, economic, and political issues. The final chapter turns to “examples of the ways that religious views and practices regarding reproductive realities have had an influence in the public sphere from the late twentieth century to today” (331). Such examples include supreme court decisions such as *Roe vs. Wade* or the labor situation in Catholic hospitals. The main goal here is to show how religion is incorporated in common practices, institutions, and public media where abortion issues are negotiated.

The five chapters are accompanied by a detailed index and bibliography of the excerpts. Overall, the anthology provides a detailed, scholarly, and entertaining overview of the relationship between abortion and religion in the US context. It is characterized by a variety of historical, sociological, and theological approaches and “ideological” perspectives that allow for a differentiated view of the phenomenon. Due to the number, brevity, and conciseness of the excerpts, the anthology has a high didactic potential, which encourages further study. This is aided by the key questions at the beginning of each chapter, the bibliography at the beginning of the anthology, the footnotes to each excerpt, and the index at the end. In my opinion there are only two things that would make sense to change for a new edition: First, a section could be added to the anthology that discusses medical aspects of pregnancy and abortion. Second, it would be good to avoid duplication of argumentation as much as possible. But taken together, these two things are “high level whining”.

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