

## BOOK REVIEWS – REZENSIONEN – RECENSIONES

Ulrike Auga / Christina von Braun / Claudia Bruns / Jana Husmann (eds.), *Fundamentalism and Gender: Scripture – Body – Community*, Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013, 297 p., ISBN 978-1-62032-392-2.

With stacks of information about fundamentalism surging western media, there is no surprise that questions about how the subject has affected religion and social politics in modernity have quickly risen in academia. *Fundamentalism and Gender: Scripture – Body – Community* is an anthology of proceedings from a conference at Humboldt University in Berlin in December 2010 and was edited two years later by Ulrike Auga, Christina von Braun, Claudia Bruns, and Jana Husmann. Articles include research from international scholars on, as the title suggests, the intersection of fundamentalism and gender in the three religions of the Book – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – while still considering modern secularism as influenced by and an influence on fundamentalism in society.

The thirteen articles are divided into three subsections: “Literalism, Religion, and Science”, “Nation, State, and Community”, and “Body, Life, and Biopolitics”. Each article delves into aspects of fundamentalism head first, from the priority of traditional gender roles in American Protestantism (“Jesus Enters the Battle of the Sexes” by Vincent Crapanzano) to matrilineal descent in Halakhic Judaism (“Belonging to Halakhic Judaism: On the Sense of Matrilineal Descent” by Micha Brumlik), asking stirring questions pertinent to the topic at hand. In the introduction, the editors point to “the analytical diversification of the term *fundamentalism* and its various intersections with the category gender” (7), in addition to the historical contexts in which the fundamentalisms are active, as the most prevalent research interests among scholars at the conference.

Christina von Braun’s article “Religion and Science – An Opposition?” provides a thorough and compelling basis for the trailing articles, categorizing the seven central characteristics of religious fundamentalism, from a “low tolerance for ambivalence” and the preoccupation with “the purity of the social body” to the importance of media to “the written word” (34-35). Von

Braun supplements the description of the categories by expounding upon the function of literalism in fundamentalist sects of the three religions, and then furthers this by imputing the rise of literalism to the development of the written word throughout modernity. Just as the mechanical clock, says von Braun, the printing press is removed from its monastic setting, and as a result, science and religion are at odds. What is missing, according to the author, is a broader view of history – what fundamentalists, both religious and secular, fail, if not refuse, to see is the historical connection between religion and science, a reluctance prompted by literalism. The author’s insights on the battle between religion and science and secularism, are organized and provide a substantial groundwork for the tone of the following essays.

The second section, “Nation, State, and Community”, prepares a multifarious view into the effects of fundamentalism on gender within a geopolitical context, providing a swift, yet comprehensive vision of fundamentalist beliefs, as well as responses to these beliefs, primarily in Israel and Germany. The particular arrangement of the articles in this section is successful in the way the material in a preceding article may introduce a main theme in the next, for example, “Race, Gender, and Religious Fundamentalism: Debates between Christians and Jews at the End of the Weimar Republic, The Case of Hans Blüher and Hans-Joachim Schoeps” by Claudia Burns subtly introduces the work of Thilo Sarrazin for the next article “Antifundamentalism as Fundamentalism: Reading Thilo Serrazin through Joseph McCarthy, Some Thoughts on Supremacy, Secularism, Gender, and Culturalization” by Gabriele Dietze. Dietze’s essay centralizes on “antifundamentalism”, a term unique in the collection, within history as a response to secular fundamentalism, such as communism in this respect, or foreign religious principles, which in this case is Islam. Antifundamentalism, according to the author, is a response to societal crisis, especially crises which threaten the hegemonic majority: McCarthyism and fear of communism in the United States emerged after the Cold War, just as Occidentalism and fear of Islamic fundamentalism in Germany countered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the rise of Muslim migration in Europe. The use of examples from two distinct geographical and historical contexts (1950s America versus contemporary Germany), allows the reader to fully understand the paradox of antifundamentalist fundamentalism and aligns a more secular representation of fundamentalism (as well as the participating sexual politics) with the religious paradigms discussed throughout the anthology.

Of the three sections organizing the collection, “Body, Life, and Biopolitics” contains the largest discussion directly related to gender. The discourse

includes an informative study on bioethics in Israel (“Seminal Reasoning: Ultra-Orthodoxy and the Biopolitics of Medically Assisted Reproduction in Israel” by Carmel Shalev), queer theology (“Queer Theologies and Sacred Bodies” by Lisa Isherwood), and the effect of fundamentalism on female self-reflexivity (“Daughters are Diamonds: When Honor Precludes Reflexivity” by Shafinaaz Hassim). As a counter to the macroscopic focus on community, “Body, Life, and Biopolitics” takes a microscopic approach, examining the individual, or minority, within the fundamentalist community, a piece rather than the whole. The central question is, as the editors identify in the introduction: what images of the body are “invoked by fundamentalist constructs of the self and the other, as well as what interrelations play a role between the individual body, the collective body, and the (holy) body of text” (15).

As a whole, *Fundamentalism and Gender: Scripture – Body – Community* critically engages with an emerging topic in social, political, and religious spheres and consists of a diverse arrangement of highly relevant articles to contemporary societal questions. Although editing errors were interspersed throughout the collection, the conscientious organization and structure were more noteworthy: the transitions from one article to the next were virtually seamless, supplementing the natural connections within the collection. In the introduction, the editors acknowledge the limitations involved with discussing such a considerable topic, and “make[] no claims to be complete or give equal weight to different forms of fundamentalism (religious and secular)” (8); but the assortment of ideas in each article is certainly recommendable to those searching for informative and accessible material on fundamentalism and gender.

*Annamarie Benson (Villanova – USA)*

Laurie Cassidy / Maureen H. O’Connell (eds.), *She Who Imagines: Feminist Theological Aesthetics*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012, 225 p., ISBN 9-780814-680278.

Throughout history the image of women and the ideal of beauty have been imagined by men. This vision has marked female models, with very specific characteristics, which men liked. Age and body shape imposed by the patriarchal mentality have subjected women. This has excluded women that did not fulfill these conditions and aesthetics. Also this has forced women to imagine themselves in a way they were not, making them lose their identity and body aesthetic, personal and religious diversity.

A first approach in the book relates to the images we have about women as objects of beauty: “*She who imagines*”. Christianity has built oppression around the female image. In her contribution, Susan Ross emphasizes the invisibility of women in Christianity, which has produced a vision of unreal beauty and has put Christian women in the background. Christianity has not allowed feminine forms of experiencing God to emerge. The male tradition used the figure of Mary as an exemplary mother and submissive woman. However, in Mary, we can also discover a different way of being Christian. Motherhood, femininity and justice are linked in the reflections of Jeanette Rodríguez, Jayme M. Hennessy and Colleen Mary Carpenter. Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe is a message of hope and justice for many believers (Rodríguez) and the suffering of women creates resistance to pain, injustice and barbarity (Hennessy). Through maternity many believing women contribute to changing the world and the search for beauty (Carpenter), a beauty that is fair, different from that imposed by others, a beauty that can be found in everyday life.

The second part highlights the dynamics of oppression because of sex, gender, race, class and geography. It is “*She who is imagined*”, i.e. women are forced by patriarchy to imagine themselves differently than they are. M. Shawn Copeland and Michelle A. Gonzalez both criticize standards of beauty in religious and popular culture. Images and women’s bodies are linked to morality and some virtues are beautiful. The beautiful is good and just. This vision of bodies has implications for racist practices: Black and Latino/a bodies are not beautiful, but are perceived as negative (82). Fighting for equality for female images is a fight for beauty and a fight for the divine, because the body can also be a place of the expression of relationship with God (99). Laurie Cassidy reflects on the suffering of women through photography. Is it lawful to display photographs of suffering? There is some moral ambiguity in the observation of these images. Cassidy draws on the concept of the human as image of God in order to propose a reconstruction of the photographs as channels to dignify the human being (119). Kymberly Vrudny reviews the artistic work of Sue Williamson and her artistic reflections on violence against women in South Africa. She argues that if we live solidarity and reconciliation, we will destroy violence, and instead help heal wounds and restore the common good (140).

The third part, “*She who imagines*”, focuses on women as agents and creators of beauty in their families, in their bodies, in their communities. The beauty created by women develops personal relationships, alternative thinking and plural and respectful participation. Berru Rebecca Davis studies this

beauty in the crafts(wo)manship of Peruvian women. In their textile pictures, they express and propose new ways of living, practicing justice, solidarity and dignity from an eschatological consciousness of the “here, but not yet” (156). Maureen H. O’Connell focuses on the relationship between beauty and love that Dorothy Day and the Catholic Christian radical spirituality proposed. Beauty eliminates the ugliness of social injustice when practiced through love of others. Beauty is a gift that grows when shared with others (166). Mary Ann Zimmer questions the concept of purity and its relationship to the Immaculate Conception. Is it possible to create new salvific images of Mary? She defends the need for women believers to reappropriate the figure of Mary without its traditional boundaries. This is a task of women artists (185). Susie Paulik Babka reflects on the role of portraiture in the life of migrant women in the United States. The self-portrait is a way of looking inward and establishes a dialogue with oneself. It positions women as the face of God, as the *Other* who loves me and fills the whole of reality (215). Thus a relationship with God is established and it is possible to gain access to divine righteousness. Thus women are empowered to take charge of their own spirituality.

Drawing on a variety of artistic media, such as painting, photography, crafts, music and poetry, these authors bring again together beauty and truth through the practice of justice. Therefore, the resistance of suffering women becomes a path to God and beauty-righteousness. This volume is an incipient but fruitful theological dialogue on how women are creators of beauty in this broken world.

*Silvia Martínez Cano (Madrid – Spain)*

Susannah Cornwall, *Theology and Sexuality*, London: SCM Press, 2013, 195 p., ISBN 979-0-334-04530-4.

Susannah Cornwalls Buch bietet einen umfassenden, kritischen Überblick über theologische Debatten rund um die Sexualität. Dabei geht es grundsätzlich um eine theologisch-anthropologische Reflektion über den Menschen als sexuelles Wesen, weniger um eine Einführung in die theologische Sexualethik, obwohl relevante Debatten referiert werden. Das Ziel der Autorin ist nicht, Antworten auf die Vielzahl kontroverser Fragen rund um Sexualität zu geben, sondern “to give readers an overview of some of the different responses to sexuality from the Christian tradition, and to equip readers with critical questions to pose to the tradition itself about the broader goods against which particular phenomena are to be assessed” (161).

Als Einführungstext beginnt der Band mit einer Definition relevanter Termini (*sex, gender, sexuality*), einer Darstellung der essentialistischen und konstruktivistischen Debatte um Sexualität sowie einem kurzen Überblick über hellenistische, jüdische, psychoanalytische und philosophische Einflüsse auf christliche Vorstellungen von Sexualität. Das zweite Kapitel legt theologische Grundlagen für ein positives, konstruktives Verständnis von Sexualität durch die Diskussion von zentralen Begriffen wie Inkarnation, Geschöpflichkeit und Trinität und ihrem Beitrag zum Verständnis der Rolle von Sexualität in der Mensch-Mensch- und Mensch-Gott-Beziehung, sowie kurzen Zusammenfassungen von wichtigen Theologien des Körpers/der Sexualität (Johannes Paul II., Elisabeth Stuart, Benedict XVI., James B. Nelson u.a.). Das dritte Kapitel diskutiert den Zusammenhang von *sexuality, sex* und *gender* und die verschiedenen Formen sexueller Identität und Beziehungen, die sich aus unterschiedlichen Kombinationen ihres Zusammenhangs ergeben (heterosexuell, homosexuell, transgender, intersexuell). Vor allem Cornwalls Diskussion von Intersexualität und Transgender macht deutlich, wie prekär doch der Zusammenhang von Geschlecht und Sexualität ist, der in vielen theologischen Texten als stabil und eindeutig vorausgesetzt wird. Das Kapitel setzt mit einem Überblick zu neutestamentlichen Geschlechterverhältnissen sowie der Einführung des für die Sexualethik in vieler Hinsicht zentralen Begriffs der Komplementarität fort. Die folgenden vier Kapitel fokussieren auf spezifische Themen im Kontext von Sexualität, die in der theologischen (und sozialen) Debatte zentral sind: Zölibat und Jungfräulichkeit (Kap. 4), Ehe (Kap. 5), Sex außerhalb der Ehe, speziell Masturbation, Polyamorie, Prostitution (Kap. 6) und gleichgeschlechtliche Beziehungen (Kap. 7). In diesen Kapiteln bietet die Autorin einen klaren Überblick über biblische Ursprünge, historische Entwicklungen und aktuelle Kontroversen, wobei jeweils mehrere Stimmen und Meinungen zu Wort kommen, so dass die Lesenden unterschiedliche Gesichtspunkte kennenlernen und dazu herausgefordert werden, sich in der kritischen Interaktion mit diesen Perspektiven ihre eigene Meinung zu bilden.

Der Band schließt mit Überlegungen zu “Sexchatological Tensions: Sex in Light of the Last Things” ab, in denen die Stimme der Autorin erstmals deutlicher hörbar wird und sie ihre eigenen Gedanken zu einem theologischen Nachdenken über Sexualität in einer eschatologischen Perspektive darstellt:

This means affirming two things simultaneously: first, that all Christian thought and theologizing about sexuality takes place in the context of a present and future hope for a new creation; and second, that this new creation is to be understood not

as one in which sexuality has been erased or transcended, but one in which it's become so fully and rightly integrated into human being that it's no longer a site of pain, tragedy, violence, jealousy, doubt, shame and self-loathing as it sometimes is in the present world. Sexchatological hope means that these just and right patterns of sexuality might be understood as already possible, already being lived out wherever sexuality equals solidarity, justice and love in relationship" (155).

Eine solche "sexchatologische Perspektive" verlangt, dass sexuelle Begegnungen in Hinsicht auf ihre langfristigen Konsequenzen nicht nur für Individuen, sondern für die Gemeinschaft und mit einer Vision von Gerechtigkeit, Würde und Gleichheit gelebt und diskutiert werden (156-157).

Obwohl Einführungstext ist Cornwalls Darstellung zentraler theologischer Themen rund um die Sexualität nie oberflächlich oder verallgemeinernd, sondern bietet einen präzisen, fundierten Einblick in die Komplexität der Fragen und in die Vielfalt der Versuche, sie zu beantworten, wobei die Autorin unterschiedliche "klassische" und aktuelle AutorInnen, Traditionen, konfessionelle Perspektiven sowie nicht-theologische Disziplinen zu Wort kommen lässt und kritisch diskutiert. Die jeweiligen Ansätze werden kontextualisiert und die Autorin macht deutlich, wie historische und geistesgeschichtliche Entwicklungen auf die christliche Theologie gewirkt haben.

Der Band wurde offensichtlich für die Verwendung im spezifischen Kontext der anglo-amerikanischen akademischen Kultur konzipiert, ist aber mit seinem umfassenden Überblick zu zentralen Fragen im Kontext von Sexualität und Theologie, ihrer historischen Einbettung und multi-perspektivischen Diskussion, durch klare Formulierung und übersichtliche Darstellung, mit Diskussionsfragen, ausführlichen Zitaten aus wichtigen Primärtexten, Vorschlägen für Arbeitsaufträge sowie einem Glossar auch darüber hinaus, für Studierende anderer Kontexte und interessierte LaiInnen, sehr geeignet.

*Stefanie Knauss (Villanova – USA)*

Ivone Gebara, *Filosofía feminista: Brevíssima introducción*, Montevideo (Uruguay): Doble clic Editoras, 2014, 94 p., ISBN 978-9974-670-87-7.

Si buscamos definir filosofía nos encontramos que el diccionario nos dice que es "el conjunto de reflexiones sobre la esencia, las propiedades, las causas y los efectos de las cosas naturales, especialmente sobre el hombre y el universo" (RAE 2009). Ivone Gebara no sólo le añade el adjetivo feminista sino que añade y matiza que "es la posibilidad de expresar otra manera de ver el

mundo y la relación entre los seres humanos” (18). Ciertamente nuestra manera de ver el mundo e incluso de entendernos como ser humano: ser viviente, ser mezclado, ser en mutación y ser mortal según Ivone.

En estos fundamentos antropológicos existe un pensar masculino que ha influido en nuestra percepción y nuestro pensamiento. Sin embargo, si “filosofar es simplemente osar pensar el mundo que es y modificarlo lentamente” (57) tendremos que recuperar las aportaciones de distintas filosofías a lo largo del tiempo. Ellas nos ayudarán a deconstruir ideas preconcebidas y podremos así responder a los llamados de justicia y equidad que se hacen oír aquí y ahora. Recuperando la dignidad de las mujeres al afirmar la dignidad humana. Dignidad que cuestionará afirmaciones y conceptos que forman parte de nuestra cultura y convivencia humana tales como el concepto de ser humano, la diferencia, la igualdad y la universalidad.

Como dice Gebara “todas nosotras podemos no sólo pensar, sino aprender a pensar nuestro mundo, dando nuestra contribución a esa tarea colectiva” (91). Toda una invitación que la historia de hoy nos hace a todas nosotras que con lleva en sí una posibilidad, un reto y un compromiso personal y como colectivo.

*Blanca Bergareche Echenique (Bilbao – Spain)*

Martínez, Silvia (ed.), *Mujeres desde el Vaticano II: Memoria y esperanza*, Estella: EVD, 2014, 156 p., ISBN 9-788499-459851.

This book is the result of a conference held by the ATE (Association of Spanish theologians) in occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The first chapter, “Las claves del Concilio Vaticano II” (Keys of Vatican II, by José Antonio Estrada), presents the ecclesiological key elements that allow to contextualize the convocation and development of the Council, its importance and its difficulties. The chapter discusses the contribution of a new historical and theological paradigm, a new hermeneutics from which to evaluate the previous history. The author also investigates the dogmatic dimension of a council that has been considered a pastoral one. These keys help to understand the reception, importance and implications of the Council.

The second chapter, “Gozos y esperanzas de nuestro tiempo: relectura actual del texto conciliar” (Joys and hopes of our time: a contemporary rereading of the conciliar texts) focuses on the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. The



author, Pilar Yuste, maintains that the attitude of listening to the signs of the times and the questioning of reality that the document proposes, allowed women to be protagonists of change, in spite of not being named explicitly, and despite institutional resistance. Yuste considers the Council and, in particular, this document as a prophetic call that allows and invites women to assert themselves, to keep looking and to build a church and a fairer society.

The third chapter “Iglesia ¿qué dices de ti misma?” (Church, what do you say about yourself?) analyzes the constitution *Lumen Gentium* from a gender perspective. Teresa Toldi takes stock of its promises, achievements and failures. Topics such as the distribution of power, access to the word in the Church and dialogue models are analyzed to question the tradition that it represents: the tradition of Jesus or one that betrays him. The author suggests that “women’s issues” become the touchstone of fidelity to the Gospel.

Another chapter reflects a variety of experiences in the attempt to capture the spirit of Vatican II in which one has to read the documents in order to understand them well. Three women and one man who lived through the Council and its preparation in very different social and geographical locations share their experiences: Felisa Elizondo, a Christian academic in Spain; Pilar Wirtz, a religious for whom the Council changed her outlook on vocation and pastoral work; Marife Ramos, a post-conciliar young woman who experienced the change in her religious training; Rafael Aguirre, a seminarian who was in Rome to study theology and witnessed firsthand how what happened in the conciliar assemblies was prepared in the academic sphere and reflected in the streets.

Finally, Dolores Aleixandre, in her work “Señales y semillas” (Signs and seeds), using a poetic-prophetic language and tone, points towards two signals to which the Council refers: 1) the evolutionary reality as something that requires further analysis and synthesis (GS 5); 2) the Church which does not always have the solutions (GS 33) and needs to search and to listen. She notes the desire for universal brotherhood (GS 9) as one of the seeds that can be seen in the Council and that is still only a germ.

This book is an interesting work that enables the readers to understand the spirit in which to read the texts of Vatican II and to identify the key elements that allow to see the potential and opportunities it presents for women and their cause.

*Carmen Bernabé Ubieta (Bilbao – Spain)*