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A Book Review Mistakenly Treated

TODA Satoshi

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The book review which will be shown below was originally submitted to an online book review which is quite famous in the field of studies of classical antiquity; the author himself has the experience of having published once a book review for another book on the same online book review¹.

To the present author, the process, at the end of which the book review in question written by himself was mistakenly published and then retracted from publication, was quite bizarre, to say the least. The editor of the online book review in question (apparently only one of the editors was deeply involved in the matter) decided that my book review should not be published, and in my view this judgement is a mistake; the reader will form his/her own judgement by reading the review presented below. Then, quite bizarrely, the book review was sent mistakenly by e-mail to the subscribers of the book review, and because of that I received from some competent scholars (including one of the contributors of the book reviewed) some responses, all of which seem to show that my book review was far from unsuitable for publication. And then the editors sent another e-mail in order to retract the mistaken sending of the book review, using the following words²:

Subject: Erratum: 2018.08.30

Date: Tue, 28 Aug 2018 20:13:59 + 0000

From: Bryn Mawr Classical Review <bmcreview@bmcreview.org>

Reply-To: Bryn Mawr Classical Review <bmcreview@bmcreview.org>

View this email in your browser (<https://mailchi.mp/bmcreview.org/erratum-20180830?e=b7f8fe0fbb>)

1 It can be consulted at: bmc.brynmawr.edu/2016/2016-06-33.html (“http://” should be added, needless to say).

2 As indicated in the e-mail quoted, this “Erratum” can be seen at: mailchi.mp/bmcreview.org/erratum-20180830?e=b7f8fe0fbb (“http://” should be added, needless to say) (viewed January 5, 2019).

We made a mistake in publishing a review today under 2018.08.30, and we offer sincere apologies to its author. We've published a different review with that number, and will send it out by email tomorrow.

The senior editors
BMCR

The text of the e-mail says: "we offer sincere apologies to its author [i.e., the author of the review, that is I]", but this is, to be quite frank, also a mistake, because my intention has always been that the book review in question should be published (I have never agreed not to publish the review); so the editors should offer sincere apologies not for publishing the review, but for retracting the publication of the review.

The body of the text of the book review in question, which, as shown above, was thus treated mistakenly in a multiple way, is the same as that which was sent mistakenly by e-mail from the editors of the online book review; only some stylistic minor changes have been introduced to the text. And in order to avoid any possible judicial conflict, I should add that the book, or rather the copy, at which this book review aims (so to speak), is not the one I received some time ago from the editors of the online book review, but the one bought for the library of the university to which I currently belong.

Thus below is the book review in question.

* * *

Martin WALLRAFF (ed.). *Religiöse Toleranz: 1700 Jahre nach dem Edikt von Mailand* (Colloquia Raurica, 14), Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter, 2016. Pp. viii & 348. ISBN 9783110370874

In the Vorwort the editor says: "Religiöse Toleranz ist in aller Munde. ... Toleranz im Allgemeinen, in Religionsfragen im Besonderen gehört zu den unhinterfragten Leitbildern unserer Gesellschaft ... und auch im vorliegenden Buch geht es nicht darum, diesen Konsens in Frage zu stellen" (p. v). Thus assuming the supreme value of religious tolerance, the book, divided into three parts (Teil I "Der moderne Toleranzbegriff": pp. 3-47, Teil II "Spätantike und Toleranz": pp. 49-221, and Teil III "Wirkungsgeschichte [of the so-called Edict of Milan, T. S.] in der Neuzeit": pp. 223-340), intends to present various reflections, focusing in the main on the Edict of Milan, issued in 313 (i.e., about 1700 years ago) and understood here as an eminent example of religious tolerance.

However, it should be noted at the outset that the comment of the editor, quoted at the very beginning, holds good mainly, if not to say solely, in "unserer Gesellschaft", i.e., the Christendom of Europe. In the globe, there are regions where this comment does not fully apply: in many countries of the Middle East, for instance, where Islam is the preponderant religion, religious tolerance is at best imperfect, and sometimes next to nothing.

I am not raising a question which religion is more or less tolerant. In the West, it was only after the serious, devastating religious wars between Catholics and Protestants in the early modern period that religious tolerance was introduced in Europe; thus it was not Christianity itself, but the conflicts in Christianity (or rather Christianities) that led to the emergence of religious tolerance. And evidently, Islam as a religion has had no such experience throughout its history³.

The notion of tolerance in general is discussed in the two articles of Teil I (Andreas Urs Sommer

“Toleranz und Relativismus,” pp. 3-25, and Gisela Schlüter, “Von religiöser Toleranz zum Tolerantismus. Zur Universalisierung des Toleranzbegriffs in der Aufklärung,” pp. 27-47). Since the “modern” notion of tolerance is dealt with here, it is normal that no mention at all of the Edict of Milan nor of Constantine can be found in these two articles⁴. However, if one asks what is the relation between Teil I of the book, on the one hand, and Teil II and Teil III, on the other, the answer would be: Next to nothing links the two, precisely because, in the two articles of Teil I, no mention is made of Constantine etc. To put it differently, these two articles seem to reveal that the modern notion of tolerance has almost nothing to do with the tolerance as introduced by Constantine through the so-called Edict of Milan. The articles of Teil II and III should be considered strictly historical researches, not necessarily relevant to contemporary discussions on religious tolerance⁵.

Furthermore, it can also be disputed whether Constantine really introduced tolerance through the Edict of Milan; one can wonder if the typical religious tolerance in antiquity is represented by the Edict of Milan or, say, by the edict issued a little earlier by Galerius. In my view the latter solution should be strongly preferred, because the notion of tolerance is, properly speaking, a *permissio mali* (to use an expression in Schlüter, p. 38). The Edict of Milan, on the other hand, is something more than a simple tolerance; and this is implicitly suggested by Giuseppe Zecchini, “Das „Mailänder Edikt“ ” (pp. 51-65), because according to his interpretation of the Edict, although a god conducts the destiny of the Roman Empire, “es ist nicht mehr gesagt, dass dieser Gott Jupiter sein muss” (p. 62), whereas, properly speaking, a simple tolerance would surely not modify the established viewpoint on e.g. the role of a god like Jupiter.

It is much more suitable to talk about religious tolerance when it comes to the Donatist schism, dealt with in Johannes Wienand, “Religiöse Toleranz als politisches Argument. Konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur konstantinischen Wende” (pp. 67-100) and Noel Lenski, “Constantine and the Donatists. Exploring the Limits of Religious Toleration” (pp. 101-139), and it is beyond doubt that, during the schism, Constantine sometimes exerted his power by imposing tolerance upon the conflicting parties, Donatists and Caecilianists. However, while appreciating the detailed discussions of these two articles, when reading the following phrase: “Constantine calibrated his response to the Donatists with a remarkable sense for moderation and *with a real understanding of the fundamental principles* at the root of what modern theorists might identify as toleration” (p. 135; *italic mine*, T. S.), a serious doubt arises whether

3 To avoid any possible misunderstanding that Islam as a religion is being depreciated here, it should be noted that there are very many religions in my country, Japan, and that, to my knowledge, almost none of them has experienced any serious necessity of religious tolerance. Thus religious tolerance is something unknown to those Japanese religions. Rather, Christianity is the major, and perhaps the only, exception among all the religions.

4 The “Addenda zum Konstantinbild der französischen und italienischen Aufklärung” (pp. 43-45) of Schlüter’s article is interpreted here as literally something which *should be added* because of the theme of the book, but which can otherwise be totally omitted; this “Addenda” is apparently not a constitutive part of Schlüter’s article.

5 Thus in this review which deals principally with studies in antiquity, the two articles of Teil I are totally beyond scope, and thus they are not discussed as such below. One remark is made here, however. Both quote the famous diction of Goethe: “Toleranz sollte eigentlich nur eine vorübergehende Gesinnung sein: sie muß zur Anerkennung führen. Dulden heißt beleidigen” (Sommer, p. 10; Schlüter, p. 36), thereby implying that the notion of tolerance is, compared with that of religious liberty, something authoritative and thus arrogant. However, in order that religious liberty can be secured, intervention by State should be possible if necessary; and in such a case, if there is any dispute, what pertains to religious liberty has to be determined by someone (in the government or in the supreme court?). Thus one can wonder how great the difference is in reality between religious tolerance and religious liberty.

Constantine was a figure of such a modern mind. It can also be doubted whether Constantine's main concern was "Ruhe und Ordnung" (p. 95) or not. Rather, throughout the Donatist issue, was Constantine's conduct not guided exclusively by his effort to secure by all means, and to lose by no means, his God's grace?

Jörg Rüpke, "Textgemeinschaften und die Erfindung von Rivalität und Toleranz in der Kaiserzeit (2./3. Jh. n. Chr.)" (pp. 141-157) shows, on the basis of a methodological notion "textual communities", various interesting reflections. However, their importance for the problem of tolerance remained unclear to the reviewer.

Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, "Toleranz braucht Rechtfertigung. Zur Funktion des Mailänder Edikts und verwandter Texte des 4. Jh. n. Chr." (pp. 159-192) argues that these texts, such as the edict of Milan, were more important because of their "communicative function" (p. 183) than as legal texts, since the primary political objective was to persuade people who were not necessarily ready for accepting religious tolerance. This observation sounds quite correct, but it still remains unclear to the reviewer how differently things can be viewed from this perspective.

The fifth political discourse of Themistios, dealt with in Hubert Cancik & Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, "Religionsfreiheit und Individualisierung von Religion. Themistios' Rede zum Konsulatsantritt Jovians (364 n. Chr.)" (pp. 193-221), seems indeed to be one of the most important discourses in antiquity regarding religious liberty. After presenting a detailed analysis of the discourse, in the conclusion (Zusammenfassung) the authors discuss the importance of Themistios' discourse and that of the religious policy, the philosophical basis of which was given by the very discourse; and the authors admit that the latter importance was rather small (p. 217: "Die Religionspolitik, die Themistios philosophisch begründet, hatte kleine Erfolge."). Reading this, is one not allowed to think that, in antiquity, such discourse as Themistios' concerning religious liberty was regarded simply as a means of persuasion, and that religious liberty itself was never considered a supreme value?

As for the articles of the Teil III "Wirkungsgeschichte in der Neuzeit", which treat materials a bit too far from antiquity, the incapacity of the reviewer for reviewing some articles should be frankly confessed; more concretely, Lothar Vogel, "Pietismus und Gewissensfreiheit. Konstantin und die Folgen im kirchengeschichtlichen Werk Gottfried Arnolds" (pp. 247-282) should be left out of consideration in this review. Furthermore, since the reviewer claims strictly no expertise on such an extremely complicated matter as politics in contemporary Italy, Arnaldo Marcone, "Das Edikt von Mailand in der politischen Kultur Italiens im 20. Jahrhundert" (pp. 323-340) has to be left out of consideration as well. Thus comes the first of the three articles of Teil III to be reviewed here, Martin Wallraff, "Konstantin und das Mailänder Edikt in der Historiographie der Reformationszeit" (pp. 225-245). In itself, it is an interesting and brilliant article on the beginning period of the modern historiography of the Christian church. However, the article itself seems to suggest that the Edict of Milan played almost no role in the period discussed. Next, Stefan Rebenich, "„Allgemeine Toleranz.“ Das Edikt von Mailand in der Aufklärungshistoriographie" (pp. 283-300) shows, among others, the interpretations of the Edict of Milan by Voltaire (p. 286: "le fameux édit de liberté de conscience ... On pourrait faire un livre sur un tel édit; mais je ne veux pas seulement y hasarder deux lignes") and by Gibbon (p. 295: "three suppositions may be deduced ... The mind of Constantine might fluctuate between the Pagan and the Christian religions. ... he might acknowledge the God of the Christians as one of the many deities ... Or perhaps he might embrace the philosophic and pleasing idea that ... all the sects and all the nations of mankind are united in the

worship of the common Father and Creator of the universe”). Finally, Hartmut Leppin, “Instrumentelle Toleranz und Jacob Burckhardts *Constantin*” (pp. 301-322) argues that Burckhardt describes Constantine consistently as a political genius who issued, conjointly with Licinius, the Edict of Milan simply as a “result of political calculation” (p. 307).

The reader may have found the present review a bit too critical against the book contributed by scholars, all of them quite competent, and edited by Dr. Wallraff who is so capable as to give an overview of European patristic studies (which is nearly equal to patristic studies at large) in only 15 pages⁶, an almost incredible intellectual *tour de force*. The main reason of this rather critical review is that, after all, the main historical importance of the Edict of Milan lies, in my view, not in that it propounds religious tolerance or “liberté de conscience”, but in that it launched the process of Christianization of the entire Europe. In Europe which is now considerably, if not to say largely, de-Christianized, a theme like the Christianization of Europe would be hardly attractive, and with such a theme, doubtless it would be very difficult to obtain a grant of any kind, in order to organize a colloquium like that from which originates the book under review. Yet still, as a translator into Japanese of a book of A. H. M. Jones on Constantine⁷, I would like to stick to this idea.

6 Martin Wallraff, “Whose Fathers? An Overview of Patristic Studies in Europe”, in: B. Bitton-Ashkelony, T. de Bruyn & C. Harrison (eds.), *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-First Century. Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2015, pp. 57-71.

7 A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*, 2. ed., 1962. The Japanese translation (ISBN 978-4-7642-7284-2) is published in 2008 from the publisher Kyobunkwan.

