and what can still be observed today ("… life in that part of the world has remained relatively unchanged over millennia until the discovery of oil. Even after that event, the cultural values have remained constant and can still be experienced in village life or tribal situations", 288). While Pilch occasionally draws on ancient sources (be they literary or archaeological), his inspiring and masterful portraits of various aspects of the biblical world and their reflection in the Bible should be combined with studies which focus more distinctly on the ancient biblical world. The world of the Bible is not the Middle East as we know it and as it has been and can be studied by cultural anthropologist but the Ancient Near East and the Hellenistic-Roman world.

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While the relationship between religion and violence is not a new issue, for a number of reasons it has come to the forefront in recent years. The origins, and at times disastrous consequences, of this relationship are no longer a narrowly defined academic question but widely discussed in society. Often the focus has been on one or several religious traditions readily and commonly associated with the use of violence. Often the public discussion has been ill-informed or operating with stereotypes. In view of these developments, the *Oxford handbook of religion and violence* is much welcome. The editors note in the preface:

> The dark attraction between religion and violence is endemic to religious traditions. It pervades their images and practices, from sacred swords to

> mythic conquests, from acts of sacrifice to holy wars. Though much has been written about particular forms of religious violence, such as sacrificial rites and militant martyrdom, there have been few efforts to survey the field as a whole, to explore the studies of religious violence historically and in the present, to view the subject from personal as well as social dimensions, and to cover both literary themes and political conflicts (1).

The Handbook aims at providing a comprehensive examination of the field, and wants to introduce new ways of understanding it. In "Introduction: The Enduring Relationship of Religion and Violence" (1–9), Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson describe the approach of the volume, analyse the present situation, and briefly outline various interdisciplinary approaches to the perplexing aspects of the relationship of religion to violence. The volume seeks to unravel these aspects and to:

> Show how acts of destruction in the name of God (or gods) or justified by faith have been rooted in historical and literary contexts from early times to the present. Contemporary acts of religious violence, of course, are profuse. Since the end of the cold war, violence in the name of religion has erupted on nearly every major continent, and many of its perpetrators have been revered by those who find religious significance for such actions. Although no longer novel, religious violence and the adulation of its prophets continue to confound scholars, journalists, policy makers, and members of the general public. Some of them have argued that religious violence is not really religious – it is symptomatic of something else and thus is an anomaly, a perversion of foundational religious teachings. Yet it is precisely foundational religious teachings that are claimed to sanctify violence by many of its perpetrators. Others cite bloody legends of martyrs and heroes and argue that religions, or some of them, are violent at the core, their leaders masterminds of criminal behaviour. Yet the chapters in this volume show that there is a much

> more nuanced interpretation of the presence of violence in so many different traditions (2).

The editors also point out that there is a variety of ways in which religious violence can be understood:

> Some social scientists point to a resurgence of anti-colonialism, poverty, and economic injustice; the failures of secular nationalism; cultural uprootedness and the loss of a homeland; and the pervasive features of globalization in its economic, political, social, and cultural forms. Alternatively, literary theorists and historians examine how scriptural traditions and founding cults are steeped in violent myths, metaphors, and apocalyptic expectations that support acts of violence in the contemporary world. Different still are analyses based in evolution, anthropology, and psychology. The various approaches represent the range of lenses from which one might view religion and violence within the total realm of historically situated human experience (2).

The editors provide short introductions to the different parts of the volume and to the essays presented there.

The Handbook consists of four parts. Part one offers a survey of how different religious traditions have engaged with violence. The aim is to understand how violence is justified within the literary and theological foundation of the tradition, how it is used symbolically and in ritual practice, and how social acts of vengeance and warfare have been justified by religious ideas (1). The chapters aim to capture the diversity within the different religious traditions, the differences between theological pronouncements in scripture, and the actual instances of religious violence in society. In some instances, sacred texts do not just pronounce but describe forms of religious violence, such as sacrifice and warfare. Violence is also embedded in religious symbols. What are the theological and symbolic connections to violence, and also its historical and social manifestations, including warfare, torture, ritual, or suicide? The following essays appear in this part (summaries of each essay on pp. 4ff.): Veena Das,

"Violence and Nonviolence at the Heart of Hindu Ethics" (15–40); Michael Jerryson, "Buddhist Traditions and Violence" (41–66); Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, "Sikh Traditions and Violence" (67–77); Ron E. Hassner, Gideon Aran, "Religion and Violence in the Jewish Traditions" (78–99, covering biblical prescriptions for violence, biblical descriptions of violence, coping with the violent implications of the Bible, the legacy of early Judaism as one of rebellion and destruction, the oral Torah and Rabbinic rulings, Kabbalah and mythology, Messianic ideas and movements and the question of 1800 years of non-violence; the authors conclude: "Thus, to the two parallel and complementary Jewish traditions, violence and anti-violence, one should add another Jewish tradition, that of victimhood. These three traditions can be viewed as an integral triangle, each corner of which has a dialectical relationship with the other two", 98); Lloyd Steffen, "Religion and Violence in Christian Traditions" (100–125, see below); Bruce B. Lawrence, "Muslim Engagement with Injustice and Violence" (126–152); Nathalie Wlodarczyk, "African Traditional Religion and Violence" (153–166); Andrea Strathern, Pamela J. Stewart, "Religion and Violence in Pacific Island Societies" (167–182); and Meir Shahar, "Violence in Chinese Religious Traditions" (183–196).

The introduction to Steffen's article on religion and violence in Christian traditions notes that,

> The story of the Christian religion traces back to an execution, an act of political violence directed at a first-century itinerant teacher, a Palestinian Jew, and according to the final book in the Christian scriptures, Revelation, to an apocalyptic vision of the end of history. Violence and destructiveness are inseparably linked to the Christian self-understanding, from beginning to end, and are clearly integral to the unfolding story of Christianity in the Western historical record. The involvement with violence is not a surprising development given that the religion early in its history became the official religion of the Roman Empire and thus became a player embedded in the world of power politics. That Christian people have resorted to violence to settle conflicts believing that using

> force is consistent with Christian values contrasts, however, with other, more irenic teachings in the tradition that offer a compelling, even beautiful vision of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace-making (101f.).

Steffens surveys various theological justifications for violence (Paul, Jesus, the ethics of just war, the crusades, violence in the context of subduing heresy and in the inquisition, direct or indirect violence, and missionary movements) and concludes that Christians have justified violence over the centuries by appealing to Scripture and by developing theological interpretations that sanction violence in the belief, that it is according to God's will. He also notes that today many Christians are working with a new consciousness of this history and a new determination to create dialogue in religious affairs and to combine faith with action in ways which repudiate reliance on the use of force (116). Steffens also surveys symbolic representations of violence in the Christian tradition and manifestations of violence in warfare, punishment and various forms of social control. The chapter does not address the violence done to Christians by members of other religions or ideologies, be it past or present, and the different Christian responses to such experiences.

Part two is devoted to "Patterns and Themes" relating to religious violence which occur within different religious traditions. They are explored in cross-disciplinary regional analyses. "Some of these are patterns – activities that reveal the religious dimensions of political violence, cosmic war, genocide, terrorism, torture, and abortion-related conflicts – that are found in the social histories of many religious traditions. Others are themes – concepts and practices more centrally related to religious ideas and conduct, such as the concepts of evil, just war, martyrdom, and sacrifice" (5f.). This part includes the following essays: James Aho, "The Religious Problem of Evil" (199–208); David Carrasco, "Sacrifice/Human Sacrifice in Religious Traditions" (209–225); David Cook, "Martyrdom in Islam" (226–241, with a strong emphasis on developments in contemporary Islam); Liz Wilson, "Starvation and Self-Mutilation in Religious Traditions" (242–249); Jamel Velji, "Apocalyptic Religion and Violence" (250–259); Reza Aslan, "Cosmic War in Religious Traditions" (260–267); Christopher C. Taylor, "Genocide and the Religious Imaginary in Rwanda"

(268–279); Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Terrorism as Performance Violence" (280–292); Karen L. King, "Christianity and Torture" (293–305; addressing religious justifications for and against torture, she discusses the torturous narratives at Christianity's foundations, the notion of redemptive martyrdom, and the various ways in which Christians have challenged as well as supported the torturous suffering of friend and foe, 7); John Kelsay, "Just War and Legal Restraints" (306–314); Julie Ingersoll, "Religiously Motivated Violence in the Abortion Debate" (315–323, Christian reconstruction, abortion as violence, operation rescue and nonviolent civil disobedience, the use of violence to stop abortion, anticipated violence by God in judgement for the sin of abortion); Ron E. Hassner, "Conflicts over Sacred Ground" (324–331, Hassner notes that time and again decision makers, who naively treated contests over contested sites like normal disputes over real estate have used strictly political solutions such as partition, scheduling, and exclusion, in this way they aggravated rather than ameliorated these disputes); Monica Duffy Toft, "Religion and Political Violence" (332–344); Susumu Shimazono, Margo Kitts, "Rituals of Death and Remembrance" (345–350); and Margo Kitts, "Violent Death in Religious Imagination" (351–360).

Part three is devoted to major analytical approaches to the relation of religion and violence in specific disciplinary fields (sociology, anthropology, psychology, literature, theology, and political sciences) from literary analyses to social-scientific studies, which are surveyed with an eye to showing the diversity of analytic perspectives and the ways in which scholars have and are wrestling with explanations of and treatments of religiously motivated violence (8). The chapters pursue two objectives:

> They are attempts to provide an overview of the way that the aspect of religion and violence has been conceived as a field of studies within each discipline and how it has evolved. … The chapters also provide an opportunity for the authors to develop analytic approaches that they think are particularly appropriate to the disciplinary perspective from which they approach the topic. For this reason, the discussions are critical

> analyses of the studies of religion and violence in the various disciplinary areas (8).

The essays are: John R. Hall, “Religion and Violence from a Sociological Perspective” (363–374); Pamela J. Stewart, Andrew Strathern, “Religion and Violence from an Anthropological Perspective” (375–384); James W. Jones, “Religion and Violence from a Psychological Perspective” (385–396); Daniel Philpott, “Religion and Violence from a Political Science Perspective” (397–409); Margo Kitts, “Religion and Violence from Literary Perspectives” (410–423); and Charles Kimball, “Religion and Violence from Christian Theological Perspectives” (424–434, survey from pacifism to the just war doctrine and the crusades, the inquisition and events in Calvin’s Geneva, violence and Christian theology in the twentieth and twenty-first century; the notion of unambiguous early pacifism has recently been challenged by Despina Iosif, Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service, Gorgias Studies in Classical and Late Antiquity 1; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013). Kimball concludes:

> For 2,000 years, Christians have wrestled with questions about their religion and the role of violence. For more than 1,700 years, followers of Jesus have embraced vastly different approaches to what the earliest Community understood to be Jesus’s teachings. The unprecedented circumstances of multireligious societies in an economically and ecologically interconnected world of nation-states have spurred a new generation of theologians and ethicists to fashion contemporary responses by asking once again with a clear sense of urgency, “What would Jesus do?” (434).

Part four presents new models and analytic approaches for the study of religion and violence and new directions in established approaches. The essays are to indicate “productive new possibilities in the study of religion and violence that will illuminate not only this specific topic but the range of ways in which religious culture interacts with other social phenomena” (10): Walter Burkert, “Sacrificial Violence: A Problem in Ancient Religions” (437–454); Saskia Sassen, “Cities as One Site for Religion and Violence” (455–466, survey of the rise and growing structural power of organised

religions in today's global modernity, the violent bridging of religion and cities, the physics of the city, Mumbay as a case study and Gaza, "When Religious Difference is used to fight a territorial battle"); M. A. Sells, "Armageddon in Christian, Sunni and Shia Traditions" (467–495, American apocalypticism and God's promise to Israel, a Saudi Salafi Amargeddon); Hent de Vries, "Phenomenal Violence and the Philosophy of Religion" (496–520); David Frankfurter, "The Construction of Evil and the Violence of Purification" (521–532); Wolfgang Palaver, "Mimetic Theories of Religion and Violence" (533–553); Hector Avalos, "Religion and Scarcity: A New Theory for the Role of Religion in Violence" (554–570, applying scarce resource theory to understanding violence and religion); Candace S. Alcorta, Richard Sosis, "Ritual, Religion, and Violence: An Evolutionary Perspective" (571–596); Harvey Whitehouse, Brian McQuinn, "Divergent Modes of Religiosity and Armed Struggle" (597–619); and a final essay by Mark Juergensmeyer and Mona Kanwal Sheikh, "A Socio-theological Approach to Understanding Religious Violence" (620–643). An index closes the comprehensive volume (645–653).

This Handbook combines broad surveys with detailed studies by authors who mostly come from the United States (according to institutional affiliation). Their experience and perception of religious violence shape the character of the volume. Other perspectives would have enriched the volume. In a broader perspective, the quasi-religious nature of some forms of secularism and atheism has been recognised. It would have been interesting to also address their relationship to violence. This Handbook indicates the variety of approaches, theories, and methods that can be applied to the study of religion and violence and that could also be applied to other fields of interaction between. An up-to-date reader with key texts on religion and violence would be much welcome.

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