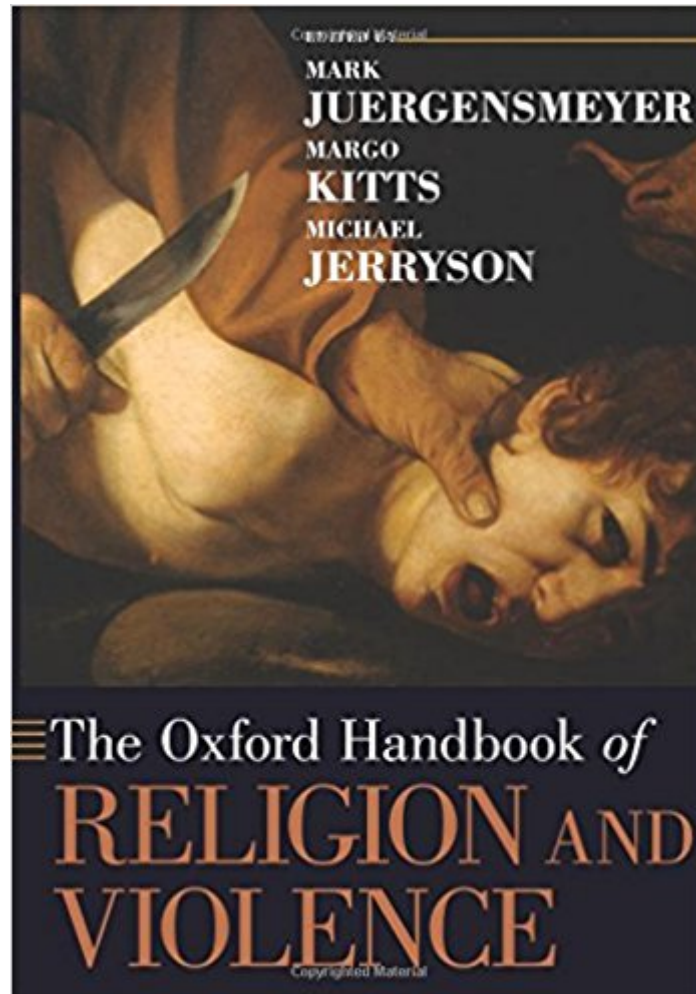




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# The Oxford Handbook Of Religion And Violence (Oxford Handbooks)



## Synopsis

Violence has always played a part in the religious imagination, from symbols and myths to legendary battles, from colossal wars to the theater of terrorism. The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence surveys intersections between religion and violence throughout history and around the world. The forty original essays in this volume include overviews of major religious traditions, showing how violence is justified within the literary and theological foundations of the tradition, how it is used symbolically and in ritual practice, and how social acts of violence and warfare have been justified by religious ideas. The essays also examine patterns and themes relating to religious violence, such as sacrifice and martyrdom, which are explored in cross-disciplinary or regional analyses; and offer major analytic approaches, from literary to social scientific studies. The contributors to this volume--innovative thinkers who are forging new directions in theory and analysis related to religion and violence--provide novel insights into this important field of studies. By mapping out the whole field of religion and violence, The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence will prove an authoritative source for students and scholars for years to come.

## Book Information

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Paperback: 672 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (November 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0190270098

ISBN-13: 978-0190270094

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 1.3 x 6.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #115,576 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Comparative Religion](#) #156 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Religion, Politics & State](#) #163 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Church & State](#)

## Customer Reviews

"[A] timely collection that provides a welcome guide to the emerging field of studies in violence and religion. Among only a few such efforts to survey the field as a whole, the book explores religious violence in both the past and present as well as in all its social, psychological, and theological

complexities...this diverse volume is certainly well worth picking up, as all involved in such scholarship are sure to find something of pertinent interest."--Journal of Contemporary Religion"The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence is a welcome addition to the burgeoning scholarly literature on the relationship between religion and violence...it should definitely be read by all those interested in the various ways religion has been used to legitimate violence." --Politics, Religion, & Ideology"Quite excellent and easily navigated by specialists and nonspecialists alike." --CHOICE

Mark Juergensmeyer is Professor of Sociology and Global Studies, and Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Margo Kitts is Professor of Humanities and Religious Studies and Coordinator of Religious Studies and East-West Classical Studies at Hawai'i Pacific University in Honolulu. Michael Jerryson is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Youngstown State University.

I found this brilliant anthology to be revolutionary, evocative, and deeply disturbing. The 40 articles herein contained cover a vast range of territory from psychology, sociology, anthropology, textual analysis, armageddon, ritual, sacred sites, torture, just war theory (Augustine and Aquinas), to a profile of major and minor religions around the world. The authors vary slightly as to how they render the religion=violence correlation, but they are united in seeing a surprising conjunction between them. Religion is deeply tied to in-group identity formation (as noted in evolutionary psychology), which ends up with a strong dualism that demonizes the Other. The quest for purity, as in global fundamentalisms, can only function if there is the vast world of the "impure" who are always rendered as less than human and hence ripe for extermination. On this reading, Yahweh is a genocidal and tribal god bent on the utter destruction of all other tribes. It seems that the three Western monotheisms are more prone to this kind of thinking. Yet Buddhism, seemingly the most non-violent of the global religions, comes in for its share of critique, especially around the issue of the militarism of the local kings and princes who protected the monasteries by proxy. What I found especially disturbing is the bizarre popularity of armageddon sadistic and masochistic fantasies found in many religions. While for most these delusions fall into the "science fiction" genre, for many others, they are literally true. As always, regardless of the religion, only a few will be saved while billions will be condemned to some kind of envisioned hell. This triumphalist and ego-centric position remains one of the worst byproducts of a certain kind of religiosity. Among the articles in the volume I was especially drawn to several, however, others will highlight different ones as they impinge on their own research. I was rather compelled by the following: "Religion and Violence from a

Psychological Perspective," by James W. Jones, "Religion and Violence from Literary Perspectives," by Margo Kitts, "Armageddon in Christian, Sunni, and Shia Traditions," by Michael A. Sells, and "Cosmic War in Religious Traditions," by Reza Aslan. Of course, I must add that the rest of the articles in this superbly edited volume have their own great value and everyone will, as noted, come up with their own list as to their sense of which articles influenced them the most deeply. In summation I can say that this is a very important book to read. It took me some time to read all of the articles, and at times I had to take a slight break because of the nature of this painful yet urgent material.

A great compilation

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