

Book Reviews

Violence and New Religious Movements, edited by James R. Lewis. Oxford University Press. 2011. 456pp. hb., \$99.00/£65.00, ISBN-13: 9780199735631; pb., \$35.00/£22.50, ISBN-13: 9780199735617.

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The book *Violence and New Religious Movements*, edited by James R. Lewis of Tromsø University in Norway, approaches the problem of relationship between new religions and violence, which attracts public attention because of incidents that were widely depicted in the media. As the editor of this new book puts it, it is intended to “research the general model of all NRM-related violence, to examine violence in less prominent new religions and violence against new religions” (p. 6).

This book consists of five parts and nineteen contributions. The first part “Theorizing NRM violence” has three contributions by David G. Bromley, James T. Richardson and Dick Anthony *et al.* David G. Bromley in his chapter analyzes the factors for violence to emerge within NRMs, distinguishes two types of factors—external and internal—though he focuses on the latter factor. He discusses millennialism, totalism and charisma as the main characteristics related to radicalization of NRM but not necessarily related to violence. James T. Richardson in his chapter discusses relations between violence and NRMs from the perspectives of conflict and interaction and states “violence is embedded in the relationship between religion and its opponents and should not be viewed as something necessarily inherent in the structure and organization either” (p. 48). Dick Anthony, Thomas Robbins and Steven Barrie-Anthony in their chapter discuss the interaction of totalistic NRMs and their counter groups, state that “totalism begets totalism” when anticult groups confront totalistic movements and suggest for accurate explanation of

any violence to include assessment of both degree of endogenous causation and the degree of exogenous causation.

The second part of this book has six contributions about the most prominent acts of violence in NRMs, which Lewis identifies as the *big five*, plus a chapter on the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God. Here one may find contributions by Rebecca Moore about violence in the Peoples Temple and Jonestown, a chapter by Stuart A. Wright about debates regarding the Branch Davidian deaths, Henrik Bogdan's analysis of the Order of Solar Temple murders and suicides, Martin Repp's chapter on religion and violence in Japan with a focus on Aum Shinrikyo, and Benjamin E. Zeller's chapter on the euphemization of violence in Heaven's Gate. The final chapter in this part of the book is dedicated to the analysis of the case of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, which is provided by Jean-François Mayer. All these cases have already become "classical" examples of violence in NRMs, they all are analyzed from different angles and perspectives. The authors of the mentioned chapters analyze available empirical data on these cases and other scholarly sources, and discuss the reasons of violent acts.

The third part of this book has four contributions "on violence in a wide variety of alternative religions, including groups that are not normally studied under the NRM rubric" (p. 8). The contributions to this part of the book come from various parts of the world and various social contexts, not with exception the post-soviet area. Jonathan Peste analyzes the series of murders in the Swedish Pentecostal community; Kaarina Aitamurto discusses how a group within Slavic Paganism, Rodnoverie, justifies violence and presents the idea of pagan as warrior. Helen Crovetto analyzes the case of Ananda Marga, allegations against them concerning murder of apostates, and examines how the group justifies the use of force. E. Burke Rochford Jr. presents another case of violence within NRMs—the Hare Krishna New Vrindaban community, and discusses how acts of violence undermined the authority of the leader of this group and led to its final collapse.

The fourth part of this book covers the discourses of violence within various religious groups that never became violent themselves; among such groups are Nation of Islam, Bhagwan Rajneesh's followers' community of Rajneeshpuram, Yogi Bhañan's 3HO group and Satanism. Martha F. Lee examines the case of violence in Nation of Islam movement. Marion S. Goldman analyzes the data from Rajneeshpuram and examines why violence has never been used in this group, she states that networks of members outside community helped to solve problems peacefully. Constance Elsberg presents the case of

Yogi Bhajan's 3HO group where she sees a strong martial dimension of Sikhism and discusses what were the factors that prevented the use of violence so far. Jesper Aagard Petersen approaches Satanism and discourses of violence around it, and how Satanism is used as an alibi for various acts of violence.

The fifth part of this book deals with violence against new religions. Two contributions present different sources of violence against NRMs and the ways it is used. James T. Richardson and Bryan Edelman analyze the violence against Falung Gong movement in China and the ways it is justified by the state. Anson Shupe approaches the violence of counter groups used against the NRMs through so-called deprogramming activities.

As it was observed the aim of this book was "to research the general model of all NRM-related violence, to examine violence in less prominent new religions and violence against new religions." (p. 6)." which was reached. This is evident from clear structure of this book starting with theoretical discussions about NRMs and violence, through presentation of classical examples of violence in NRMs, to discussing the new manifestations of violence within new religions and discourses about violence within other religious phenomena, to challenging the new areas of research—violence against new religions. Thus it gives a reader both an introduction and the guidelines for further research into the topic and makes this book relevant for scholars and students from various academic fields, like religious studies, sociology of religion, law, political science, theology, etc. The topic of this book, its overall quality and readability should also be attractive for general public.

A few words must be added about the overall contribution of this book to the field of research of relations between violence and NRMs and religion in general. Mark Jurgensmeyer in his book *Terror in the Mind of God* (2001) analyzed the relationship between religion and violence in general but also wrote about various movements within different religious traditions that try to legitimize use of force. The anthology *Cults, Religion and Violence* (2002) was the first attempt within this field of research of relationship between violence and NRMs. This new book *Violence and New Religious Movements*, edited by James R. Lewis is a new attempt to propose new theoretical insights in this field, and it is successful for a few reasons. This book is timely, it is well structured, gives examples of violence and new religious movements from various contemporary social contexts (like post-soviet area), and proposes new areas for future researchers.