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978-0-521-45038-6 - Religion, War, and Ethics: A Sourcebook of Textual Traditions

Edited by Gregory M. Reichberg and Henrik Syse

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## Religion, War, and Ethics

### A Sourcebook of Textual Traditions

*Religion, War, and Ethics* is a collection of primary sources from the world's major religions on the ethics of war. Each chapter brings together annotated texts – scriptural, theological, ethical, and legal – from a variety of historical periods that reflect each tradition's response to perennial questions about the nature of war: When, if ever, is recourse to arms morally justifiable? What moral constraints should apply to military conduct? Can a lasting earthly peace be achieved? Are there sacred reasons for waging war, and special rewards for those who do the fighting? The religions covered include Sunni and Shiite Islam; Judaism; Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity; Theravada Buddhism; East Asian religious traditions (Confucianism, Shinto, Japanese and Korean Buddhism); Hinduism; and Sikhism. Each section is compiled by a specialist, recognized within his or her respective religious tradition, who has also written a commentary on the historical and textual context of the passages selected.

Gregory M. Reichberg is Research Professor at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). He is leader of the Oslo-based Research School in Peace and Conflict, adjunct Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo, and associate editor of the *Journal of Military Ethics*. He is co-editor of *World Religions and Norms of War* (2009); *Ethics, Nationalism, and Just War: Medieval and Contemporary Perspectives* (2007); and *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (2006).

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Gregory M. Reichberg

*Peace Research Institute Oslo*

Henrik Syse

*Peace Research Institute Oslo*

with the assistance of Nicole M. Hartwell



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Gregory M. Reichberg is Research Professor at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), where he specializes in the history of ethical thinking about peace and war. Over the last few years he has co-edited several volumes, including *World Religions and Norms of War* (2009) and *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (2006). He heads the Research School on Peace and Conflict (a consortium for doctoral students based at the University of Oslo) and is currently writing a monograph, *War and Peace in the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas*, which will be published by Cambridge University Press.

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## Preface

The events of 11 September 2001 cast a harsh new light on links between religion and violence. While much of the attention was initially directed toward Islam, it was not long before parallels were explored within Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and other mainstream religious traditions. This coincided with a sharp rise of philosophical interest over the past decades in the ethics of war, particularly within the confines of what is standardly termed the Western “just war tradition.” Consequently, among scholars certainly, but also among the general public, there is now a wider recognition that religion has the dual potential to encourage and to restrain violence. While some religious adherents urge a complete renunciation of violence (pacifism), more often there can be found a mixed approach in which the resort to force is excluded under certain conditions but allowed and perhaps even enjoined in others. Some have looked for ethical alternatives to limit war; others have sought to justify acts of violence to make these acceptable in ethical terms; while still others have sought to use religious symbols and ideals to foment conflict in pursuit of political agendas.

Despite the accrued interest in religion, violence, war, and ethics, the source texts in which these issues are expounded have often remained inaccessible to all but a handful of specialists. This is especially true of traditions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, where the key authoritative treatments are often embedded in texts (e.g., *Qur’anic* jurisprudence, religious epics, or Halakhic commentary) that are not overtly about matters pertaining to the ethics of war, thus requiring a difficult process of interpretation and selection, and for which English translations frequently do not exist. Since debate in the public arena (on, for instance, what Islam does or does not teach regarding participation in violence) often hinges on a proper knowledge of the relevant textual traditions, the quality of such debate would be significantly enhanced if the most important texts could be made available, under a single cover, in English, to a broader reading public. It is with this goal in mind that the present book was conceived.<sup>1</sup> A generous grant from the Research Council of Norway, for a four-year project on “Comparative Ethics of War,” enabled the idea to become a reality.

The volume that thus emerged – this sourcebook – explores how the world’s leading religious traditions have approached the normative problems associated with war and armed conflict. While nonviolent approaches have been taken into account, the book’s main focus is on “the just-war outlook in the generic sense of the term.”<sup>2</sup> This is the idea that the use of armed force may be justifiable within determinable limits, in order to

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uphold fundamental human values, such as protection of one's homeland from attack, defense of the innocent, or preservation of the rule of law.

If "just war" designates the search for a middle ground between "no violence whatsoever" and "anything goes," then it can be a useful term for designating the abundant literature that arose first in Hindu culture, then among the ancient Israelites and Chinese, to a certain extent among Buddhists and Sikhs, and finally with more explicit articulation by Christians and Muslims.

Some may find this focus on "just war" surprising in a volume that purports to study specifically how *religious traditions* have assessed the normative dimensions of armed conflict. For many, "just war" has come to signify a secular Western discourse (of the sort exemplified by Michael Walzer's widely cited book *Just and Unjust Wars*) that is ill suited for describing properly religious attitudes toward the phenomenon in question. Moreover, on the theme of religion and war the reading public has grown accustomed to apparently contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, it is often assumed that religion requires a renunciation of violence; on the other hand, it seems equally true that when individuals enter war with religious motivations their use of force will know no limits. Hence the freighted term "holy war," long associated with historical excesses such as the medieval crusades or the Reformation-era wars of religion, has newly found application to a wide range of violent struggles in which religious identities are taken to be a key factor. The discourse about religion and war thus swings from principled pacifism to violent extremism. The ground traditionally occupied by the world's great religious traditions – wherein over the centuries a network of overlapping distinctions has been drawn concerning the difference between justifiable and unjustifiable uses of force – is often sidelined in favor of the more dramatic discourse that alternates between the opposing poles of nonviolence and militant extremism.

The present volume aims to remedy this neglect by making available, under a single cover, the key texts on "just war" that may be found within the world's major religions. Nonviolent and "extremist" alternatives have not thereby been excluded, as some if not all of the chapters include at least some texts that reflect these viewpoints. The book's center of gravity does nonetheless remain within the orbit of "just war." Since the cultural matrix for millions of people in the world today is infused with ideas, sentiments, images, and expectations that originate from their respective religious traditions, if norms of war are to have real traction, if they are to have a hold on the minds and hearts of believers, it is important that they be associated with long-standing norms of peace and war that can be found within each of these traditions.

It was impossible within the confines of a single volume to provide exhaustive coverage of all relevant texts within each religious tradition. Difficult choices were forced upon the contributors, each of whom was given strict limits on the size of his or her respective chapter. By the same token, space constraints were such that some religious traditions could not be represented herein. Had the total number of pages not been a consideration, the by-no-means-insignificant developments within, say, Coptic and Armenian Christianity, Ismaili Islam, Native American and African spirituality, Tibetan Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism would certainly have found their rightful place. Let it be added that our focus on textual traditions has implied that nearly all of the historical sources reproduced in this volume have originated from male authors. This is certainly a problem and challenge worth noting.

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The book has been designed according to a set of guiding principles that have been applied in the measure possible throughout each of its eleven chapters.

First, in commissioning contributors for the different chapters, we sought to identify scholars who could provide an internal viewpoint on the traditions to be represented in the volume or who know the tradition truly well based on long-standing scholarship – under the supposition that linguistic and religious familiarity would promote a keen grasp of delicate and often controversial issues. Second, it was understood that each of the chapters would be free-standing so they could be read independently of each other. Similarly, it was acknowledged that the treatment of war within these traditions was sufficiently diverse that no common set of categories – for instance, the Western just war terminology of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* – could be imposed throughout. Some shared rules were nonetheless apposite in order that the book might cohere as a single unit. Each chapter, for instance, begins with a general introduction. In some cases this sufficed to present and to contextualize the sources reproduced. In other cases, the contributors interspersed commentary throughout their chapters or more frequently paraphrased material that could not readily be detached from its surroundings. A careful typographical differentiation was established between editorial commentary on the one hand and original texts on the other, thereby enabling our readers to understand at any point whether they are hearing the chapter editor's voice or reading an actual text from the tradition in question. All passages reproduced verbatim or closely paraphrased include an initial statement that identifies the source – book, article, manuscript, poem, epic, sacred scripture – from which the passage is taken. When translations were needed – as was most often the case – these were ordinarily drawn from previously published materials. Our colleagues at Cambridge University Press, especially Anastasia Graf and Emily Spangler, are to be praised for their painstaking efforts at identifying and contacting the relevant copyright holders. At other times, the chapter editors translated passages themselves or entrusted others with this task. For works not in the public domain, copyright holders of the original versions were able to review these translations so that their consent could be given.

All of the contributors were urged to include source materials across a broad time span, thus from ancient, modern, and contemporary periods, although it was understood that depending on the contours of each tradition the emphasis would be placed differently from case to case. Moreover, within each chapter it was expected that a range of different sources would be represented – epical, scriptural, theological, jurisprudential, patristic, liturgical, pastoral, and the like – depending in each instance on the special characteristics of the tradition in question. Let us note that the relevant Scriptural passages related to Christianity are assembled at the beginning of the Catholic chapter. These passages are also relevant for the discussions and texts in the Orthodox and Protestant chapters. (Furthermore, texts from Hebrew Scriptures found in the Judaism chapter are of relevance to the chapters on Christianity; some passages will indeed be found both there and in the Catholic chapter.) In the case of the Muslim and Buddhist sources, the basic texts from those traditions have to a larger extent been divided between the relevant chapters (i.e., Sunni and Shia for Islam, and Theravada Buddhist and Japanese traditions for Buddhism).

We have given our contributors the option of expressing their own considered judgment on the texts included within their respective chapters. Thus, in some cases, the reader will find that the chapter editor has taken a stand on controversial issues, while in other chapters the editor has retained more of a distance from personal views. In all

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of the chapters care has nonetheless been taken to provide a representative sampling of diverse views on war and ethics that can be found within each of the traditions.

Finally, while writings on peace could not be ignored altogether – virtually all religious traditions acknowledge that peace is the normative horizon for reflection – it was recognized from the outset that the preponderance of citations would necessarily have to be drawn from writings about war and violence. By the same token, the many metaphorical uses of “war” and related concepts – which in some traditions can be quite extensive – were largely set aside as outside the scope of this volume.

An undertaking such as this could not succeed without indispensable support from many quarters. First and foremost there was the indefatigable editorial assistance of Nicole M. Hartwell, who coordinated the flow of numerous drafts from our contributors. She kept careful track of their successive revisions; attentively read the manuscript through its various transformations; offered many valuable suggestions, stylistic and substantive; and was of great help to the contributors in finalizing their chapters. Our committee of external readers, Timothy J. Demy (United States Naval War College), Glenn “Chip” Hughes (St. Mary’s University, San Antonio), Matthew Levering (University of Saint Mary of the Lake), Ayatollah Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad (Shahid Beheshti University, Teheran), and Josef Stern (University of Chicago), enhanced the accuracy and scope of this volume through their perceptive comments. Much praise is likewise due to our copy editor, Stephanie Sakson, and Cambridge University Press senior editor Beatrice Rehl, who enthusiastically embraced the project from the outset, attending our workshops in Oslo and Paphos, and providing invaluable guidance over the last six years. Considerable thanks are also due to our indexer, Tobiah Waldron, for carefully putting together the index. Without the institutional support of our home institution, the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), encouragement from our friends in the section on Peace and Reconciliation at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the financial contribution of the Research Council of Norway, this project would not have seen the light of day. Very special mention is lastly reserved for our contributors, who made the book what it is. From our communion in the ethics of war may there emerge some durable roots of peace. To all of the above, we the editors-in-chief express our heartfelt gratitude and thanks.

Gregory M. Reichberg  
Henrik Syse

## NOTES

- 1 The idea emerged at a conference organized by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in Rome (March 2006) on “Conceptions of Peace and War in the Abrahamic Religions.” The ground for the present volume was prepared when a group of scholars at that conference contributed essays to a book, *World Religions and Norms of War*, edited by Vesselin Popovski, Gregory M. Reichberg, and Nicolas Turner, which was subsequently published by United Nations University Press (Tokyo, 2009). We, the editors, thank UNU Press for allowing us to reproduce in this preface some passages that originally appeared in the conclusion to the aforementioned volume, “Norms of War in Cross-Religious Perspective.”
- 2 Stephen Neff, *War and the Law of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 34.