General Introduction*

Jitse H. F. Dijkstra and Christian R. Raschle

Situation in Current Research and Themes of the Volume

At the start of the twenty-eighth chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon (1737–94) writes:

> The ruin of Paganism, in the age of Theodosius, is perhaps the only example of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition; and may therefore deserve to be considered, as a singular event in the history of the human mind.[1]

Having described the rapid triumph of Christianity under Constantine in chapter 20, and the short revival of traditional religion by Julian in chapter 23, according to Gibbon the final reckoning with the Graeco-Roman religious tradition took place by the removal of the altar of Victory from the Senate house under Gratian and the subsequent imperial legislation under Theodosius I. The latter incited an empire-wide attack by Christian fanatics on temples, statues and other objects of worship, resulting, for example, in the famous destruction of the Serapeum at Alexandria in 391/92 CE. The success of this systematic campaign aimed at the 'fall of Paganism' was so complete, says Gibbon, that by 423 Theodosius' grandson (Theodosius II) hardly noticed that there were any traces of the old religion left.[2]

  The central tenets of Gibbon's sweeping narrative of the religious transformation that took place in Late Antiquity (fourth to seventh

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[1] E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 3 (London, 1781), ed. D. Womersley, vol. 2 (London, 1994) 71.

[2] Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall* 2, 90. Gibbon's remark refers to *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.22.

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century CE), of a violent conflict between 'pagans' and Christians resulting in a speedy victory of the latter, captivated scholarship until the 1980s.[3] With his 1971 *The World of Late Antiquity*, however, Peter Brown opened up new ways of looking at the period in general and the process of religious transformation in particular.[4] Late Antiquity is now seen in much more positive terms as a dynamic period of cultural change, in which monolithic views of the 'decline of paganism' and the 'triumph of Christianity' have been replaced with a much more intricate web of religious interactions in a world that only gradually became Christian.[5]

Despite these trends in scholarship, the idea that religious violence was widespread in Late Antiquity has remained persistent, which is no doubt in large part because our sources abound with dramatic stories of zealous bishops and fanatical monks attacking temples, statues and adherents of the Graeco-Roman religions. Take, for instance, the *Life of Porphyry*, a Greek hagiographical work ascribed to a certain Mark the Deacon, which describes the actions of this bishop against 'paganism' in his see of Gaza, including the burning, with the emperor's approval, of the main temple of Marnas and its conversion into a splendid church.[6] It does not come as a surprise, then, that, whereas before religious violence was often merely treated as a given, in the aftermath of 9/11 the topic has generated enormous interest and has grown into one of the most hotly debated issues in Late Antique studies.[7] The idea amongst not just scholars that

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[3] E.g. J. Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Heidelberg, 1920); A. Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1924); A. Momigliano (ed.), *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 1963). For the remainder of this section we rework, expand and update J. H. F. Dijkstra, 'Religious Violence in Late Antique Egypt Reconsidered: The Cases of Alexandria, Panopolis and Philae', *Journal of Early Christian History* 6 (2015) 24–48 at 26–29 (repr. in W. Mayer and C. de Wet [eds.], *Reconceiving Religious Conflict: New Views from the Formative Centuries of Christianity* [London, 2018] 211–33 at 211–13).

[4] P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London, 1971).

[5] E.g. R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (AD 100–400)* (New Haven, 1984); R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (London, 1986); F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370–529*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1993–94); R. MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, 1997); P. Chuvin, *Chronique des derniers païens: la disparition du paganisme dans l'Empire romain, du règne de Constantin à celui de Justinien*, 3rd ed. (Paris, 2009); É. Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200–450 CE* (Ithaca, 2012); C. P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

[6] See, for more detail on this episode, Bremmer, this volume, pp. 62–66.

[7] E.g. J. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt: Studien zu den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Christen, Heiden und Juden im Osten des Römischen Reiches (von Konstantin bis Theodosius II.)* (Berlin, 2004); M. Gaddis, *'There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ': Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, 2005); H. A. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot and Burlington, 2006); J. Hahn, S. Emmel and U. Gotter (eds.), *From Temple to*

religious violence was endemic in the period following the rise of Christianity is so pervasive that it has recently been reawakened in public perception through the Hollywood movie *Agora* (2009), and one cannot fail to observe that the topic is closely related to the current interests and *mentalité*.[8]

Even if these studies have contributed to a growing awareness of the complexity of the phenomenon, paying greater attention, for instance, to the much more devastating cases of intra-religious violence,[9] the subject has until recently remained largely undertheorised. For example, not one of the mentioned studies discusses the terms 'religion' and 'violence' in any depth, if at all. In this respect, we can learn much from recent publications in Religious Studies analysing religious violence in contemporary contexts. When using the term 'violence', scholars often think of physical violence, but in fact it can denote a diversity of actions, from verbal abuse to actual bodily violence. The terminology proposed by the founder of Peace and Conflict Studies, Johan Galtung, is useful here, as it distinguishes between direct (physical), structural (embedded in social structures) and cultural (symbolic) violence, of which the interrelations need to be studied together.[10] The interpretative difficulties of the term 'religion' are also well known. The ancient context, in particular, has led to much debate as for most of Antiquity there was no clearly demarcated religious sphere and the ancients did not have a word for religion as we know it, leading some scholars to denounce the term altogether;[11] hence even 'religious violence'

Church: Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity (Leiden, 2008); T. Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia, 2009); P. Athanassiadi, *Vers la pensée unique: la montée de l'intolérance dans l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 2010); E. J. Watts, *Riot in Alexandria: Tradition and Group Dynamics in Late Antique Pagan and Christian Communities* (Berkeley, 2010); B. Isele, *Kampf um Kirchen: Religiöse Gewalt, heiliger Raum und christliche Topographie in Alexandrien und Konstantinopel (4. Jh.)* (Münster, 2010); B. D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2011), with the discussion of this book by M. A. Tilley, D. Frankfurter, P. Frederiksen and B. D. Shaw in *JECS* 21 (2013) 291–309 and by C. Ando, C. Conybeare, C. Grey, N. Lenski and H. A. Drake in *JLA* 6 (2013) 197–263; T. Myrup Kristensen, *Making and Breaking the Gods: Christian Responses to Pagan Sculpture in Late Antiquity* (Aarhus, 2013); M.-F. Baslez (ed.), *Chrétiens persécuteurs: destructions, exclusions, violences religieuses au IVᵉ siècle* (Paris, 2014); S. Ratti (ed.), *Une Antiquité tardive noire ou heureuse?* (Besançon, 2015).

[8] See also Mayer, this volume, p. 255.   [9] E.g. Isele, *Kampf um Kirchen*; Shaw, *Sacred Violence*.

[10] J. Galtung, 'Cultural Violence', *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1990) 291–305, and *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London, 1996) 196–210. See also Bremmer, p. 48, and Bendlin, pp. 144–45, both this volume.

[11] B. Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, 2013); C. Barton and D. Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York, 2016). See also Mason, pp. 110–11, Bendlin, pp. 140–41, Rives, p. 177, and Mayer, pp. 257–58, all this volume.

has now been challenged as a heuristic term.[12] Every student of religious violence, then, should keep in mind the complexity and problematic nature of the terminology used.[13]

In approaching religious violence, we can equally benefit from the recent progress in Religious Studies on this topic, which has enjoyed a massive interest since 9/11. A major debate has revolved around the question of whether religious violence is rooted in monotheism, a thesis that was advocated in a number of studies by the Egyptologist and cultural historian Jan Assmann,[14] thus reviving a line of thought going back to Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume (1711–76) that polytheism is tolerant whereas monotheism is intolerant.[15] Yet recent research in Religious Studies has convincingly argued against this image by demonstrating that religious violence is a complex phenomenon that exists in all places and times (hence it is too simplistic to say that it is caused by monotheism, and the most recent studies therefore rather speak of 'religion and violence' in order to preclude any compelling relationship between the two),[16] and is frequently interwoven with political, social and economical factors. As a result, fine-grained analyses of case studies, in which due attention is given to the local and historical contexts in which the violence arises, should be the norm.[17]

Taking their cue from these recent developments in Religious Studies, Late Antique scholars increasingly realise that the perception of the prevalence of religious violence, concomitant with the Enlightenment view of the definitive establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire as coercive and violent (which, through Gibbon, has influenced, as we have seen, much of subsequent scholarship in Late Antique studies), stands in

[12] See Mason, this volume, pp. 131–32, countered in particular by Bendlin, pp. 141–42, and Mayer, pp. 257–58 both this volume.
[13] As is well illustrated by Van Nuffelen's discussion, in Chapter 11 of this volume, of a related term, the concept of coercion, in Late Antiquity.
[14] J. Assmann, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung oder der Preis des Monotheismus* (Munich, 2003); Assmann, *Monotheismus und die Sprache der Gewalt* (Vienna, 2006). See also Kippenberg, pp. 17–18, Bremmer, pp. 49–50, and Mayer, p. 256, all this volume.
[15] D. Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (London, 1757), in the edition by J. C. A. Gaskin, *David Hume: Principal Writings on Religion* (Oxford, 1993) 160–63. See also Kippenberg, pp. 17–18, Bremmer, p. 49, and Bendlin, p. 136, all this volume.
[16] See also Kippenberg, pp. 18–19, and Bremmer, p. 67, both this volume. In this book, we have opted to maintain, for the sake of convenience, the term 'religious violence', while realising the problematic nature and complexity of the term, as set out above.
[17] We will mention here only W. T. Cavenaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford, 2009); H. G. Kippenberg, *Violence as Worship: Religious Wars in the Age of Globalization* (Stanford, 2011); M. Jerryson, M. Juergensmeyer and M. Kitts (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (Oxford, 2013); S. Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Oxford, 2014); M. Juergensmeyer, M. Kitts and M. Jerryson (eds.), *Violence and the World's Religious Traditions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2017).

the way of a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. Several scholars have problematised the term 'religious violence' and successfully applied the Religious Studies framework to the ancient evidence.[18]

Such an enriched understanding of religious violence accords well with two recent trends within the field. First of all, Late Antique scholars have increasingly scrutinised the literary accounts that describe violence between Christians and 'pagans'.[19] To come back to the *Life of Porphyry* mentioned above, this work has now been demonstrated to date to the sixth century, which significantly decreases its trustworthiness as a historical source for the events around 400 it is describing.[20] At the same time a large amount of archaeological data has been made available that enables us to counterbalance the picture of the literary sources. A major theme has been the changing sacred landscape in Late Antiquity. In a classic study, clearly written in the tradition of Gibbon, Friedrich Deichmann (1909–93) posited, mostly on the basis of literary sources, that the destruction of temples and their conversion into churches was widespread in the fourth and fifth centuries.[21] The archaeological evidence that is now available from throughout the Mediterranean, however, proves that both were in fact rather exceptional.[22] Thus it is clear that events described in the Late Antique sources were often dramatised for ideological reasons and

[18] E.g. J. N. Bremmer, 'Religious Violence and Its Roots: A View from Antiquity', *Asdiwal* 6 (2011) 71–79 (repr. in Mayer and De Wet, *Reconceiving Religious Conflict*, 30–42), and 'Religious Violence between Greeks, Romans, Christians and Jews', in A. Geljon and R. Roukema (eds.), *Violence in Ancient Christianity: Victims and Perpetrators* (Leiden, 2014) 8–30; W. Mayer, 'Religious Conflict: Definitions, Problems and Theoretical Approaches', in W. Mayer and B. Neil (eds.), *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam* (Berlin, 2014) 1–20, and 'Re-Theorising Religious Conflict', in Mayer and De Wet, *Reconceiving Religious Conflict*, 3–29, as well as the other contributions in that volume.

[19] E.g. S. Emmel, U. Gotter and J. Hahn, '"From Temple to Church": Analysing a Late Antique Phenomenon of Transformation', in Hahn et al., *From Temple to Church*, 1–22; R. S. Bagnall, 'Models and Evidence in the Study of Religion in Late Antique Egypt', in Hahn et al., *From Temple to Church*, 23–41 at 25–32; L. Lavan, 'The End of the Temples: Towards a New Narrative?', in L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (eds.), *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'* (Leiden, 2011) xv–lxv. See for this point also Dijkstra, this volume, pp. 286–87.

[20] T. D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen, 2010) 260–83; A. Lampadaridi, *La conversion de Gaza au christianisme: la Vie de S. Porphyre de Gaza par Marc le Diacre* (Brussels, 2016) 15–19. See also Bremmer, this volume, pp. 64–66.

[21] F. W. Deichmann, 'Frühchristliche Kirchen in antiken Heiligtümern', *JDAI* 54 (1939) 105–36 (repr. in his *Rom, Ravenna, Konstantinopel, Naher Osten: Gesammelte Studien zur spätantiken Architektur, Kunst und Geschichte* [Wiesbaden, 1982] 56–94).

[22] E.g. B. Ward Perkins, 'Reconfiguring Sacred Space: From Pagan Shrines to Christian Churches', in G. Brands and H.-G. Severin (eds.), *Die spätantike Stadt und ihre Christianisierung* (Wiesbaden, 2003) 285–90; R. Bayliss, *Provincial Cilicia and the Archaeology of Temple Conversion* (Oxford, 2004); Hahn, Emmel and Gotter, *From Temple to Church*; Lavan and Mulryan, *Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*.

belie a much more intricate reality in which religious violence only occasionally occurred in special local or regional circumstances.[23]

The current volume intends to build on this recent scholarship on religious violence in Late Antiquity by using the insights from Religious Studies in order to come to more nuanced judgements about the nature of the violence.[24] Together the chapters collected here highlight the wide range of different kinds of violence, from violence transmitted through discourse to physical violence and from single events to longer-term processes; the various factors, besides religious ones, involved in cases of 'religious violence'; and the methodological issues encountered in interpreting them. Some chapters also display an openness, as is *de rigueur* in Religious Studies, to applying models from other disciplines in order to elucidate the phenomenon under study as much as possible.[25]

An innovative aspect of this book, which follows logically from the idea that religious violence is not peculiar to particular religions but can occur in all places and times, is the inclusion of studies on the earlier Graeco-Roman world. For the focus on Late Antiquity has too often obscured the fact that the phenomenon was also, if of course differently, present in earlier periods of Antiquity. The reason for this imbalance can once again be found in Enlightenment thinking, and the thesis of polytheistic tolerance versus monotheistic intolerance. Just as Gibbon's view of the Christian Roman empire as violent and coercive was informed by this thesis, so was his portrayal of the Roman state in previous centuries as advocating 'universal toleration' in the domain of religion.[26] Even if the view of religious tolerance in the first centuries of our era has long been proved incorrect and the debate has become significantly more sophisticated,[27] such ideas still permeate many recent studies of religions in the Graeco-Roman world.[28] But in the same way as the picture of Christian

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[23] E.g. Dijkstra, 'Religious Violence in Late Antique Egypt Reconsidered', with the comments of Mayer, this volume, pp. 261–63.

[24] In this sense, it can be seen as a successor volume to Mayer and De Wet, *Reconceiving Religious Conflict*, which uses the same approach.

[25] E.g. in this volume the chapters of Eidinow (anthropology: pp. 71–72) and Dijkstra (social psychology: pp. 288–91).

[26] E.g. in his famous sixteenth chapter, Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall* 1, 514.

[27] The seminal study is P. Garnsey, 'Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford, 1984) 1–27; see also e.g. J. Losehand, '"The Religious Harmony in the Ancient World": Vom Mythos religiöser Toleranz in der Antike', *GFA* 12 (2009) 99–132.

[28] E.g. J. Scheid, 'Les religions', in F. Jacques and J. Scheid (eds.), *Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire (44 av. J.-C.–260 ap. J.-C.)*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1990) 111–28 at 126: 'polythéiste et non doctrinal, le système religieux des Romains était forcément tolérant à l'égard des pratiques religieuses privées',

intolerance and widespread violence in Late Antiquity has been nuanced, so we should transcend the prevailing picture of polytheistic tolerance and allow that religious violence did occur in earlier periods of Antiquity, in various manifestations.[29]

To redress the balance, this book therefore brings together, for the first time, scholars with expertise ranging from classical Athens to Late Antiquity to examine the phenomenon in all its complexity and diversity throughout Antiquity. The resulting case studies will serve to complexify the picture of religious tolerance in the Graeco-Roman world and place the developments of Late Antiquity in a long-term perspective, covering events in the thousand years from the fourth century BCE until the sixth century CE, while at the same time highlighting specific local and historical factors.

Overview of Contributions to the Volume

This volume contains seventeen of the eighteen papers delivered at the international workshop held at Montreal/Ottawa on 28–30 September 2017 (see Acknowledgements above). We have maintained the division at the conference of the two full days of papers, with those of Montreal focusing on religious violence in the Graeco-Roman world (Part II) and those of Ottawa on Late Antiquity (Part III). With seven and eight chapters, respectively, these sections are almost evenly balanced out. Within this structure the chapters have been placed in roughly chronological order. The key-note lectures by Kippenberg and Bremmer (Chapters 1 and 2) have been placed at the beginning (Part I) as 'Methodenkapitel' that serve to lay out the theoretical, methodological and chronological framework for the book. The chapters by Mayer and Van Nuffelen at the start of Part III (Chapters 10 and 11) function as separate introductions to the issues at stake for the Late Antique period.

The present book does not claim to be exhaustive in any way. Part II focuses heavily on the Roman empire and, regrettably, includes only one chapter on ancient Greece (another paper was commissioned but eventually could not be delivered for the volume). Still, the cases discussed in Chapter 1 by Kippenberg (Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids) and

and *Les dieux, l'État et l'individu: réflexions sur la religion civique à Rome* (Paris, 2013) 170, remarking on the Bacchanalia affair of 186 BCE: 'On peut dire que c'était la société romaine qui était intolérante, mais pas ses religions'.

[29] See Bremmer, 'Religious Violence and Its Roots', 73–77, and 'Religious Violence between Greeks, Romans, Christians and Jews', 12–18, making this point, with Raschle, this volume, p. 88, and the detailed remarks by Bendlin, this volume, pp. 136–38.

Chapter 2 by Bremmer (fourth-century impiety processes), as well as
Chapter 3 by Eidinow, provide enough incentive for future scholars to
further explore the topic of violence and Greek religion. Dependent on the
expertise of the invited speakers, the chapters in Part III verge towards the
Eastern Roman empire in Late Antiquity, though Chapter 10 by Mayer
is general and Chapter 11 by Van Nuffelen is concerned with Augustine
(and note also Chapter 9 by Digeser on Lactantius at the end of Part II).
Nevertheless, these chapters offer a representative set of case studies that
allows for a comparative examination and interpretation of religious vio-
lence in the Graeco-Roman and Late Antique periods.

Part 1 contains two introductory chapters that cover the two main
themes of the book, the Religious Studies approach and the opening
up of the study of religious violence to the Graeco-Roman world. In
Chapter 1, Hans G. Kippenberg provides an overview of the current state
of affairs on religious violence in Religious Studies. He starts by refuting
the existence of a causal relationship between religion and violence, placing
the emphasis instead on the religious communities that generate the
violence. He illustrates this link with two case studies, a modern (9/11)
and an ancient one (the Maccabean revolt), in which in each case a secular
conflict is defined in religious terms and a model ('prefiguration') from the
community's sacred tradition (Quran, Bible) is taken as a script for action;
the link between religious communities and violence is further cemented
by looking at the different perspectives of Jews and Muslims on the Middle
East conflict. The chapter ends with a list of methodological rules for
studying religious violence in terms of social action.

In Chapter 2, Jan N. Bremmer takes a long-term perspective on
religious violence in Antiquity, discussing cases from the fourth-century
BCE impiety processes against Socrates and Phryne, to the clash between
Greeks and Jews in first-century CE Alexandria (known as the first
'pogrom'), the Roman persecutions of Christians and the Christian
'destruction' of the Marneion in Late Antique Gaza. Along the way, he
makes several methodological points, such as that classical Athens was
reasonably tolerant (though there was always a chance of being accused of
impiety), that the use of the term 'pogrom' for the events of 38 CE (or any
other event in Antiquity) is misleading as it implies a purely religious
conflict, that we see an increasing involvement of the state in exerting
religious violence in the course of the Roman period, while in Late
Antiquity bishops start to play a significant role as well, and finally that
religious violence in Late Antiquity is mostly restricted to violent rhetoric.
His concluding thesis can be taken as the motto for this book: 'in

Antiquity not all religious violence was that religious and not all religious violence that violent'.

Part II, on religious violence in the Graeco-Roman world, opens with Chapter 3 by Esther Eidinow on Greek religion. She focuses on the corpus of Greek binding spells (*katadesmoi*) from, mostly, Athens, dating to the late classical and Hellenistic period, and argues that these texts should be considered primarily as political instruments, which treated the body of the individual as a site of potential domination by imagining punishment of key body parts as happened in the civic law courts. The intention of the practitioners was not so much, she contends, to restrain their competitors, but rather to harm their opponents. To do this they employed the language and ideas of civic punishment, which in turn resulted in emotional relief. Thus Eidinow shows that the binding spells, far from being a marginal magical practice, were integrally linked to the institutions and values of the *polis.*

The Roman world is at the centre of the remaining chapters in this section. Chapter 4 by Christian R. Raschle starts with an overview of the ways in which foreign gods and cults were introduced (Asclepius and Cybele) and suppressed (Bacchus) at Rome in the Republican period. This general background sets the scene for his discussion of the repression of followers of the Isis cult and astrologers in late Republican and early imperial Rome (roughly first century BCE to first century CE). He shows that the violent actions against these groups are the result of a complex set of negotiations among elite members trying to convey messages of political identity by drawing boundaries between appropriate Roman and non-Roman behaviour.

With Chapter 5 by Steve Mason, we move on to two chapters on religious violence and the Jews. Mason starts out with some methodological reflections on the theme of the volume and uses these as a point of departure for a detailed analysis of two massacres, one of a Roman garrison in Jerusalem, the other of Jews in Caesarea, which according to Josephus occurred at the very same time on a Sabbath in 66 CE. He places the passage in its literary and historical context and concludes that we cannot be sure what real events lie behind Josephus' narrative. Moreover, according to Mason, Josephus knew no category of 'religion' in our sense of the word, hence we cannot speak here of (cases of) religious violence.

Chapter 6, by Andreas Bendlin, addresses head on the view of a Roman world before the mid-third century CE that, in sharp contrast to Late Antiquity, basically advocated tolerance and pluralism, thus minimising religious violence. Following the theoretical underpinnings of Kippenberg,

Bendlin invites us instead to disaggregate religion and violence, and acknowledge, contrary to what Mason holds, that social actors could appropriate the religious domain as they legitimised or suffered violence in the period in question. Moreover, different kinds of violence need to be distinguished – besides physical violence, also cultural and structural violence. He illustrates these points by a study of the Jewish diasporas of Flavian Rome and Puteoli (69–96 CE), highlighting the sustained cultural and structural violence to which these communities were exposed. Such violence was not restricted to the Jews, however, but also affected other diasporic communities.

The following three chapters deal with religious violence and the Christians, particularly the chapters by Rives and Manders, which are both concerned with the persecutions. In Chapter 7, James B. Rives incisively analyses the role of animal sacrifice in the Roman persecution of Christians in the second and third centuries CE. He argues that animal sacrifice appears to have played no distinctive role in the initial interactions between Christians and the Roman authorities, but that the edict of Decius (249/50 CE) marked a turning point not only in the emphasis that Roman authorities put on animal sacrifice, setting a precedent for later empire-wide persecutions, but also in the place of animal sacrifice in the Christian imagination, which now came to be seen more emphatically as a practice incompatible with Christian identity.

The last two chapters in this section, by Manders and Digeser, embody the transition from the Roman to the Late Antique period (note that Constantine occurs here first as emperor, in Manders' chapter, and then as Christian emperor, in that by Digeser). In Chapter 8, Erika Manders looks at the motives behind the outbreak of the Great Persecution (303–13 CE) from a new angle: the numismatic evidence. A quantitative analysis reveals that there were fewer different messages conveyed on the coin types of the Tetrarchs as compared with those of the previous, third-century emperors, and that they represent similar thematic patterns. The message of unification as evident from the coin types is taken as part of a larger ideological programme, which provided the context for the outbreak of the Persecution: with it the Tetrarchs intended to obtain greater (religious) unity in the empire.

Chapter 9, by Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, focuses on Constantine as a Christian warrior emperor. She argues that this image, which was diametrically opposed to the Christian image of the martyr, often persecuted by emperors, gained wide acceptance as a result of the rhetorical skills that Lactantius displayed in his *Divine Institutes*, probably written