Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 736 pages. Hardback, £105.00. ISBN-13: 978-0199731640 (hardback); ISBN-10: 0199731640 (ebook).

This large volume aims to provide a comprehensive overview of topics relating to religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. It is divided into five thematic sections, and twenty-five chapters, allowing for a wide range of focus and a deeper level of analysis than that which would be possible in an encyclopaedic format. Several chapters include a useful list of suggested further readings after the bibliography. The organization of the chapters is topical but confusing at times, as different sections overlap.

The first part of the volume serves as a review of the field of religious peace building and religious violence. Written by two of the editors, it covers two major areas of analysis: how religious peacebuilding has been discussed in academic literature, and how to explain the phenomenon of religious violence. Both authors provide comprehensive mapping, outlining the current limitations and challenges of the study of religious peacebuilding, and defining key terms like "strong religion," "weak religion," "fundamentalism," and other concepts of the respective fields of study. This section will prove invaluable to students and researchers new to the disciplines of religion and peacebuilding studies.

Part Two, "The Historical and the Historicist," contains four chapters. The first three provide a theoretical analysis of secularism and religion, nations and states, and how they are related. The section has a detailed discussion of the different interpretations and a critique of secularism, and a proposed reinterpretation of secularism reconciling the gap of what it means in theory and in practice. Chapter 5 deals with empirical data, including a section on the Polish solidarity movement of the 1980s, where Jakelic provides an example of secular-religious solidarity. The last chapter provides a genealogy of structural and cultural violence thus providing analytical tools to address the issues of justice and peace in the context of peace studies. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the works of Martin Luther King Jr. and Cornel West in relation to religion and peacebuilding. The title and categorization of this section could be confusing to the reader, as it lacks much historical analysis despite the title. Except for chapter 3, which presents a brief history of the origins of nationalism, and chapter 6's brief history of peace studies, I was confused why the authors identified this as historical, when it was largely devoted to theory.

Part Three, "Contested Issues," contains six diverse chapters, mainly focusing on religion and development, religious militancy, religion, state, and violence (three case studies are briefly discussed: the Bosnian War, Gujarat, and Apartheid South Africa), ethics and "justpeace," and religious freedom. Chapter 10 specifically discusses Islam and ethics, focusing mainly on Islamic thoughts in regards to war and jihad. The last chapter of this section comprehensively covers most of the discussions around women, religion, and peacebuilding.

Part Four, "Peacebuilding in Practice: Strategies, Resources, Critique," is the longest section of the book. The twelve chapters deal with transitional justice, religion peacebuilding, and social change (intervention in Syria), how a secular militancy could be an obstacle to peacebuilding, religions, and peace in Asia, peacebuilding in the Muslim world, Martin Luther King Jr. as an interfaith leader and a discussion of youth and interfaith, inter-religious dialogue, a more practical chapter on ritual and peacebuilding by Schirch, spirituality and religious peacebuilding, theology and peacebuilding, the role of religious communities in peacebuilding, religion and solidarity activism, and solidarity activism focusing on comparing the Israeli–Palestinian peacebuilding with the case of Tibet.

Part Five concludes the book with a single chapter conclusion, "The Growing Edge of the Conversation," that summarises the main arguments of the volume's content, defining "justpeace," presenting different conceptions of violence while contextualizing the discussions of theory and practice in the fields of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. This final discussion reiterates the context of how the book project started and to what it contributes to: "justpeace," the different conceptions of violence, and an in-depth debate on the role of religion in these discussions.

The main contribution of this book is its synthesis of a wide swath of theoretical perspectives. However, historians and area studies scholars might feel that much of the content is overly abstract and lacking historical depth. Apropos to the readers of this journal, Asia is largely overlooked: specific discussion of Asia is largely limited to chapter 16, "Religion and Peace in Asia." The chapter, which covers a hugely complex and diverse area, and "more than half of the world's population" (407), touches on issues the authors call the "Asian religious context." After a short discussion of the Korean peninsula and the role Christianity can play in a peaceful reunification, the chapter turns to the religious figures of Mahatma Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and their contributions to peacebuilding and justice. Other discussion of Asia appears elsewhere in the book as passing examples of other issues.

This handbook offers a detailed introduction to the study of peacebuilding, conflict, and religion; it will be an essential reference for any student or researcher working in the field of conflict and peacebuilding, and useful to researchers in the field of religious studies. The diversity of the authors who contributed to the volume, and who are mostly from religious and peacebuilding studies, indicates the scope of the book. Although occasionally lacking in empirical depth, the solid theoretical framework provides a sound foundation for further development of this vital field.

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