

Review of: Manuel Vogel (ed.), *Heiliger Krieg. Antike Texte – moderne Kontexte*

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The anthology edited by the Jena-based New Testament scholar Manuel Vogel is the outcome of lectures held between 2017 and 2020 as part of a series of conferences organized by the Old and New Testament sections of the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für Theologie* (Academic Society for Theology) on the topic of religious radicalism. The volume comprises nine papers on a broad spectrum of topics, not only in terms of history but also geographically. The first, more extensive part of the volume contains contributions to concepts of war in the OT, NT and Ancient Judaism as well as its pagan environment, while the more concise second part takes up “modern contexts” and deals with topics such as the expulsion of evil spirits in West African Christianity and also includes a contribution to the “spiritual guidance” of the 9/11 terrorists- the latter contribution is actually a reprint of an annotated translation of a text from the Arabic. Most surprising is the inclusion of an extensive section written by the editor on the Red Army Faction (RAF) and the ‘June 2nd Movement’ – active in West Germany from the 1970s until 1998 – and the paths of their members to radicalism. This section takes up almost a third of the volume.

The volume begins with Raik Heckl's contribution to the sacralization of war in the Old Testament. Heckl criticizes Jan Assmann's distinction between “primary” and “secondary religion”. Assmann describes the primary religion as tolerant and the secondary religion, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as violent and intolerant. Heckl examines the “ban” in Deuteronomy and analyzes texts that could support Assmann's thesis, as they show religiously motivated violence in wars. Particularly important are parallels from the Mesha Stele, which show that the motives are not only monotheistic or religious. Heckl proposes a political context of interpretation and recognizes that the extermination of the population is fictitious and does not correspond to historical facts.

In his contribution to the texts from the Book of Zechariah, the Ethiopian Book of Enoch and the Egyptian Potter's Oracle, Andreas Kunz-Lübcke examines their political background from the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The God of Israel appears as a military actor, but his actions vary depending on the political situation. The first part of the book of Zechariah reflects hopes for stability, while the second part deals with real threats from the Diadochi empires. Text genesis and political events are closely linked, which rules out an isolated religious analysis. The texts react to history and are not a call for a “holy war”.

The article by Karl Leo Noethlichs deals with the concepts of “holy” and “just” war in Greco-Roman antiquity. It is part of the broader discussion on Hellenism, with a focus on the military aspects of Alexander's successors. The term “holy war” is mentioned in the Greek texts, but Aristophanes uses it in a comedic context. Noethlichs examines the religious character of warfare in Greece and especially in Rome, where war was a highly ritualized, religious act. For Rome, war was not only religious, but also had to be seen as just, which meant that it had to be based on previous injustice. The question of how Rome maintained the claim of 'justice' for its wars, which were often unlawful, remains open.

The article “The Holy War in the 1st Book of Maccabees” by Michael Tilly focuses on the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism, whereby the latter term should be questioned with regard to its associated cultural theory. The paper deals with the preservation of Jewish identity and the internal Jewish dispute between pro-assimilation and conservative groups. The 1st Book of Maccabees presents the Maccabean Revolt more as a religious war and also reflects on the interpretation of history and the legitimization of rule.

Simone Paganini's article looks at the War Scroll from Qumran (1QM) as an important document for a “holy war”. The text describes battle formations, prayers and liturgical acts as well as instructions on the composition of troops. But a closer look reveals inconsistencies: The army for the final battle is old, the combatants act passively, and the human contribution consists mainly of reciting liturgical texts. The role of the angels and heavenly armies is decisive for the victory of the sons of light.

Vogel's contribution to the “Holy War in the Revelation of John” emphasizes that the theme of “war” is central in the Apocalypse of John, although no physical battles take place. The victory of the Lamb, mentioned in Apocalypse 5:5, shows that with his blood the Lamb makes people from all nations God's own and raises them to a priestly rule. This victory poses a military threat to the Roman empire, as it undermines Rome's power without using military force.

The three contributions in the second part of the volume offer modern, comparative perspectives on the topics of the first part. The first contribution by Werner Kahl examines the connection between the demonological worldview of ancient Judaism and faith in modern African societies, particularly in West African Christianity. The second contribution analyzes the spiritual guidance of the 9/11 terrorists in the US. The guide book sheds light on the religious and liturgical aspects of the raid. It was characterized by a strange sacred choreography and consisted of a stepped prayer as the preparations for this unprecedented terror attack took place.

The third article in this section by the volume's editor deals with the terror group Red Army Faction (RAF) and the 'June 2nd Movement'. He analyzes the motives of those involved in the armed struggle. The antagonism against the state was fuelled by a strong sense of justice and the awareness of being part of a global liberation movement. This contribution primarily compiles autobiographical texts, letters and interviews with members of the second generation of the RAF. Noteworthy, the author does not mention the anti-Semitic background in the thinking of many members of the first generation of the RAF. The Jews, according to Ulrike Meinhof, were murdered during the Shoah "for what they were presented as money Jews. Antisemitism was anti-capitalist in its essence." According to her view "antisemitism, which was manipulated into the people, was the longing for communism, the dull longing for freedom from money and banks." Thus, "post-fascism, imperialism, capitalism and colonialism" (p. 222), as emphasized by the editor were not the only contexts of the RAF's original ideology. The unresolved hatred of Jews of their parent's generation also preoccupied the members of this radical terror group.

The contributions, both individually and collectively, can be linked in many ways to religious, social and cultural studies discourses. From the point of view of the Judaic scholar, the anthology lacks important topics such as the law of war and peace according to the rabbinical tradition and later medieval Jewish philosophers (Maimonides). In an anthology entitled 'Holy War', one might also miss a contribution to a broader understanding of the Jihad in its various Islamic interpretations. Especially against the backdrop of the Ukraine war and the Hamas attack on Israel, however, more current issues would have lent themselves to such an inspiring collection of articles.