

Preface

This book seeks to establish a new paradigm for research in a field that is both highly relevant and much disputed. More than half of all Germans incline, for example, to the view that religions generate conflicts and are therefore intolerant. This opinion is confirmed by a flood of publications that link monotheism with intolerance. On the other hand, we find the no-less-justified view that none of the world religions can allow itself systematically to issue a summons to violence, and that the main tone sounded by all religions is nonviolence. Against the background of this dispute, the present book offers a close examination of some cases that point to a close connection between religion and violence. The examination of eight cases will show which traditions from the ample stock of religious lore have been chosen to justify violence, and in what situations this has occurred. These cases are well known from the newspapers and television; but the reports often omit any reference to genuine religion, or else they conceal this under a different vocabulary. Unlike such presentations in the media, the research in this book plunges into a deep religious current of contemporary politics.

It would have been impossible to carry out this comprehensive program without dialogue with my academic colleagues, and my position as a Fellow of the Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies afforded excellent opportunities for this. First of all, I should like to thank the doctoral and postdoctoral students and the Fellows: their competence in the disciplines of jurisprudence, history, philosophy, economics, and sociology has influenced my project in ways that I can no longer reconstruct. Without their suggestions and criticisms, I could not have developed the conceptual and methodological instruments that I have employed in the investigation of this subject. The stimulating climate created at the center by Dean Hans Joas was ideal for my work. I should also like to thank Ur-

sula Birtel-Koltes and the staff at the University Library in Erfurt, who got hold of books that were hard to find. Mrs. Birtel-Koltes has also helped with the work of text processing.

It was originally agreed that the German publisher would receive the manuscript of this book in 2003, but my research took longer than anticipated. The subject matter presented itself in shifting forms and with an ever-new vitality that resisted attempts to “tame” it academically. Nevertheless, Ernst-Peter Wieckenberg and Ulrich Nolte never lost interest in this project, and they have accompanied its realization at various phases with helpful suggestions.

The eight cases I have investigated have involved wide reading over a period of many years. Since I am not equally at home in every field, I have asked colleagues with proven academic qualifications to read through what I have written. Manfred Brocker read the chapter on American Protestantism, Ulrike Brunotte the introductory section, Alexander Flores my remarks about the Palestinians, Kurt Greussing the section on Iran, Stephan Rosiny the chapter about the Shi‘ites in Lebanon, and Zwi Werblowsky in Jerusalem the section on Israel. I wish to express my profound gratitude to them all; naturally, any mistakes remain my own.

I have delivered parts of this book as lectures on various occasions: at academic meetings in Erfurt and Augsburg, at the Evangelical Academies in Loccum and Bonn-Bad Godesberg, at the Ecumenical Church Congress in Berlin in 2003, at the Catholic Church Congress in Saarbrücken in 2005, and in a research group of the FEST. I also spoke at a seminar in Dhaka in Bangladesh, where my remarks about the Islamic justification for 9/11 provoked such a storm of indignation in the press—“Arrest Professor Hans!”—that the German embassy was afraid that I might not make it safely out of the country.

Patrick Wöhrle, a doctoral student at the Max Weber Center, helped me with the final version of the German book. The Max-Weber-Kolleg Erfurt and the Jacobs University Bremen contributed financially to translating the book into English and editing it.

Except where otherwise mentioned, all translations from German texts in the present book are by Brian McNeil.