



Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence

Jon Pahl

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It is widely recognized that American culture is both exceptionally religious and exceptionally violent. Americans participate in religious communities in high numbers, yet American citizens also own guns at rates far beyond those of citizens in other industrialized nations. Since September 11, 2001, U.S. scholars have understandably discussed religious violence in terms of terrorist acts, a focus that follows U.S. policy. Yet, according to Jon Pahl, to identify religious violence only with terrorism fails to address the long history of American violence rooted in religion throughout the country's history.

In *Empire of Sacrifice*, Pahl explains how both of these distinctive features of American culture work together by exploring how constructions along the lines of age, race, and gender have operated to centralize cultural power across American civil or cultural religions in ways that don't always appear to be "religious" at all. Pahl traces the development of these forms of systemic violence throughout American history and focuses an intense light on the complex and durable interactions between religion and violence in American history, from Puritan Boston to George W. Bush's Baghdad.

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