

The Author's Final Word

I would first like to thank Craig Atwood and the editorial board of *The Hinge* for the opportunity to publish this article. After completing my Masters of Divinity degree, Craig asked me to turn part of my senior project into an article for this publication. As a young master's graduate, adding a publication to my resume is a great honor. I was and am excited about this opportunity. Thank you again, Craig, my teacher, mentor and friend.

While the goal was rather lofty, the required size and length of this paper was hinderingly short. Translating two years of thorough and detailed research into a brief article required difficult editorial decisions. As such, there simply was not the room to follow historical and/or contemporary examples of religious violence through each factor, nor was there length to go into more depth on each factor.

The purpose of this article was to provide an introductory piece with the intention to direct readers toward further research. This article was meant to be a starting point for dialogue, discussion and reflection on the subject. I apologize to those readers who desired a more detailed and intellectual article, but space and purpose simply did not allow it.

I would like to make one cautionary statement. One reader described my historical examples of religions violence as unfortunate because they contained a mixture of religious and political motivations. The distinction between religion and politics is relatively new,

especially in Western, and therefore American, contexts. Most of the world does not employ this distinction, and it would be incorrect to project this distinction into many examples of religious violence. This is also true when we study historical examples of religious violence. We must be mindful of this fact.

This same reader proposed a useful and helpful question: “[is it] religion itself that is prone to violence or just members of the religion who use violence ... [?]” How a scholar answers this question influences how they approach the issue in general. For example, Rene Girard inherently believes religion itself is violent, as does Hector Avalos. On the other hand, Charles Kimball assumes that religion is inherently pure, but religious adherents bring violent tendencies to the table. This debate is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, as I am not sure how you can empirically prove one answer over and against the other. It is important, however, for readers to understand the underlying presuppositions of the scholar.

Rev. Gramley discussed the role of nation-states in promoting wars and conflicts. His point assumes national actors in international conflict (i.e., U.S., Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.). The rise of non-traditional groups of violent actors (terrorists) in recent decades has bucked this trend. He makes the point, however, that the church (with the exception of certain denominations) has seemingly abdicated its prophetic role in the lead up to war. The Early

Church Fathers wanted the Church to be “in the world, but not of it,” yet, the Church has not taken a leading role in stalling or slowing the call to arms. While every human has multiple loyalties, we must not let our nationalism trump our faith.

Finally, I would like to applaud Mr. Frank. After reflecting on this article, he applied the principles and created a list of six behavioral changes that religious groups should apply to

decrease the chances of violence. These are good starting points for all readers, as this list should not be viewed as comprehensive (i.e., respect the ambiguity and complexity of life and not view the world in simplistic, dualistic terms). I encourage readers and religious adherents to reflect, create, and employ your own list in order to decrease the likelihood that your religious groups will utilize violent means.