

name of ethnic cleansing we have seen in our lifetimes in Germany, the former Yugoslavia Republic, Zimbabwe and Darfur. Perhaps these six factors are more humanly universal and serve masters beyond religion like ethnic and national beliefs.

Until we can adequately address the primary cause for religious violence—sacred texts testifying to God specifically using and sanctioning human violence for redemptive purposes and to punish unfaithfulness—I fear religious people will remain violent.

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## **Rick Stamm**

This article would make a great five or six piece blog in order to generate replies and discussion. While the intent is admirable I find a number of points I would either disagree with or, at least, want to discuss further with the author. For example, I find it unfortunate that the examples used to support the thesis are a mix of political and religious. The attack of September 11, for one, has been identified by a variety of analysts as more political than religious even though the people carrying out the action probably had strong religious convictions. The same claim could be made for the murder of Rabin and possibly that of Jesus. So, I wonder if it is the religion itself that is prone to violence or just members of the religion who use violence as their way of getting what they want.

As for the factors being described, most have merit to some degree with the exception of Outside Agitation. Mohammad was peaceful until he had power; Christianity was peaceful until Constantine embraced it and gave it power. On the other hand, Anabaptists in early history retreated as they were threatened, and today Christians in Pakistan and Palestine retreat rather than respond with violence. The other factors mentioned are probably worthy of study and would have had a stronger position in this article if they had been referenced against the examples used in the opening so the reader could see how they produce violent action.

The footnote directing the reader to other theories of violence in religion was excellent and I hope there will be many articles in the future opening discussion on these as well. As the author states, “religion has always had a fascinating and flirtatious relationship with violence.” As people following the Prince of Peace it is incumbent upon us to pay attention and respond.

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