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How Should We Respond to Religious Violence?

Fifteen Ways to Critique our own Thoughts

Matthew Rowley

Violence in the name of God is an extremely complex phenomena and oversimplification further jeopardises peace. Unhelpful patterns of thought only exacerbate the situation. Understanding the complexity of violence and our own tangled thoughts on the issue is an important step towards diagnosing the problem and moving towards reconciliation. This article offers fifteen ways to critique our thoughts on religion and violence.

Introduction: thinking about our thoughts on religious violence

When asked 'How should we respond to religious violence?' I suspect most would assume I am searching for a martial or theological response: 'We need to deploy troops' or 'We need to love our enemies'. It is important that we think critically about such responses. However, I want to focus on our intellectual response. How should we *form beliefs* regarding violence committed in the name of God? For the sake of peace, how can we criticise our own thoughts about war?

On 22 February 2015 Al-Shabaab, a jihadist group based in Somalia, issued a threat against the Mall of America in Minnesota in the United States. Having lived six miles away from this shopping centre for a number of years, the threat hit home. Within seconds numerous thoughts filled my head:

- I first thought of outings to the mall on cold winter days with my wife and daughters—their warm hands in mine as we walked around. What will happen to all my friends who still live nearby? Should they hide in fear or risk assault in an effort to show that they will not be intimidated?
- Then I thought of my neighbours, tens of thousands of them, who have come to Minnesota as refugees and given Minneapolis the nickname 'Little Somalia'. Could one of them carry out the attack? Sadly, Al-Shabaab's threat will likely increase suspicion and make life more difficult for the vast majority of law-abiding Somali residents in Minneapolis.
- My thoughts transitioned to tightening borders so that no more refugees could come. But should we let fear overcome love and hospitality?
- Going into attack mode, I thought about taking the fight to Al-Shabaab on their own soil. But force seems to exacerbate the feared situation.
- I returned to my mental picture of the shopping centre and felt disgust that Al-Shabaab threatened a building that Americans have set aside for commerce and pleasure. This set-apart space was violated. Though I no longer lived in Minneapolis, I was reminded once again of my vulnerability.
- Finally I felt a deeper sympathy with those in the Middle East who fear a drone strike during a funeral, or with the girls who fear being kidnapped by Boko Haram, or with the children who are forced to commit crimes against their families by the Lord's Resistance Army. In a limited way, feeling threatened helped me to sympathise with others.

In the space of five minutes, these ideas barged in uninvited—tugging my thoughts in contradictory directions. Anti-immigrant arguments jostled with pro-hospitality feelings. The stereotype of the 'dangerous Muslim' sought to crowd out my personal experiences with Muslims. It took great mental effort to subdue these knee-jerk beliefs. I knew they were a normal reaction to injustice, fear and

vulnerability. Yet I also knew that, if left unchecked, they would facilitate a view of reality that was incorrect, biased, unloving and counterproductive.

The existence of militant groups and lone-wolf terrorists has increased the awareness of vulnerability in the West. I know from experience that my thought patterns change when I feel afraid and vulnerable. While thoughts of violence are ever before us, I suspect that we seldom think about our thoughts on religion and violence. If there is anything our polarised age needs, it is self-criticism, charity and empathy.

Responding to Violence in the Name of God

This article offers fifteen guidelines for thinking about violence in the name of God. Elsewhere I have argued that such violence is an extremely complex phenomena and oversimplification further jeopardises peace.[1] In what follows I recommend different ways of subjecting our own beliefs to criticism.

1. Do not think that violence is something that only 'they' can do.

Many have noted how 'Us' vs 'Them' thinking exacerbates conflict situations. There can be a form of 'Us' vs 'Them' thinking where 'We' are rational, nonviolent, and enlightened and 'They' are irrational, bloodthirsty, and unenlightened. This hinders peace and evidences a simplistic understanding of why individuals and groups are motivated to kill. Our attitudes towards outsiders are often not created on the battlefield. Our children learn foreign policy around the dinner table. It starts with the things we say about outsiders when they are not present. Because the line between good and evil does not run between Arabs and those in Western societies, casual conversation should not imply such simple dichotomies.

I cannot escape the haunting and undeniable conclusion that people cause violence. Behind every intentionally violent act is a violent human.[2] Any number of paths could have led him or her to the conclusion that violence was necessary or permissible.[3] I am keenly aware of the fact that I am writing this article in safety, freedom, and with plenty. In different circumstances, the logic of violence could be much more tempting.[4] I have never desired to kill in the name of God. In fact, none of my friends have either. This is not because we are exceptionally good humans who signed a Facebook pledge. My non-participation is far more complex—and troubling. I have never been tempted to kill for religion for much the same reason that I have not been tempted to kill—and this has much to do with my situation. Without excusing the actions of those who have killed in the name of God (because many in difficult situations eschew killing) I wonder how I would act in a similar situation.

2. Allow your group to be criticised.

Some people distort the historical record so that their group comes out relatively unscathed. For example, Christians often dismiss centuries of violence by saying that those acts were not performed by 'true Christians'. This is a difficult position to maintain while believing that one stands in continuity with the historic church. Newer religious movements might be able to make this claim. However, Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Puritans, and Baptists (to name a few) all have violence in their heritage—sometimes justified by their revered divines. When religion is involved in conflict, many atheists often seek to make it centre stage. Conversely, modern Christians often downplay responsibility for the violence committed by those in their group.

Atheists downplay 'secular' violence as well. This is evidenced by Hector Avalos' impassioned unmasking of the danger in all things 'religious'. After devoting hundreds of pages to the inherent dangers in religion, he takes on the problem of 'secular' violence performed by the Nazis, Stalin, the nation state and secular humanists. He concludes: 'This chapter has shown that some famous instances of violence attributed to the rise of secularized states are, in fact, the result of religious factors'.[5] Avalos is correct in finding religious elements.[6] However, blaming religion for the abuses of secularism clearly fits his overall agenda—one in which religion must be excluded, *a priori*, from all public policy. It allows him to marginalise the overwhelming majority of humans from the peace process: 'Involving religion in decision making is never a good idea if the goal is to eliminate or at least minimize violence'.[7] Solutions must be imposed on the religious majority by the outside secularist minority. In my judgement, if this were implemented, it would drastically increase violence.

3. Do not use increased knowledge to demonise or misrepresent.
Ironically, a nonreligious outsider might use their knowledge of violence to demonise a religious individual or group. This is both dangerous and disingenuous. It is dangerous because demonising a group or misrepresenting their beliefs or motivations might actually help create the condition (i.e., religious violence) that the nonreligious person fears. Thus the nonreligious person would become a real contributing cause of violence. It is also disingenuous because one could supplement many 'religion causes violence because of X' claims with a corresponding 'irreligion causes violence because of Y' claim.[8] Since every ideological system is susceptible to violence under varying circumstances, the golden rule should apply.

4. Do not be reductionistic.
It would be easy to ransack a book, article or Facebook post in order to confirm a previously held belief (confirmation bias). For example, one could cite many books to support the belief that eschatology causes violence. Not only is some form of eschatology unavoidable for all humans, eschatology alone is not the cause of violence. The causes of violence are manifold and sometimes eschatology contributes.

5. Do not exaggerate or ignore the role of sacred texts.
One should aim at a balanced approach to the relationship between a sacred text and killing based on that text:

> [We] must navigate between two simplistic pictures of how authoritative sources operate in the history of ideas. According to the first, texts do all the work: intellectual history should be regarded as a kind of ballistic display in which thinkers at rest are set in motion by collisions with newly discovered sources. On this view, readers bring very little to the table; they are empty vessels waiting to be filled by the arguments they read. According to the second picture, in contrast, texts do none of the work. They are, rather, deployed instrumentally by readers whose ideological commitments are to be regarded as fully formed in advance—shaped perhaps by their political circumstances, economic situation, or psychological profile.[9]

John Coffey rightly emphasizes 'both the resourcefulness of readers and the power of texts'.[10] Philip Jenkins closed his book on religious violence this way:

> If Scripture passage X supposedly inspired terrorist group Y, then we need to explain why militants chose to draw on that Scripture and not some radically contradictory text. No less important, we must understand why that same Scripture has had no effect whatever in pushing millions of others toward comparably extreme acts. Some of what we call 'religious violence' may well be authentically religious in character, but we must find its origins in places other than the basic texts of the faith.[11]

We learn much about a group by which portion of a biblical narrative they reference.[12] We can also learn a lot about the person (or the situation they are in) who chooses to use a violent (rather than loving, merciful, and forgiving) text.[13]

The relationship between religion and violence is complex. The reader should resist the urge to oversimplify. Sacred texts frequently *hinder* violence and they will often continue to function this way until a suitable argument for violence can be made from that text. *The Peace and Violence of Judaism* by Robert Eisen is one of the more insightful works on the complicated relationship between a believer and the text. He shows how someone could use a text to support killing and how someone else could use the same text to support peace.[14] My point is not that the text is infinitely malleable or does not have correct meaning or interpretation. It is to show that, if someone is inclined to support killing from within the Bible—they will likely find the resources they are looking for. This speaks volumes about human nature.

6. Do not believe that every claimed cause of violence actually contributed to violence.
Some claims are blatantly contradictory and are therefore mutually exclusive. Other claims need to be nuanced. They may be true only in a certain sense and only in a certain circumstance. Not every theory of religious violence is accurate. Some may only tell part of the story. 'The quest to discover why [religious violence] occurs probably has generated more social scientific study that any other topic. Unfortunately, no other topic has generated as much flawed theorizing and trivial research.'[15]

Many take a broad view of religion allowing it to encompass patriotism, nationalism, belief in justice, belief in meaning, etc. If there is violence, it is likely that someone somewhere will find something religious in it. Clearly, transcendent meaning can be attached to the state, but it does not follow that this should be classified as religious violence. 'Religion' is so elastic that it can be blamed for all manner of disliked behaviours. For example, a recent article uses an admittedly broad definition of religion and claims to illuminate the 'implicit religion of school shootings'.[16] School shooters do not state their religious motivation, it is implied—even though many are vocal atheists. The authors find 'religion' in the shooter's existential concerns like death, isolation, identity, freedom and meaning. Existential concerns are normally the domain of religion, hence the 'implicit religion'. The closest the shooters come to expressing something overtly religious is in phrases like 'we martyrs', 'we will raise hell', 'Eric Harris ist Gott', or 'I am f***ing armed. I feel ... God-like'. This article is worth mentioning since, if the media picks up on it, it will be yet another nail in the coffin of dangerous religion. Religion not only flies planes into buildings, it also motivates teenagers to shoot fellow classmates. Rather than illuminate, this article has defined religion so broadly that it ceases to be informative.

7. Do not assume that the presence of a claimed cause contributed or will contribute to violence.
For example, some scholars argue that the belief in salvation causes people to do questionable things. If a group committed violence, one should not assume that the belief in salvation actually contributed to violence until the evidence demonstrates this. Also, one must not claim that a believer in salvation is likely to commit violence in the future. Empirical data clearly shows that the vast majority of those who believe in salvation will never commit violence. They should not be treated as dangerous simply on account of this belief.

8. Be alert to the fact that there are spoken and unspoken causes, motives, and justifications for violence.
For example, if a group justifies violence by an appeal to a divine command the reader should look deeper at other factors (e.g., other beliefs, feelings, circumstances, or actions by outside authorities). Similarly, one should not conclude that only evident causes, motives, and justifications played a part in fomenting violence. Humans are complex and the violent person may not know or be able to articulate all of the reasons why he or she acted the way they did.

Some might conclude that, because sacred justifications feature prominently in conflict, this shows that the entire conflict was a war of religion. This would reveal a misunderstanding of how sacred descriptions often function. A religious appeal presented during or after a conflict is intended, in part, to show that the cause is just. This 'cause' often encompasses issues of law, limits of legitimate authority, property rights, the role of government, the source of authority, control of the military, traditions, taxes, and the preservation of transcendent truth. One need not mention the rightness of a position on taxes after a battle. The appeal to divine providence functions as a validation of opposition to that tax. When a sacred appeal is made, it is often shorthand for the rightness of one's positions on dozens of interrelated sacred and secular factors. Also, one should not assume that advocacy of killing (often in self defence) made by a religious person is advocacy of killing *because of* religion. When a religious person advocates the same act as a nonreligious person (e.g. forcefully neutralising an active mass shooter), the religious person is often demonised and the nonreligious praised.

Religious appeals also aid in creating certainty. It usually takes enormous amounts of certainty to bear arms where there is a likelihood of taking life or losing one's own life. Lethal violence is often ultimate in its cost and eternal in the effects for the deceased. This is what killing is.[17] Therefore we should expect

descriptions and justifications that appeal to what is ultimate and eternal. These descriptions and justifications will likely come from one's pre-established beliefs about the nature of ultimate reality and the eternality of life beyond the grave. Because the cost of lethal violence is so high, a combatant usually wants to be certain of the rightness of their cause. Religious appeals are often the easiest and quickest way to create certainty. One might overlook an issue of taxation, but the Gospel cannot be trampled upon. One might even be wrong in their understanding of the balance of power, but an alliance with the Antichrist must be opposed. This is not to imply that religion cloaks secular justifications or vice versa. Rather, it implies that religion helps create the certainty needed to take or lose life.

9. Be alert to the fact that justifications and rhetoric change during the course of a conflict.
A conflict that starts out being justified and explained using mainly just war arguments can easily morph into one using mainly holy war arguments. It is easy for an observer to foreground the holy war rhetoric and background other legitimate grievances. The judicious observer should carefully consider all the known factors leading to violence.

10. Be careful when describing violence.
Scholars are increasingly recognizing the controversial nature of the language used to describe religious violence. One should be careful with dichotomies such as these: religion versus irreligion; sacred versus secular; private beliefs versus public beliefs; and faith versus reason. Much ink has been spilt on whether or not a particular conflict is religious or secular. Because, by many definitions, all humans are religious, we should expect to find some sort of metaphysical explanation or justification in all conflicts. Karen Armstrong has recently argued that violence is embedded in human nature and is essential to the state. Since humans are meaning-seekers, they naturally use religion and ritual to assign meaning to violence. Historically it was impossible to imagine separating the sacred from the secular. Modern secular cultures did not create a transcendence-free society, but replaced one myth with another, and sanctified violence in that new name.[18] She rightly argues that perpetuating false dichotomies actually contributes to tension between religion and irreligion. In an effort to avoid definitional problems Rabbi Jonathan Sacks recently coined the term 'altruistic evil' to describe 'evil committed in a sacred cause, in the name of high ideals'. He argues that 'there is nothing specifically religious about' it.[19]

11. Aim at helpful, gracious, honest, humble accuracy instead of political correctness.
Though the overwhelming majority of Muslims are not violent and should not be scapegoated, the vast majority of modern accounts of 'religious violence' are perpetrated by those who have some form of Islamic belief. After assessing every account of violence in 2012 where a religious motive was clearly expressed, Rodney Stark and Katie Corcoran summarize their findings:

> Religious terrorism occurs almost exclusively within Islam. Of the 810 incidents we collected [in 2012], 70 percent took place within Muslim nations—a third in Pakistan alone. In addition, 75 percent of the victims of religious atrocities were Muslims killed by Muslims.... We are fully aware that millions of Muslims are not motivated by their faith to hate.... We also refuse to ignore the fact that most current religious terrorists are Muslims who justify their actions on religious ground. In addition, we also fully recognise that for centuries Christians slaughtered one another.[20]

Political correctness can obscure data and hinder meaningful progress.[21] It is common to identify Timothy McVeigh as a Christian terrorist—though he professed agnosticism,[22] whereas the Fort Hood shooter who 'shouted "Allahu akbar" while he gunned down his victims, [is classified as] "work-place violence"'.[23] Similarly, though the Jonestown mass suicide is often considered to be religiously motivated (which it likely was for many), the leader, James Jones, was simultaneously an ordained Methodist minister and a professing atheist and communist.[24] We must carefully deal with these complex realities.

12. Be careful when calculating causes.
For example, scholars agree that the Waco siege was complex. One might be tempted to figure out the extent to which each factor contributed (e.g., beliefs and texts 40%; seclusion 10%; charismatic leadership 20%; actions by outside authority 30%). Certainly one should assign significant weight to paranoid

eschatological beliefs and outside government actions, but one should resist the urge to completely explain what contributed to violence. Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) noted the difficulties in calculating the causes of warfare:

> It seems to be almost the universal error of historians to suppose it politically, as it is physically true, that every effort has a proportionate cause. In the inanimate action of matter upon matter, the motion produced can be but equal to the force of the moving power; but the operations of life, whether private or public, admit no such laws. The caprices of voluntary agents laugh at calculation. It is not always that there is strong reason for a great event.[25]

Though the various academic disciplines have advanced our understanding of human actions since the time of Johnson, his point still stands. When dealing with rational, volitional and emotional humans, understanding individual and group behaviour is not an exact science.

13. Do not treat responsibility as a zero-sum pie.
For example, one can believe that Al-Qaida is completely responsible for targeting civilians on 9/11 and that the USA bears some responsibility for provoking hatred through international policies. It is not as though attributing some responsibility to the USA necessarily diminishes Al-Qaida's responsibility.

14. Carefully parse the relationship between response and responsibility.
For example, in 2012 a film entitled *The Innocence of Islam* was produced with the aim of enraging Muslims. As a result, many in the Islamic world have died. Even though the filmmaker bears responsibility, one must be nuanced in how to attribute blame to him. There was a *direct* connection between the film and later violence. However, there was not a *necessary* connection between the film and that violence. The violence came in response to the film, but the responsibility for the violence rests mainly on the humans who killed other humans—ones who were not involved in making the film. Blasphemous movies are made about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam on a regular basis and the overwhelming majority of Jews, Christians, and Muslims do not kill in response. Similarly, there was a direct relationship between publishing a cartoon of Muhammad and the Charlie Hebdo attack. However, there was not a necessary relationship between the two. The vast majority of offended Muslims managed to respond nonviolently.

15. Consider when and why violence shocks us.
Our reaction to violence—particularly terrorism—is influenced by two things: proximity and expectation. These roughly correspond to two different emotions: fear and surprise. Though one might not think it *right*, it is *natural* to be moved more by an attack that is *near* and *abnormal* than by one that is *far away* and *relatively common*. If one thinks of the principle of diminishing returns, it becomes clear that a horrific attack that takes place in the context of long-standing violence does not carry the same shock value. The heart-breaking slaughter of a village in a war-torn region does not challenge interpretive frames—it sadly confirms them.

It is natural that western people would be more concerned with a terror act in France than in Lebanon—though they occurred only days apart in November 2015. Though terror acts in France seem to be on the rise, they are still rare. Second, it is easier for those in the West to draw *comparison*—a major support of sympathy—with the French. Conversely, the Lebanese culture is more removed from many in the West. Further, they have experienced nearly two dozen bombings in the last two years. Rationally, one could argue that the frequency of attacks should propel us towards *more* sympathy with the Lebanese, but the opposite seems to be the case. Some point out this discrepancy in an effort to guilt-trip people into thinking of those who are considered outsiders. I am simply arguing that this discrepancy is normal. Worldwide, it has been estimated that there were 20,000 acts of religiously influenced killing between 2003 and 2013 resulting in over 300,000 deaths.[26] I do not have the intellectual or emotional capacity to feel all of these acts deeply and equally. Selectivity is a necessary implication of finitude. As Cicero noted: 'We do tend to notice and feel our own good and bad fortune more than that of others, which we see as if a great distance intervenes'.[27]

The need for empathy

Having lessened the guilt on those who sympathise more deeply with victims of violence that is near and abnormal, I will now emphasize the need to expand our empathetic horizon. This is true for ontological as well practical reasons. First, the value of all humans created in the image of God cannot be underestimated. In a deep and meaningful way, everyone is like me. All killing, even in a cause considered just, should be deeply grieved. Second, empathy is beneficial for many practical reasons. Through my research—which is primarily historical—I have been drawn to empathise with those who died long ago. What was it like to be a civilian female who was intentionally mutilated or killed at Naseby during the English Civil War? What was going on in the minds of the Pequot Indians at Fort Mystic in New England when they realised that the English were not sparing women and children? What was it like to be an English soldier who, for various reasons, believed this killing was permissible—and even God-pleasing? What fear punctuated the lives of colonists who lived near natives who occasionally attacked, burned and killed a town with little advanced warning? Entering into the fear and surprise of historical characters helps me explain, though not necessarily justify, their actions.[28] People often act more on the basis of perceptions than on reality, and historical hindsight allows us to sort out the two. I do not have the benefit of hindsight concerning yesterday's headlines and today's choices. Future historians will sort out where our perception strayed from reality.

If careful analysis and empathy is important in historical studies, it is more so in peace studies. We must not only understand *that* someone believes their killing is righteous, we must understand *how* this belief was created. We must lean in—intellectually and emotionally—towards those who are different and at a distance. If we want to understand part of the impetus towards terrorism, if we want to understand the fear occasioned by accidental drone strikes, if we want to understand the (often disastrous) reaction of individuals and nations to terror, if we want to respond properly to violence in the name of God—we must learn to incorporate empathetic understanding into our critique and reaction.

Conclusion

Violence in the name of God is an extremely complex phenomena and oversimplification further jeopardises peace. The primary argument of this paper is that unhelpful thought patterns only exacerbate the situation. Understanding the complexity of violence and our own tangled thoughts on the issue is an important step towards diagnosing the problem and moving towards reconciliation. Karen Armstrong closes *Fields of Blood* with helpful words for our polarised age:

> No state in history, however great its achievements, has not incurred the taint of warrior. We are all, religious and secularist alike, responsible for the current state of the world.... The scapegoat ritual was an attempt to sever the community's relationship with its misdeeds; it cannot be a solution for us today.[29]

For further reading

- Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (Bodley Head, 2014).
- Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Steve Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014).
- Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015).
- Rodney Stark and Katie E. Corcoran, *Religious Hostility: A Global Assessment of Hatred and Terror* (ISR Books, 2014).
- Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (Harper Collins, 2003).

Matthew Rowley (MDiv, ThM, Bethlehem College & Seminary) is a PhD candidate in early modern history at the University of Leicester and a reader at Tyndale House, Cambridge. His thesis is on Puritans, providence and warfare in England, Scotland, Ireland and Colonial America.

[1] 'What Causes Religious Violence: Three Hundred Claimed Contributing Causes', *Journal of Religion and Violence* 2 (2014), 361–402. I would like to thank the *Journal* for allowing me to reproduce here the conclusion of this article.

[2] In cases where the violent person is coerced there is still another human behind the act.

[3] The force of the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 and the force of the suicide hijackers are not morally equivalent. Not all use of force is equally justifiable. Some justifications are better than others.

[4] It is also discomforting (though enlightening) to know that recent studies show the relative normalcy of most who commit violence. See: Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Eerdmans, 2002), 58–60; John R. Hall, *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe, and Japan* (Routledge, 2000), 184; James W. Jones, *Blood that Cries Out from the Earth: The Psychology of Religious Terrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 9, 12, 15; Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence*, 2nd ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 10; Andrew Silke, 'Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalism', *European Journal of Criminology* 5 (2008), 99–123; Rodney Stark and Katie E. Corcoran, *Religious Hostility: A Global Assessment of Hatred and Terror* (ISR Books, 2014), 87–89; Jessica Stern, '5 Myths About Who Becomes a Terrorist', *Washington Post* (Jan 10, 2010), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/01/08/AR2010010803585.html.

[5] Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Prometheus, 2005), 342. This seems to apply to the previous chapter on the Nazis as well (318–19).

[6] See Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence*, 134–52.

[7] Avalos, *Fighting Words*, 343.

[8] These belief systems can have the problems (to name only a few) of violent texts, apocalypticism, euphemistic language, cognitive dissonance, ends justifies the means thinking, unquestioned submission to authority, deferment of guilt, projection of human weakness onto a strong leader or ideal, scapegoating, failed parenting, economic deprivation, scarce resources, 'witch hunts' against unorthodoxy (e.g., against political correctness), uncompromising totalism, dehumanization of the 'other', black-and-white thinking, mob mentality, group-think, blind faith, certainty, and the belief in retributive justice.

[9] Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 5.

[10] John Coffey, *Exodus and Liberation: Deliverance Politics from John Calvin to Martin Luther King Jr.* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

[11] Philip Jenkins, *Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses* (HarperOne, 2012), 252.

[12] Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (Basic Books, 1985), 135.

[13] Jenkins, *Laying Down the Sword*, 12, 163, 244–52; Andrew Kille, '"The Bible Made Me Do It": Text, Interpretation, and Violence' in *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, vol. 1, J. Harold Ellens, ed. (Praeger, 2004), 57; Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (Harper Collins, 2003), 28; Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?* (Eerdmans, 2006), 36–38; Richard Wentz, *Why People Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion* (Mercer University Press, 1993), front matter.

[14] Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

[15] Stark and Corcoran, *Religious Hostility*, 42.

[16] B. Pfeifer and R. R. Ganzevoort, 'The Implicit Religion of School Shootings: Existential Concerns of Perpetrators Prior to Their Crime', *Journal of Religion and Violence* 2 (2014), 447–59.

[17] Theist and atheist alike would agree that, after death, the combatant would be changed into a state (e.g., reincarnation, paradise, nirvana, nonexistence) that is irreversible—and thus eternal in its effects.

[18] Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence* (Bodley Head, 2014), 3, 7, 21, 42, 69, 84, 114, 123, 126, 141, 232.

[19] Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), 9–10.

[20] Stark and Corcoran, *Religious Hostility*, 27, 41.

[21] Stark and Corcoran, *Religious Hostility*, 26–27.

[22] Rightly, Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 312.

[23] Stark and Corcoran, *Religious Hostility*, 26.

[24] Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 308.

[25] Quoted in Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change & Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale University Press, 2014), xxix.

[26] Stark and Corcoran, *Religious Hostility*, 5.

[27] M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, eds, *Cicero: On Duties* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 13.

[28] James W. Jones rightly notes that 'understanding an action in no way means excusing it; explaining an action in no way means condoning it' (*Blood that Cries Out from the Earth*, xviii). For a good introduction to the difference between explanations, justifications, and excuses for violence in the name of God, see Clarke, *The Justification of Religious Violence*, 10–14.

[29] Armstrong, *Fields of Blood*, 366.