The Global Impact of Religious Violence

Hector Avalos
Iowa State University, havalos@iastate.edu

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Abstract
TIP O’NEILL, THE FAMOUS Speaker of the United States House of Representatives (1977-1987), is often credited with popularizing the phrase, ‘All politics is local.’ In the case of religious violence, it is particularly difficult to say that ‘all violence is local.’ The shootings in Orlando, Florida in June of 2016 are related, even if indirectly, to the airport attacks in Belgium and Istanbul. In turn, these events are related to the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. Indeed, religious violence can easily transcend geography and locality because its actors live all over the globe and/or can travel seamlessly across many borders. More importantly, the mentality that accompanies religious violence is not restricted to any locality.

Disciplines
Comparative Methodologies and Theories | Ethics and Political Philosophy | Ethics in Religion | Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion

Comments
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A response

Hector Avalos

Tip O'Neill, the famous Speaker of the United States House of Representatives (1977-1987), is often credited with popularizing the phrase, "All politics is local." In the case of religious violence, it is particularly difficult to say that "all violence is local." The shootings in Orlando, Florida in June of 2016 are related, even if indirectly, to the airport attacks in Belgium and Istanbul. In turn, these events are related to the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. Indeed, religious violence can easily transcend geography and locality because its actors live all over the globe and/or can travel seamlessly across many borders. More importantly, the mentality that accompanies religious violence is not restricted to any locality.

The essays in this volume rightly emphasize the global nature of religious violence. The global dimensions of this volume are evident in the treatment of violence in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. But the volume also marks some new milestones in the research on the role of religion in violence. One is that the volume seeks to avoid the religionist traps in which much of the research on religion and violence is conducted.

By religionism, I refer to the idea that religion is beneficial for humanity, and so it should be protected and preserved. Religionist scholarship is marked by exculpating or minimizing the role of religion in violence. It is also marked by definitions of religion that claim that religion either cannot be defined or that it is so interlaced with politics and economics that one cannot attribute any violence to it. The work of William T. Cavanaugh,

author of *The Myth of Religious Violence* (2009), would be an example of a scholar who denies the existence of religious violence. Other scholars, whether religious or not, claim that religion is no more prone to violence than the reification of the nation-state or other ideas such as "freedom" or national identity. The scholars in this volume are aware of these disputes between religionists and secularists, and that is a welcome development in the study of religion and violence.

Another welcome feature of this volume is that most of the scholars belong to a younger generation. That means that some areas that older generations of scholars did not deem to be "research-worthy" now have made a strong case for inclusion. Thus, we have comic books and graphic novels as part of the cultural data that we can study seriously for what they reflect about society and violence. We have a clearer consciousness of the anthropocentric nature of research on violence, and this volume turns our attention to violence toward non-human animals.

Since many of the essays in this volume involve a discussion of my theory of religion and violence, it may be useful to summarize the theory that I fully laid out in *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (2005):

1. Most violence is due to scarce resources, real or perceived. Whenever people perceive that there is not enough of something they value, then conflict may ensue to maintain or acquire that resource. This can range from love in a family to oil on a global scale.

2. When religion causes violence it often does so because it has *created new scarce resources*.

I define religion as "as a mode of life and thought which presupposes the existence of, and relationship with, unverifiable forces and/or beings." This theory allows for a clear ethical distinction between religious and non-religious violence. I specifically argue that religious violence is always immoral, but secular violence is only sometimes immoral. Within a moral relativistic frame that accepts empirico-rationalism as providing reliable data, our argument that religious violence is always immoral begins by positing the seemingly obvious proposition that what exists has more value than what does not exist. Only what exists can be said to have any ethical value, if it has any value for us. If that is the case, then life, as an existent phenomenon, must have more value than what does not exist. We can schematize our rationale as follows:

1. What exists is worth more than what does not exist.

2. Life exists;

3. Therefore, life is worth more than what does not exist.

We may deem immoral any action that places the value of life as equal or below the value of nothing. Therefore, it would always be immoral to kill for something that has no actual value because it does not exist.

We can also extend this argument to what cannot be proven, on empirico-rationalist grounds, to exist. For example, if I were to say that I am killing because undetectable Martians have declared it obligatory to kill, the argument would be considered rightly as absurd. But, the fact is that the possibility of undetectable Martians existing is not what would declare such a statement absurd. It is perfectly possible that undetectable Martians exist and order people to kill other people. The main reason that we do not accept this rationale as moral is that we, as observers, cannot verify that undetectable Martians exist, and so we would regard the perpetrator's claims as absurd.

In fact, we can argue that killing because undetectable Martians said so is equivalent to killing for no reason or to killing for nothing, even if the person killing believes himself or herself to have a just reason. Here, we as observers and members of the larger society are judging the perpetrator based on the empirico-rationalist verifiability of the claim. Since we cannot verify that undetectable Martians exist, we judge the perpetrator's claim to be without merit, and so the killing would be unjustified. Any act of killing not justified or authorized is called a "murder" in our society.

Accordingly, we can propose that, just as it is always immoral to kill for something that does not exist, killing for something that cannot be proven to exist is equally immoral. And since religion is, by our definition, a mode of life and thought premised on the existence of, and/or relationship with, unverifiable supernatural forces and/or beings, then it follows that killing for religious reasons is always immoral. We can make a similar argument for any act of religious violence. Therefore, we recapitulate our proposition as follows: It is always immoral to commit any act of violence for religious reasons.

We can also make our case against religious violence within the framework of scarce resource theory. When religious violence is compared to secular violence due to scarce resources, the a fortiori argument would be as follows:

If acts of violence caused by actual scarcities are judged as immoral, then violence caused by resources that are not actually scarce is even more immoral.
Any act predicated on the acquisition or loss of a non-existent resource is morally wrong because a loss of life was traded for a non-existent gain.

We may illustrate this with a more concrete, if fanciful example. Suppose that male twins, who are otherwise equal, were the sole survivors of a boating accident. The twins are fortunate to encounter a helicopter with room for only one person to be rescued. The scarce resource is space on the helicopter. The choices that either of these twins might encounter would logically include:

- One twin gives up his life for the other; or
- One fights the other for the space in that helicopter.

Since either combatant did not cause the scarcity, then fighting for one's life may be considered tragic, but justifiable.

However, let us say that it was not true that there was only room for one more person on that helicopter. In that case, the loss of life would be wasteful. That is to say, the loss of life was sustained on a false premise. But, while this violence may be wasteful, it still might be justified if the killer did not know that there was, in fact, room for both twins.

The situation would be different if the killer could have verified that there was room, but did not. In this case, we may hold the killer to be unjustified. If one has the ability to verify that the seat on the helicopter was available, then one should not kill another person without making such verification. The reason, again, is that a life would be traded for a non-existent scarcity. And what exists is always more valuable than what does not exist.

But, let us say now that the only reason that one twin killed the other is that the killer claimed that an invisible Martian had told him that only one seat was available or that only one twin had the privilege to enter the helicopter even if two seats were available. In this case, we would hold the killer to be unjustified, if we did not hold him to be mentally ill.

The reason is that we cannot verify that invisible Martians exist or communicate with any individual. Just as a jury in Texas convicted Andrea Yates in 2002 for killing her children, even as she claimed it was on God's orders, we would not allow the perpetrating twin to claim communication from an undetectable Martian as justification for his killing.3

We can extend this argument to religious beliefs. Let us say that Population X has declared that god, who only communicates with members of population X, gave a certain bounded space to them. While there may be enough physical space, the space has now been made scarce solely because of the belief that a god has declared it to be his property. Any loss of life now

3. For an overview of the Andrea Yates case, see O'Malley, Are You There Alone?
would be completely wasteful if indeed that god did not exist. Any violence due to this belief would be judged wasteful and/or immoral.

If the morality of any act of violence is measured in proportion to verifiability, then we can judge some specific acts of historical violence as more immoral than others. To begin with, any acts of violence based on scarcities that do not actually exist would be more immoral than any acts of violence based on scarcities that actually do exist. Likewise, any killing by Muslims, Christians, or Jews based on scriptural commands would be immoral as opposed to any killing done because of any resources that actually were scarce. In the latter cases, it may sometimes be immoral to kill for resources that are actually scarce, but it may not always be so (e.g., if there were only one seat on that helicopter).

With these prefatory remarks in mind, I now turn my attention to examining how the different essays in this volume address the idea that scarce resource theory is useful in explaining violence. In some cases, the essays confirm and expand the idea to other areas (e.g., comic books, animals). In other cases, they integrate data from the natural sciences to complement sociological theories of violence. Yet, other writers challenge specific aspects of scarce resource theory or explore the question of whether biblical scholars should be activists against preserving biblical authority in the modern world in light of the violence endorsed in biblical texts. But, all of the essays agree that we must actively strive to understand the role of religion in violence.

**André Gagné**

The volume's first chapter ("Tyranny of Political Correctness and Religious Violence") addresses an issue of great importance in how modern scholarship approaches violence. Criticism of religion is normally not accepted in Western societies, even among many non-religious individuals. However, within this general reluctance to criticize religion, there is also a specific resistance among many scholars to criticize Islam. Gagné attributes this to "political correctness," which he defines as "the practice of being careful not to use speech and/or engage in actions that could offend a particular group of people" (p. 5). He notes this tendency among some of the best-known writers on violence, including William T. Cavanaugh and Karen Armstrong. Gagné rightly argues that any effort to address the problem of violence will need to involve criticism of religion and of specific religions. One cannot say, for example, that Christianity or Islam are essentially peaceful or that
ISIS is not really "Islamic." Those are theological judgments and should not be represented as historical or scientific ones.

I certainly agree that one should not be labeled an "Islamophobe" for pointing out the issues and problems of violence within certain segments of Islam or within Islam itself. Unfortunately, the issue of whether this should be attributed to "political correctness" has been muddled by the origin and the diverse usage of the phrase "political correctness" and "politically correct." Although Gagné points to one usage, there are opponents of political correctness who are religionist in orientation insofar as they deem criticizing religion to be precisely an instance of "political correctness." This is the case, for example, with the works of Dinesh D'Souza, who helped popularize the war against political correctness. One of his recurrent complaints was that the universities were hostile to religion and he complained about the hostility that evangelical Christians felt in academia.4 Jonathan Wells and other Creationists often attribute their exclusion from scientific discussion in academia as a case of "political correctness."5 Roger Kimball, who is also credited with being a leader against political correctness, viewed the introduction of gay and feminist themed courses into academia as an instance of "political correctness."6

That is why I prefer to attribute the resistance to criticize Islam or any other religion to "religionism" because political correctness can change depending on who has the power to regulate discourse. Religionism is a more stable category that refers to those who think religion is valuable or necessary for human existence, and, therefore, to be preserved and/or protected. Of course, religionists are also selective. Usually, American religionists strive to protect their own religion, Christianity. These Christian religionists may even be enthusiastic about characterizing other religions as violent, while ignoring that Christianity has been as violent or even more so throughout history. Indeed, Tom Sizgorich, among others, has striven to show how early Islamic war practices were borrowed or adapted from Christian and biblical sources.7

Gagné is definitely in accord with the idea that scholars should be activists. Scholars should attempt to speak out against the role of religion in violence, and to repudiate openly any of the theological concepts or

4. D'Souza, Illiberal Education, 84, 302, and 226, where he speaks of how evangelicals find the atmosphere of Harvard to be "intolerant" to them. For the role of D'Souza in popularizing the war against Political Correctness, see Williams, PC Wars, 1, 11, 24, 26, 52, 58, 72-73, 87, 90, 97-98, and 100-01.
5. Wells, Politically Incorrect Guide.
7. Sizgorich, Violence and Belief.
scriptural warrants used to foment violence. His main goal is, as it is mine, to use education as one of the main methods to combat violence. As he phrases it: “We need to target the ideology; this means that education has to be at the forefront of debunking dangerous and harmful ideas” (p. 9). I could not agree more.

Jennifer Tacci

For an example of the younger generation of scholarship on religious violence, one should look to Jennifer Tacci’s “Apocalypses and Superhero Mythology: The Scars of Crisis and the Remnants of Outbursts between Reality and Imagination.” Tacci issues a much-needed corrective on the previous hesitation to use popular mythology, here in the form of comic books and graphic novels, as a source to analyze religious violence. In this case, comic books can be a primary source that simulates and echoes ancient apocalyptic literature. Tacci follows John J. Collins and others in defining “apocalypses”:

By Apocalypses I am referring to the texts which belong to the genre according to the well-known scholarly definition: “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world” (p. 20, n. 33).

She explains how comic books and ancient apocalypses are similar: “What do comic books and apocalypses have in common? For starters they both have a tendency to intermingle history and myth” (p. 20). Tacci also notes that “many apocalypses were written during or shortly after a serious crisis” (p. 16). A fascinating portion of Tacci’s analysis is how comic books have reacted to 9/11 and how prescient some of them appear to be concerning 9/11.

The core of my work on violence has been to identify and clarify the ethical distinctions between religious and non-religious violence. Tacci shows similar concerns. She specifically analyzes Frank Miller’s *Holy Terror* (2011), a graphic novel that was viewed as a screed against Islam. She then compares *Holy Terror* to the book of Revelation, the paradigm of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. According to Tacci, “Revelation is much more dangerous than *Holy Terror* because the biblical text is held by some as truth” (p. 23). Indeed, *Holy Terror* is not being used as a sacred text to authorize any

8. See Miller, *Holy Terror*.
behaviors depicted. Even if others may mimic the ideas in *Holy Terror*, one does not usually encounter people saying that we must fight Islam because Frank Miller says so.

Tacci’s work should inspire others to undertake similar explorations of how modern media perpetuates ideas found already in ancient biblical texts. One desideratum is to elucidate further the extent to which, not just comic books, but also how all sorts of media (film, video games) view violence as the primary solution to the problems of human conflict. How many comic books or video games, for example, are dedicated to alternatives to violence in solving world problems? The fact that violence so predominates in all forms of media as a “solution” is surely one of the most important questions our culture can raise about itself.

**Costa Babalis**

A different angle on the issue of religious violence is outlined by Costa Babalis’s essay, “The Common Good Gone Bad.” Babalis accepts the concepts that scarce resources are a key to explaining violence. He also recognizes the difference between scarce resources that actually exist and those that are unverifiable supernatural ones. Babalis seeks to show that an appeal to the common good often conceals a hegemonic ideology. He raises the following question:

> How many times have religious authorities invoked the common good, which in itself suggests the well being of the individual, the community, and ultimately humanity, only to persecute and obliterate their opponents? (p. 40).

This is a good question, and I hope Babalis will elaborate further with more detailed and concrete historical examples. For example, Babalis mentions the Thirty Years War. However, it is very important to note that there are scholars of that war that deny that it was mainly a religious conflict. Peter H. Wilson’s treatise on that war explicitly states that “it was not primarily a religious war.” 9 Indeed, one of the most salient problems is that many scholars of violence (e.g., Cavanaugh on the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre) do not consult the primary sources thoroughly before issuing judgments on causation.

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Spyridon Loumakis

Spyridon Loumakis's chapter ("Genocide and Religion in Rwanda in the 1990s: 'What Weapons Shall We Use to Conquer the Cockroaches Once and For All?'") is a very impressive piece of historical research. Loumakis has sifted through personal testimonies, media accounts, and judicial records. The genocide in Rwanda is certainly one of those tragic human events that should never be repeated. In fact, Rwanda shows how easily a nation can devolve into genocidal frenzies in full view of the world. Loumakis seems very familiar with the primary source materials, and broader methodological and theoretical issues in the study of religion and violence inform his analysis. The chapter certainly exemplifies the global nature of religious violence highlighted in this volume. According to Loumakis:

The present work seeks to establish the connection between the violent events of the 1994 Rwanda genocide and the Christian religion as experienced and lived by the people of this country, influencing each other, both top-down and bottom-up, in the everyday interactions and everyday aspects of their lives; from high politics and decision making to bloody roadblocks in a small village in the countryside (p. 49).

Loumakis argues that "[r]eligious violence goes beyond the Church or the Bible, penetrating deep into the Rwandan society. It makes horrible actions—such as those committed during genocide—justifiable and acceptable" (pp. 50–51). Loumakis does note how Justin Mugenzi, a Minister of Trade and Industry in the Interim Government in Rwanda until 1994, used the Bible to promote his agenda. Mugenzi is quoted as stating: “I used the Bible citation which in our context, the Bible was well known to Rwandans” (p. 61). The Hutu published their version of the Ten Commandments (pp. 62–63).

The rationales used by the Hutu in their genocide of the Tutsis are ones we have seen before. For example, the idea that victory over enemies is a sign of a God's favor is certainly documented among the Hutu. However, those killed on the side of the ones committing genocide are “martyrs,” while those on other side are sinners and transgressors who received just punishment. Some of the rationales seem perfectly rational if one accepts certain dogmas about God's omnipotence and omniscience. As Loumakis observes: “a genocide unfolding under his assumingly all-seeing capability, without hindrance, leaves génocidaire Hutu believers room for only one explanation: God's approval” (p. 73).
The conclusion reached by Loumakis is that "the 1994 Rwanda genocide was religiously violent" (p. 77). Nonetheless, Loumakis adds:

In conclusion, the evidence available for studying the 1994 Rwanda genocide demonstrates that Avalos's theory is in need of some expansion. His arguments are often text-based and overemphasize examples about how people read and interpret their sacred books or how they act according to what they think is the right interpretation of said writings... The use of biblical motifs, as well as religious motifs in general, in the way that a religion is experienced in everyday life, even during a genocide, has much less to do with sacred books and their systematic interpretation than with their vague invocation or with general claims tentatively based on a shared religious background that people should have in a certain culture at a given time and place. (pp. 77-78).

I agree with Loumakis in affirming that we must go beyond texts to explain religious violence. My theory allows for this, and does not say that religious violence is only generated by religious texts. Rather, it says that religious thinking can create scarce resources, one of which is inscripturation—the idea that God reveals himself/herself in a limited set of texts. However, other scarce resources, including group privileging, which are an important factor in explaining the genocide in Rwanda, need not invoke Scripture to be "religious." To be "religious" the group privileging must be based on the notion that such a privilege was given by a supernatural being. Overall, Loumakis provides the sort of detailed historical investigation that one must undertake before declaring the extent to which a specific act of violence was religious or non-religious.

Marion Achoulias

Another excellent example of a younger generation of scholarship on religion and violence is Marion Achoulias's "Discourse of Sacrifice: Religious Studies and Violence against Animals." Achoulias rightly challenges the anthropocentric tradition found in so much of the scholarship about violence, including mine. In Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence I had a very anthropocentric view, which privileged harm to human beings. In that book, I defined violence as "the act of modifying and/or inflicting pain upon a human body in order to express or impose power differentials."10

10. Avalos, Fighting Words, 19.
It is when I began to work on *The Bad Jesus: The Ethics of New Testament Ethics* that I realized how much I had ignored violence against animals. I began to explore how many times biblical texts endorsed all forms of violence against animals, including in the Flood Story (Gen 6–7), sacrificial legislation (Exod 13:13–15), and even in Jesus's attitudes towards dogs and swine (Mark 5:11–13; 7:27). I have since changed my definition to the following: "Violence is the act of modifying and/or inflicting pain upon a living body in order to express or impose power differentials." In any case, Achoulias describes her purpose as follows:

This author proposes that the careful application of Avalos's theory of religious violence to the situation of the animals we eat, wear, and use might bring about a much needed shift in perspective vis-à-vis other animals. In the framework of scarcity theory, religious violence is understood as avoidable conflict between competitors over valuables that only exist in the imaginary and is thus inherently unethical (pp. 84–85).

Achoulias, here, understands the ethical distinction between violence generated by scarce resources that actually exist and scarce resources that are unprovable or "imaginary." She recognizes that group privileging is one of the scarce resources that routinely generates violence towards animals because human beings reserve for themselves the right to life that they do not accord to animals.

Achoulias signals her support for an activist stance in scholarship: "With Avalos's critique as starting point, religion scholars can do much to contribute to a better understanding of the religious/ideological aspects of structural violence against animals" (p. 86). While Achoulias indicates that we should not exaggerate the gap between the secular and the religious, that statement still presupposes that the religious and secular can be separable. Yet, Achoulias also sees how complicit scholarship can be in denying rights to animals, and she includes the work of Jonathan Klawans and Kimberley Patton.

It may be useful for Achoulias to clarify some aspects of her terminology and argumentation. One example is her use of the word, "artificial," in phrases such as "Carnism produces an artificial scarcity of arable land, clean water, grain, as well as inequities based on climate change..." (pp. 89–90)." This might lead some readers to conflate her use of "artificial" with what I would call unverifiable, fictional, mythical, or non-existent resources. In my

theory, the scarcity of arable land can be real, even if human beings manufacture it. This would be unlike a religiously generated scarce resource such as “heavenly rewards,” which are also artificial, but not “real.”

Achoulias’s efforts to formulate new frameworks to analyze how biblical scholarship addresses violence toward animals are informed by ideological and Marxist theory. I cannot phrase the agenda any better than Achoulias:

Now, in the twenty-first century and at the brink of global environmental destruction, it seems high time to systematically challenge the sacrificial taxonomy, to question inherited ideologies that harm human relations to the nonhuman world, and to think through the implications of the Darwinian realization that we all share ethically relevant features with those other animals we routinely exploit and kill (p. 109).

It will be interesting to follow how this work develops and challenges anthropocentric biblical scholarship, which still either neglects the issues of animal rights or tries to mitigate biblical ideas and teachings about animals.

Marc-André Argentino and Dalia Sabra

Soon after Omar Mateen was identified as the shooter in the Orlando massacre, reports began to circulate about his violent tendencies as a child. This raised the question of whether Mateen is simply using Islam or religion as an instrument to exercise violent tendencies, or whether religion generated the specific violent behavior in which Mateen allegedly engaged. This is why the question raised in the chapter “Is There Such a Thing as a Radicalized Brain?” is so important. It brings new light to an old argument about the role of nature versus nurture in behavior and it has much relevance for ascertaining solutions to violence.

Argentino and Sabra argue that there is much neurobiological evidence that some people may be genetically prone to commit violence given the right environmental factors. However, they also rightly emphasize that genes cannot be the entire explanation. As they phrase it: “By itself, the genetic makeup of an individual is only a small proportion of the risk involved in violent behavior. The interaction with other biological, neurobiological, sociobiographical, and environmental factors is crucial” (p. 119). Indeed, the essay by Argentino and Sabra shows how difficult it is to ascertain causality even when we apply our strictest scientific methods. In particular,
consider the study by Avishalom Caspi and his coworkers that is cited by Argentino and Sabra. The objective of Caspi and his co-researchers was to determine why some children who were maltreated grow up to develop antagonistic behavior, whereas others do not. Their findings concluded that a polymorphism in the MAOA [monoamine oxidase A enzyme] gene was found to moderate the effects of maltreatment. Thus, children who were maltreated and had a genotype consisting of high levels of MAOA were less likely to develop aggressive behavior. MAOA is an enzyme that “metabolizes neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine (NE), serotonin (5-HT), and dopamine (DA), rendering them inactive.”14 Deleting the gene encoding for the MAOA enzyme results in increased levels of those three neurotransmitters observed in a line of transgenic mice. The increased levels of those neurotransmitters, in turn, are associated with increased aggression in the mice. Restoring MAOA expression of the corresponding gene normalized the aggression. Caspi then tried to show how maltreated children might later engage in aggression depending on their expression of the MAOA gene. However, Caspi notes how difficult it is to then transfer these results to human aggression. Caspi says that “[e]vidence for an association between MAOA and aggressive behavior in the human general population remains inconclusive.”15 Caspi adds that “no study has ascertained whether MAOA plays a role” in determining whether maltreatment has persisting neurochemical correlates in human children, even if it has an effect on the neurotransmitters (e.g., dopamine, serotonin) being studied.16

Although I am by no means qualified to evaluate the neurochemistry discussed, it is important to note that Caspi uses The Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) published in 1994 to assess what is called “adolescent conduct disorder.” However, it is well known that DSM has had a history of changing criteria or eliminating “disorders” (e.g., homosexuality). Some of the criteria for determining whether someone has “Adolescent Conduct Disorder” require some critical analysis. Terrie E. Moffitt has argued that some of the age-of-onset subtyping used by DSM-IV may still be useful (e.g., differentiating between childhood and adolescent onset behaviors), but we need more comparative studies and longitudinal studies from different cultures.17

In 2014, Courtney A. Ficks and Irwin D. Waldman published meta-analysis of violence association studies that included the MAOA gene. One

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
observation related to the location of the MAOA gene on the X chromosome, and men only have one X chromosome. This can result in gender bias in some studies. According to Ficks and Waldman,

Because females have two X chromosomes whereas males have only one, heterozygosity may be present in females but not males. As MAOA expression for heterozygous allele carriers remains unclear, many investigators have selected all-male samples or eliminated heterozygous females from their samples. . .18

At the same time, a study of 500 violent offenders in Finland by Jari Tiihonen and his co-workers found that childhood maltreatment did not really affect the behavior of those with the MAOA genotype.19 Although Tiihonen and his co-researchers believe there is a correlation between the MAOA genotype and violence, they also conclude that: “a conservative estimate implies that 5–10% of all severe violent crime in Finland is attributable to specific MAOA and CDH13 genotypes.”20 In other words, we are still a long way from explaining the mass bulk of violence in the world by looking at the MAOA genotype.

Argentino and Sabra also discuss the role of humiliation in generating aggression. Humiliation is about lowering social status, and so it can be explained by scarce resource theory. The scarce resource would be “status,” and when people do not feel they have enough of it, then, they will try to acquire it just like any other resource deemed to be valuable. What is needed in the studies cited by Argentino and Sabra is recognition of how and why any particular ethnic or national status became valuable.

Sometimes religious factors have created the status (“group privilege”) deemed valuable. For instance, according to biblical accounts, the creation of the Hebrew ethnic group is traced to the calling of Abraham to form his own separate lineage (Gen 12:1–7), even though he was not different “ethnically” at that point from the rest of his kinship group. Adhering to monotheism further differentiated Abraham’s lineage; adding some religiously mandated practices (endogamy, circumcision) that set it apart from neighbors (see Gen 17:12; 24:3–4). A similar phenomenon occurred between Christians and Jews. The initial conflict was between Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and Jews who did not (see John 5:18, Acts 17:2–5, Gal 2:11–16). Such Jews did not really differ “ethnically” from each other. While

19. Tiihonen et al., “Genetic Background,” 790: “Our results, from over 500 offenders, showed a strong main effect for this genotype, but maltreatment did not modify the risk in any way.”
20. Ibid.
it is clear that some persons in the New Testament regarded themselves as both Jewish and Christian, eventually “Jews” became those who retained the traditional religion of their ancestors without accepting Jesus as the Messiah. The Catholic Church then reinforced the separate religious identity of the Jews through marriage laws, professional restrictions spatial separation in ghettos, and distinctive garb, which made Jews even more different and more identifiable targets for humiliation and violence. Yet, it was perceived Jewish antagonism to Christ that was stated as a reason for violence against Jews. Thus, when Pope Paul IV issued his bull, Cum nimis (1555), which established a ghetto for Jews, his introductory rationale was that the “Jews’ own guilt has consigned them to perpetual servitude.” Thus, one cannot always divorce humiliation of one ethnic group by another without analyzing how religion made them different ethnic groups, with different statuses in the first place. Overall, Argentinio and Sabra are on the right track. We need to consider any effects of genetics and neurochemistry on violence. This idea, of course, is not new. I discuss some biological theories of violence in Fighting Words. However, with the new biomolecular and genomic tools at our disposal we can make new attempts. I concur with the conclusion of Argentinio and Sabra: “A multi-disciplinary approach is the only solution that is viable, as there is a multiplicity of causes and consequences that can lead to one same result: violence sourced by a particular religious belief or ideology” (p. 130).

**Calogero Miceli**

Calogero Miceli’s chapter, “Religion and Violence: Rethinking the Role of the Biblical Scholar in the Contemporary World,” is very engaged with various aspects of The End of Biblical Studies (2007) which argues that the only mission of biblical studies is to end biblical studies as we currently know it. As we currently know it, biblical studies is a religionist apologetic enterprise centered on preserving and expanding the value of biblical texts. Biblical studies is still situated within an ecclesial-academic complex that has no analogue in other areas of the humanities. While not advocating that we end the study of the Bible, The End of Biblical Studies argues that we must re-purpose biblical studies. That new purpose is to end the authority that the biblical texts wield in modern society. We would still study the Bible as a relic of ancient culture. That new purpose involves some level of “activism”

that centers on undermining the authority of biblical texts in the modern world. That is to say, a biblical scholar would now seek to explain to the public why this text should not be used as a moral authority to set any sort of legal or social policies in modern societies. Miceli disagrees in part with this new mission. He says that the Bible and other religious texts “can be academically studied and critiqued without necessarily being promoted or rejected” (p. 135). However, Miceli is willing to make some exceptions:

The chief exceptions to this tenet, I argue, are in cases when religious texts are used to promote, incite, or justify forms of violence in the world. In such instances, the duty of the biblical scholar must unreservedly be to intervene and strongly disavow the use of religious texts in such deplorable manners (p. 135).

In general, Miceli's “article advocates for a neutral and objective stance on the role of the biblical scholar when it comes to avowing or disavowing the value of religious texts for modern audiences, it fervently promotes an exception to the rule when it comes to religious violence” (p. 150). Accordingly, my aim here is to show that:

a. Objectivity and activism are compatible;

b. There is no reason why the exception should be restricted only to violence;

c. There is no such thing as neutrality.

Let me address first the claim that there is compatibility between objectivity and activism. Miceli seems to view objectivity and activism (either as promotion or rejection) as opposing categories. However, objectivity and activism, whether it involves promotion or rejection of biblical texts, are compatible. The reason is that knowledge has consequences, and beliefs have consequences. Therefore, any piece of knowledge that is consequential for our society must obligate a researcher to either promote what is deemed true or oppose what is deemed untrue.

Consider the history of science. At one time, most people thought that disease could be caused by supernatural beings called demons. Then, science discovered that microbes or other natural causes actually cause many of the diseases attributed to demons. We could demonstrate that administering certain drugs or vaccines could cure disease where prayer had no effect. The discovery is as “objective” as anything else in science. Microorganisms can be correlated with certain diseases and one can conduct experiments to verify that certain microorganisms can cause specific diseases.
Now, should scientists promote this discovery and work against the idea that demons cause diseases? Should scientists not divulge that discovery for fear of upsetting the authority of clerics who pray for the sick? Should scientists not work to undermine beliefs in supernatural causation of disease when they know that vaccines will save millions of lives? What if these scientists started a campaign that said that one should not put their trust in prayer or the demonic theory of Polio because we had objectively found what really caused Polio and had a better alternative? Would these scientists not be objective anymore? Not at all. Objectivity has really nothing to do with whether one will advocate for the beneficial consequences of any discovery, and the harmful consequences of maintaining some false theory of illness.

There is no reason scholars in biblical studies, religious studies, and other areas of the humanities cannot be just as vocal and objective as in science when the results of their research have crucial consequences for humanity. Restricting the exceptions to violence also overlooks many other areas in which religious beliefs can do harm to a society. Consider the claim that one must legally mandate a one-man-and-one-woman marriage because that is the only marriage that has ever been accepted in human history. The Supreme Court of the United States actually discussed this sort of claim, and accepting could mean denying millions of people the right to marry the persons they love when they are of the same sex. But, historians know that human beings have had a diversity of "marriage" arrangements. So, should they divulge their discovery and say that certain historical claims about marriage practices are false? Their argument may be objective (based on documents showing the diversity of marriage practices) and activist at the same time. There is compatibility.

What about creationism, which undermines genuine scientific education? Scientists have actively challenged creationism for decades by testifying in federal court cases in the United States, and opposing legislation that aims to introduce it as science in classrooms. In 1983, Laurie Godfrey published an anthology called Scientists Confront Creationism, which featured many prominent scientists trying to undermine a literal understanding of Genesis. Would that mean those scientists were not objective? Many bibli-

23. See also, Donovan, "Neutrality in Religious Studies."
25. Most recently in Supreme Court of the United States, "Obergefell et al. v. Hodges," which declared as unconstitutional prohibitions against same-sex marriages.
27. Godfrey, Scientists Confront Creationism.
cal scholars (e.g., Peter Enns) have actively undermined the whole idea that Genesis is a scientific account of our origins, and say so. Are these scholars not being objective insofar as they base their arguments on empirical data? If their arguments are based on objective empirical evidence, their advocacy of what they have found objectively should not be viewed as a transgression.

We could compile a long list where most biblical scholars might say that researchers have an obligation to reveal what they have learned and to advocate for the practical results of those investigations. I could mention climate change, which might destroy our biosphere if not checked in time. Biblical scholars might support fighting anti-vaxxers, whose beliefs could result in millions of deaths if left uncontested. Indeed, almost anything that harms human beings or living beings can be seen as a type of violence, and, therefore, it can be included even by the exemption that Miceli himself advocates.

And, of course, there is no such thing as neutrality because knowledge and “truth” are not neutral. Aristotelean logic affects all of our beliefs so that if you assert that X is true, you must be asserting that its opposite is not true; nothing neutral about that. If you say that germs cause disease, you automatically are in opposition to those who say germs do not cause disease. If you say that marriage has had many forms in history, then you are saying that a one-man-one-woman marriage is not the only form of marriage in history. Science and all good research are meant to discriminate between good theories and bad ones; between true and false claims.

*The End of Biblical Studies* also claims that activism can help biblical studies remain relevant. Biblical scholars are often not viewed as solving any problems akin to what scientists solve. That endangers their employment and relevance in academia. However, that view is partly the result of the silence and passivity of biblical scholarship in divulging the significance of its discoveries. If biblical scholars were more activist in informing the world of the dangers of biblical beliefs for modern society, then perhaps we could have people pay more attention to what biblical scholars have discovered about the true nature of the societies that produced the biblical texts. Activism, in other words, may be what saves biblical studies from total irrelevance. There are degrees of activism and many forms of it. Perhaps Miceli is actually protesting those who conduct their activism in unseemly fashion. They might shout insults or personally degrade those who do not believe likewise. However, the world needs all sorts of activism, and activism is determined by context and the imminence of any threat, as it does in the rest of life. Some activist scholars can write articulate essays to express

themselves in a respectful fashion, and others may want to protest with pithy slogans outside of a congress.

In addition, Miceli raises the important issue of the role of activism in teaching in the classroom. I, for one, don't usually advocate for any particular political or secularist stance in classrooms. I simply report what different viewpoints believe. My personal views are revealed on the last day of class for those who wish to know them. My approach, as far as students and peers have evaluated it, has not impeded the objectivity with which I can report different viewpoints. I make a distinction between being a reporter of many viewpoints in a classroom and engaging in activism and advocacy for my viewpoint in the broader public arena.

In sum, Miceli and I disagree only on the extent to which one should be an activist. He restricts activism to violence, and I favor activism in all cases where harm or death to human beings or our biosphere can be the result of silence. Indeed, at some level, the negative consequences of some biblical teachings can result in harm or death to human beings that reach beyond the violence of an interpersonal or inter-state nature. If you believe climate change is not real because of certain biblical teachings, then harm may come to human beings and to life on earth, and that harm is no less painful or tragic than that of other actions we classify as "violence." If children are left to die of horrible diseases because parents believe that the Bible favors prayer only, and not medical treatment, that can also be a type of "violence" suffered by that child. Indeed, there is no reason to restrict activism to just classic forms of "violence" if the assistance of biblical scholars can help ameliorate the plight of human beings who will suffer some sort of injury or death because of the attempt to preserve some biblical beliefs.

Derek Bateman

The paper by Derek Bateman raises a perennial issue in the study of violence—namely, the relationship between religious and non-religious violence. This is very important because William T. Cavanaugh and other theorists go so far as to say that religious violence is a myth. Some scholars claim that religious violence is really political violence that uses religion as a tool. The idea that religious violence is not really ethically different from non-religious violence is perhaps the primary target of my theory. Bateman rightly notes that "much of the contentious flavor of the debate revolves around the idea and definition of religion and the distinction between divine violence and secular (state) violence" (p. 155). Bateman affirms that
non-religious scarce resources can create violence that simulates the scarce resources created by religion. As he phrases it:

The point here is that Hector Avalos rightly recognizes the scarce resource as a prime component of violence justification among religious practitioners, but he does not fully consider the similarities of this proposal with the non-religious entities and their propensity towards violence. ..Insisting that religious violence is distinct because of its embrace of non-empirical and irrational cosmological views fails to acknowledge equally irrational concepts within the political and nationalistic perspectives of so-called secular societies (p. 159).

Bateman regards “freedom” as one of those non-religious yet unverifiable concepts: “Secular ideologies elevate their resources to a sacred status in the same way as the religious and are equally guilty of allowing unverifiable concepts such as freedom to control the trajectory of their beliefs and violent actions” (p. 159). Although there may some points of agreement, there are a number of reasons why I disagree with at least some of Bateman’s analysis.

First, he is not addressing where the fundamental distinctions between religious and non-religious violence lie in my theory. According to Bateman, I apparently deny that non-religious entities can create violence similar to the violence created by religion ("he does not fully consider the similarities of this proposal with the non-religious entities and their propensity towards violence" p. 159). However, Bateman here displays some misunderstanding of my theory. My proposal affirms that “[m]ost violence is due to scarce resources, real or perceived. Whenever people perceive that there is not enough of something they value, then conflict may ensue to maintain or acquire that resource. This can range from love in a family to oil on a global scale.” The latter certainly acknowledges the ability of non-religious scarcities to cause violence. I have repeatedly stated the not all violence is caused by religion, and I do not regard religion as the only cause of violence.

Indeed, Bateman overlooks the fact that I do not make a distinction in the ability of religious and non-religious factors to generate similar acts of violence. It is scarcity, religious or not, that I deem to be the underlying cause of violence, whether secular or not. Furthermore, I argue that the mechanism that leads to violence is the same in religious and non-religious violence: The effort to acquire or maintain Scarce Resource X. 29

30. See Avalos, Fighting Words, 22.
What I do make is an ethical distinction between verifiable and unverifiable scarce resources that Bateman does not fully recognize or address. Despite the same basic mechanism (The effort to acquire or maintain Scarce Resource $X$) behind violence, there is an ethical distinction in trying to acquire or maintain a resource that exists and trying to acquire or maintain a resource that does not exist or cannot be proven to exist. Here is a simple illustration:

- I will commit violence because I want to acquire the water my enemy is denying me.
- I will commit violence because I want to acquire the reward called eternal life.

I argue that if killing for a resource we can prove to be scarce is bad enough, then killing for a resource that cannot be proven to exist is worse. As mentioned, committing acts of violence for something that does not exist or that cannot be proven to exist is always immoral in my theory. The reason is that in the cases of unverifiable scarce resources one is harming beings that do exist in return for rewards that do not exist or cannot be proven to exist. What does not exist has no ethical value, while that which exists can or does have ethical value. Therefore, trading something ethically valuable for something of no ethical value is always immoral. The same is not the case with resources that actually exist. If someone wants to take my life, and I commit an act of violence to save my life, then I am trying to maintain a resource (life) that has ethical value. In the latter case, I am not trading real lives for unverifiable resources or rewards. In order to truly understand the ethical distinctions I make, Bateman would have to answer clearly the question of whether there is an ethical distinction between violence committed for a resource that exists and violence committed for a resource that does not exist or cannot be proven to exist. He needs to address the specific example I offered above or others I discuss elsewhere.

Second, Bateman substitutes other terms for the ones I am using, and thereby addresses arguments I did not make. For example, one main distinction I make is between verifiable and unverifiable when speaking of resources created by religious versus non-religious factors. Bateman sometimes substitutes a different category of “rational/irrational” (“fails to acknowledge equally irrational concepts within the political and nationalistic perspectives of so-called secular societies,” (p. 159). I do not use “rational/irrational” in quite the same way. For example, I have argued that if a person believes a god hates homosexuals then it may be “rational” for a believer in that god to commit an act of violence against homosexuals. In another
instance, he states that "[t]he sacred is not the sole domain of the religious" (p. 159). However, here he is substituting his own definition of "sacred" for mine. I only use the term "sacred" when it is related to something religious. But, even if we used "sacred" for what we might value most, there is still an ethical difference in my theory between valuing things whose existence is verifiable and valuing things that do not exist and cannot be proven to exist.

Third, Bateman conflates general abstract categories with specific categories and thereby creates asymmetrical comparisons. For example, he contends that the concept of "freedom" is "unverifiable" ("...unverifiable concepts such as freedom..." p. 159), and then equates this abstract concept of freedom with specific unverifiable scarce resources generated by religious thinking. But, my theory does not say that "the concept" of religion is unverifiable. That is to say, we can verify that the concept called religion does exist just as does the concept of freedom. Beliefs exist and concepts exist in my theory. As long as I can verify that Person X believes Y or has a Concept Z, then beliefs and concepts exist and are verifiable.

Moreover, the unverifiability of the scarce resources that generate violence does not lie so much in the abstracted genus ("religion" or "freedom"), but in the species of scarcity ascribed to that genus. Carl Schmitt, the scholar upon whom Bateman relies for some of his arguments, actually makes a similar observation when speaking about "sovereignty":

"About an abstract concept there will be in general no argument, least of all in the history of sovereignty. What is argued about is the concrete application and that means who decides in a situation of conflict what constitutes the public interest or interest of the state, public safety and order, le salut public, and so on." 31

Accordingly, we certainly can verify the existence of specific freedoms. For example, I can verify that I have the "freedom to vote in an election." I can verify that I have the "freedom of movement in a particular territory." I can verify that I have the "freedom to worship a particular god as I wish." Once one identifies specific freedoms, then verifiability can enter our ethical evaluation. Those who have those freedoms and those who do not can verify that any particular Person X has those specific freedoms. These specific types of freedoms are resources that can be made scarce or abundant in a real way.

The same is not true with religious scarce resources. Believers in a heavenly reward cannot verify that they have such a reward, and neither can non-believers. These resources cannot be made more abundant by simply

31. Schmitt, Political Theology, 6.
believing that they are more abundant. On the other hand, I can increase the amount of freedoms I grant to others in a real and observable manner.

Fourth, Batemen is relying heavily on Carl Schmitt’s flawed analogy between religion and a nation-state. Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) was a political theoretician active in Germany during the Weimar, Nazi, and Post-World War II periods. Schmitt had a very complicated relationship with Catholicism and Nazism that I will not detail. Scholars of Schmitt have debated whether he was a Catholic in the late Weimar period that shifted away from Christianity during the Nazi period, and then reconciled with the Church in order to distance himself from Nazism in the post-War period.

For my purposes, it is important to point out that Bateman is primarily relying on Schmitt’s Political Theology, which was first published in 1922, during his pre-Nazi period. Bateman actually is using George Schwab’s 1985 translation of the 1934 German edition, which was published during the Nazi period. By Schmitt’s own account, this second edition remains “unchanged” from the first. Bateman quotes Schmitt’s famous declaration that “[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts...” (p. 158) However, Bateman quotes only part of Schmitt’s sentence, as translated by Schwab, which I reproduce here in its entirety:

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.

32. For some basic studies of Schmitt, see Balakrishnan, The Enemy; Bendersky, Carl Schmitt; Schwab, The Challenge of the Exception. For a recent assessment of his relationship to Christianity and the Catholic Church see Roberts, “Carl Schmitt—Political Theologian?”

33. See further Bendersky, Carl Schmitt.

34. For some comments on this evolutionary view of Schmitt, see Roberts, “Carl Schmitt—Political Theologian?”

35. Schmitt, Political Theology.

36. Ibid., 1.

37. Ibid., 36.

Given the centrality of Schmitt’s claim for Bateman’s chapter, my aim is to show that:

a. Schmitt is wrong historically;

b. Schmitt’s claims do not invalidate the ethical difference between religious and non-religious violence;

c. Schmitt is probably engaged in crypto-Christianity and is actually applying a biblical principle at the time he made this claim.

Schmitt does not provide any thorough defense of his claim beyond some analogies he observes. On a historical level, his claims are outdated and refuted by not only historical, but also anthropological research. Human organization preceded any elaborate theology to justify or explain that organization. If one looks at the ancient Near East, one sees that pantheons are pervasively organized as families so that one could just as well make the case that theology simply replicated human organizations, not the other way around. “Custom” (e.g., Gen 29:26) can be cited as a reason for a legal or social decision in the ancient Near East, and that is analogous to impersonal “law” that is often cited in modern times. Therefore, an impersonal institution called “custom” that governs behavior was perfectly compatible within monotheistic and polytheistic systems of law of antiquity, and is not a modern development. Much of the juridical and governing apparatus of the Catholic Church was explicitly simulating the Roman Empire (e.g., the title of Pontifex for the Pope), and Jesus himself is often portrayed as another version of the Roman emperor.39

Philosophically, the analogies contain some crucial differences that Schmitt and Bateman overlook. For example, even if “the law” or “a human lawgiver” is just secularized theology, the fact remains that those entities are verifiable, whereas a divine lawgiver is not. Thus, if I commit an act of violence because a human “omnipotent” lawgiver told me to do so, then I am choosing to follow the will of a real existent being. The reasons of that human lawgiver may be flawed, but that lawgiver does exist. The same applies if we say we commit violence because of “the law” or some set of laws that guide our policies. Those laws do express the will of real entities.

The same is not the case with “God.” He either does not exist or cannot be proven to exist, and so he is not analogous to a human lawgiver or to an institution we call “the law.” Thus, there is no real or verifiable “will” of God that is being reflected by any “God-given” law as far as we can determine,
whereas the will of a real entity is being reflected in "the law" or a human lawgiver. Harming or injuring another human being because of the will of a non-existent or unverifiable being will always be ethically objectionable, whereas that is not always the case of following the will of "the law" or a human lawgiver, who might have empirically verifiable motives to engage in violence (e.g., we are about to be attacked). That is why a nation-state cannot be considered the same sort of entity as "God" or some similar supernatural entity. A nation-state usually consists of a bounded space that has a human hierarchy that exercises power within it. The boundaries and the hierarchy all can be verified to exist. It may be artificially and arbitrarily constructed, but it exists to the extent that it is composed of a group of individuals who make up the government or rulership. It exists to the extent that it can control its borders and enforce its will on its subjects.

True enough, there may be people who do not "recognize" the nation status of a particular territory or organization, but there still may be a real organized or territorial entity that is not receiving that recognition even in the eyes of the deniers of that status. The ISIS state or "caliphate" may not be recognized by Western powers, but those same powers recognize that there is a group of people who call themselves ISIS who control a particular territory. Real military operations are organized to root out real people from a real territory.

Moreover, there remains a strong demarcation between religious and non-religious state violence. Any state that says, "We will commit Violent Act X because a belief in a supernatural being leads us to do so," is engaging in religious violence if those beliefs are sincere. A state that says "We will commit Violent Act X in order to Acquire Freedom to extract oil from Location Y" is not engaging in religious violence.

In contrast, God exists only by virtue of belief in that entity, and God has no verifiable existence beyond the mind of believers. Therefore, we can still make an ethical distinction between violence committed by believers in a real entity like a nation-state, and violence committed by believers in an entity that does not exist or cannot be proven to exist. Believers in a nation-state may sometimes be unjustified in their violence, but not always. If a nation-state is attacked, for example, it is usually deemed justified to defend it because it is composed of people whose lives are real. On the other hand, violence committed because of the belief that one is defending God's honor or will is always immoral because real lives are being killed or harmed for the honor or will of an entity that does not exist at all or cannot be proven to exist. Bateman also raises the issue of the relationship between "consensus" and "verifiability."
If there is not a consensus regarding what freedoms are essential, then the verification of that freedom becomes unstable; empirical evidence needed to solidify the verifiability of the resource is tainted by the interpretative approach of any given society (p. 158).

However, “consensus” does not really affect verifiability in that fashion in my theory. If people cannot agree on what freedom means or what a national state’s powers should be, that does not render any specific powers held by humans or freedoms allowed less verifiable. It only means that consensus itself becomes a scarce resource that can generate violence, and so it is perfectly consistent with my theory. That is to say, the lack of consensus is itself a scarce resource that is subject to the same mechanism: “Effort to acquire or maintain Consensus X may generate violence.”

The lack of consensus about a general resource (“gender equality”) will not affect the verifiability of the specific actions or resources that derive from that general category. For example, let us say that we cannot agree on what “gender equality” means. Some might say that it means only allowing women to vote in elections, and others might argue that it means that women can serve in any political office held by men. Will the lack of consensus on “gender equality” really mean that we cannot verify whether women serve in the same political offices as men or whether women can vote or not? Again, the issue revolves around how Bateman views the verifiability of an abstracted genus (“gender equality”) versus the verifiability of the specific actions or behaviors associated with that general category.

Finally, one must look at Schmitt’s own context and biography more critically to understand why he was making the claim.40 As mentioned, some scholars have viewed Schmitt as a religionist and a devout Catholic early in his career (or even throughout his career). His interest in Catholicism’s place in society is illustrated by his book, Roman Catholicism and Political Form (1934). Consider Schmitt’s essay “Die Sichtbarkeit der Kirche: Eine scholastische Erwägung” (“The Visibility of the Church: A Scholastic Consideration”) published in 1917-1918. Therein, Schmitt states that “[w]hen the Christian obeys authority, he obeys God and not authority because it [authority]—[in its] foundation and limits—is from God.”41 In other


41. Schmitt, “Die Sichtbarkeit,” 74: “Wenn der Christ der Obrigkeit gehorcht, weil sie—Grund und Grenze—von Gott ist, so gehorcht er Gott und nicht der Obrigkeit.” It is uncertain what biblical translation Schmitt was referencing, but the words of Luther’s translation also use “Obrigkeit” and “von Gott” in Rom 13:1: “Jedermann sei untertan der Obrigkeit, die Gewalt über ihn hat. Denn ist keine Obrigkeit ohne von Gott; wo aber Obrigkeit is, die ist von Gott verorndet.”
words, Schmitt was echoing the Pauline declaration in Rom 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

Not long after that, in 1922, Schmitt wrote his more famous declaration about the main concepts behind the state as being “secularized theology.” A plausible case can be made that Schmitt’s Political Theology was attempting to retain God’s place in a secularized world or trying to expose the illusion of secularization when he believed that God is really in control of all government, secular or not. But, whether such an interpretation of Schmitt is correct or not, it will not support the conflation of supernatural beings and nation states.

In short, Schmitt’s claim about states being secularized theologies was one that he never worked out in detail in Political Theology, and it should not be used without far more historical and anthropological study of human organizations and state formation. It is especially important to observe that Schmitt’s Germany followed one of at least five nationalist paths identified by Liah Greenfeld, and they should not all be equated either. National ideologies can produce violence as much as any religious ideology. But, the ethical distinction will remain in the difference between fighting for entities that exist and fighting for entities that do not exist or cannot be proven to exist. Nations, laws, and human ideologies, even if arbitrarily constructed, have a verifiable existence. Gods and supernatural resources do not. Therefore, it will always be immoral to trade real human lives for entities whose existence is unprovable and so have zero ethical value.

Conclusion

The essays in this volume have explored a number of issues, and raised important questions. In general, the volume illustrates the necessity of approaching the issue of violence, and particularly religious violence, by using a multidisciplinary approach. The volume reflects part of a shift to activism in the scholarship of religion and violence. That is to say, at least some of the authors advocate that scholars actively repudiate and challenge religious ideas and texts that can lead to violence. I think most of the essays also illustrate the utility of scarce resource theory in explaining religious violence, even if there are further clarifications and elucidations that should be made. The main issues that need to be settled or clarified include:

- Causality: Clearly, a recurring issue has been how we differentiate violence attributed to religious factors from violence attributed to

42. Greenfeld, Nationalism.
non-religious factors, or even if such a differentiation can be made. Too much of scholarship is still content with simply asserting that politics use religion or that religion is concealing the role of economics without any rigorous empirical or historical research to justify those conclusions. We must insist on more philosophical and historical rigor when we assign causality. That means that we need more scholars willing to master the primary sources when discussing specific conflicts (e.g., Thirty Years War) in order to make judgments about causes.

- **Definition of religion**: In some ways the issue of causality is related to the issue of the definition of religion; the very strict definition versus the very broad one. I certainly do not espouse Jonathan Jong's recent argument that it is useless to define religion.\(^{43}\) The fact is that the usual arguments against defining "religion" would apply to virtually any other word or category we use. Perhaps the best we can do is simply to be transparent about the definition we are using. If one believes that committing violence to maintain or acquire resources that exist as opposed to committing violence for resources that do not exist, then a definition of religion that focuses on a relationship with supernatural beings and/or forces can still be useful in illuminating an ethical distinction that otherwise would be missed. In my case, I would urge a commitment to reject any and all modes of thinking that are based on supernatural entities. If we can eliminate violence based on the will of invisible beings, we would have eliminated at least one substantial source of violence.

- **Activism**: The extent to which scholars believe that their findings have consequences and are relevant to humanity is the key to encouraging scholars to be activists. There is no reason that scholars of religion cannot be just as activist as scientists when they discover that a disease is caused by a microorganism, not some demon. Similarly, if scholars find that religion and religious factors are correlated with religious violence repeatedly, then they have a moral obligation to say so. They have a moral obligation to undermine the authority and relevance of those religious beliefs. Such criticism of religion and specific religions should not be viewed as cause for accusations of racism or ethnocentrism concerning corresponding believers (e.g., as Islamophobia).

Finally, the recognition that religious violence is global can bring both advances and frustrations in minimizing violence. Advances may result in forging broader coalitions of scholars across the world to address the issue. Frustration will continue insofar as one cannot contain religious violence by defeating it in any particular territory, especially with the power of

\(^{43}\) Jong, "On (Not) Defining (Non)Religion."
social media to incite individuals anywhere at any time. Whatever differing viewpoints there may be among the contributors as to the diagnosis and prognosis of global religious violence, the questions and issues raised in this volume should set the agenda for how one studies religion and violence from now on.
Bibliography


