



Violence as Worship: Religious Wars in the Age of Globalization

Hans Kippenberg

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Today's religious violence challenges our understanding of religion. Do we need special notions such as 'cult' and 'fundamentalism' to come to terms with it? Does monotheism, with its claim to exclusivity, necessarily generate intolerance? Kippenberg rejects the idea that violence and religion are inherently connected and instead considers the actions, motives, and self-perceptions of real people. He shows that the violent outcomes of the American tragedies of Jonestown and Waco were not inevitable. In both cases, law enforcement, the media, and anti-cult networks believing in the necessity of liberation by force stood in opposition to communities who chose to idealize martyrdom. The same pattern applies to other major cases of religious violence since the 1970s: the Iranian revolution; the birth of Hezbollah in Lebanon; the conflict between Jews, Muslims, and American Protestants that grew out of disputes between Israel and its neighboring states; and the attacks of 9/11. In the age of globalization, religious ties fill the vacuum left by the weakening of traditional loyalties and by states that do not foster social solidarity. Lest we believe we are condemned to a violent future, *Violence as Worship* concludes with a discussion on prevention. Religion may inspire many conflicts, but it is also a resource that can be mobilized to avert them.

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