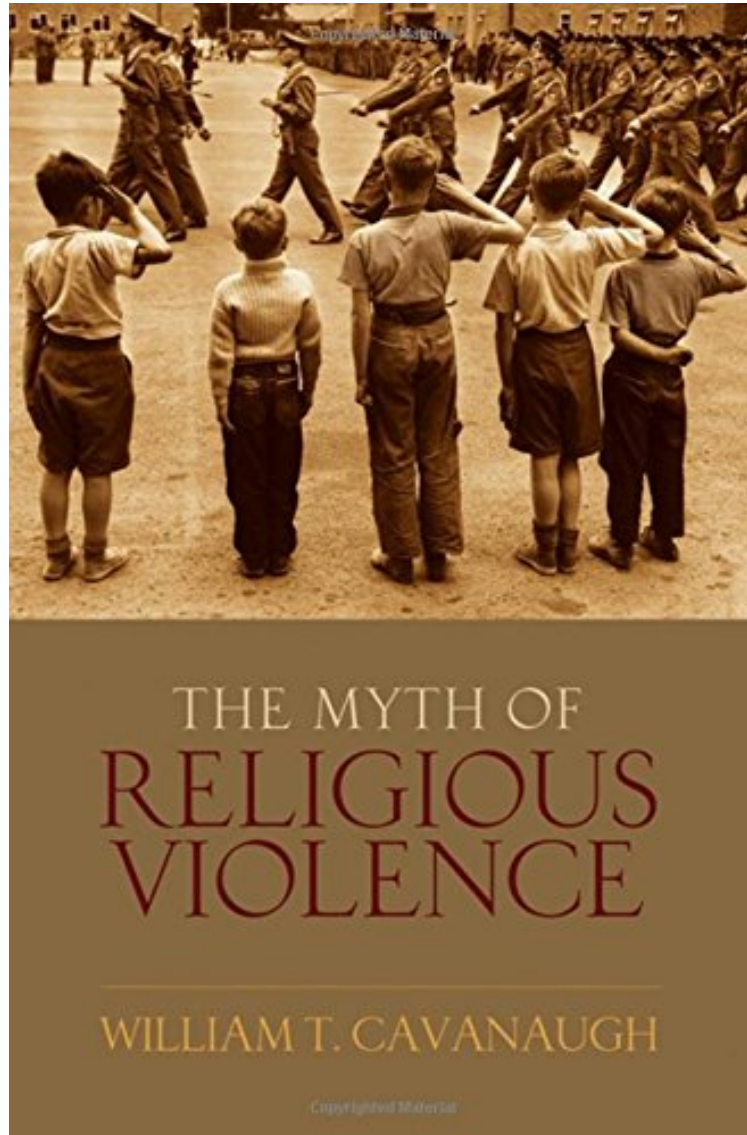


(Library ebook) The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict

The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict

William T Cavanaugh

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William T Cavanaugh : The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Clarity regarding the history of theologians and WhigsBy thefeistysweetheart Absolutely outstanding. The only problem with this book is you may start tearing your hair out

when people refer to the "Wars of Religion." My frustration with the Whig tendency to create its own mythologies, refuse to question them, and then sneer at "religion" as if it's some monolithic thing probably reached its height with Cavanaugh's masterpiece. If you'd like to improve your grasp of history and understand why complex political wars of power were re-written centuries later as the fault of theologians, then this is your book. I especially think this should be read by people who embrace Whig history without checking original sources; but who wants their personal mythology to be challenged? 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Read this book!

By Daniel Cox
This is a monumental book that all college philosophy majors and religious studies majors should read as soon as possible. The most provocative insight this book has to offer is that it makes it impossible to construct an argument or conversation about "religion" as some sort of autonomous and basic discourse that stands qualitatively separate from its "secular" counterpart. In other words, there is no way to define "religion" in a way that applies to all times and cultures while also maintaining that there is a category known as the "secular" which is distinct from the "religious." Thus, something like "American politics" cannot be categorically separated from something like "Islamic extremism" in terms of an appeal to whether or not each activity is "religious" or "secular." This has huge implications for the "New" atheists, all of which seem to target "religion" as if everyone knows what that means. Please read this book.

39 of 42 people found the following review helpful. A Definite-Read Book (With Only One Flaw)
By Christian Smith
This is a significant, very well-written book that deserves a wide reading. The story it tells is fascinating and important, and makes a valuable contribution to our reflections about religion and violence in the contemporary world. The unmasking of the modern, secular, liberal myth of religious violence is scrumptious. The one flaw in the book, in my view, is the author's having bought too uncritically into the "Talal Asad" account of "religion" being a modern invention. There is truth to that, properly understood. But when the distinction between religion as a concept and religion as an activity/practice gets lost (as social constructionists tend to be vulnerable to), problems arise. Cavanaugh falls into that and related elisions of what ought to be kept distinct in Chapter 2. I recommend as an antedote Martin Riesebrodt's *The Promise of Salvation: A Theory of Religion* (Chicago, 2010). Even so, that flaw in no way undermines his larger argument, which is right in my view, very important, and powerful. If many people read this book and understood and worked out the significance of its message, the world would be a better place. As for myself, I plan to assign it in my graduate seminar in sociology of religion this fall, first week of classes, to help expand the vision of what we're even taking about and the assumptions we make about it. Many thanks to Cavanaugh for his good work in producing this book.

The idea that religion has a dangerous tendency to promote violence is part of the conventional wisdom of Western societies, and it underlies many of our institutions and policies, from limits on the public role of religion to efforts to promote liberal democracy in the Middle East. William T. Cavanaugh challenges this conventional wisdom by examining how the twin categories of religion and the secular are constructed. A growing body of scholarly work explores how the category 'religion' has been constructed in the modern West and in colonial contexts according to specific configurations of political power. Cavanaugh draws on this scholarship to examine how timeless and transcultural categories of 'religion' and 'the secular' are used in arguments that religion causes violence. He argues three points: 1) There is no transhistorical and transcultural essence of religion. What counts as religious or secular in any given context is a function of political configurations of power; 2) Such a transhistorical and transcultural concept of religion as non-rational and prone to violence is one of the foundational legitimating myths of Western society; 3) This myth can be and is used to legitimate neo-colonial violence against non-Western others, particularly the Muslim world.

"Cavanaugh not only sets the bar of future scholarship higher but also avoids oversimplifications that can obstruct conflict resolution. Future scholarship on religious violence will inevitably need to interact with the theories laid out in this book." --BYU Studies Quarterly "[A]n important book." --Commonweal

Williams T. Cavanaugh's *Myth of Religious Violence* is a disciplined, detailed and painstakingly thorough book that sets out to debunk the all-too-pervasive liberal myth: that something called 'religion' is necessarily inclined to produce violence, especially left unchecked. " --Leigh Edwards, Durham, North Carolina

Cavanaugh not only exposes the myth for what it is, he provides details to show precisely how the myth is not grounded in reality." --Christian Century "...an important and highly interesting work...enough to make one doubt the modern dogma of religious violence and be alert to its ideological function in the West." --James R. A. Merrick, University of Aberdeen

"The book is well-written, thoroughly documented, and clearly argued, and it should be of value both to generalists and to readers with particular interest in the topic." --Debra Erickson

A detailed and carefully researched rebuttal of the idea that there is some essence or necessary function of religion that makes it a more consistent cause of violence than other worldviews, belief systems or ideologies. He effectively unveils the self-serving nature of secular liberal condescension toward religion." --Modern Theology

Razor sharp and pertinent... Cavanaugh leaves us hard pressed to imagine how the notion of a privatized, internalized 'God of One's Own' could ever be part of the solution to a problem that it is responsible for inventing in the first place." --Common Knowledge

About the Author
William T Cavanaugh is Senior Research Professor at DePaul

