

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Religion and Violence

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CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE

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Christianity and Violence

Elements in Religion and Violence

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ABSTRACT: How Christian people have framed the meaning of violence within their faith tradition has been a complex process subject to all manner of historical, cultural, political, ethnic and theological contingencies. As a tradition encompassing widely divergent beliefs and perspectives, Christianity has, over two millennia, adapted to changing cultural and historical circumstances. To grasp the complexity of this tradition and its involvement with violence requires attention to specific elements explored in this Element: the scriptural and institutional sources for violence; the faith commitments and practices that join communities and sanction both resistance to and authorization for violence; and select historical developments that altered the power wielded by Christianity in society, culture and politics. Relevant issues in social psychology and the moral action guides addressing violence affirmed in Christian communities provide a deeper explanation for the motivations that have led to the diverse interpretations of violence avowed in the Christian tradition.

KEYWORDS: Christians and violence, anti-Jewishness, insecurity, identity protection, white supremacy

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