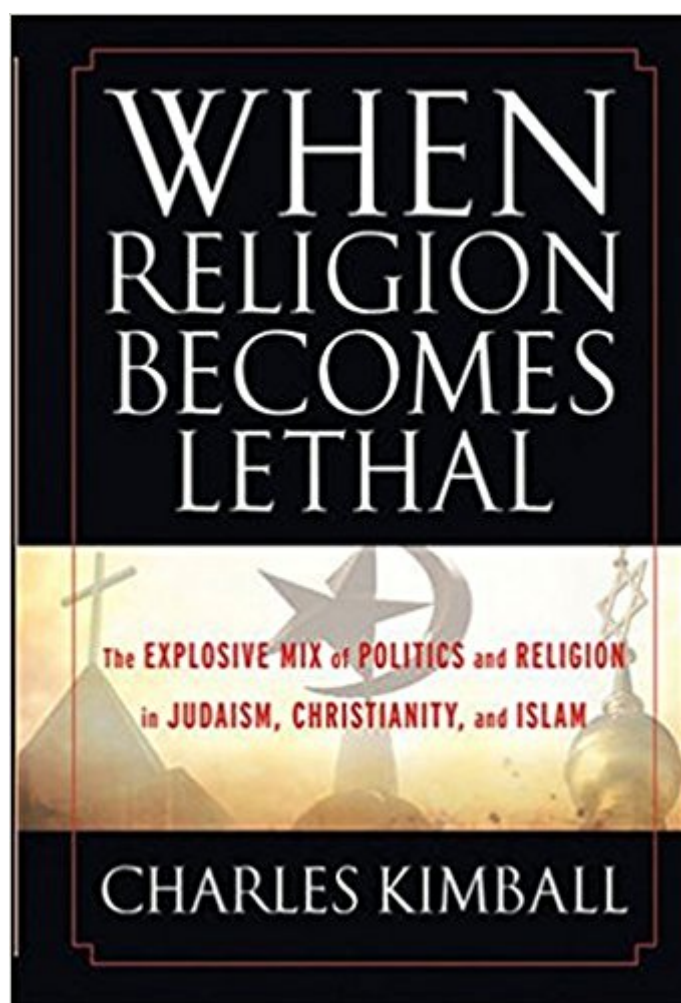


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# When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix Of Politics And Religion In Judaism, Christianity, And Islam



## Synopsis

A compelling look at today's complex relationship between religion and politics. In his second book, bestselling author Charles Kimball addresses the urgent global problem of the interplay between fundamentalist Abrahamic religions and politics and moves beyond warning signs (the subject of his first book) to the dangerous and lethal outcomes that their interaction can produce. Drawing on his extensive personal and professional knowledge of, experience with and access to all three traditions, Kimball's explanation of the multiple ways religion and politics interconnect within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam will illuminate the problems and give readers a hopeful vision for how to chart a safer course into a precarious future. Kimball is the author of *When Religion Becomes Evil*, one of the most acclaimed post 9/11 books on terrorism and religion. Reveals why religion so often leads to deadly results. The author has scholarly knowledge and expertise and extensive personal experience with the peoples, cultures, and leaders involved. Readable and engaging, this book gives a clear picture of today's complex political and religious reality and offers hope for the future. Author Q&A with Charles Kimball Author Charles Kimball

How did you become interested and involved in Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations? I've always been interested in religion, maybe because I'm kind of a mix--my paternal grandfather was Jewish, and while my immediate family was Christian, a large portion of the extended family was Jewish. While I grew up thinking that both Judaism and Christianity were great traditions, I soon learned that not everyone in Tulsa, OK, agreed. As I encountered ignorance about and prejudice toward Jews, I wanted to know why and wanted to know more about what religion was all about. Eventually when I began my doctoral program at Harvard, I decided that I wanted to study the religious, historical, and political interplay between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Why were you so interested in those three monotheistic religions? My wife and I lived in Egypt (one block from the now famous Tahrir Square) when I was a young scholar, and I was directly involved in the Iranian hostage conflict during the Carter administration, as I describe in the book. Those life-changing experiences ignited my efforts to understand the dynamics of religion and politics in the contemporary Middle East. The combination of some 40 trips to the Middle East and my observations of developments in Israel and the emerging influence of conservative Christians in the U.S. highlighted the often convoluted, confusing, and lethal mixture of religion and politics. It's been made painfully clear that even small numbers of religious zealots or extremists claiming inspiration from their religion can wreak havoc on a regional or even global scale. In the second decade of the 21st century, the stakes are far too high for us to avoid or underestimate the volatile mix of religion and politics. What's the most important thing people need to know

to better understand the often confusing and clearly explosive mix of religion and politics in the Middle East and U.S. today? We get a lot of our information about the dizzying swirl of recent events from religious leaders, politicians, and pundits—often packaged in superficial sound bites. For most Americans today, this has produced a kind of “detailed ignorance” of Islam, the Middle East and the interplay of religion and politics. We have a lot of details and images but no framework for understanding. It might take some effort to develop such a framework, but it’s far less daunting than you might imagine. If we look at the scriptural bases for each tradition and their historical origins and relationships, we can see that there isn’t actually a fixed template for how they operate and interact. But we can see clearly the dangerous and often deadly results of fundamentalists in all three religions, people who claim that they know precisely what God requires for them and everyone else. It’s always a “work in progress.” Are the dramatic developments in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and other predominantly Muslim countries in 2011 a source of hope or cause for alarm? Although our “detailed ignorance” tends to make us lump all these countries together, they are all different and distinctive. Tunisia is not Jordan; Egypt is not Syria. At the same time, there are common themes that connect the turbulent upheavals. While there are no easy answers or simple solutions, the book identifies resources and opportunities for people of faith and goodwill to help fashion a more hopeful future. When Religion Becomes Lethal identifies what’s wrong or dangerous in order to point out healthy alternatives. Many of the key issues surfacing today are discussed in the book—from the major sources of anger and frustration in many predominantly Muslim countries and the ways the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exacerbates problems throughout the region to the constructive and misguided ways U.S. policies have shaped and will shape events. In addition, as we demystify catch phrases like the so-called “clash of civilizations” and clarify what actually constitutes “shari’ah law,” we can identify more positive ways to embrace the challenges in the U.S. and in the Middle East that loom before us.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

Whether it's terrorists in the Middle East who claim inspiration from Islam and express their hatred for the West, or the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, or the violence done by the religious extremists in the United States, it seems religion too often leads to lethal results. Charles Kimball, the author of *When Religion Becomes Evil*, builds on his bestselling book to offer further insight on a difficult topic. *When Religion Becomes Lethal* answers key questions and provides a reliable framework for understanding why religious belief—especially in the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—so often leads to violence and what constructive steps can be taken to chart a more hopeful future. Kimball, an expert on comparative religion, has a profound understanding of the often-troubled history between the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim descendants of Abraham. He examines a litany of compelling questions that challenge us today including: Why are the turbulent religious forces now seemingly more threatening than ever before? How representative are violent extremists operating in the name of Islam? What do the large majority of Muslims really want? Is or should America be a Christian nation? What is a Christian nation? Is peace between Israel, the Palestinians, and neighboring Arab and Muslim states really possible? These questions perplex many of us as daily headlines remind us all how even small numbers of religious zealots can wreak havoc on a massive scale. *When Religion Becomes Lethal* offers a reliable, insightful, and useful way of thinking about and engaging the critical issues of religion and politics.

"Building on decades of experience witnessing and affecting change in the Middle East, Charles Kimball gives a rich examination of religious conflict from the vantage point of a peacemaker. In a world torn by religious extremism, this book provides a pragmatic, hopeful, and much-needed tool for those who seek an honest dialogue of change." —Jim Wallis, founder and CEO, Sojourners, and author, *Rediscovering Values* "Informed by the best of scholarship and his own

extensive experiences and insights, Charles Kimball's *When Religion Becomes Lethal* is an engaging and riveting must-read on how the interplay of religion and politics in the three great monotheistic traditions can and has led to dangerous and deadly consequences." — John L. Esposito, professor, religion and international affairs, Georgetown University, and author, *The Future of Islam* "With the courage and clarity of the great reformers and the vision of the prophets, Charles Kimball sets before us the potential of communities of faith in which each honors all." — Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, director, Department of Religion, Chautauqua Institution "At a time when the line between the sacred and secular is slowly fading away in all parts of the world, we need Kimball's steady hand, wit, intelligence, and smart analysis to guide us toward a saner future." — Reza Aslan, author, *No god but God and Beyond Fundamentalism* "In this stunning book, Kimball sheds light on the most dangerous religious movements of our time. His deep understanding of the landscape of religious extremism — Jewish, Christian, and Muslim — is shaped by decades of firsthand experience with religious and political leaders in the United States and the Middle East. This is a critical book for navigating today's perilous and explosive religious landscape." — Diana Eck, professor, comparative religion, and director, The Pluralism Project at Harvard University

Excellent book whether you have read his first book or not. Explains in pretty good detail a lot of stuff about Christians, Muslims, and Jews and is good information to have to help a person make decisions about the world around them and kind of understand just why things are as they are.

An enlightening historical view of the issues between Islam and Jews and between Christians, Jews and Islam. A must read for everyone no matter what your religion is. Only through understanding and ingredients can we begin to open a dialogue between religions and cultures.

So much information about how we, the world's major religions, got to where we are today. None of us need to feel too superior about it either. Another book that is hard to put down.

I found Charles Kimball's writing very interesting!! It was very readable and I actually learned a lot in the process! Thanks Charles for sharing your wonderful gifts and also for your expertise on these subjects!

This is an important book for the current time, in which fundamental religious beliefs are being used

as an excuse for violence. I bought this book for my church's library, and I think that it could fit well into libraries of other religious bodies.

A very good book which opens eyes about the dangers of extremism in religion and how this impacts politics. It is also a good reminder of events of the recent past and how they affected the course of history.

A must read, in conjunction with "When Religion Becomes Evil". Especially timely given world events. Helps to understand history. Helps to understand the dangers that can stem from zealots everywhere.

Just as described and shipped immediately. Good book.

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