

Greetings church,

We're moving on to part 4, chapter 7 in The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction by Ben Daniel.

I want to re-iterate that the author is not writing an academic thesis nor is he writing a persuasive essay or argumentative paper attempting to win someone over to his cause. He is writing about a personal journey he has been on and inviting us into that journey. That is to say that this book is *very* readable and I strongly encourage everyone to not just read my reflections on each chapter but to **read the book for themselves** and to put your thoughts, questions, and reflections into conversation with mine.

The author uses chapter 7 to give a cursory overview of the history of violence perpetrated in the name of Christianity. Why? One of the reasons so many contemporary Americans fear the Islamic religion is its association with violent extremism. The author then, in light of Matthew 7:3-5, thought it appropriate to practice self-awareness regarding the violent shortcomings of our own faith before having a brief conversation on the violent shortcomings of Islamic faith. Christians wanting to decry the violence of the entire religion of Islam and every practitioner, without acknowledging Christian history, is the proverbial pot calling the kettle black. Christian history is rife with innocent blood being shed in the name of Christianity. The crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Salem Witch Trials are just the tip of the iceberg.

While we must acknowledge that the terrorists who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks did so in the name of Islam, to say that those attacks make every adherent of the faith a violent extremist would be like saying that you, dear reader, are also a violent extremist because of what the crusaders did. You are likely not interested in being lumped in with violent extremist Christians who bomb abortion clinics and murder doctors who perform abortions. The same is true of the vast majority of Muslims; peaceful, God-fearing people, who abhor violence, terrorism, and extremism. "Muslims from all over the world and from every background insist that unprovoked violence is incompatible with Islam. A simple Google search using the words 'Muslims condemn violence' will yield hundreds of formal Islamic declarations against violence in general and against terrorism in particular."¹ I presume that the vast majority of you all readers would say the same thing about Christianity. Yes, there are some of us who are not great but the vast majority are just regular people, trying to get by. Why can't we afford Muslim people the same grace, the same tolerance, we afford ourselves?

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Eddie

¹ Daniel, Ben. The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY; 2013. p.134