

“Christian” Religious Wars – Assessment

Choose either **Option 1** or **Option 2** to respond to the bold question on the back of this sheet.

Be sure to cite evidence/examples from recent lessons and readings in your answers.

Option 1

Over the past several days, you have learned more information about the wars and atrocities that occurred in the aftermath of the Reformation. One of the central rallying cries of the Reformation from the Protestant side was (and remains) *Sola Scriptura* – according to “scripture alone,” or the idea that God’s truth comes only from the Old and New Testament. The Catholic Church responded to this doctrine among others in their declarations from the Council of Trent. Recall the differences below, referring to **Student Handout 2.1** (Lesson 1: Opposing Views – Protestant vs. Catholic):

Protestants:	Catholics:
The Old and New Testaments are the <i>only</i> sources of Christian teaching.	

How might this difference have contributed to wars and atrocities, including those described by Bartolomé de las Casas in the New World?

Option 2

[Prominent atheist and Oxford professor emeritus Richard] Dawkins has stated that religion (particularly monotheism) is a bad thing which is described as “*the great unmentionable evil at the center of our culture....Religion causes wars by generating certainty*” and “*...such absolutism nearly always results from strong religious faith and it constitutes a major reason for suggesting that religion can be a force for evil in the world.*”¹

This is a popular argument among many who claim to be atheists. Most, when pressed to explain this position, will cite examples that include the conflicts we studied in class over the past several days – post-Reformation clashes in Europe and the Spanish inquisition and conquest of the New World. Dawkins and his supporters don’t generally differentiate between sects, and ultimately lump evangelical Christianity in with Catholicism and even extreme elements of Islam.

How would you respond to Dawkins and those who agree with him, based on our study of religious conflicts and their contrast with true, Christian principles?

¹ <http://www.philosophynews.com/post/2011/02/20/Is-Religion-to-Blame-Part-2.aspx>

