

Why Are Video Games Depicting Religion as Violent?

Over the past few years, the video game industry has grown from a niche market into a major part of mainstream media. But are video games becoming a side story in the **culture wars** by depicting religion as violent?

State-of-the-art technology makes it possible for video game developers to offer more detail and nuance into video game storylines than ever before—and many video games are starting to incorporate religion as a key aspect to plot points.

Indeed, Greg Perreault, a doctoral student in the University of Missouri School of Journalism, found that many newer-generation video games equate religion with violence in the game narratives.

Perreault examined five recent video games that incorporate religion heavily into the storyline: *Mass Effect 2*; *Final Fantasy 13*; *Assassin's Creed*; *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*; and *Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*. The result: all of these video games problematize religion by closely tying it in with violence.

“In most of these games there was a heavy emphasis on a ‘Knights Templar’ and crusader motifs,” Perreault says. “Not only was the violent side of religion emphasized, but in each of these games religion created a problem that the main character must overcome, whether it is a direct confrontation with **religious zealots** or being haunted by religious guilt.”

While Perreault observed a relationship between violence and video games, he does not believe video game developers are creating an intentional commentary on religion.

“It doesn’t appear that game developers are trying to

purposefully bash organized religion in these games," Perreault says. "I believe they are only using religion to create stimulating plot points in their story lines. If you look at video games across the board, most of them involve violence in some fashion because violence is conflict and conflict is exciting. Religion appears to get tied in with violence because that makes for a compelling narrative."