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identity, setting them apart from human forces as a distinct opposite. Given this portrayal, it's understandable that fans of the series have observed and noted these themes.

What is perhaps more significant, however, is that fans use the Covenant to draw parallels to various allegedly religious extremist groups in our reality. *Religious extremism* is defined here as violence committed in the name of religion by an individual or group (Appleby 2000). Some of the groups mentioned, like Al-Qaeda, were contemporary to the release of the first games, and others – such as ISIS – did not exist when the first games were developed. For instance, the comments from Anon 6 (2020) and Anon 7 (2022) offer interesting perspectives in this regard. Anon 6 (2020) characterized the remnants of the Covenant as “religious extremists, like ISIS. Basically space wort worthy terrorists” and Anon 7 (2022) who stated that the Covenant “is basically al Qaeda who believe that humanity (the United States) very existence is an offense to their perversion of religion.” However, parallels are not only drawn between these aliens and Islamist groups. The Medieval Crusades and the Catholic church are similarly presented as real-world examples of the Covenant. “I see religion in general,” as one forum user put it, “Christianity has its own history of Crusades and religious motivated wars and genocide” (Anon 2 2022), adding: “Plus the Hierarchs seem more like Popes” (Anon 2 2022). In general, the majority of the parallels drawn are between the Abrahamic religions, with Christianity and Islam being most commonly referenced. It is, however, much more common to refer to religion in a general sense without identifying any particular religious tradition. Nevertheless, a general trend is to associate the Covenant, and by extension religion, with extremism.

As argued by Jefferey Jerome Cohen (1996) in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*,





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