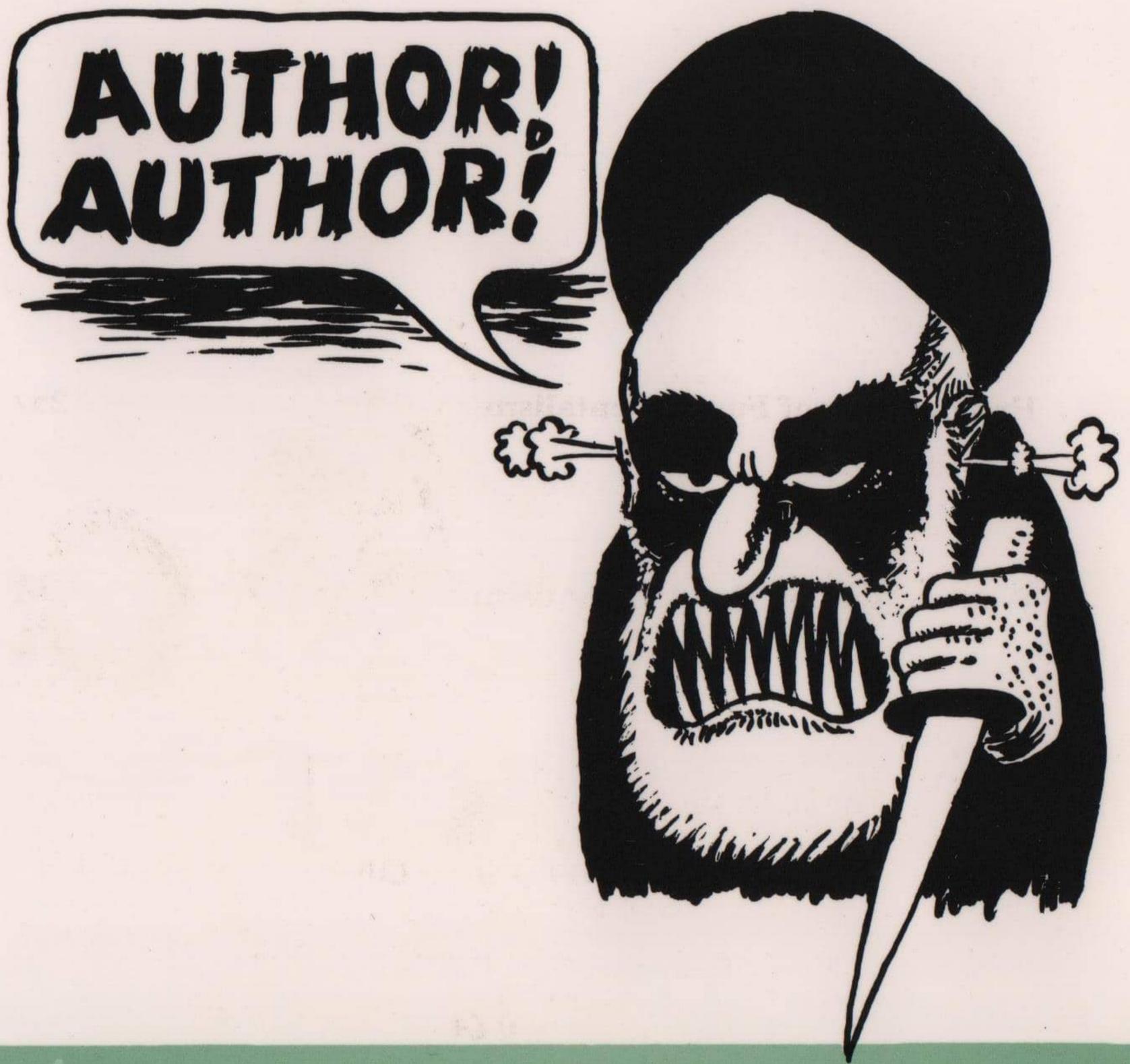


RELIGION 2

Fundamentalism



THE RAVEN

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Editorial

Two of the contributors to the following pages have been physically attacked in the streets of London by demonstrators from Muslim backgrounds who were using their right to freedom of assembly to call for the banning of a book and for the extension of laws against free speech.

Since the extraordinary affair of *The Satanic Verses*, 'fundamentalism' (meaning, generally, Muslim fundamentalism) has become an almost daily topic for the press. This issue of *The Raven* is an attempt to make sense of the phenomenon, and although it is presented from the point of view of political anarchism, the papers collected here will interest those of all or no political or religious persuasions. It is a sequel to *The Raven* 25 (pages 1-96 of this volume) on Religion, which was well received in both anarchist and secularist circles, and the editor considers himself fortunate in being able to present a further collection of articles equally informative and thought-provoking and varied in their approach.

We open with an article by **George Walford**, which prefigures several of the topics dealt with in detail by later writers. Written some months ago and intended originally for his own magazine *Ideological Commentary*, but generously offered to *The Raven*, George Walford did not live to see it published, nor to amend it at proof stage as he had wished. Walford's references to Muslim-Hindu rioting at Indian independence may lead the reader to **John Shotton**'s study of Hindu fundamentalism which describes a new Hinduism created 'for purposes more political than religious, and mainly supportive of the ambitions of a new social class', while Walford's belief that fundamentalism is a mental attitude forms the basis of **Bob Potter**'s research into the Jehovah's Witnesses. Potter writes as a research psychologist and traces six general characteristics that go to make up the 'fundamentalist individual', who he sees as a 'psychotic individual'. He describes in fascinating detail the way in which the Jehovah's Witnesses operate, leading to a rather daunting conclusion.

Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, shows clearly not only the intolerant behaviour of the small minority of Muslim extremists in Britain, but also the inadequate response of 'complacently misguided liberals'. She gives an account of the 'fundamentalist Muslim agenda' in Britain, the recent moves in connection with the

blasphemy laws and the Criminal Justice Bill, and the response of Labour Party MPs and the government. On the question of grant-maintained schools, Smoker shows how the British Mullahs want subsidised religious schools designed to prevent the children (and particularly the girls) from integrating with the wider community.

Harold Barclay, formerly Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, and contributor to our earlier issues on Anthropology and Sociology, here contributes two papers, the first dealing with the propaganda machine of the Roman Catholic Church: its alleged liberalisation and the fact that many of its nominal adherents defy its teachings should not blind us to its true nature. Barclay's second paper deals with the self-styled 'Moral Majority' in the United States, and in examining protestant theories of relations between church and state, also distinguishes the libertarian and authoritarian aspects of the protestant tradition.

One of the results of the 'Anarchy in the UK' festival, coinciding with the Anarchist Bookfair and a meeting of the Anarchist Research Group, was an exceptionally large audience for the talk by **Colin Ward** at the Conway Hall in Saturday 22nd October. Wide-ranging and speculative, Ward's text is followed by the notes which show the breadth of his reading, and we are fortunate to have secured it for *The Raven*. As Ward wrote in his 'Anarchist Notebook' feature in *Freedom* (26th November 1994):

... my aim had not been to suggest anarchist responses, but just to point out that nobody – socialist, communist or anarchist – had anticipated that at the coming turn of the century a huge political issue would be, not the struggle between capitalism and workers' movements, but the attempt by religious believers to impose their ideologies on the rest of us.

In the same building the following day **Nicolas Walter** addressed the South Place Ethical Society. He pointed out that the word fundamentalism 'is increasingly used in casual conversation, and may be applied to several quite different and even contradictory things'.

Walter's fundamentalism is 'the insistence on principle' and he explores this theme first in religious movements, specifically the Fundamentalist Movement in the USA and more generally in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions, and then considers political parallels: the fundamentals of conservatism, socialism and anarchism.

Somewhere in his talk Ward says that 'in our media-managed world where news-worthiness displaces human values, it is always the extreme expression of views that dominates the media'. We may ask

to what extent the idea of fundamentalism is a media creation – a word to be used interchangeably with extremist (as ‘anarchist’ may be used as a synonym for ‘terrorist’) as a technique for designating whole categories of people as beyond the pale, irrational beings, barbarous, to be dealt with only by force.

We may read of ‘Arafat and his *Muslim-fundamentalist rivals* belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad’, of ‘Arafat and *his peace partner* Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’ (*Observer*, 27th November 1994, my italics), whereas previously Arafat was a ‘terrorist’. In Algeria there is a civil war which came about after the cancellation of a general election in 1992 that seemed likely to be won by a political party called (in English) the Islamic Salvation Front, ‘*the leading fundamentalist grouping*’ (*Sunday Times*, 14th August 1994, my italics). Its tactics, nasty though we may find them, seem to be typical of guerrilla movements in attempting to involve ‘the people’ in a conflict not of their making – but what, really, has this got to do with anybody’s religious beliefs?

Ward notes that the constitutional separation of church and state was a feature of many of the new republics founded this century: India, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Israel. Today the fundamentalist threat is not merely, as in the USA, to a secular constitution but to the political regimes as such. Ward takes Turkey as a key example of a secular state under threat:

In Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, who also shared Bakunin’s views on religion, embarked on a dictatorial policy of what we might call ‘de-Islamification’. His current successors are prevented from presenting a democratic facade precisely because of the threat of the return of religion.

But could one not argue that the fundamentalist threat is the consequence of the failure of the European Community to accept Turkey as a member, with the result that the Turkish government has to look to Saudi Arabian money and the Islamic banks? That the West uses civil liberties issues to deny the economic aid to poor countries that would prevent their lower classes from turning to radical religious leaders? That it is economic, not religious, reasons that are behind political instability?

One of the most interesting publications that we have seen recently in the Freedom Press Bookshop is a short pamphlet, a mere ten pages of text, called *Anarchism in Turkey*, written by Mine Ege and published in London by Karambol Publications, PO Box 1681, London N8, at 80 pence.

I quote:

Moreover, there is another political factor that should be taken seriously. It is the radical Islamic movement. The military regime of the early '80s has intentionally promoted radical Islamism in the state apparatus for the purpose of eliminating all other forms of civil political groups and also for creating a new type of patriotism. Although this movement and its leaders are actually at the service of the ruling classes of Turkey, the masses choose this radical movement in order to show that they are against the ruthless capitalism which exists in Turkey. As it happens elsewhere in the world when the revolutionary fire is deflated, the masses often choose the reverse way against the system. From this point of view, we should try to understand the Islamic radicalism as a complex issue which is both an obstacle for the revolution and a signal of discontent of the masses from the system.

Reading the somewhat gloomy prognostications of some of these articles we may take heart at the emergence of an anarchist movement in Turkey.

Correction

On page 96 (*The Raven* 25) the letter 'Technology, Science and Anarchism' was written by Michael Duane. Due to a technical error his signature was omitted.

The Spaniards inflicted on us the worst superstition the world has ever known: the Catholic religion. For this alone they should all be shot.

Pancho Villa

attributed, from *The Heretic's Handbook of Quotations*

A good Catholic, precisely because of his Catholic principles, makes the better citizen ... loyally submissive to constituted civil authority in every legitimate form of government.

Pope Pius XI

Divini illius magistri

To worship another is to degrade yourself.

Robert Ingersoll

Individuality

George Walford

The Future of Fundamentalism

I

From the French Revolution onward society seemed to be growing more open, more secular, more rational. Education and literacy spread, freethought and even outright atheism became socially acceptable, democracy largely replaced monarchy, and a prospect of socialism, communism, even anarchy, opened in the distance. The Great War revealed other possibilities, but that got dismissed as a last recurrence of the old, evil ways, arousing the irrevocable determination: Never Again! In October 1917 the future came to Russia.

Gradually at first, and then more rapidly through the twenties and thirties, shadows overtook the brightness. The crisis of capitalism, so long awaited, brought not socialism but fascism, bursting up from forgotten depths. The Soviet promise was trampled into bloody dust, and the Great War turned out to have been merely the first act, with worse to come. As the empires retreated former colonies sank into a state worse than before. In India after liberation Muslim-Hindu rioting killed more than ever fought for socialism, communism or anarchism. The Enlightenment and its results remain with us, but as a supplement to the old modes of social behaviour, rather than a replacement for them. We have a new and more complex scenario to face.

Much of the apparent progress turns out to have been illusory; the old attitudes had been obscured rather than eliminated. The advanced nations, equipped with computers, nuclear power and spaceships, find themselves confronted with mass attachment to the ideas of a thousand, two thousand years ago. Radio and television spread the words of Mohammed, Christ, Buddha and Moses; in the USA followers of hell-fire evangelists greatly outnumber atheists. Neither Bakunin nor Kropotkin nor Tolstoy anticipated anything like this for the end of the twentieth century. We need to rethink our expectations.

II

As the empires withdrew from direct control of the Third World it seemed at first that Marxism would move into the resulting vacuum. This did not last. The attempt to use *Das Kapital* as a pattern for setting up modern capitalist societies, complete with a proletariat ready to move on through socialism to communism, collapsed for lack of mass support. In the ex-colonies Marxism went down under a wave of traditional religions, each of them driving back towards its origins. Islam proved the strongest of these, with 45 nations now belonging to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Its strength had persisted under the empires although obscured by rationalist influence over the media, and it reasserted itself, returning to a literal reading of the Koran as a guide to life. Renascent Islam applied to the westernised societies of the twentieth century the condemnation *jahiliyya* (period of ignorance and barbarism) used by the Prophet for conditions preceding his seventh century ministry. Israel's victories over the Arabs in 1967 and 1973 confirmed, in Islamic eyes, the need for a return to traditional ways; the new wealth of the Arab oil states helped to finance the movement and the terrorism that furthered it. Khomeini, relying on the superior legitimacy of the religious establishment in Iran, overthrew the Shah. In the Gulf War Saddam Hussein abandoned, for the time at least, the policy of suppressing Islamic movements and raised the green banner of the Prophet, calling for a Holy War. The largest transnational Islamic organisation, the *Jama'at al Tabligh* (Society for the Propagation of Islam) dismisses twelve centuries of history. It rejects everything in the legal organisation of society not authorised in the sacred writings of Islam as sin and corruption. Its members re-organise their lives in detailed emulation of Mohammed's behaviour, dressing in white as the Prophet did and even wearing a turban of the same size.

A corresponding fundamentalism in contemporary Judaism, finding organisational form mainly as *Gush Emunim* (the Bloc of the Faithful) increases the bitterness of the struggles between Israel and Islamic states. Although Israel has no one model to fill the role of Mohammed, Gush Emunim operates in the same spirit as the Tabligh: it holds to the Covenant God (in Genesis) made with the Jews, working against the secularist and socialistic tendencies of Zionism for a thoroughgoing return to traditional Judaism. Claiming divine authority for the occupation of Palestine, it tries to replace the legalistic concept of Israel as a state by the biblical idea of the Land

of Israel. The 'return movement' in Israel parallels the Tabligh, demanding a return to full observation of Judaism's 613 religious prohibitions and obligations; these govern both trivial bodily functions and the organisation of life in society. Members of Gush Emunim, looking to Scripture for their justification, belonged to the terrorist movement stopped, just in time, from blowing up buses crowded with Arabs; they had also planned to dynamite the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa mosque.¹

These Islamic and Judaic movements (with others, following similar behaviour patterns, in the Hindu and Sikh religions) appear mainly in the East; this encourages a long-standing tendency to associate not only religion with the East, but also secularism with the West; the following examples come from a recent study by John L. Esposito: 'Western, secular, presuppositions and lifestyles', 'the more Western-oriented and secular elite minority', 'liberal, secularly informed Western intellectuals, policymakers and experts'.² With the West commonly seen as advanced and the Islamic countries as backward or (more politely) developing, this suggests that we can expect the Muslim countries to become secular states themselves. With a society becoming increasingly integrated this may seem reasonable enough, but before accepting it we need to ask what route the West has in fact been following. *Can* we fairly describe it, without massive qualification, as secular?

III

In 1910 some American Protestant theologians published a series of twelve volumes opposing the modernism of the time. It carried the title *The Fundamentals*, but only in the 1920s (the *Shorter Oxford* gives 1923) did 'fundamentalism' emerge. A recent study defines the movement now known by this name primarily by its literal reading of the Bible, taken to be the absolutely infallible expression of Divine Truth. This means acceptance of all its ethical, moral, social and political commandments and injunctions, together with belief in the divinity of Christ, his life, death and physical resurrection, and the effective action of these in the salvation of souls.³

This list of features contains nothing unfamiliar, and indeed the movement disclaims originality, urging return to an assumed previous condition. Yet from its first appearance it did (as its use of a new term implies) display at least one novel feature. From the time Christianity spread over Europe until the latter part of the eighteenth century the

biblical account held the field virtually unchallenged, complete with divine creation of all living creatures, each after its kind. When the Inquisition and its Protestant near-equivalents condemned heretics to the stake they were doing no more than suppress a few dissidents. Even in the late nineteenth century, when Disraeli declared himself 'on the side of the angels' (he would rather be descended from them than ascended from, as he put it, monkeys), he spoke from a position of assumed security. Only in this century, with growing respect for science, did the balance of intellectual authority shift, throwing religion onto the defensive, and only then, as a reaction, did aggressive fundamentalism come to the fore.

As Darwinism spread, Christians taking the Bible literally found their beliefs endangered by these newly-met theories and the cosmopolitan, secularist thinking of which they were a part. In the 1920s they began to fight back, especially in America, where xenophobia, anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism became more active, and growth of the Ku Klux Klan accompanied a fresh outburst of 'revival meetings conducted by improbable evangelists from Southern and Western backwaters who banged the drum, pranced about and shouted for that old-time religion'.⁴

In 1925 the authorities of Tennessee charged John Thomas Scopes with having broken the law by teaching (in the words of the indictment) 'that man descended from the lower order of animals'. (Islam and fundamentalist Judaism, too, reject the theory of evolution; Lewis Wolpert, lecturing to a hall full of Islamic Society members found not one of them willing publicly to accept it.⁵ Coca-Cola were obliged to abandon, in Israel, a series of advertisements mentioning it.⁶) There followed the famous trial in which Clarence Darrow, for the successful defence, made a monkey out of William Jennings Bryan, and after that it seemed fundamentalism must disappear. The event disappointed these expectations, the movement going on the greater strength.

It has grown larger and more powerful than sometimes appears, for it effectively includes, along with those acknowledging the name, and other movements of the 'New Christian Right' such as the Moral Majority, Christian Voice and Religious Roundtable,⁷ also the larger numbers supporting evangelicalism. Although these usually prefer to work from below upwards, trying to affect society by way of individual spiritual regeneration rather than vice versa, the difference remains tactical rather than substantive. The influence still being exercised in the USA by evangelicalism, directly political as well as social in the

more general sense, showed up in 1980 when all three presidential candidates declared this allegiance. Evangelicals and fundamentalists hold much the same beliefs and display much the same attitudes, both of them (for example) distrusting liberal Protestantism with its tendency to question the virtues of capitalism. Both set out to bring society back to God, and evangelicals like Billy Graham have to insist on the difference between themselves and fundamentalists to prevent it being lost to sight. One investigator reports the use of 'evangelical' as a synonym for 'fundamentalist'⁸ and Charismatics, Pentecostals and other enthusiasts are in much the same position. In any but a narrow academic sense these sects count among the fundamentalists. A Gallup Poll of 1986 reported 58 million Americans calling themselves evangelicals (i.e. fundamentalists) and Jerry Falwell (founder of the Moral Majority and adviser to President Reagan) using phrases such as 'born-again Christians', 'religious promoralists' and 'idealistic moralists' claimed 84% of the American people for the movement.

Although such figures invite scepticism, the movement is clearly both large and powerful. Recent developments, rather than sidelining fundamentalism, suggest it may soon achieve even greater influence; Jerry Falwell has founded Liberty University, specialising in study of radio, television and the other mass media. This follows up past successes, for American fundamentalism has gained its present numbers and influence mainly by skilful use of modern propaganda techniques.

Charles Finney and Dwight Moody in the late nineteenth century, followed by Billy Sunday in the early twentieth, developed the use of mass meetings under canvas, with Billy Graham going on to use the popular press, radio and television. Jim Bakker, Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts and others joined in later. They came to pull in many millions of dollars annually, and their warnings of the skill and cunning of the Tempter have proved only too well founded. As Jim Bakker's embezzling came to light his slogan PTL, originally an acronym for 'Praise the Lord!', was re-interpreted as 'Pass the Loot!', and when an attractive church secretary admitted receiving some of the cash in return for highly personal services, the reading changed again to 'Pay the Lady!'. He wound up with a sentence of 45 years. Jimmy Swaggart and Oral Roberts also displayed too warm an appreciation of worldly and fleshly pleasures. The press made the most of the scandals, and televangelism ceased to cover its expenses. History does not suggest that these disclosures will have much lasting effect, for such behaviour

comes as no novelty. Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, a drunken, lying lecher, was drawn from the life with many a ranting Southern Bible-puncher for model. American fundamentalism reached its high point after that exposure, and we have to be prepared for it to rise again. Indeed it continues to be active now; the anti-abortion movement cites the Fifth Commandment against the taking of life, and creationism fights evolutionary theory.

IV

The strength of fundamentalism lies less in its leaders than in their congregations, and neither Lewis's writings nor the deficiencies of early or late preachers did much more to these than discourage them for the time being. Fundamentalist preaching, whether in tent or studio, produces its effect by revealing rather than creating the prevalence of fundamentalist attitudes. On the rather rare occasions when anarchists, socialists, freethinkers, atheists or the like appear on radio or television, the response does not suggest that greater exposure, improved technique or more charismatic expositors would win them comparable support.

These responses from the people of the leading Western country mean that we cannot sensibly describe contemporary Western society as simply secular. The state organisations, narrowly defined, may be so but the countries, taken in any more general sense, continue to be subject to substantial religious influences. After ten thousand years of change religious people continue to outnumber the anti-religious, and religious influences to outweigh atheistic and anarchistic ones.

Any given instance of fundamentalism presents a particular set of ideas, and one set often clashes with another, as when Muslims resent Christian ideas about 'Mahound'. Fundamentalism does not find its full definition in any particular beliefs; it lies in form rather than content, in an attitude comprising an unshakeable certainty of rightness, together with an overbearing assertiveness that refuses toleration or compromise, insisting on the original form of a religion (or what is believed to be such). It appears when and where an authoritarian religion finds itself under attack. In the past this has usually happened locally, with one religion threatening another, but now on a larger scale.

Secularism, also, has now gained firm establishment. Its extension over the civilised world, along with freethought, agnosticism and atheism, tendencies felt by religious people to threaten their

ideological security, has produced a correspondingly widespread reaction, religion responding with fundamentalism rather as the body produces fever in defending itself against infection. Now each of the great authoritarian religions has its militant arm joining battle with rationalism, and the course of events so far offers no assurance of a rationalist victory. The more recent entrants – secularism, atheism, anarchism and others – have not ousted the earlier tendencies and we have no good reason for expecting them to do so. Rather does the course of events to this point in history suggest a continuance of authoritarian religion, fundamentalism serving as its actively defensive organ, with the tendencies that have emerged more recently, anarchism among them, providing criticism, restraint and modification rather than offering any viable alternative.

I have brought forward more than one account of fundamentalism; none of these depart at all radically from generally-accepted ideas, and I do not now propose to reject any of them. They do not completely agree with each other, but a social movement appearing in separate parts of the world, in widely different social contexts, engaging millions of people and persisting over decades, cannot sensibly be summed up in one of the snappy dictionary definitions that serve to distinguish a square from a triangle. We do, however, need to add something. Although each of the above descriptions has value, they all omit a significant feature, namely *belief in the supreme value of authority*. Rather than attempt to work out ultimate objectives for themselves, or even to survey those offered and make a rational choice between them, fundamentalists accept the ones laid down in their familiar scriptures, believing them to have been set by deity. Taking their stand on these, they fight from that position.

This pattern of behaviour appears in politics as well as religion. Willing submission to authority enables the state to operate, and high valuation of it marks the totalitarian states, with their near-deification of the leader. Fundamentalism appears when a religious community feels itself or its constituent beliefs under attack, totalitarianism in the states that are (or whose people believe them to be) under threat. Only states feeling themselves secure can afford the luxury of democracy, and when democratic state feels itself endangered, as Britain did in 1914 and again in 1939, it restricts the normal liberties, moving towards the totalitarian condition. Totalitarianism and fundamentalism present the same behaviour pattern in, respectively, the political and religious fields. These tendencies (or these two forms of the one tendency) have persisted through all the changes of

recorded history; the ancient empires (at least when at war) already displayed both of them. Fundamentalism is neither a new creation (except in the trivial sense that circumstances, and responses to them, vary from moment to moment) nor even a return; rather an extension onto the world stage of something formerly localised. The tendencies and movements that have become established in the course of later history – freethought, agnosticism, atheism, democracy, socialism, communism, anarchism and others – have each of them in turn enjoyed an initial period of rapid growth. This misleads the members into expecting the movement to take over the society, but the impetus does not last. Once the people who had been independently moving towards the new way of thinking have been taken up, the new movement settles into place, able to maintain itself but not to displace its competitors or the overriding authority.

An increasingly complex structure develops, and we now have a society that, in the most advanced states, has shown itself capable of dynamic stability, a continuing conditions of tension between reformist and revolutionary movements on the one hand and traditionalist tendencies on the other. This has not excluded change in the past – working people in the West do not now live under the same conditions as in Bakunin's time – and we have no good reason for expecting it to do so in future. It does, however, affect the probable course of future events. It suggests a persistence of the established social and religious base, with its tendency (more or less fully realised in practice according to conditions) towards fundamentalism and totalitarianism. The indications are that anarchism will have to reckon with this as a continuing feature of its social movement.

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Colin Ward

Fundamentalism

Talk at the Conway Hall, London, on Saturday 22nd October 1994, 2pm.

When I was asked by the Anarchist Research Group to talk here today, I resolved to tackle a difficult subject which we tend to ignore because it doesn't fit our view of the world but which is going to affect us all, anarchists and non-anarchists, increasingly: the rise at the end of the twentieth century of religious fundamentalism.

Among the classical anarchists, the characteristic statement on religion came from the most widely-circulated work of the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, *God and the State*. It is a fragment, written in 1871, in which he deploras the fact that belief in God still survived among the people, especially, as he put it, 'in the rural districts, where it is more widespread than among the proletariat of the cities'.¹

He thought this faith in religion was all too natural, since all governments profited from the ignorance of the people as one of the essential conditions of their own power, while weighed down by labour, deprived of leisure and of intellectual intercourse, the people sought an escape. Bakunin claimed that there were three methods of escape from the miseries of life, two of them illusory and one real. The first two were the bottle and the church, 'debauchery of the body or debauchery of the mind; the third is social revolution'.

Social revolution, Bakunin believed, 'will be much more potent than all the theological propagandism of the freethinkers to destroy to their last vestige the religious beliefs and dissolute habits of the people, beliefs and habits much more intimately connected than is generally supposed'.

Bakunin then turned to the powerful, dominant classes in society who, while too worldly-wise to be believers themselves, 'must at least make a semblance of believing' because the simple faith of the people was a useful factor in keeping them down.

Finally, in this particular statement of his attitudes, Bakunin turns to those propagandists for religion who, when you challenge them on any particular absurdity in their dogma relating to miracles, virgin births or resurrection, loftily explain that they are to be understood

as beautiful myths rather than literal truths and that *we* are to be pitied for our prosaic questions rather than *them* for propagating mythology as truth.

Bakunin's opinions were much the same as those of his adversary Karl Marx, one of whose best-known phrases was his description of religion as the opium of the people. And the historians of ideas would categorise liberalism, socialism, communism and anarchism as products of the period known as the Enlightenment, the result of the Age of Reason, the ferment of ideas and the spirit of enquiry between the English Revolution of the 1640s and the American and French revolutions of the 1770s and 1780s.

In parochial English terms, one slow, grudgingly-conceded result of the Enlightenment was religious toleration. We tend to forget that England has a state church, founded because of a row that Henry VIII had with the Pope over one of his divorces. It claimed its martyrs as the long history of suppression of dissenters reminds us, as does the continual struggle for religious freedom. It wasn't until 1858 that legal disabilities were lifted from believing Jews and not until 1871 that people who could not subscribe to the 39 Articles of the Church of England were admitted to the ancient universities. The Church of England may be a joke to us and the majority of British people, but it is a reminder of an important social and political fact. One result of the Enlightenment was that the people who wrote the constitutions of a great many states sought to learn the lessons of history and the horrors of religious wars, and insisted on the absolute separation of religious practices from *public* life. Religion was to be a private affair.

This was true of the founding fathers of the United States of America, whose ancestors had fled religious persecution in Europe, it was true of the French republic and consequently of those countries which with immense loss of life liberated themselves from French imperialism. And it is true of many new republics similarly founded as a result of the collapse of imperialism in the twentieth century. Some key examples are the republics of India, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria or Israel.

Now, all over the world, the secular state is under threat. Secular political regimes in, for example, Turkey, Egypt, Israel or Algeria, are threatened by militant religious movements, and there is a growing fundamentalist threat to the secular constitution of the United States. This isn't what Bakunin or Marx or any other political thinker from the nineteenth century, from John Stuart Mill to Alexis de Tocqueville, predicted.

I am like the rest of them, but I don't have a speculative turn of mind and never ponder over the big philosophical issues that worry some people, like the nature and purpose of human existence. What interest me are the issues that bind us together, like the need for housing, food and the production of goods and services, rather than those that set us apart, like nationalism, tribalism and religion, which seem to depend on geographical accidents and aesthetic choices. Just as there is no point in arguing over the relative merits of Mozart, rock or flamenco, there is nothing to be gained from disputes about the great variety of religions on offer. It is more sensible to stress, in terms of getting on with the art of living together, the principle which many of them have in common and with most of us non-religious people. This is the principle of reciprocity, or 'do as you would be done by', described by Kropotkin as Mutual Aid.

So it never seemed important to me to be involved in anti-religious activities, dismissed by Bakunin as 'the theological propagandism of the freethinkers', and it has always seemed to me to be pointless to solemnly set out arguments intended to prove that God does not exist. I took it for granted that the increasing secularisation of life, reflected in Europe at least by declining attendances in places of worship, would make religion an issue we didn't have to bother about. 'Live and let live' is my attitude, and I would never dream of troubling people who didn't trouble me.

I live in a country which is *not* a secular state, and which actually has a state church, attended by a small minority of the population, and actually has a law of blasphemy. Everyone thought this law was a dead letter, but it was actually invoked a few years ago in a private prosecution by Mrs Mary Whitehouse of the journal *Gay News*, its editor and distributors because of their publication of a poem by James Kirkup. The revelation that we still had such a law led to a demand that, simply out of fairness, it should be *extended* to cover other religious faiths beyond Christianity and the Church of England.

This demand for a new non-discriminatory blasphemy law was supported not only by representatives of that church but by those who claimed to represent Catholics, Jews and Muslims, and could happen, just for lack of political opposition. It was left to Nicolas Walter, in his book on *Blasphemy, Ancient and Modern*, to remind us that such a law 'would still discriminate between religion and other forms of belief' and would 'dramatically increase the power of fanatics to impose their views on the majority and to have them protected from criticism'.²

Plenty of anarchists may think that a more immediate diminution of civil liberties will result from the present government's Criminal Justice Bill, about to become law. This is a calculated attempt to criminalise a wide spread of dissidents including traditional gypsies, travellers, squatters, protesters and demonstrators of every kind. A legislature which can approve so appalling a threat to every kind of non-parliamentary opposition will not hesitate to approve the protection from criticism of religious beliefs of the major kinds.

What makes this a disastrous prospect is that, in our media-managed world where news-worthiness displaces human values, it is always the extreme expression of views that dominates the media. We never hear about the views of those millions of fellow citizens who would feel outraged by anti-religious propaganda but have made their adjustments to secular society. They make a token observance of ancient beliefs, out of respect for their ancestors, for births, marriages and deaths or festive occasions, and fill up the statistics of believers. But they don't make news and, as a result of the media, it is taken for granted that the spokesman for the non-Catholic majority in Northern Ireland is the Reverend Ian Paisley, or that the spokesman for the majority in Israel, a nation-state founded by socialist atheists, was the late Rabbi Meir Kahana, a New Yorker, or the spokesman for the Muslim world was the late Ayatollah Khomeini, or for that matter that the Catholic world shares the opinions of the current Pope. Daily experience confirms that this is not so.

The unexpected and unwelcome change in the religious atmosphere is known as fundamentalism, and arose from a trend in Christian revivalism in the United States after the First World War which insisted on belief in the literal truth of everything in the Bible. The use of the term has spread to describe trends in the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Shinto religions which, to outsiders like us, present similar features. They present a threat, not only to the hard-won concept of the secular state, which anarchists may not feel important, but to the hard-won freedoms of every citizen. Writing in *Freedom* recently, Nicolas Walter urged us to take this threat seriously, pointing out that:

Fundamentalist Christians are trying to suppress the study of evolution and the practice of contraception and abortion in the West and the Third World. Fundamentalist Jews are trying to incorporate the whole of Palestine into Israel and to impose the *halachah*, the traditional law of Judaism. Fundamentalist Muslims are trying to establish Muslim regimes in all countries with Muslim populations (including Britain) and to impose the

sharia, the traditional law of Islam. And fundamentalists of all faiths are using assassination and terror all over the world to suppress freedom of discussion of such matters.³

This is an absolute tragedy for that majority of citizens in any country who are simply concerned with the ordinary business of living, feeding a family and enjoying the ordinary pleasures of life, as well as for those who aspire to make life better through community action and social justice. Governmental suppression of religion never works. The Soviet Union witnessed seventy years of state hostility, sometimes violent and sometimes benign, to religious activity. When the regime collapsed, there was a huge revival of the Orthodox faith and a happy hunting ground for American Protestant evangelism. In Soviet Central Asia, one historian suggests that 'the local elites, attached to Islamic customs and recognising a degree of affinity between Islamic and socialist values, cheated on their anti-religious activities as assiduously as they faked their cotton-production figures. Gatherings of old men reading the Koran would be described to zealots of the Society for Scientific Atheism as meetings of Great Patriotic War veterans'.⁴ In Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, who also shared Bakunin's views on religion, embarked on a dictatorial policy of what we might call 'de-Islamification'. His current successors are prevented from presenting a democratic facade, precisely because of the threat of the return of religion. On a different time-scale, Iran, where the Shah was a ruthless Westerniser, was succeeded by a regime which no one predicted. Egypt and Algeria are torn apart between rival elites of the secular or religious state. In the United States the most powerful of all political lobbies is that of the Christian Coalition with a growing influence in the Republican Party. It denies any responsibility for the murder of the last doctor who dared to perform an abortion in the American South.

It is both tragic and unexpected that among all the other issues facing us, we, who thought that wars of religion belonged to the past, have to confront issues of the recognition of difference while we move on to the issues which unite, rather than divide us. My own approach is that of the anarchist propagandist Rudolf Rocker, ninety years ago in the Jewish community of Whitechapel. Some secularist allies had chosen the propaganda of provocative behaviour on Sabbath mornings outside the synagogue in Brick Lane. Asked his opinion, Rocker replied that the place for believers was the house of worship, and the place for non-believers was the radical meeting.⁵ The

anecdote has resonances. For the same building that has seen many faiths come and go, as a Huguenot church, a dissenting meeting-house and a Jewish synagogue, is now a mosque. And anyone harassing the emerging worshippers today is not a secularist Bangladeshi but an English racist, menacing and heavy, and bent on instilling fear and making trouble. The scene has changed.

It has changed for me too. On the rare occasions when I have thought about this issue I have agreed with the view expressed about, for example, the BJP Party in India who succeeded in spreading communal violence into parts of the Punjab where different communities had previously lived in harmony together, that the name of the disease is not fundamentalism but ethnic nationalism. This view fits other parts of the world like Northern Ireland. And in such instances, as in many parts of the Islamic world, we can choose to put the blame on the endless humiliations and devaluations of the local culture inflicted by Western imperialism. Edward Said, for example, claims that:

The fear and terror induced by the overscale images of 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism' – call them the figures of an international or transnational imagery made up of foreign devils – hastens the individual's subordination to the dominant norms of the moment. This is as true in the new post-colonial societies as it is in the West generally and the United States particularly. Thus to oppose the abnormality and extremism embedded in terrorism and fundamentalism – my example has only a small degree of parody – is also to uphold the moderation, rationality, executive centrality of a vaguely designated 'Western' (or otherwise local and patriotically assumed) ethos. The irony is that far from endowing the Western ethos with the confidence and secure 'normality' we associate with privilege and rectitude, this dynamic imbues 'us' with a righteous anger and defensiveness in which 'others' are finally seen as enemies, bent on destroying our civilisation and way of life.⁶

To my mind, Said's difficult prose envelopes a big truth. The countries of the Near and Middle East were for centuries subjected to one imperialism or another, their culture ridiculed and patronised and even their boundaries formed by lines drawn on the map by European government and business. They are valued today according to their oil resources or as potential markets, while they are awash with weapons left over from Cold War bribes. The Western secular religion of conspicuous consumption was readily adopted by Eastern rulers, but could offer nothing but frustrated hopes to their poor subjects.

But although Islamic fundamentalism is the version that makes news, other varieties with quite different backgrounds are observable in the West. The best source for the ordinary reader (as opposed to scholars with access to an academic industry called The Fundamentalism Project, with its series of books from the University of Chicago Press) is a book by a French author, Gilles Kepel, with the apt title *The Revenge of God*.⁷

He studies the phenomenon in terms of the three major religions known as 'Abrahamic', Judaism, Christianity and Islam, though he might have extended his study, not only to other old religions but to various new ones. I would have extended it to cover the worldwide trend over the same period to Marketism, the worship of the Market, of which the Thatcherism of the 1980s in Britain is just one reflection, permeating every aspect of our lives. The least observant of us must have noted how, as if by magic, even our language has changed, so that the user of public transport once described as a 'passenger' is now a 'customer' and that what was once 'health care' is now a 'product'. There is a theology at work here, and its universal acceptance is part of our enquiry into fundamentalism.

Kepel's aim is something different. His task is to persuade us that the scene has changed since the days when elderly rationalist anarchists like me formed out view of the world.

He argues that 'The 1970s was a decade of cardinal importance for the relationship between religion and politics, which has changed in unexpected ways during the last quarter of the twentieth century' and that around 1975 the whole process of secularisation went into reverse as 'a new religious approach took shape, aiming no longer at adapting to secular values but at last recovering a sacred foundation for the organisation of society – by changing society if necessary'. These movements, he explains, 'had come into being earlier, but none had attracted a large audience until that time. They had not drawn the masses after them, and their ideals or slogans appeared outdated or retrograde at a time of widespread social optimism. In the postwar period, earthly utopias had triumphed: in Europe, which had emerged from the nightmare of war and destruction and had discovered the horror of the extermination of the Jews, all energies were turned to building new societies that would exorcise the morbid phantasms of the past. The building of socialism in the East and the birth of the consumer society in the West left little room for the expression of ideologies seeking to draw upon religion for the guidelines of the social order. The improved standard of living resulting from the

considerable advances in technology fostered an uncritical belief in progress, so much that "progressiveness" itself became a criterion of value'.

And to remind us that we cannot simply explain the rejection of secular values on the traumas of the post-colonial world, he draws our attention to political realities in America.

'We may recall', he reminds us, 'that in 1976 the fervent Baptist Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States, and deployed his moral and religious convictions in cleansing the American executive of the sin of Watergate. In 1980 his rival, Ronald Reagan, was elected largely because he captured the votes of most of the Evangelical and fundamentalist electors who followed the advice of politico-religious bodies such as the Moral Majority. Created in 1979, this movement aimed at making America ... into a new Jerusalem. There too, the religious movements of the 1970s touched all levels of society; they were not confined to the rural, conservative southern states, but attracted members both from the black and Hispanic minorities and from the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, and developed a huge preaching and financing network thanks to their exceptional mastery of television and the most sophisticated forms of communication. Under Jimmy Carter, and above all Ronald Reagan, some of them had easy access to the White House and the highest political circles; they used it to promote their vision of a society founded on the observance of "Christian values" – from school prayers to the prohibition of abortion'.

Kepel was writing in 1991, and since then what is now called the Christian Coalition now dominates the Republican Party in the United States and this summer all the Republican senators have signed a letter to the Democratic president Clinton demanding that he should 'repudiate' the attack on the religious Right as 'bigotry'.⁸ He knows that his party too depends upon the organised Christian vote and will have to employ all the skills of his media advisors to learn how best to accede to this demand. The point to note is that anyone who wants to protect the secular state from religious propagandists is a bigot, while those who you or I would regard as bigots claim the protection of the state in imposing their attitudes on the rest of us.

The secular state of consumerism and the religion of economic growth and free trade will always come to terms with the fundamentalists of a variety of other religions if they provide markets for military equipment, but somehow this kind of economic fundamentalism is not considered as an irrational ideology but as a

law of nature. But in terms of the discussion of those ideologies normally classified as religions, anarchists, with their all-embracing criticism of authority whether that of the state or of capitalism, have been by-passed by the resurgence of religious belief.

Since we know that traditional anti-religious propaganda fails to change people's minds and since we know that enforced attempts to suppress beliefs simply encourage them to spring up again the moment the pressure is relaxed, we (or rather our successors in the next century) have to explore other routes, and we have few ideas about what they are.

One is the obdurate defence of civil liberties and of freedom of expression. Supporters of Amnesty and readers of the journal *Index on Censorship* will know that all over the world this claims its martyrs every day, not only among those bold enough to speak out but among those caught in the crossfire. In fact, of course, every newspaper reader knows this too. But since the media need a new horror to report every day, even our familiarity with the disasters of religious or ethnic nationalism or tribalism tends to obscure the fact that most people have a huge vested interest in simply keeping society going, and don't share the lethal preoccupations of the zealots. In the background of the shocking images on television are the municipal employees dedicated to ordinary public services like the water and power supplies, the fire brigade, ambulance and hospital provision, cleaning up the mess that the ideologists and true believers leave behind. They hadn't heard the news from the market religion of the enlightened West that these things are simply commodities.

This leads me to another approach to the religious revival, which I will call accommodation. No doubt you, like me, have met believers in some religion or other with whom we have one attitude in common, which is of disgust at the world of advertising and public relations that surrounds us, concerned solely with ensnaring us all into consuming more. It might be that rejection of the way in which the culture of contentment of the consuming classes of the rich nations are squandering the world's resources, an issue that links anarchists with the Green movement, also joins people like us to one element in various religious movements. It isn't a matter of puritanical anti-materialism. We all want a society where people are adequately fed, clothed and housed, and plenty of us felt disinclined to conduct theoretical arguments with members of that movement known as Liberation Theology in Latin America or with other believers in other faiths who were impelled to tackle issues that their rulers neglected.

Let me illustrate this from my experience. While uninterested in God, I am interested in housing, so I get asked to present what I see as an anarchist point of view at conferences where the well-housed discuss the problems of the ill-housed. At one of these I found an ally in a woman with vast experience of self-help housing by poor people. She wore the *hijab* or veil and I learned later that this was why she was forbidden to teach about housing at the University of Ankara. There are, of course, neighbouring countries where she would be forbidden to teach unless she was veiled.

This encounter leads me to a further speculation. Perhaps the most effective counter to fundamentalist threats to the liberty of all will be the women's movement. Women are certainly its first victims. In Algeria, schoolgirls were killed in the street for not wearing the veil and in March this year two girls wearing the veil were shot outside their school. Aicha Lemsine comments in the current issue of *Index on Censorship*.

It was the first time that girls wearing Islamic dress had been killed. Suddenly it was not only women journalists and writers – 'modern' women – who were being targeted; simply to be a woman was enough. Caught between the 'democratic fundamentalists' and the 'religious fundamentalists', regardless of age, Algerian women became a human shield, the animal brought to slaughter, marked down for the final solution by madmen.

It is evident that the Bible Belt of the United States has vast numbers of women who couldn't wait to escape. And the same must be true of the new more-orthodox-than-ever-before Jewish households in that country or in Britain or in Israel. One of the reasons why there has been such a widespread recent interest in Emma Goldman and her views is because she was an exemplar of women's emancipation from the culture of the *shtetl*, which male theologians have sought to reproduce in New York, London and Jerusalem. The implications of this and its equivalents in other religious traditions, Hinduism and Islam, are spelled out in an absorbing book on women and fundamentalism in Britain called *Refusing Holy Orders*.⁹

Another aspect of the same theme comes from the Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi who made a study of *Women and Islam*, when she was asked to write a preface for an English translation of her book. She concluded:

When I finished writing this book I had come to understand one thing: if women's rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Koran nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply

because those rights conflict with the interests of a male elite. The elite faction is trying to convince us that their egotistical, highly subjective and mediocre view of culture and society has a sacred basis.¹⁰

You will know that for expressing similar views a Bangladeshi doctor and writer, Taslima Nasreen, author of a novel *Shame* about the persecution of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, has been obliged to flee her country and take refuge in Sweden. She was reported as saying that 'It is my belief that politics cannot be based on religion if our women are to be free', and on 4th June this year 'the Bangladeshi government issued an arrest warrant under Article 295a of the Penal Code; the relevant legal clauses refer to "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings" ... It is ironic that the law under which Taslima Nasreen was charged was originally a British law introduced in colonial times to prevent inter-religious strife'.¹¹ It is evident that she was allowed to slip out of the country to avoid a confrontation between the secular government and the fundamentalist lobby. Unlike Fatima Mernissi, who writes from within the Islamic tradition, Taslima Nasreen says:

I dream of a world without religion. Religion gives birth to fundamentalism as surely as the seed gives birth to the tree. We can tear the tree down, but if the seed remains it will produce another tree. While the seed remains, we cannot root out fundamentalism.¹²

These two brave women have quite different views on fundamentalism. I think that the evidence of twentieth century history is that religious impulses can't be rooted out. The power of the state can be used to subdue them but they keep springing up. It is going to be a battle in the next century just to insist that they are a private matter, and that the zealots are prevented by the secular majority in society from imposing their preferences and prejudices on the rest of us, destroying civil society in the process.

This is a muted conclusion, which I reach through watching what is actually happening in the world. I should add that at 3pm tomorrow afternoon in the library in this building, you can hear Nicolas Walter talking, far more analytically than I could, on 'Fundamentals of Fundamentalism'.

Notes

1. Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (1871), London: Freedom Press, 1912, New York: Mother Earth, 1916, New York: Dover, 1970.

2. Nicolas Walter, *Blasphemy, Ancient and Modern*, London: Rationalist Press Association, 1990.
3. Nicolas Walter, letter to *Freedom*, 17th September 1994.
4. Malise Ruthven, 'Phantoms of Ideology' in *Times Literary Supplement*, 19th August 1994 (discussing Vitaly Naumkin (editor), *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia*, Ithaca, 1994).
5. W.J. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, London: Duckworth, 1975.
6. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1993.
7. Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: the Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.
8. C. Vann Woodward, 'What the South Can Teach Us' in *Times Literary Supplement*, 23rd September 1994 (discussing Eugene D. Genovese, *The Southern Tradition*, Harvard University Press, 1994).
9. Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*, London: Virago, 1992.
10. Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: an Historical and Theological Enquiry* (Paris, 1987), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
11. 'Taslina Nasreen: the case for secularism and free speech' in *New Humanist*, August 1994.
12. Interview with Taslima Nasreen (first published in *Der Spiegel*) in *Index on Censorship*, September/October 1994.

I shudder at the thought of religion, I flee the bible as a viper, and revolt at the touch of a Christian, for their tender mercies may next fall upon my head.

G.J. Holyoake

The History of the last trial by jury for Atheism, 1843

Give one who is inwardly a Muslim, a Jew or a Christian, permission to speak what he likes: he will yet utter only narrow-minded stuff.

Max Stirner

The Ego and Its Own, 1845

Nicolas Walter

Fundamentals of Fundamentalism

'Fundamentalism' is used in so many ways, most of them wrong, that it is in danger of losing its meaning. Nicolas Walter argues that it is a useful term which should be used properly.

'Fundamentalism' is a good word, but it has its dangers. Nowadays it is increasingly used in casual conversation and even in serious comment in many ways, most of them wrong, applying to several quite different and even contradictory things. It was first employed in the early twentieth century for a specific position in a particular religious controversy; it was later mainly identified with the traditional Protestant doctrine that the Bible is literally true and is the only source of truth; it has now become widely associated with reactionary extremism in any religion, especially with putting the particular principles of a religion before the general interests of religion (or humanity or morality); and it is frequently used as a mere term of abuse against any form of strong religious conviction. This confusion is unfortunate and unnecessary. 'Fundamentalism' should be used carefully and correctly. Historical fundamentalism is more subtle and more sensible than is usually admitted, and general fundamentalism is a much older and wider phenomenon altogether.

After all, in the strict sense, anyone who follows any coherent system of belief, whether religious or not, is a fundamentalist of some kind. Indeed every system is ultimately based on some fundamentals – axioms of mathematics, or laws of science, or articles of faith, or rules of the game, or whatever – and though there may be disagreement about incidentals there must be agreement about essentials. These essentials, the basic principles of any system, are the fundamentals; the insistence on the principles is fundamentalism; and people who stick to their principles are fundamentalists.

Here I don't want to describe the various current manifestations of religious extremism loosely known as 'fundamentalism' – this has been and is being done well enough elsewhere. I want to get back to basics, and discuss the fundamentals of fundamentalism.

The Fundamentalist Movement

To begin with, the origin of the term is relevant and revealing. The original Fundamentalist Movement was an attempt to reform Christianity. Until the nineteenth century almost every movement for 'reform' in Christianity was a movement for *return* to its beginnings — to get rid of the errors of the present and get back to the truths of the past, to Jesus and his first followers: and therefore to the Bible. The latter point arises because everything known about Jesus and his first followers is in the Christian Bible, which acquired the same status as the Jewish Bible which they used.

This pattern is true of the most apparently revolutionary departures from 'orthodoxy'. The radical heretics of the Middle Ages and the radical Protestants of the Reformation were all trying in various ways to recover the roots of Christianity and put into practice particular doctrines taken from the Bible. The Puritans wanted to 'purify' Christianity of the accumulated corruptions of Paganism and Romanism, episcopacy and monarchism. The Quakers wanted to get back from the letter to the spirit, from the Church and clergy to Christ and the Disciples. The Unitarians and the Universalists, who objectively seem to have rejected essential doctrines of Christianity, subjectively sought to return to the essence of the religion and indeed to the text of the Bible. Even the Deists, who objectively appear to have begun the modern assault on all religion, subjectively argued that Christianity would be strengthened by relying on natural reason rather than supernatural faith.

But during the eighteenth century some Deists, although they still respected the person and teaching of Jesus, began to turn against the religion of Christianity itself, and during the nineteenth century many kinds of Christians began to doubt or even reject basic Christian doctrines. This is the context of Fundamentalism.

The movement which first called itself Fundamentalist and launched the term Fundamentalism was an attempt among White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the Northern part of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century to reform their religion. From the time that Protestant Dissenters began to settle in North America in the sixteenth century, considerable influence was exerted by the Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist denominations, later joined by Methodist and other groups — all of which originated from particular attempts at reform and return. Religious 'Awakenings' and 'Revivals' were a common feature of American life from the

eighteenth to the twentieth century, and the United States was one of the most religious countries in the world, despite the unorthodoxy of the Founding Fathers and the constitutional separation between Church and State. Almost all the leading people in American public life were active members of Protestant congregations, and almost no one dared to attack religious assumptions openly.

But during the late nineteenth century the position of the Protestant denominations was seriously eroded by the advent of millions of immigrants from Europe (many of them Catholic or Jewish), by the appearance of dozens of new neo-Christian and post-Christian sects (Adventists and Pentecostals, Mormons and Christian Scientists), and by the steady advance of secularisation. The movements known as Latitudinarianism in the Church of England and as Modernism in the Roman Catholic Church were matched by similar developments in the American Churches, and the traditional power of the conservatives was threatened by the spread of what was variously called 'liberalism', 'rationalism' and 'modernism'.

Above all, the ultimate source of Protestantism, the Bible, was confronted by both external and internal challenges. The external challenge came from the growth of science – first the new astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo, which displaced the earth from a special place in the universe, and then the new biology of Darwin and Huxley, which displaced man from a special place on earth. Between them, the scientific views of the universe and the earth, of life and humanity destroyed the biblical doctrines of God's creation of and intervention in the world. The internal challenge consisted of biblical criticism – the treatment of the Jewish and Christian scriptures as human writings like any other. Scholarly research into the text, canon, authorship, dating, composition and meaning of the various books of the Bible struck a series of blows at its authority. The conservatives were less worried about unbelief, which had little appeal for Christians, than about doubt, which affected members and even leaders of their own denominations. There were repeated disputes and even dismissals involving prominent scholars and preachers whose unorthodoxy caused trouble in academic and religious institutions. The conservatives increasingly felt that they had to fight back and get back to the Christianity of Christ.

An important event in the conservative counter-attack was the appearance of *The Fundamentals*. This publication was financed by the Californian oil millionaires Lyman and Milton Stewart, issued from 1910 to 1915 in the form of twelve booklets containing a total

of 90 essays by American and British scholars on various aspects of Christian belief, and circulated in millions of copies to leading Protestants throughout the English-speaking world. At the same time the Presbyterian General Assembly affirmed in 1910 and reaffirmed in 1916 a declaration vindicating five essential doctrines of Christianity – the inerrancy of Scripture, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the substitutionary Atonement of Jesus, the bodily Resurrection of Jesus, and the authenticity of the Miracles of Jesus – in an attempt to settle current arguments in several congregations.

The American involvement in the First World War caused a radical upheaval among conservative Protestants. In public life they had previously been progressive, strongly committed to social work and fairly sympathetic to the Social Gospel. After the war, in the international crisis which was marked by the Russian Revolution and the national crisis which was marked by the Red Scare, the Fundamentalist movement finally emerged. On one hand theological conservatives became political conservatives, and on the other hand theological conservatives joined in founding a multi-denominational movement. The World's Christian Fundamentals Association was formed in 1918 and began to hold public conferences in 1919. The people taking part in this were first described as 'Fundamentalists' by the Baptist leader, Curtis Lee Laws (in his paper the *Watchman-Examiner* on 1 July 1920), and within a year groups began to accept the term and the ideology of the movement became known as 'Fundamentalism'.

What were its 'fundamentals'? The Presbyterian declaration of 1910 and 1916 was adopted – or rather adapted – as what came to be known as the 'Five Points' of Fundamentalism. These actually varied from time to time, and consisted of seven separate issues – the inerrancy of Scripture, the Deity of Jesus, the substitutionary Atonement of Jesus, the Virgin Birth of Jesus, the authenticity of the Miracles of Jesus, the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus, and Second Coming of Jesus. The first was the most important one, from which Protestant Christianity derived; the others were by no means all the true fundamentals of Christianity – those not mentioned because they were taken for granted included the existence of God, the creation of the world and of humanity, the Incarnation and/or Messiahship of Jesus, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Ascension of Jesus, life after death, and salvation or damnation. They were in fact specific issues which happened to be in dispute at that time in the various Protestant denominations in the United States (and to some extent in Britain).

The actual identifying characteristic of the so-called Fundamentalists was the Second Coming (though there were profound disputes about details), but this tended to get lost in the ensuing controversy, though it still has significance today. Contrary to common belief, Fundamentalism is not the same as literalism – the Fundamentalists did not believe in the literal truth of everything in the Bible; their leaders were well-educated and well-informed people who recognised that some things in it were contradictory and realised that these had to be harmonised by imaginative interpretation. What they believed was that the Bible never erred and that all the things in it were true in some sense.

During the early 1920s there was a very public battle between Fundamentalists and their opponents (and also a much less public battle between various kinds of Fundamentalists). The result was ambiguous. On one hand those who held Fundamentalist views had majorities in most Protestant denominations; after all, as many people said, the Fundamentalists were only restating the old-time religion of the Protestant tradition. But on the other hand the majority of Fundamentalists didn't wish to split the denominations on the issue; after all, Protestant tradition also included the practice of mutual toleration, and even the most fundamentalist Fundamentalists couldn't entirely ignore the outside world – for instance, they didn't believe that it was flat!

In the end the dominant factions agreed to disagree, and the militant Fundamentalists established separate denominations or turned to the outside world, or both. Their first aim was to recover the Christian initiative in education, since the public schools were not permitted to teach religion directly because of the constitutional separation of Church and State, and they believed that this was a crucial factor in the decline of Christianity. Their first target was the teaching of evolution in schools, and their method was to pass laws against it in the various states. The climactic event came in 1925, with the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, when Fundamentalism first received major attention from the outside world – and major ridicule. This campaign has continued until the present day, involving the development of a major movement for so-called Creationist Science, and it has been followed by similar campaigns against other targets – pornography, homosexuality, abortion, and so on.

This process has involved frequent ironies. The doctrine of evolution is clearly contrary to the biblical account of creation, but abortion, the most dramatic issue today, is not condemned in the

Bible. The accumulation of wealth and the practice of divorce are among the very few things unequivocally condemned by Jesus, but they are both widespread among Fundamentalists. And there is the awkward issue of the Sabbath or Lord's Day, which has an uncertain place in early Christianity, traditional status in the Protestant tradition, and an uncertain place again in modern Fundamentalism.

During the next half-century the Fundamentalists took an increasing part in politics, eventually forming such organisations as the so-called Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition, which have had a major influence in many aspects of American life. However, it should be noted that many strict Fundamentalists oppose intervention in politics. Nevertheless, the American Fundamentalists provided a model for Christian fundamentalism all over the world, in the shift from theological to ideological conservatism – though they haven't been able to exert the same influence anywhere else, apart from parts of Latin America dominated by Protestant missionaries.

Fundamentalist principles apply just as well in Judaism and Islam as in Christianity, and there have been parallel developments in both religions. The Enlightenment in the European Jewish community during the past two centuries, which led to many Jews abandoning their religion and to those who retained it forming Reform and Liberal congregations, also led to a conservative reaction and the entrenchment of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox congregations who preserved a fundamentalist form of Judaism. Here a political dimension was added by Zionism. The pragmatic need of a persecuted people for a place of refuge became entangled with dogmatic reference to texts more than 2,000 years old, in which their god had 1,000 years before that promised them the land where they had once been and again became a persecuting people. Once more it should be noted that some strict Fundamentalists oppose the state of Israel being formed before the coming of the Messiah. Nevertheless, fundamentalist Judaism in alliance with fundamentalist Zionism has become a formidable force in the Middle East and in several Jewish communities elsewhere.

Islam has suffered from bitter conflicts in doctrine and observance throughout its history, and from time to time and from place to place there have been reform movements parallel to those in Christianity and Judaism, attempting to return to its founder, Muhammad, and its Bible, the Koran. Early movements of this kind were reactions to various forms of corruption among Muslims, but later movements have also been reactions to the influence of the West, political,

economic and intellectual. During the past two centuries they have given rise either to oppressive regimes (as in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Sudan and Iran) or to subversive oppositions (as in Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia and Algeria). During the past few decades this phenomenon has been described as fundamentalist, since it shares several obvious features with Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, and during the past few years its spread into Western countries has brought it literally home.

The present situation is that Christian, Jewish and Muslim fundamentalists present considerable dangers to many parts of the world, not so much because of their beliefs as because of their behaviour – their aggressive and intolerant attempts to force their rigid doctrines not only on followers of their own religions but on the populations around them. Christian fundamentalists are trying to ban the teaching of evolution in schools and the legal practice of abortion, and are prepared to use violence to gain these ends. Jewish fundamentalists are trying to conquer the whole of ancient Israel for modern Israel and to impose traditional Jewish law throughout the country, and are prepared to go to war to gain these ends. Muslim fundamentalists are trying to seize power wherever there are Muslim populations – including the minority populations in the West – and to impose traditional Islamic law throughout all of the countries concerned, and are also prepared to go to war.

Nevertheless, these various forms of fundamentalism are not necessarily bad. It may be a good thing for people who call themselves Jews or Christians or Muslims (or anything else) to take their beliefs seriously, to stick to their principles, to say what they think, and to do what they say. At least you know where you are with them. It is easy to sympathise with God's rebuke to the Laodicean Church in the Revelation of St John the Divine: 'Because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth!' The fundamentalists in all religions are not necessarily fanatics or terrorists; they are also saints and scholars, monks and hermits, quietists and mystics. Many of the most admirable people in all religions are fundamentalist in their beliefs. And there are many fanatics or terrorists in religions which have no place for fundamentalism in the traditional sense (Hinduism, Buddhism). The test is how the fundamentalism is put into practice.

Religious Fundamentals

Religion is a paradigmatic example of fundamentalism, not only because fundamentalism was historically a religious phenomenon, but because religion is intrinsically inclined to fundamentalism. Every serious religion has its fundamentals – its basic doctrines, its central rituals, its ultimate authority. Take the particular example of the related Semitic religions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam. All three have similar fundamentals in a message or mission from a divine being, revealed to chosen leaders and prophets, recalled in sacred rites, and recorded in sacred writings – the latter above all. In each case there must have been a critical creative period when the writings had not yet been or were still being written or were not yet fully accepted as sacred; but historically and practically these religions are based on their scriptures, to which their doctrines and rituals and all other details are referred.

The creation of these scriptures is a complex business. The Jews who emerged as a distinct people worshipping a single god in Palestine in the first millennium before the Common Era relied on a collection of scriptures written in Hebrew about their relationship with their god. These scriptures were produced by known and unknown people over a long period down to the 1st century BCE, but were all eventually assumed to have been inspired or actually transmitted by God.

The first Christians who appeared in Palestine in the first century of the Common Era were Jews who worshipped the Jewish God and accepted the Jewish scriptures (using the Greek version known as the Septuagint), but interpreted them in a special way to mean that their founder Jesus was God's 'anointed' (Hebrew *Messiah*, Greek *Christ*). The later Christians, who followed during the 1st and 2nd centuries, seceded from the Jewish community and added new scriptures of their own, which were written by various known and unknown authors over a period of about a century in Greek and collectively known as the New Testament (or New Covenant). The Jewish scriptures then became known by Christians as the Old Testament, and the two collections put together were known as the Bible (Greek *biblia*, books). All these writings were eventually assumed to have been inspired or directly transmitted by God.

The first Muslims who appeared in Mecca in the seventh century CE were Arabs who considered themselves to be successors of both Jews and Christians but followed the new prophet Muhammad. They took seriously some of the Jewish and Christian scriptures but

produced their own new scriptures – a collection produced by a single author over a short period. The Koran (Arabic *Quran*, recitation) was believed to have been revealed to Muhammad over the last twenty years of his life (612 to 632 CE) by the archangel Gabriel from the actual word of God preserved in Heaven, and to have been written down in Arabic by scribes from Muhammad's recitation. (There was an intriguing if invidious echo of this story twelve centuries later, in the Mormon story that the Book of Mormon was revealed by the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith and transcribed by scribes at his dictation from gold plates in 1827.)

All these scriptures were given divine status, but they all raise serious questions of authority and authorship, text and canon, exposition and interpretation. Authority depends on authorship, and here almost all scriptures have been called into question. Most of them are attributed to named authors, but few of these attributions can be safely accepted, and almost nothing is known about any of the attributees. The texts (the actual wording of the books) were generally fixed at a relatively early stage, but they all contain many insoluble problems, and the canons (the contents of the collections of books) generally took much longer. In the case of the Christian Bible, the canons of both parts were not settled for several centuries.

One problem was that the Jewish and Christian collections each contained several writings with uncertain status, some of which were included and excluded from the canons by various people at various times. Some were eventually excluded from the Jewish canon because they were not in Hebrew, but some of these had already been included in the Septuagint and were therefore included in the Christian Old Testament, and are still accepted by the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, but were later rejected by the Protestants. These used to be called Apocryphal (Greek 'hidden'), but this has a pejorative meaning of false, and they are nowadays called Deuterocanonical (second canon), which makes them all right.

When both text and canon have been settled, however, scriptures still have to be expounded and interpreted by experts – Jewish rabbis or Christian priests or Muslim mullahs – and they have been understood in various ways, literally or allegorically, morally or politically, practically or mystically. Commentaries on the scriptures are nearly as old as the scriptures, have been much longer than the scriptures, and are still appearing.

Moreover the scriptures were not sufficient, and subsidiary writings were produced – for Jews the Talmud, for Christians the writings of

the 'Fathers' from the first to the eighth century and later the 'Doctors' from the fourth to the thirteenth century, and for Muslims the Hadith or traditions about the life and teaching of Muhammad and his Companions. There came divergent traditions of various denominations and congregations and different systems of law to regulate daily life – the Halakhah of the Jews, the Canon Law of the Christians, the Sharia of the Muslims.

Even with scriptures and interpretations and commentaries and laws, there may still be problems over certain issues. The early Christians had great difficulty with the doctrine of the Trinity – the nature of the 'substance' of God and the relationship of the three 'persons' of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, in the fourth century, these questions were discussed at a series of Ecumenical Councils called by the Emperor in Constantinople, held in various places in what is now Turkey, and attended by bishops from all over Christendom during a period lasting several centuries. The decisions of these Councils were accepted by most Christians, and this method of settling issues acquired such a reputation that when there were doctrinal problems in the Western Church towards the end of the Middle Ages there was an abortive movement to give supreme authority to such Councils. But in practice authority among Christians was actually held by the senior bishops of the various Churches, and the Western Church eventually deferred to the bishop of Rome (the Pope).

Roman Catholics objected to the specific points of the twentieth century Fundamentalists because they omitted several fundamentals, above all the defining characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church, the primacy of the Papacy. This was rejected by the Eastern Churches but established in the Western Church by the fifth century. A thousand years later the Pope claimed supreme authority over the whole of Western Europe, and in theory over the whole world (thus in 1493 Alexander VI divided the newly discovered parts of Asia and America between the kings of Spain and Portugal). Rome eventually proclaimed infallibility in matters of faith and morals, including of course the authority over the interpretation of the Bible, the authoritative version of which was not the Hebrew and Greek originals but the Latin translation made by Jerome in the fifth century.

But Papal authority is based on a circular argument, since the justification for the primacy of Rome derives from the Bible. Jesus is said to have said to one of his Disciples: 'Thou art Peter (*Petros*), and

on this rock (*petros*) will I build my church' (Matthew 16:18). It was argued that this gave authority not just to Peter over the followers of Jesus but to his successors over all Christians. It was then alleged that Peter went to Rome, acted as leader of the Christians there, was martyred there in about 65 CE, and handed authority on to his successors who became Bishops there; in the Bible Peter is indeed important among the early Christians for a time, but in the Acts of the Apostles he loses crucial arguments with Paul, returns to Jerusalem, and disappears – the story about Rome was added towards the end of the 2nd century in the apocryphal Acts of Peter, and has no biblical authority at all.

Finally, all three religions developed short and comprehensible statements of faith. For Jews there is the Shema: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one.' For Muslims there is the Shahada: 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.' For Christians there is a series of Creeds. The earliest surviving creed was adopted at the Council of Nicaea in 325, and is therefore known as the Nicene Creed (though it was revised at the Council of Chalcedon in 451). The most widely used Creed in the Western Church was adopted in Rome in the fifth century, attributed to the Apostles in the first century, and therefore known as the Apostles' Creed. The most comprehensive of all was the Athanasian Creed, expounding the doctrine associated with Athanasius, the dominant theologian of the fourth century, which was adopted in the West in the sixth century.

The later reform movements within Christianity produced new statements of the particular doctrines of the various sects which arose and survived. The Lutheran doctrine of the German Protestants was expressed in the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (revised in 1552). The Calvinist doctrine of the French Swiss Protestants was expressed in the Geneva Confession of 1537, and of their French brethren (the Huguenots) in the Gallican Confession of 1559 (revised in 1571). The Anglican doctrine of the Church of England when it broke away from Rome under the Tudor monarchs was expressed in a series of statements made jointly by the Church and the Crown, from the Ten Articles of 1536 and Six Articles of 1539 to the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563-71. The Congregationalist doctrine of the English Independents was expressed in the London Confession of 1561. The Calvinist doctrine of the British Presbyterians was expressed in the Westminster Confession, adopted by the English in 1643 and by the Scots in 1647. The doctrine of the English Baptists was expressed in Confessions of 1646 and 1677. The Quaker doctrine of the Society

of Friends was expressed in the Chief Principles written by Robert Barclay in 1678.

In the Counter-Reformation – the official reaction of the Roman Catholics to the Protestant Reformation – the traditional doctrines of the Western Church were confirmed in the Profession of Faith of the Council of Trent in 1564 (slightly revised in 1877, following the first Vatican Council in 1871). The similar reaction of the Roman Catholics to the growth of scepticism three centuries later led to a negative statement of faith – the definition of doctrines which should not be believed – in the Syllabus of Errors issued by Pius IX in 1864.

But even then, more is still needed, and is provided in the various Catechisms through which believers are instructed in their beliefs. The best-known Catechisms in the English-speaking world are the Catechism of the Anglicans (in the Book of Common Prayer) and the Longer and Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterians (the Shorter is by no means short!). The latest version of the Roman Catholic Catechism, which has just been issued, is several hundred pages long.

All these various writings have provided varying authorities of these various religions and denominations. They all depend on the original scriptures, and of course these depend first on the people who authored them and then on the people who authorised and authorise them. Even in religions where the final authority lies not in scripture but in tradition or in position (such as Hinduism and Buddhism), the same circular arguments apply and the same questions arise – who gives authority to the authorities, and what is the fundamental fundamental? In every case the line is circular, and fundamentalism is in danger of disappearing up its own fundament.

Non-religious fundamentals

The elaborate structure of religious fundamentalism has obvious parallels outside religion. Social and political ideologies also rest on basic principles, which may themselves be based on written authorities, and which may be the occasion of serious divisions. All movements tend to split over disagreements about means. Moderates and militants may be found throughout history – in British history between the Presbyterians and Independents of the Commonwealth, ‘Moral Force’ and ‘Physical Force’ Chartists, Suffragists and Suffragettes, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Committee of 100, and so on. But movements also tend to split over disagreements about ends. Pragmatists and dogmatists, possibilists

and impossibilists, realists and fundamentalists may also be found throughout history.

There are several interesting examples around us right now. The Greens, who have been politically active since the 1970s, split during the 1980s into factions actually called 'realists' and 'fundamentalists', and the movements for equality between sexes or between sexual preferences and for animal rights or disability rights are falling into the same pattern.

But non-religious fundamentalism is more prevalent altogether. In Britain, for example, Conservatism derived from the policy of the Tories, which was based on devotion to the established Church (with Catholic tendencies) and the established Monarchy (with Jacobite tendencies), which was expressed by various writings from Filmer and Swift to Burke and Disraeli, and which turned into devotion to the existing social and economic system (whatever it was) – until the 1970s. Liberalism derived from the policy of the Whigs, which was based on the constitutional compromise of the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, and was expressed in various writings from Locke and Montesquieu to Paine and Mill. Liberalism was later extended to America in the Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the Constitution of 1789 (with its Amendments). It returned to Europe during the French Revolution, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 and then of 1793, in the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. It was extended to the other half of humanity by Olympe de Gouges in the Declaration of Rights of Women and Citizenesses of 1791. Liberalism has spread all over the world through international conventions (Hague, Geneva, and so on) and organisations – the League of Nations after the First World War, and the United Nations after the Second World War – and was definitively expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

Socialists also have their fundamentals, varying much like those of Christian denominations, expressed in the writings of individuals, resolutions of congresses, and constitutions of parties. Indeed Marxism has a scriptural and doctrinal history strikingly similar to that of Christianity, though much more compressed: the gospels of the founders, the epistles of the missionaries, the apocalypses of the leaders, the commentaries of the scholars, the parties and internationals, the congresses and constitutions, and then the sects and purges, schisms and heresies, crusades and inquisitions, show trials and autos da fé. The writings of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Trotsky and Mao have been given almost biblical or talmudic

status at times, and the crowds waving Mao's *Little Red Book* strongly resemble those waving the Koran.

Moderate Socialists have never been so fundamentalist, but they have had the resolutions of the First and Second Internationals, and the constitutions and resolutions of the national parties. Our own dear Labour Party has the constitution of 1918 with its Clause 4, the famous fundamental which is often quoted in principle but never followed in practice – no Labour Government has seriously proposed to establish common ownership and popular administration of anything, let alone the means of production, distribution and exchange – and the resolutions of the Annual Conferences, which are just as consistently ignored. (No wonder the Church of England now seems to be the Labour rather than the Conservative Party at prayer!)

There are individual oddities. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has maintained its objects unchanged for 90 years in a remarkable reflection of the fundamentalist Protestants – and it is the only political party to make atheism a condition of membership. The Solidarity group, which was active from the 1960s to the 1980s, unconsciously reflected the Roman Catholics by producing both a positive and a negative statement of belief – *As We See It* and then *As We Don't See It*.

Anarchists have fundamentals of a kind – the writings of the founders, and then for collectivists and communists the resolutions of the founding international congresses from St Imier in 1872 to Amsterdam in 1907, and some later ones. But anarchists – even more than other socialists – don't know much of their history, don't read much of their writers, and don't care much for their so-called leaders. The divisions between anarchists have generally been between types (individualism and communism) or over methods (violence or non-violence). Fundamentalist anarchists, who take anarchism seriously and mean what they say, have little choice but to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous authority or to take arms, and tend to become drop-outs or outlaws.

However, all left-wing ideologies share a quite different and more dominant form of fundamentalism, based not on the positive authority of any writing or leader or party, but on a set of almost instinctive negative principles – the rejection of such things as wealth, ambition, success, responsibility, tradition, family, romance, beauty, tolerance, humour, gentleness, leisure, pleasure and truthfulness. Such fundamentalism is most familiar among the many varieties of

Marxism, but it has also been seen in other left-wing movements for two centuries, and it is not unknown in anarchism.

Even the ideologies which are most strongly opposed both to fundamentalism in theory and to 'actually existing' fundamentalism have their distinct fundamentals and definite fundamentalist tendencies. Science in theory may reject fundamentals, but scientists in practice depend on some assumptions without which they couldn't operate – the insistence on naturalism and the rejection of supernaturalism, the uniformity of nature and the repeatability of experiments, the possibility of either verification or falsification of hypotheses, and so on. Traditional scepticism is based on the assumption that everything can be doubted, except this assumption. Modern 'skepticism' is based on the assumption that no events are paranormal. Agnosticism, which rejects dogmatic assumptions, is based on the dogmatic assumption that so-called 'ultimate questions' – the existence of God, the origin and fate of the universe, the origin and meaning of life, the freedom of the will, the survival of death – cannot be answered. Rationalism is based on the assumption that everything should be subjected to reason – except this assumption, in pure rationalism; including this assumption, in critical rationalism. Atheism is based on the assumption that there are no divine or superhuman beings. Secularism is based on the assumption that this is the only world and the only life. Ethicism (the ideology of the ethical movement a century ago) was based on the assumption that good has objective existence. Humanism is based on the assumption that all human beings are ends in themselves. In each case, whatever the theory, in practice the ideology can't work without its fundamentals, and no evidence could be offered to convince the respective fundamentalists that they are wrong.

But again, such fundamentalism is not necessarily a bad thing. However long the lever we use to move the world, we need a firm fulcrum. We must stand on something, even if only a belief in our own existence, the reliability of our observation and the validity of our reasoning, and the things we stand on are our fundamentals. Rather than repudiate fundamentalism, we should try to understand it, not only in others but in ourselves.

Based on a talk at the South Place Ethical Society on 23rd October 1994.

Demonstrating against and for Freedom

There were some libertarian counter-demonstrations during the large Muslim demonstration in London on Saturday 27th May.

The main demonstration, which was organised by the British Muslim Action Front, consisted of a mass march from Hyde Park to Kennington past the Houses of Parliament. Its aim was the banning of Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, which is alleged to blaspheme against Islam, and the extension of the law of blasphemy to cover Islam as well as Christianity.

There were between ten and twenty thousand militant demonstrators from all over the country (almost all men), there were banners and slogans calling not only for the book to be banned but for Rushdie to be killed, and there was fighting at various places along the route between demonstrators and opponents, between demonstrators and police and between demonstrators and demonstrators. Several people were injured, and more than a hundred were arrested.

One counter-demonstration was held by a group of people, mostly women and mainly from Muslim backgrounds, who are loosely organised as Women Against Fundamentalism and Voices for Salman Rushdie. Both organisations have produced powerful statements calling for the emancipation of the most oppressed members of oppressed groups in the community and for the complete secularisation of society. About forty women were able to hold banners and shout slogans in Parliament Square for a time without being attacked.

Another counter-demonstration, which was held by representatives of the traditional British freethought movement, was much smaller and shorter. Barbara Smoker (for the National Secular Society) and Nicolas Walter (for the Rationalist Press Association) displayed banners at Hyde Park Corner calling for Free Speech. Within a few moments, they were violently attacked by mobs of fanatical young demonstrators, their banners were seized and destroyed, and they were knocked to the ground and kicked and punched until they were rescued by older and less fanatical demonstrators – and, to their surprise, as old libertarians (and former comrades in the Committee of 100), by policemen. Neither of them was badly hurt, and they intend to return to oppose any future demonstrations in favour of banning books or killing authors.

MH in *Freedom*, June 1989

*Barbara Smoker***Empowerment of Intimidation:
Islamic Threats to Freedom**

For its first millennium, Islam was far less objectionable, far more humane and tolerant, than Christendom; but whereas Christianity has, on the whole, gradually become more humanistic in the last three or four centuries, with the development of post-Enlightenment liberal values, Islam has tended to stand still, in conformity with Mohammed's injunction against 'innovation'. Therefore, its prescribed morality is still fixed, in some of its aspects, at a cruel and primitive level. It is essentially authoritarian – not to say totalitarian – with horrific penalties laid down in this world, and worse in the next, for particular transgressions in certain countries where Islam holds sway.

Obviously, this situation does not arise (yet?) in Britain, where no more than one in thirty of the population is Muslim and only a small minority of those are fanatically fundamentalist; but that is not to say that this country is unaffected by Muslim fundamentalism, for it takes only a few thousand cohesive and vociferous fanatics to cause considerable unrest, especially if there has been little awareness of the danger among the population at large. And there seems to be very little awareness in Britain of the fact that the Muslim extremists are totally opposed to humanistic values, especially the concepts of freedom, liberal democracy and individualism – all of which they see as incompatible with divine law.

Having opposed fundamentalist Muslim spokesmen in a number of university debates up and down the country, with audiences comprised almost entirely of Muslim students, I have heard many clear expressions of this hostility to freedom in the name of Islam, both from my platform opponents (often ranting orators brought in as revivalist audience-pullers) and from students in the body of the debating chamber.

Many of the facts and comments that follow are culled either from these university experiences or from the more civilised, though no less disturbing, exchanges in public meetings and day conferences organised by Muslim groups or by various voluntary associations, in which I have also been invited to participate.

Not only do the fundamentalist religious leaders of the Muslim population want the civil rights of individuals in their own community to be handed over to them; they believe that Islamic precepts should be imposed on the whole of society, and are determined to change the laws and institutions of this country accordingly – preferably through proselytisation, but if necessary through intimidation and violence. And even their concept of the right to proselytisation is one-sided, for a Muslim who becomes a convert to any other belief system is regarded by orthodox Muslims as deserving of the death penalty. While they welcome freedom of expression in this country for their own ideology, many of them wish to deny it to any contrary viewpoint.

They insist that Islam is not merely a religion; like communism, it pervades the whole of life. This means that religious liberty for Islam (the only liberty they countenance) is not confined to freedom of worship, but includes their political and economic demands – bestowing on them a god-given right to get the English legal system changed so as to assimilate the Islamic personal law (on legal polygamy, easy divorce for men but not women, inheritance, and so on) which would then have to be upheld for Muslim citizens either in the general law-courts or by referral to their own subsidiary courts.

In India, where this separate Muslim personal law, perpetuated by the British Raj, still prevails, the law-courts have to administer a special code of justice for Muslims, and even have to take account of differences in law between one Islamic sect and another. The result is not only chaos in the courts; more importantly, there is social compartmentalism and a permanent denial of common citizenship, not to mention inter-group strife. In Britain we may have a flawed legal system, but at least it has always aimed at 'equality before the law'.

The demand of the British mullahs and imams (as also of the Hasidic rabbis) for their own religious schools to be subsidised out of the public purse is designed to prevent the children from integrating with the wider community. If families come to settle permanently in Britain, surely they should allow their children to grow up as an integrated part of it?

Fundamentalist Muslims in Britain, however, want the adjustments to be on the other side. Some actually say that they see Britain as the 'first true Islamic state' of the future. For them, there are no true Islamic states – not Iran, not Saudi Arabia, not Pakistan – all of which fail in strict obedience to the Prophet. But Britain – which is obviously seen as a sitting duck – can, with the help of Allah, be the first!

For the present, even the extremist mullahs are content to act one step at a time, taking advantage of the fact that most MPs and other influential people here seem to be under the impression that the fundamentalist Muslim viewpoint represents that of their whole community; whereas the demands of fundamentalists – who are, though the most vociferous, only a small minority of Muslims – are against the true interests of most of the members of that community, particularly those of women and children.

In this country, multi-culturalism is often presented as a policy of liberalism; but it can have just the reverse effect. In the name of multi-culturalism, concessions for particular religious communities are usually negotiated with the most visible and most reactionary members of those communities, while the moderates are ignored and unconsulted.

Though I am as concerned as anybody for the right of minority groups to pursue their own chosen lifestyles – and, indeed, see this as a positive contribution to the varied general culture – I am also concerned for the rights of minorities *within* those minority groups.

What the British race-relationites are unwittingly proposing is that the moderates in each ethnic community be handed over to the tyranny of its fundamentalists, who revel in the empowerment of intimidation.

Appeasement of patriarchal fundamentalists is the unacceptable tolerance of intolerance. Its effect is to condemn those who are under their thumbs to remain there. It is to deny their women the normal civil rights enjoyed by other women in the country, and to subject their young people brought up in Britain (especially the girls) to a conflict of cultures that often leads to the tragedy of mental illness and even to teenage suicide.

As Taslima Nasreen (who was preposterously described by her persecutors as 'an apostate appointed by imperial forces to vilify Islam') declared, before fleeing from her native Bangladesh: 'Everywhere I look I see women being mistreated and their oppressors justified in the name of religion. Is it not my moral responsibility to protest?' And after her arrival in Sweden she is quoted as saying: 'The

fundamentalists want to silence me because I want women to come into their own as free and equal members of society, and also because I want human life to be guided by reason and science, not by superstition and ignorance.'

Men in Muslim communities have it comparatively easy, except that they are more likely to die in terror at the prospect of 'the First Night in the Grave' – when the Angel of Death will confront them with all their life's misdeeds.

There are, of course, vociferous Christian, as well as non-Christian, fundamentalists in this country, but it is the more recent immigrant religions that attract so much official support from complacently misguided liberals.

However, as between these religions, Muslims do have grounds for complaint regarding discrimination under the law: Islam, which does not comprise a single race or 'ethnic' category, is not protected under the Race Relations Act, while Judaism is accepted as an ethnic category as well as a religion, so that Jews complaining of religious abuse or discrimination have, from the first, been able to appeal to the protection of this Act; and, as a result of case law in 1983, Sikhism is likewise recognised as a race as well as a religion, so that Sikhs are able to cite the same law for protection against hurt feelings engendered by attacks on their religious beliefs; while Muslims (as Muslims) have no recourse to the Race Relations Act. This point was made by several Muslim speakers (including lawyers) at a day conference on religion held at the Barbican Centre on 30 June this year under the auspices of the Commission for Racial Equality – which was enjoined, on an overwhelming number of votes, to place a recommendation before the Government that the law be amended so as to insert religion alongside race in the Race Relations Act.

The main emphasis of the present fundamentalist Muslim agenda in this country is, therefore, a legal battle to curb freedom of expression about religion in general and about their own religion in particular.

First, in the wake of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, they tried to get Parliament to extend the reach of the Common Law offence of Blasphemy beyond its present protection of the Established Church, and this attempt has won favour with a number of politicians, churchmen and others who recognise the inequity of this law protecting only one religion. So, indeed, do we in the secular humanist movement – but we see the only acceptable solution to be the complete abolition of the blasphemy law.

Then, on 12 July this year, an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill was introduced in the House of Lords, so as to make it a criminal offence 'to stir up hatred against any group of persons in Great Britain on the ground of their religious beliefs'. Though its parliamentary supporters were members of the Bench of Bishops and evangelical Christian peers, it was manifestly instigated by Muslim lobbyists; for ecumenical solidarity comes to the fore when the main opposition is seen to be freethought and secularism.

On this occasion, the proposed new Clause was defeated: but the issue will not go away. Further attempts to meet the vociferous lobby for legal protection against strong criticism of the Muslim religion are to be made, not only under any future Criminal Justice Bills but also by amendment to the Race Relations Act, and they have plenty of ill-advised support for it in both Houses of Parliament – not to mention their own so grandiosely named 'Muslim Parliament of Great Britain'.

We are told that objective criticism would always be allowed; only ridicule would be ruled out. But ridicule is an important part of free speech. Without it there can be no satire; no robust debate; no open exchange of ideas; no forthright opposition to any ideology, secular or religious.

Besides, even the most polite objective criticism of Islam would be denied to those who, having been reared in the religion, have thought their way out of it – for Islam does not recognise the right to apostasy, which is still a capital offence in parts of the Muslim world.

The idea that giving Muslims recourse to the courts of law against 'blasphemy' would persuade their fundamentalists to give up book-burning, violent demonstrations, arson and incitement to murder, is poor psychology. Every time they lost a law-suit, that would serve as an excuse for violent reaction on the streets.

When (not if – unless the general population, together with our more moderate Muslims, really wake up to the danger and do something about it) any one of the attempts to curtail free speech about religion finally succeeds in becoming law, it will lead to more social friction and considerable litigation, inevitably resulting in censorship – not least, in defensive self-censorship.

Since Islamic extremists are even more legalistic, touchy and litigious than extremists of other religions, no one would dare to mention Allah or Mohammed or the Koran except in the most acquiescent and respectful terms for fear of incurring heavy legal costs – or worse.

Some well-meaning liberals suggest that the novelist Salman Rushdie, who has been compelled to stay in hiding for the past five and a half years for the sake of his life, should have known better than to write his 'offensive' book *The Satanic Verses*, and its publishers ought not to have brought it out. Even now, they say, it should be withdrawn. To be consistent, they would also have to decry the original publication of Paine's *Age of Reason*, Shelley's *Queen Mab*, Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Darwin's *Descent of Man* – all of which were no less offensive to the fundamentalists of their day.

Labour MPs in particular are anxious not to do or say anything that will cost them Islamic votes, on which several of them depend for their parliamentary seats. Moreover, they think that acceding to the initial demands of the Muslim fundamentalists will satisfy them and obviate further confrontation. In fact, however, giving in to fundamentalist demands is like giving in to blackmail or terrorism: the next demand is even bolder; so the more concessions in law that the fundamentalist Muslims obtain the more they will demand.

The Conservative Government is meanwhile passing its own ideological laws that fortuitously play into fundamentalist Muslim hands. For instance, the extension of grant-maintained schools on the principle of 'parental choice' means that public funding for socially divisive Muslim schools (as well as Hasidic, Sikh and other denominational schools), with no restriction on the teaching and practice of religion and usually with complete segregation of the sexes, is well on the way – the first public funding for such schools being forecast for January 1995. Hitherto, applications for publicly funded Muslim schools under voluntary-aided status have been turned down on the ground that other schools in the catchment area have vacancies; whereas applications under the new 'parental choice' provisions with grant-maintained status means that vacancies in other schools will not count unless they themselves are separate Muslim schools.

It should be recognised that children, as well as parents, have rights and that one of the rights of every schoolchild is to have access to the wider community and to ideas at variance with those of the home background.

Because some religions are, under the existing education laws in Britain, allowed their own denominational schools, with public subsidies amounting to 85% of the capital cost and virtually 100% of the running costs, it is argued that all religions (or, at least, all 'major' religions) must, in the name of equity, be given the same privilege. It

is an argument that is certainly difficult to brush aside unless one maintains at the same time that the existing church schools should be phased out; but even if it is politically impossible to remove the subsidies on all such schools in the foreseeable future – as demanded not only by justice but also by sound educational principles – the resulting inequity does not represent a valid argument for extending the same privilege to schools run by other religious groups. ‘Two wrongs cannot make a right’: clearly, the first wrong should be eliminated, but, without waiting for its elimination, the introduction of the second wrong should be thwarted.

It is understandable that Muslim parents feel concerned that the changes made in the education law in the past six years, requiring more school-time in local authority schools to be devoted to religious teaching and assemblies of ‘a broadly Christian character’, mean that their children are being ‘christianised’; but the solution is surely to get these arrogant new laws repealed, not to segregate children according to their religious backgrounds.

School is not the place for religious indoctrination: parents who want their children to learn the tenets of a particular creed can surely carry out this teaching themselves, or entrust it to their own church, chapel, synagogue or mosque – outside school hours. And there is even less justification for making the school a part-time place of worship, which implies consensus as to the existence of a Being to be worshipped.

The National Secular Society, the oldest national freethought body in Britain, has consistently campaigned against the religious stranglehold over education – both the teaching and practice of religion in our state schools and the subsidised provision of separate denominational schools.

In schools run by and for fundamentalists, religion would be sure to colour every subject on the timetable and pervade the whole ethos of the school. One amusing, though disturbing, statement made by a Muslim spokesman on the problem of the requirement to include music (which is not allowed by strict Muslims) in the curriculum of state-subsidised schools was that Muslim schools would be quite willing to include the *theory* of music, in parallel with sex education, which is invariably restricted to theory!

The stifling effect of their own single-sex denominational schools on Muslim (and orthodox Jewish) girls – especially those from fundamentalist families – is greater than for girls attending, say, the average single-sex Catholic school of the present day, who are unlikely to be totally segregated socially from boys and men, both in and out of school, and to be narrowly educated for the roles of submissive wife and self-sacrificing mother.

So far, such 'ghetto' schools are fee-paying and few in number, but as soon the first obtain grant-maintained status there will be a proliferation of them, enabling the fundamentalist mullahs to coerce moderate Muslim parents into using these schools, even though many of them recognise that integrated schooling is in their children's best life interests.

British Muslim fundamentalists have already achieved a number of successes in law – for instance, the Government decided against implementing the recommendations of their own advisory body, the Farm Animal Welfare Council, to put an end to the religious slaughter of animals for meat without pre-stunning (Halal, as well as Kosher, meat). Preference was thus given, in the name of religion, to the cruel practices of the ancient land of Canaan and of seventh century Arabia over our own comparatively humane abattoir regulations. A new law was also passed requiring Halal meat to be provided in all local authority schools with Muslim pupils. We would not, of course, want to impose upon them taboo food, but there is invariably a vegetarian alternative on the menu too.

When a few people, including policemen, were hurt at a feverish anti-Rushdie demonstration in London in May 1989, the Muslim culprits taken into custody were later released without charge. On a Home Office directive?

The reluctance of governments to create martyrs in a sizeable ideological group is understandable enough, but it has surely gone too far when public incitement to murder (even in peak-time television interviews) is overlooked instead of being dealt with as the serious crime it is.

Muslim extremists have recently climbed on to the inter-faith bandwagon of opposition to artificial contraception and abortion, set rolling by the Vatican for the UN conference on population control held in Cairo in September – though a moderate Shiite Ayatollah has argued, on the other side, that Mohammed had nothing specific to say against artificial contraception!

Islamic fundamentalism in Britain is too big for its boots, and the longer it is permitted to continue throwing its weight about the worse it will be for us all. Not only could it undermine the general level of peace and toleration, importing into this country the bloody inter-group strife that is an ever-present feature of many of the Muslim homelands; it could also provoke a disastrous backlash here against the whole Muslim community, and even people of Asian origin in general.

Obituary: George Walford

George Walford died suddenly on Sunday 21st August 1994. He was 75 years old.

A frequent contributor to *Freedom* and *The Raven*, and a regular at the London Anarchist Forum meetings, George was an articulate and original enthusiast for Harold Walsby's theory of ideologies. This puts anarchism at the top of a pyramid whose base is the great majority, 'the ideology of expedience', who have no social ideals at all. His most recent contribution to *The Raven*, 'Through Religion to Anarchism' (issue 25) argues that the first step towards becoming an anarchist is to free oneself from the expedient mass. His last article for *The Raven* will appear in issue 27.

Earlier this year he provoked a long correspondence in *Freedom* by challenging anyone to name a freedom which does not restrict the freedom of others. Strictly speaking there is no such freedom (freedom from coercion restricts the freedom of people to exercise coercion, and so on) and to speak of 'freedom which does not restrict the freedom of others' is to speak loosely, although we know what we mean. George delighted in exposing loose speech and questionable argument, as he showed in his witty collection of essays *Angles on Anarchism*.

For sixteen years he edited and published an entertaining periodical with the alarming title *Ideological Commentary: an Independent Journal of Systematic Ideology*. His family and friends hope to publish a collection of his best articles.

We shall miss him.

Donald Rooum in *Freedom*, 17th September 1994.

Harold Barclay

I

The Roman Catholic Church: the Lamb, the Fox and the Tiger in One Unholy Trinity

It is time that we remind ourselves of the true nature of the Roman Catholic Church. In the present world our attention has been diverted by the threat of narrow minded, authoritarian and anachronistic fundamentalism. At the same time there has been an erosion of traditional religion, provoking efforts to consolidate the numerous religious factions in ecumenical movements. Such movements encourage the overlooking of differences and forgetting conflicts in favour of some amorphous and general concepts upon which we all might agree. In essence this is an attempt by Christian religionists to combat the rising tide of so-called humanistic secularism. Such efforts discourage criticisms of Roman Catholicism. Criticism is also inhibited by the belief that one does not criticise one's religion or race. But such a belief is erroneous. Race is genetically determined and one has no control over it, while religion is acquired and a matter of personal choice. Religions, like any ideologies, are subject to critical examination.

In a frantic effort to speak more to the modern world and to accommodate to the ecumenical movement the Roman Catholic Church has undergone a recent modest reformation or 'protestantisation'. Thus, we have had the removal of the papal index of forbidden books, the introduction of the vernacular in church services, Catholics permitted to join with non-Catholics in religious worship, greater participation in the liturgy by lay people, the discontinuance of compulsory clerical dress, and other essentially minor changes. Numerous activities by Roman Catholics which in the past would have brought immediate excommunication or even burning at the stake are today overlooked or at most result in depriving erring clerics of teaching in Catholic institutions. Thus, there are Roman theologians who criticise fundamental doctrines of the church

or redefine them out of existence. A majority of Roman Catholics in the United States openly defy teachings on contraception, divorce and abortion.

The allegedly changed or 'protestantised' Roman Church has had the effect of encouraging large segments of the public to believe that this church is a benign, liberal institution.

In my view nothing could be further from the truth. Today, one in every six people on earth is presumably Roman Catholic. I say presumably since a considerable number of these are non-practising. For instance, in Britain it is estimated that 30% are lapsed Catholics and in France 26% are indifferent, never attending church.¹ The proportion of Romanists in the world has been slowly increasing in recent years and it should be of some concern that this institution can command the allegiance of hundreds of millions. It is the world's largest monolithic ideology and politico-religious system. In addition, it has the unique position of constituting an independent sovereign state – the Vatican – which while comprising only a few acres and a thousand inhabitants, claims the moral and spiritual allegiance of nearly a billion people living outside its boundaries. The Roman Pontiff can, through his widely dispersed flock, command and influence the regimes of innumerable states and so affect – Catholicise – the lives of the billions who are not Romanists.

The Roman Catholic Church has developed one of the best propaganda machines and this coupled with its enormous wealth has meant a superior system of mind control and manipulation. Throughout its history the Roman Church has demonstrated a consistent core principle: to centralise power and authority in the hands of a clerical hierarchy in Rome and to control the minds of as many humans as possible. The uniqueness of the Roman Catholic Church is its claim of the supremacy of the Pope of Rome as direct successor from Peter, the alleged first pope. This fantastic claim, made more fantastic by the added claim that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals, rests on a single scriptural text, Matthew XVI, 13-20:

You are Peter, the rock, and on this very rock I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will not be able to overpower it. I shall give you the keys of Heaven's domain, and whatever you bind on earth will be considered bound in Heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be considered released in Heaven.

For some time numerous Biblical scholars have held this passage to be suspect. Nothing similar appears anywhere else in the New Testament. It was argued that, rather than being the word of Jesus, it was a passage inserted by Matthew or someone else to reflect the special interests of the already organised Christian churches. Recently, the so-called Jesus Seminar, composed of theologians and Biblical scholars of all persuasions, was in general agreement that 'Jesus did not say this; it represents the perspective or content of a later or different tradition'.²

Despite this one will find even Anglicans and Protestants who believe these words do in fact legitimise Peter as pope and institute the papal system.³ The *World Almanac* calls Peter the first pope. Even if Matthew XVI, 13-20, is not totally discredited, which seems highly unlikely, it is so utterly ambiguous that it has been subject to a variety of conflicting interpretations.

The Roman Catholic Church claims that aside from the Bible, doctrine is based upon tradition. But the term pope is not used until almost two hundred years after the crucifixion and Victor (189-198) was the first pope to attempt to exercise authority as the head of a universal church. He, however, found himself vigorously opposed throughout the whole church and especially in the East. Much of the history of Christianity from that time and for almost a thousand years thereafter is one of the attempts of Roman pontiffs to obtain absolute and supreme authority over all Christians. Roman Catholicism is more truly based in its organisational plan upon the Roman Empire and the papal model is that of Caesar. Indeed, much of the prestige and power of the early Roman Catholic Church derives from the fact that it was centred in Rome, capital of the Roman Empire and home base of the Caesars.

Roman Catholicism professes to be the root and trunk of Christendom – the true church. Yet anyone who studies the early Christian church will be struck by the diversity of views and the separate organisation of the various branches. From the time of the crucifixion there were groups who followed Jesus as the Cynic sage. There were those who followed Jesus's brother, James, as 'Judaisers'. There were followers of Paul, who eventually gained ascendancy. There were Gnostic sects and many others as well.⁴ In time other groups appeared and were called 'Arians', 'Monophysites' and 'Nestorians'. The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches excommunicated each other in 1054. There has never been a single

united Christian church. In truth it may be that the religion that Jesus actually taught disappeared not long after his own demise.

The Roman Catholic Church likes to present itself as the true bearer and preserver of Christian tradition when in fact it has been a great innovator. The supremacy of the Roman pontiff, the infallibility of the pope in faith and morals, the practice of auricular confession and absolution by the priest, transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, the doctrine of Christ's mother as mother of God, priestly celibacy and a number of other practices and beliefs integral to Roman Catholicism are all innovations introduced between 300 and 1800 years after Christ's death. None are associated with the churches of the first 250 years. Most may readily be seen as attempts to further concentrate power into the hands of the clergy. For papal supremacy and infallibility this is obvious. Auricular confession and absolution by the priest places in the clergy's hands an immense power, that of knowing the innermost secrets of a great number of people and being able to admit or deny individuals admission to heaven. The doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass invest in the priest the greatest power of all: he alone can change mere bread and wine into God and can sacrifice him upon the altar. The elevation of Mary to the role of the mother goddess, coupled with the worship of other saints, institutes cult centres which command great influence and generate enormous wealth for the Church.

In its effort to control and manipulate, the Roman Church has applied various techniques, each of which is appropriate for specific circumstances. Thus, it has been said: 'The Roman Church is a lamb in adversity, a fox in equality and a tiger in supremacy'.⁵ When it has had supreme authority it has imposed its Inquisitions, its index of forbidden books, its general censorship, its control of the systems of education, health and welfare. It has been the official religion of the state, suppressing all 'heresy'. It acts as a tiger. A goodly part of the history of Christian Spain is an example of this approach. That of the Province of Quebec in Canada has in the past closely approximated it.

Often in today's world the Roman Church acts as a lamb. Above, it was mentioned that this church has been undergoing a process of protestantisation, an effort at amelioration with the non-Catholic world. The Roman Church has also eased its arrogant tones of an earlier more tiger-like time. No salvation outside the Roman Church is an old doctrine which today is down-played and never mentioned.

As a fox in a situation of equality with competing power – which may be that of the state or of other religions – the Roman Church employs subtle, veiled techniques for pursuing its ends. The fox garb is today widely employed as Roman Catholic attire. Because it is common and because it is often so subtle, I propose to explore this area here more at length.

One of the Roman Church's chief efforts is influencing in one way or another the several communications media so the church is presented in a very positive manner, even seeking to give the impression that 'everybody' is a Roman Catholic. Hollywood motion pictures and television programmes subtly promote Roman Catholicism. In one hundred films with religious content I have watched at random, 60% contained Roman Catholic content. Obviously when a film is about Spaniards or Italians one would expect the Catholic content. However, in some of these films that content was little more than outlandish. Thus in one film on Concord, Massachusetts, during the colonial period the actors were portrayed as Roman Catholics when in fact eighteenth century Concord had no Roman Catholic population. Other films on blacks in America portrayed them as Romanists, when only 5% of American blacks are Roman Catholic. If clerics are portrayed as stupid, ludicrous or evil, they are never Roman Catholics but almost exclusively rural Protestants, although in the last decade with the new crusade against Islam some Muslim clerics appear in these roles.⁶

In some motion pictures there is almost a kind of subliminal advertising for the Roman Church. Thus in a bedroom scene the camera flashes by a crucifix on the wall or nuns appear in street scenes. Clergy represented in a film will be shown in clerical collars and addressed as 'father'. Actors often cross themselves, and do so in the most incongruous situations. Thus in two films I have seen there were obviously non-Catholic funeral services in which the participants crossed themselves, as if the film makers did not want to offend completely Roman Catholic sensibilities with a totally heretical religious service.

Newspapers and even many books are prone to giving statistics which grossly inflate Roman Catholic numbers and deflate non-Catholic populations. The main technique here involves reporting as Roman Catholic everyone who was ever baptised in that church, whether they are month-old infants or persons who have long since renounced Romanism. These numbers can then be compared, say to those of Protestant churches which report only adult, active

members. In this way we learn that in Canada the Roman Church has twelve million followers, while the United Church of Canada, the second largest denomination, has one million, whereas if we employed the Roman techniques for counting numbers in the United Church, there would be four times the one million reported members. News media are further prone to advertising the conversion to Roman Catholicism especially of prominent people. However, they are notoriously silent about advertising those who leave that church.

In public institutions patients and inmates are often subjected to attempts to convert them to Catholicism. I have been told by former inmates of state prisons in the United States that they would have better treatment and a better chance of parole if they converted to Catholicism. In Roman Catholic operated hospitals non-Catholic patients on their death-beds are approached by Papist priests to convert. Any time there is a serious accident, a Roman priest will appear to administer 'the last rites' regardless of whether the injured is Catholic or not. Roman Catholics are very active in the adoption business to get more children into Roman Catholic homes. If this church cannot directly control the educational system, it will campaign for government funds to operate its own separate system. I am not suggesting that there is some grand Romanist conspiracy. What I believe occurs is that the communications media and other institutions submit to Roman Church influence because of the enormous power and large following of that church.

In sum, we should not be taken in by sly Catholic attempts to hoodwink us. We should not be diverted from the Catholic threat to freedom by the fundamentalist threat to freedom. We should remind ourselves that the Roman Catholic Church is an authoritarian, hierarchical organisation, perhaps the wealthiest organisation in the world, aiming to conquer the minds of humankind. It may, as circumstances demand, pursue this end as a lamb, a fox or a tiger. Indeed, this adaptability coupled with its effective propaganda techniques explains its durability and survival for so long. Presently, because of more adverse conditions, the Catholic Church acts as a lamb or a fox, but always beneath that fluffy wool of the lamb or that silky fur of the fox is the tiger waiting to pounce and devour the world in a new clerical dictatorship.

Notes

1. David Barrett (editor) *World Christian Encyclopaedia*, Oxford, 1982, page 700 for Britain, page 296 for France.

2. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels*, Macmillan, 1993, page 207.
3. If Peter were the first pope and that office was as significant as Roman Catholics claim one would expect Paul would have mentioned him in his Epistle to the Romans since they were contemporaries. But there is no mention of Peter. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
4. See John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, Harper, 1992; Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel of Q: the Book of Christian Origins*, Harper, 1993; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (two volumes), revised edition, Harper & Rowe, 1975; Walter Bauer, *orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971.
5. Unfortunately I have lost the citation for this statement.
6. In the United States and Canada at least it has only been in the last four or five years that the paedophilic proclivities of the Roman Catholic clergy have been publicised. Before then both the press and the law most often overlooked them.

II

Protestant Tradition, Moral Majority and Freedom

Recent times have brought a renewal of the influence and power of conservative, fundamentalist Protestant tradition, especially in the United States and in connection with the self-styled Moral Majority. The apparent position of this group regarding the role of the state seems to be an essentially Calvinist one. That is, it is believed to be the duty of the state to defend and protect the Christian Church, to encourage its prosperity and well-being and to promote its moral teachings. This means that it is the duty of the state to impose Christian morality upon all its subjects whether they agree or not. Another relevant facet of the Moral Majority's philosophy is a strong anti-intellectualism, a rejection of all professional experts in the realms of philosophy, religion and social relations, yet an acceptance as experts of 'lay' preachers who are recognised as having charismatic qualities. I would like to explore briefly these two issues and their implications for Protestantism and its relation to the ideal of freedom.

It is argued that Protestantism has represented a major force for freedom in society. The Protestant movement was a protest against an authoritarian Roman Catholic hierarchy and a rejection of such centralised authority. Yet dispensing with this authority had the effect

of leaving a power vacuum. Prior to the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church had operated in part as a check-rein on the attempt of the several European states to expand and assert total power and authority. The ascendancy of Protestantism removed this check-rein and indeed the success of Protestantism may be attributed in large part to the fact that various rulers saw it as a device to rid themselves once and for all of the obstruction of the church. Protestantism had to come to grips with the state. In doing so four major positions were affirmed. Three of these are of a conservative nature and may be called representative of the 'right wing' of the Reformation; the fourth is more radical and enunciates the stand of the Reformation's 'left wing'. Of the 'right wing' positions the simplest was that associated with Anglicanism: that while church and state are separate entities they are both under the headship of the ruler of the state and the church is subordinate to the state. A second position, that of John Calvin and mentioned above as the apparent position of the Moral Majority, reflected more medieval teaching. State and church are both viewed as autonomous but the state ought to promote 'true religion' and rule according to 'Christian' teaching. Luther offered a third point of view that the state was a worldly institution, an evil instrument of violence, yet one which was necessary to the maintenance of social order. Although it is a necessary evil Christians must support and obey it. Because of an ambivalence regarding the state and a Christian's relation to it, the Lutheran position in practice left the state free to act on its own and allowed for a situation, as in Britain and Anglicanism, for the domination and monopoly of the state's authority.

But the Lutheran view bears similarity to that of the Reformation's left wingers espoused especially by the Anabaptists. Here too the state is seen as a worldly and evil institution because it is founded in the reliance upon violence as a means of compelling obedience. True Christians as members of the kingdom of God have no need for the state, but such an institution remains necessary for non-Christians – those who are devoted to worldly ways including the way of violence. True Christians should submit to the demands of the state in so far as it is within their conscience to do so, but true Christians do not participate in the administration and management of the state. This viewpoint has been faithfully adhered to by many Mennonite and other similar denominations, but among others it became modified and simplified in the course of time into a belief as among Baptists in the absolute separation of church and state as two distinct entities

which do not interfere with each other except that the state, as part of its duties, ensures the free exercise of all religions. The Society of Friends (Quakers), whose roots are also in this left wing of Protestantism, offered another kind of modification of the old Anabaptist view. It held that the state should be reformed into a Christian non-violent institution. This utopian outlook seems to have been implicitly adopted by several modern denominations which are legatees to the radical branch of the Reformation: General Conference Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, etc.

Now it seems clear that the historical record of the Protestant interpretation of the relation between church and state as enunciated in the various 'right wing' positions has been no more conducive to liberty than the Roman Catholic position it seeks to replace. I do not propose to enter here into a detailed defence of this assertion since it would entail an extensive and tedious review of over four hundred years of history. But I believe any objective examination of the historical record will demonstrate that overall the condition of liberty under Roman Catholic states and those states which have been officially Lutheran, Anglican or Calvinist will not reveal marked differences. Neither group has an inspiring record. In western European cultural tradition freedom is most clearly associated with those states in which no religious community is dominant and at the same time where there were numerous adherents to 'left wing' sects. In the Swiss Republic and the Netherlands full application of either a Roman Catholic or Calvinist theory was constrained by the approximate equal size of these two religious communities in each state.

In the obvious example of the United States not only has there long been a multitude of religious bodies, the largest of which could not even claim a quarter of the population, but additionally a substantial part of the religious community was and is composed of those who adhere to denominations which are legatees of the left wing of the Protestant Reformation. In colonial America the most consistent examples of personal freedom come from Rhode Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania – areas in which Baptists, Friends and other Protestant left wingers prevailed. Also it should be noted that significant numbers of Americans adhered to no religious body. Deists, freethinkers, atheists and Jews were in the forefront of those insisting upon religious liberty. Such individuals were of major importance in other Protestant states as well and were the ones chiefly responsible for providing what liberty exists in traditional Roman Catholic countries.

In sum, it seems doubtful that 'right wing' Protestantism has contributed much to freedom. Where Protestantism has been a force for freedom it has been associated with a left-wing interpretation of state-church relations or some variant of it. While some of the Moral Majority are Presbyterians and Calvinist, much of the support of the movement comes from Baptists and other Christians whose origins lie in the Protestant left wing. It is therefore ironic that such a group now totally rejects this tradition and adopts a Calvinist one.

The second point raised at the commencement of this essay suggests yet another irony: that the Protestant belief in the priesthood of all believers – an essentially very libertarian statement – should become ultimately turned into an anti-intellectual, anti-freedom statement by a Moral Majority, a Protestant movement. What happened here?

To affirm that each man has the right and ability to interpret scripture as he sees fit is to assert a belief in the priesthood of all believers. But such a view essentially rejects the legitimacy of specialists in holy writ. In the course of time this attitude can have the effect of asserting that in all issues which pertain to human beings and their social relationships there are no experts. Particularly, becoming an expert through scholarship – the study of books – is highly suspect. One person's view is as good as another's. The healthy aspect of this outlook is that it encourages a continuing critique of specialists and 'authorities' and prevents them becoming self-satisfied and arrogant. Yet it is a view which presents many difficulties. Especially in this day and age, knowledge is so complex even a specialist within a given field cannot command all the data of that field. We are in no sense equal authorities and experts. It is ridiculous for a carpenter, say, to argue heredity with a professional geneticist or for a chemist to argue evolution with a biologist.¹ Aside from this we find that those who reject so many kinds of intellectual authorities readily and willingly accept the unquestioned authority of certain quasi-charismatic lay preachers, extending to them authority over vast areas of knowledge.²

The relation of anti-intellectual bias to the doctrine of the priesthood of believers is demonstrated, for example, by Baptists of the American South, a major element in the Moral Majority. Here is a group which has fervently opposed any form of church centralisation and hierarchy. Each local congregation affirms its autonomy and jealously guards its power in the hands of lay members. In education the belief has always been that schools are the jurisdiction of the local community and what is taught and how it is taught is determined and controlled by the parents of the students. While preachers are

accepted as 'authorities', professional scholars such as those in anthropology, biology, geology or Biblical criticism are especially rejected as authorities. Towards government there is a similar suspicion of and disdain for certain types of authority. 'Egg-heads' and city intellectuals are condemned out of hand, but the authority of the military is an object of intense respect. The veneration of the latter is closely entwined with a vigorous ethnocentrism and anti-foreignism which is enshrouded in the euphemism of patriotism and implemented with a strong support of militarism.

This peculiar syndrome is a mixture of a healthy suspicion of certain kinds of authority with a not so healthy dogmatic authoritarianism. The type of authority which is rejected is that which is based on or validated by an accumulation and command of 'knowledge'. This might be called the authority of the mind. The authority which is accepted is that of the father-disciplinary figure, the authority, if you will, of the heart and the whip. There is, then, a tension between freedom on the one hand and authority on the other. Both freedom and authority can be seen as descending in distinct and separate lines from the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The libertarian aspect arises out of the rejection of higher authorities or specialists of interpretation. The authoritarian aspect derives from both the dogmatic assertion that one must, however it be interpreted, accept the Bible as the infallible word of God and from the Bible's own explicit patriarchalism. The first aspect readily translates into an outright anti-intellectualism when in the individual's mind it becomes synthesised with the second.

The so-called Moral Majority has, it seems, rejected the libertarian element in Protestantism and embraced the more authoritarian Calvinist position in which the state is expected to enforce a particular interpretation of Christian behaviour. At the same time it transforms the principle of the priesthood of all believers into an anti-intellectual crusade.

Notes

1. I state this while recognising that in any 'profession' we may see the members becoming caught up in and enmeshed by a particular paradigm, an outlook which is taken for granted and so may become more like a religious outlook.
2. These preachers are awarded their authority in part because they 'really know their Bible', by which is meant that they have memorised a good part of it and profess to accept it 'literally' – whatever that may mean.

Bob Potter

Explorations of Fundamentalism

Each of us views the world through cognitive 'goggles' – lenses constructed from the theories and hypotheses we have inherited and developed in our journey through life. 'Religion' is one of the ways we choose to look at the world. There are other ways – 'science' and 'politics'. Of course, these ways are not separate; they overlap and none of us uses exactly the same mental constructs.

For more than twenty years I have been interested in religious approaches to the world. As I have been an atheist since childhood, it may seem odd that I chose to research religious attitudes – I could just as easily have chosen to investigate political views and groupings. These were areas in which I had been much more involved ... and, ironically, it was for precisely that reason, because I had spent much of my life committed to various forms of the secular-marxist religion, that I chose to escape my own 'hang-ups' in the political field and research religion. (It was soon to become very obvious that the mechanisms of the one area were readily applicable to the other!)

The Christian religion is the readiest to hand and it is for this reason and this reason alone that I began by overviewing the nature and function of fundamentalist Christianity, attempting to explain its 'success' and to explore the personality characteristics of a fundamentalist believer and the interactive nature of fundamentalist groups – why they attract particular individuals and how they 'transform' the lives of their members.

T.S. Eliot's frequently quoted remark 'Christianity is always adapting itself into something which can be believed' may be partly true of the 'official' church, but it misses an important point, for there are many elements in Christendom that do *not* 'keep up with the times' and it is precisely those elements that appear to become the major growth areas.

One cannot speak of Christianity, either as doctrine or as social institution, as if it were a monolithic entity existing in isolation. The church, like every other social institution, is a network of smaller units interacting with one another and with the world outside and reflecting

different, often opposing, social and individual interests. What goes on within one unit, the ideology it develops for interacting and articulating its views of the world, therefore influences the attitudes and values of the units and the people who are members of these units within the general structure of society.

As a research psychologist I have been interested to learn something about the people who choose to identify themselves with fundamentalism – that style of religious belief that often takes as its ‘starting point’ a dogmatic insistence that the Bible is the *literal* ‘word of God’. My investigation was psychological, therefore, not theological and my interest in the individuals was related to their ‘style of thinking’ rather than the content of their belief. (For those interested in making the ‘political’ comparisons as we proceed, the Marxist ‘fundamentalist’ would be the individual who ‘wins’ a political argument by producing the appropriate quotations from Marx or Engels or Trotsky or ...)

* * *

The tension within Christianity between fundamentalism and liberalism manifests itself, as I have already indicated, in contrasting views about the status of the Bible. In 312^{AD}, the Roman Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the religion of the State. In 325^{AD} he presided over the Nicean Council which decided which ‘scriptural’ books were ‘inspired’: the following year he ordered that all ‘heretic’ writings were to be destroyed. From this point in time Church dogma evolved as part of the ideology of the ruling classes, as a means of explaining the differing social standings of the peoples while, at the same time, justifying the status quo. Scriptural interpretation was seen as an adjunct of political policy making.

Only an extreme minority of the faithful were able to read, so insistence on a literal acceptance of the gospels was rarely an issue. Arguably, the first fundamentalist was Lactantius, a fourth century theologian who used the Bible to ‘prove’ the world was flat. His argument was developed more fully by Cosmas Indicoplaustes, writing in 547^{AD}, who derided those who wasted their time taking measurements and doing sums – the appropriate way to learn astronomy was to read the appropriate chapters in the Old Testament.

By the eighth century the cosmology of Cosmas had been abandoned, even by the fundamentalists, although regularly sects sprang up preaching a ‘flat earth’. A popular anecdote of the thirteenth century relates how the congregation of one church was surprised to hear the voices of sailors coming from the sky and to see

an anchor suspended above their heads, down which a sailor descended, dying of suffocation as he reached the ground. Tragedy had struck a boat cruising on the waters above the firmament!

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christian orthodoxy insisted that the Bible was literally true and the continued illiteracy of the masses and the unavailability of the texts allowed this claim to be largely unquestioned. All academic knowledge was grounded in religious conceptualising and prior to the Renaissance theological disputes were synonymous with metaphysical arguments – whatever the point of view being advocated it was always possible to find verses somewhere in the Bible to quote in support.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw rapid developments in science. Man (and woman!) needed to expand his astronomical knowledge in order to explore and exploit the globe. The Biblical view of the world could no longer be accepted: there is a basic contradiction between believing an eclipse is one of the modes whereby the Almighty expresses His anger with humanity *and* the ability of mathematicians to predict these ‘supernatural’ occurrences. The difficulties Bruno and Galileo encountered with established theology illustrated the developing conflict between religion and science, although the details of these clashes have been crudely over-simplified. (Many of the Jesuits were enlightened scholars who were not, in principle, hostile to the Copernican system. What the church would *not* tolerate was Galileo’s claim that certain passages in scripture ‘look as if they differ from truth’.)

The scientific revolution was accompanied by the invention of the printing press, and soon the Biblical texts were accessible to lay people. Historian A.G. Dickens tells us that ‘Lutherism was from the first the child of the printed book’. In 1516, as Luther prepared to nail his 95 theses on the door of Wittenberg’s church, Erasmus produced his New Testament. In 1539, Henry VIII had Bibles placed in English parish churches, so the congregations could read them and interpret them for themselves.

The initial Lutheran challenge to Roman Catholicism was on the grounds of the preservation of purity through adherence to the literal word of God (or opposed to the authority of the Catholic Church, based on tradition) but Luther himself was far from being a fundamentalist – indeed he insisted that some Bible books were more important than others and he dismissed, for example, the letter of James as ‘an epistle of straw’.

Luther was undoubtedly one of the most viciously reactionary individuals in human history, whose anti-Semitic ravings make the later speeches of Adolf Hitler appear moderate in the extreme, but his reform served as a catalyst for fundamentalist and millenarian movements which he and his associates neither wanted nor could control. In this situation it became increasingly necessary for the church authorities to be 'seen' as endorsing the truth of scripture. The basis for a movement combining ecclesiastical conservatism and Bible literalism was being laid.

Close on the heels of religious reformation there began to develop a revolutionary ferment against the disintegrating European federal system, identifying itself with the Protestant reformation and manifesting hostility to the established church. The French revolutionaries of 1789 saw the Church as part of the feudal structure they overthrew. The elite theocrats in Rome may once have seemed enlightened 'humanists', but now the church was forced to become the blatant representative of the old order.

In England, the hierarchy of the national church usually reacted to change by identifying itself with the forces of reaction. Biblical interpretation became a device to preserve the Establishment and oppose reform; it was not untypical that when the Reform Bill of 1832 (to enfranchise the middle class) came to the House of Lords, 21 of the 23 bishops opposed it. Again, the following year, only two of the 23 bishops supported the bill to abolish slavery – they cited Exodus 21, 2-6, for example. Although Christian apologists today often accredit their religious forebears with many social advances of the nineteenth century, most reformers of the day, like Jeremy Bentham, Robert Owen, Francis Place and James Mill, were atheists. The first important scientific theory that could not be easily reconciled with Biblical literalism was Darwin's evolutionism, as expounded in *The Origin of Species* published in 1859. This was the point where the two factions comprising the church polarised and separated. To this day, at the popular level, evolution is often *the* issue that defines the boundaries of fundamentalism.

An early attempt to rationalise religion *from within* was that of David Friedrich Strauss, who in 1835 published *The Life of Jesus Christ Examined*. Strauss argued that the Gospel narratives were myths representing essential truths. Although he carefully 'took the New Testament apart', highlighting the numerous contradictions and absurdities, he saw himself as a *defender* of Christianity:

We have outgrown the notion that the divine omnipotence is more completely manifested in the interruption of the order of nature than in its preservation he argued, rejecting out of hand the need to believe in 'miracles' as historical facts.

A few years later, Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) argued that the religious individual worships *not* God but an idealised human nature. Men look about them and observe that their ideals of perfection are not realised in particular human beings, assume that they must be realised in some being and postulate a God. The more they 'give' to God, the more they take from themselves. Marx and Engels have described the enthusiasm with which Feuerbach's early delineations of 'alienation' were greeted by contemporary radicals – and Marx himself was to develop more fully this idea of the roots of religion being found in man's alienation:

The abolition of religion, as the illusory happiness of the people, is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to abandon the illusions about their condition is a demand to abandon a condition which requires illusions.

Strauss and Feuerbach, then, were the founders of modern liberal and humanistic theology – a development to be continued by Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, John Robinson and more recently Don Cupitt. The latter has developed his 'humanism' to the point of rejecting the godhead in the traditional sense:

It seems doubtful whether there is any immense cosmic or supracosmic creator-mind. Even if there is, it is hard to see what it or he could have to do with religion.

The consequences of liberalism

A theme that will be explored later in this text is that one of the essential functions of traditional religion is that it offers security and stability in an increasingly uncertain world.

It is glaringly obvious, therefore, that the individual who joins a religious community because it appears as a sanctuary in an ambiguous and frightening world, will react strongly against modern attempts to 'de-mythologise' Christianity.

I have referred to the way in which early attempts to rationalise theology were countered by the Establishment – and this, of course, is what those who needed religion as a refuge wanted. In Great Britain, for example, membership of the traditional churches steadily

increased, especially from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the period of the First World War. For most of that time, membership increased faster than the population; but during and after the 1914-18 war the numbers sharply declined in all the major churches apart from the Roman Catholic.

Interestingly the decline in membership correlated positively with the increasing liberalisation of theology. Equally interesting is the fact that throughout this period there had been no similar move to rationalise the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church and its numbers continued to rise. This trend has continued to more recent times.

One could say that the religious history of Western civilisation during the last five hundred years is largely a history of secularisation. Since the Reformation and the rise in science the external supports of the Christian faith have fallen away. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the power and prestige of the clergy declined dramatically – empirical methods and mechanical models left little room for revelation. The Christian who needed to remain faithful found his faith weakened by the social environment; increasingly he must ‘withdraw’ from the world.

The origin and growth of ‘fundamentalism’

The rejection of liberal Christian thought took two forms – firstly the insistence on the literal truth of the Bible and secondly the acceptance of millennial beliefs, the conviction that mankind was living in the ‘last days’ and that God would soon intervene to ‘cleanse’ the world.

No historical period lacks a millenarian movement. In America, the rejection of religion based on the new secular sciences culminated in the intense millennial expectation of William Miller, a Baptist preacher from New York who in 1818 declared that study of the Bible had convinced him that the present world system was about to end. He eventually decided that Christ would return to earth some time between 21st March 1843 and 21st March 1844. At their height the Millerites had a hard-core following of 50,000 and probably another million were interested but not convinced. They did not form a distinct sect, remaining with their various congregations.

The failure of the prophecy did not lead to the demoralisation that might have been expected – indeed it led in many cases to *increased* enthusiasm: ‘I have never witnessed a stronger and more active faith’, declared one of the Millerite leaders in July 1844. The date of Christ’s return was postponed until the following 22nd October. As this date

approached thousands gave up work, closed their workshops and stores. Last goodbyes were said and the faithful remained at home waiting for the Lord. The intense distress following this second disappointment destroyed the Millerites in their original form. The movement shattered into three factions.

The largest group, including Miller himself, decided he had erred in calculating the date – Christ would now return in 1849. The descendants of this group remain active in the US today. The second faction, the spiritualisers, decided that Miller had been correct, that Jesus had indeed returned as predicted, but in spirit form. This theme, with regular modifications of the critical dates, was to lead to the eventual foundation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The third faction was to develop into today's Seventh-day Adventists. They argued that Miller's date was correct but that it referred to Christ's activity in heaven. Virtually all of today's fundamentalist Christian sects originated in the disintegration of the Millerite movement.

The name 'fundamentalism' arose in the USA during the First World War. Mention has already been made of the development of liberal thinking in the established churches of this period, and it was as a conservative reaction to this process that millionaire Lyman Stewart financed the publication of twelve booklets entitled *The Fundamentals: a testimony of truth* during 1910-12. Three million copies were sold expounding the central doctrines of:

- a) the Bible is without error;
- b) the virgin birth of Christ;
- c) salvation through Christ;
- d) the need to be 'infilled' by the Holy Spirit;
- e) the imminent second coming of Christ;
- f) the urgency of speedy evangelisation of the world.

These points remain the essence of twentieth century fundamentalism.

The influence of this new factional trend within the United States cannot be overstated. During the 1920s, for example, no less than seventeen anti-evolution bills were introduced into twenty state legislatures in attempts to eliminate this theory from the public schools.

The main thrust of contemporary fundamentalism still comes from America where since the mid-1960s Bible literalists, describing themselves as 'scientific creationists', have set up numerous organisations dedicated to campaigning against almost every objective of enlightened secular education. With impressive literature, videos and films, expeditions travel abroad seeking evidence supporting the Biblical creation myths – as, for example, the recent exhibitions in Turkey claiming to have found Noah's Ark, capable of holding fifty thousand animals.

The relative 'success' of the 'born again' approach to religion is measurable in that the growth rate of various Christian groupings seems to correlate positively with the degree to which they endorse fundamentalist doctrine. Reference has already been made to the steady decline in the traditional congregations that has accompanied liberalisation. From October 1962 to December 1965 the Roman Catholics in Council, now known as Vatican II, met the groundswell of opinion for reform from within the church for 'liberty to study, liberty to discuss, liberty to differ, liberty to converse with all other men'. Limited though the reforms may have been in the eyes of the non-Catholic population, the church suffered a similar fate to that of mainstream Protestantism. For example, in this country during the years 1966 to 1992 the adult Sunday Mass attendance fell by 38% – from 2.1 million to 1.3 million participants. (Had Pope John Paul I, who was almost certainly murdered in September 1978 only 33 days after his election, remained in office, even more vigorous reforms in the area of 'birth control' would have followed. One can only speculate what the effect of *this* liberalisation would have been!)

As every denomination has its own method of assessing numerical strength, it is difficult to make comparisons. However, if one accepts their own figures as being accurate, mainstream churches in general are, on average, losing up to 20% of their members with the passing of each decade.

On the other hand, fundamentalist communities continue to expand. For example, and typically, during the period 1980-1992 in the United Kingdom Jehovah's Witnesses increased their membership by 549.

Two very important points need to be made regarding these comparative data:

1. If I accept the *Catholic Directory's* calculation that there were 4,280,000 Catholics in England and Wales in 1992, the figure doesn't

really mean much. Many of these individuals may attend an occasional Mass and have no other involvement in their 'religion'.

2. But if I accept the Jehovah's Witnesses' calculation that there were 127,000 'Witnesses' active in this country in 1992, then the figure tells me, quite literally, that there were 127,000 individuals who attended *five* meetings every week *and* spent time selling their magazines on the doorstep every week. There is no such thing as an 'inactive Witness' and failure to comply with the above mentioned requirement *as a minimum* would automatically remove them from the 'census'!

One other important point needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the meanings of the membership figures. From my own investigations, I have frequently found that even *within the mainstream churches* it tends to be the 'fundamentalist' congregations that recruit and expand: if it were possible to 'extract' the 'born again' gathering from the mainstream churches, the collapse of the traditional 'liberal' congregations (e.g. Anglican, Methodist, Unitarian) and the inverse rapid expansion of the 'evangelicals' would be accurately reflected in the figures.

The fundamentalist personality

There appear to be at least six general psychological characteristics that go to make the fundamentalist individual. Not every fundamentalist has each of these characteristics, but the majority have most of them. Indeed, research has shown that it is possible to identify, with impressive accuracy, to which community individuals belong by noting the extent to which they conform to each of these dimensions. (Although these characteristics have been identified with reference numbers of religious communities, the reader familiar with fringe political groupings will possibly 'recognise' these personality types!)

1. A rootless, alienated and isolated person who feels estranged from society and 'the world'. He will readily admit to 'not fitting in'.

He will often report that prior to joining he was troubled by loneliness and had never been able to form 'deep' relationships. Admittedly this problem will remain and he will have difficulty relating to others *within* the new congregation – but this will no longer be a problem: now there are so many things urgently requiring to be

done in preparation for the 'second coming'. There just isn't time, now, for 'socialising'.

2. An individual who is obsessed by his own perceived personal inadequacy. He will attempt to prove his worth by finding tasks he *can* accomplish – great emphasis will be placed on rejecting smoking, drugs, alcohol, the wearing of immodest clothes.

The fundamentalist will often report that before joining he was an insignificant nobody – but now, along with his colleagues who have also been 'saved', he becomes part of an *ever-expanding* invincible organisation, possibly under the personal command of the Lord himself.

(Fundamentalists are often obsessed with statistics. Every single hour spent by every single Jehovah's Witness is recorded and documented worldwide in the annual 'Yearbook'. Constant growth is evidence that they have God's endorsement – if 'other' communities are growing, *that* is evidence of Satan's influence.)

3. An essentially self-centred person whose only 'way out' of his own perceived insignificance is seen in terms of joining an exclusive 'elite' possessing esoteric knowledge not shared with the rest of humanity. If he 'does good' it is not from a 'social conscience' but rather because this is the price to be paid for membership of the elite.

I remember asking one Jehovah's Witness of forty years standing what we should do about the starving millions in the Third World. 'Nothing', was her reply, 'whatever we did would be as if we attempted to warm up the sea by emptying a kettle of boiling water into it'. When I asked the congregation overseer the same question he assured me that 'Jehovah is going to put this right in the near future – we don't want to do his work for him'.

4. An anti-intellectual largely engendered by his own exclusion from the academic world and/or past failures to gain 'recognition'. Although he will often claim to be a 'student', study will consist of reading the superficial pamphlets of his own group. His bookcase will not contain scholarly works or Bible criticisms – his object is to confirm his faith, not explore it.

He will not be a deep thinker: rather he will fear the thought processes and the dilemmas and ambiguities that result from them.

His conversion will have been sudden – the consequence of long periods of contemplation. In discussions with outsiders the opinions

of the other person will not be regarded as worthy of serious consideration – rather as a means of developing his ‘debating skills’.

Indeed points of view from outsiders are viewed as a great danger. Not untypical of the attitude to the views of ‘outsiders’ is the following warning that appeared in *Watchtower* (15th March 1986) regarding alien literature:

... what will you do if you receive a letter or some literature, open it, and see right away that it has come from a hostile source? Will curiosity cause you to read it, just to see what it has to say? You may even reason: ‘It won’t affect me; I’m too strong in the truth. And besides, if we have the truth we have nothing to fear’ ... In thinking this way, some have fed their minds upon apostate reasoning and have fallen prey to serious questioning and doubt?

5. A person with a deep fear of uncertainty and chaos. The great attraction of the religious community is that it is seen as an impregnable system totally managed by the Almighty and/or his agents on earth. Fundamentalists are fearful of the future and often admit they could *never* be happy if the future were uncertain. Perhaps this is related to their fear of inadequacy – if it is difficult to cope with the present, how can it be possible to cope with the unknown problems of the future? Hence the need to ‘determine’ the future through Bible prophecy – often with embarrassing consequences: since the founding of the *Watchtower* organisation, for example, the following years have been specified by them as the date when ‘Armageddon’ is due: 1874, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1941 and 1975.

The ‘fear of future’ is bound up with the perceived urgency of their proselytisation. It is because the presence of ‘the End’ is so close, a point that is emphasised in *every* meeting, in *every* conversation, that the fundamentalist ‘elders’ are able to keep their followers so busy to have time to think deeply about their beliefs and doctrines. Jehovah’s Witness elders are removed from their post in the congregation if they allow their children to enter into Higher Education – there is just no time for study, the End is so near. And anyway, they will add, the educational institutions are in the hands of the Devil and his demons. ‘There will be plenty of time for study after Armageddon’, I have often been told.

6. Finally, quite literally, the fundamentalist person is a psychotic individual. Indeed, if the mythologies are to be taken at face value, the founders of most religions were psychotic people who regularly talked with angels and heard voices from heaven announcing who

they were or asking why the listeners were persecuting the true God. (Read the New Testament for many examples!)

Living in a world that, it is literally believed, is peopled by demons (Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Satan sends his agents to every Kingdom Hall meeting in order that he may also discover the Truth!) it should surely come as no surprise to learn that fundamentalists are much more likely than the population norm to collapse into psychotic illness. A considerable amount of research in many countries, but especially in Australia and the United States, has found significant positive correlations between fundamentalist beliefs and mental illness. Specifically, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses are between four and ten times more likely to be diagnosed schizophrenic than the population at large.

In the next section it is proposed to look at the function of the group *for* the individual. Could it be likely that there might be support for the view that Freud was correct to characterise 'religion' as a 'mass neurosis'? Perhaps 'fundamentalism' may be a 'mass psychosis' – that by joining one of these communities the vulnerable person may avoid the necessity of constructing *his own* 'individual' psychosis.

The individual and the group

In his book *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer suggested that there is often a point in time where a person's psychological structure disintegrates and he is then ripe for recruitment to the first sect that happens to come along. Perhaps another variable needs to be considered, namely that different groups offer different attractions, so each group appeals to a different type of person.

A weakness of this kind of explanation is that it may disregard the active role of the group in generating and intensifying this process. Basing our theory on the 'alienation' of the recruit makes no allowance for the *attractions* of the community in question. There is clearly an interactive process between the individual and the group. Individuals search their world for an appropriate community that matches their psychological needs; but at the same time groups themselves engender a 'group psychology' that endeavours to attract new members. There are at least five possible attributes that can make a group attractive:

1. They are *fixed* communities. To have a conversation is nothing much – the real thing is to be able to continue treating it seriously!

2. Experiences are *shared*. Members do more than share ideas – their creed becomes a living reality, constantly being re-conformed in every day's experience.
3. The most effective persuasion is that initiated by the convert himself – in telling and re-telling his experience he is re-convincing himself while 're-structuring' his memories in the light of the group ideology.
4. Because each group has its own specific attraction, handles its own particular 'problems', those who join have much in common. Individuals are influenced most by those they perceive as being similar to themselves, so converts are constantly reinforcing themselves by eliminating feelings of isolation.
5. Groups are strengthened by the kinds of problems they address: sufferers readily embrace a new system of ideas promising relief or comfort.

One need only look at the procedure and functions of a group like Alcoholics Anonymous to appreciate the common features of group interactions – the AA 'catechism' reminds one of a typical Pentecostal dialogue:

- a) at every meeting each member must confess his 'sinfulness' – 'my name is ... and I am an alcoholic';
- b) recovery only begins after experiencing the depths of despair, recognising that one's own efforts at self-control are insufficient and accepting the aid of a power greater than oneself;
- c) members maintain and reinforce their own insecurity and instability in a threatening world by proselytisation, spreading the message to other alcoholics.

The similarity of process, fundamentalist and AA, is inescapable. (Ironically, there may well be other common factors. Research has found that alcoholics are more likely than controls to have a religious background!)

The other attractions of the community have already been hinted at: the warm social atmosphere to replace the earlier isolation and alienation, the offering of status, boosting the self-confidence of the individual by training him and helping to perceive himself as an important person carrying out God's work. The challenging nature of the community's activities *outside* their group meetings may often

arouse the hostility of the general population, thus creating a ghetto mentality and so enhancing even more the strong feeling of social solidarity that can, at times, even lead to personal immolation. Tremendously positive transformations can occur in the individual's life as a consequence of his joining the community – his morale is boosted, he leaves the barren, hostile world; he now has the opportunity to identify himself with a transcendental process engaged in changing reality.

The convert is probably not conscious of the pressures on him to 'internalise' group norms and values. He believes his decision to join originated in his 'free will'; the changes in his outlook, mediated by his group membership, are seen by him as the consequences of *his own* ingenuity.

An essential function of any community is that it may enable the individual member to achieve an acceptable image of himself. He remains committed as long as he feels his membership contributes to his sense of 'positive social identity'.

Visit any meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses at their Kingdom Hall and what will you find? You will find a tightly-packed hall of about two hundred individuals of *all* ages – from young children to the very old. All will be immaculately dressed – and, before the meeting begins, the noise will resemble that of a meeting of a local cricket club.

There will be immediate silence when the meeting begins. If it is the weekly '*Watchtower* Study', the presiding elder will read, verse by verse, the designated article from the current edition. Every member of the congregation will have previously studied this article before the meeting.

After reading aloud the first paragraph, the elder will ask a question: 'What did Paul mean when he said blank, blank, blank?' Immediately more than a hundred hands will be raised, offering to answer the question. Congregation servants holding microphones will wait for the presiding elder to indicate who will be given the opportunity to answer – and as soon as the elder announces 'Sister Bloggs' a microphone is rushed to the designated woman. It matters little *who* is given the opportunity – the answer will be identical because they are all printed at the bottom of that page in the *Watchtower*! Almost an hour will be spent working through the article in this manner, and a very successful confidence-building exercise it is. Almost everybody gets a chance to talk to the congregation (with a microphone!) and everybody gives the 'current' answer. Members leave the meeting pleased with themselves, they have demonstrated their

‘understanding’ of the relevant doctrines, they are confident they will be able to confront the householders they will meet on the next door-to-door ministry.

But this is just the beginning of the confidence-building exercise. Another meeting they will attend each week will be the ‘Theocratic Ministry School’. Here a rank-and-file male member will deliver a ‘bible reading’ from the platform. His performance will be carefully studied by an appointed elder who will make detailed notes marking him for his diction, did he arouse interest by an introductory speech? Was his speech the correct length? Did he encourage the audience to use the Bible? Did he speak with the appropriate volume? Did he pause correctly between themes? – in all he will be graded in 36 items, not only on his speech but also regarding his personal appearance, clothing, confidence and poise.

The elder’s assessment is discussed briefly before the assembled congregation and later in greater detail with the rank-and-file member. He is given an overall grade and is expected to improve on this the next time around. You will never meet a Jehovah’s Witness who will not tell you how his speaking confidence and ability has been transformed in this process.

There is a similar exercise for the female Witnesses. The ‘Ministry School’ mounts role-play activities: two of the sisters, armed with literature, canvass a householder who ‘answers the door’ and responds in a hostile manner. At the end of the role-play there is a general discussion where individuals from the floor are encouraged to suggest how the canvassers *should* have responded to the misguided housewife.

Again the congregation’s sisters benefit tremendously from these practice runs – not surprisingly their confidence is built up and in a very short time they become very adept at ‘holding their own’ with the general public, often far better educated than the *Watchtower* supporters, but *not* used to tackling the specific, carefully structured questions that are posed. Unskilled, non-academic, poorly-educated ‘disciples’ can ‘hold their own’ on *their* terms.

The Jehovah’s Witness community is more authoritarian, more centralised, more ‘organised from above’ than other fundamentalist groupings – but *all* groups to a greater or lesser degree serve similar functions.

Every fundamentalist body can provide status, purpose, legitimacy and stability. The greater the ‘need’ for these enhancements, the more sharply drawn are the boundaries between members of the ‘in group’

and everybody else. The 'closed mind' is the final 'defence mechanism' of the insecure individual – and nowhere is this better illustrated than in the field of fundamentalist religion. Let's examine this question further, again using the Jehovah's Witness to illustrate some points.

Opening the closed mind

It is rare to find a Witness who is unaware of the evidence exposing the dishonesty of the *Watchtower*. Why then do they not see a problem? Obviously there is something that prevents them from objectively analysing factual information. Frequently I have attempted to show Witness canvassers old copies of the *Watchtower* to demonstrate the regular doctrinal clangers made by their organisation – *always* they refuse to look at this material. If one cannot succeed in getting them to examine critically *their own* material, one can appreciate the impossibility of expecting them to study 'other' sources: they will happily spend hours discussing evolutionary theory – but they will refuse to read any text by Charles Darwin. Their minds appear to have an in-built mechanism which causes them to stop short of doubting anything propagated by their elders.

What is the powerful motivation that prevents the Witness entering the 'dangerous' waters of critical investigation? The motivation is fear; the underlying problem is misplaced 'security'. Convincing the Witness that his organisation is deceptive is like trying to convince a five-year-old child who loves his parents that his father is in prison for armed robbery – he simply can't believe his father is dishonest. In fact, he can't tolerate the thought, since he has placed all his security and trust in his father and mother. The truth is too fearful and devastating to consider. To protect his source of security, he *must* reject factual information as being a lie.

The more and more he ignores the facts, the more narrow-minded and adamant he becomes that he will *never* change, and the more convinced he becomes that he indeed *is* in possession of the truth. He digs himself into a trench, erecting all sorts of mental barricades against his *real* enemy, which is *doubt*.

The question, surely, is what can *we* do to help open this closed mind? There is the very real danger that if we approach the problem incorrectly we could very easily risk the Witness closing the door even more firmly – he will refuse to discuss with you further because you are perceived as a threat to his security.

The solution, then, must be to try to shift his security base. Initially, this may best be achieved by simply being a friend – it isn't necessary to spend every moment (or, initially, *any* moment) demonstrating the absurdity of his beliefs. If, like the majority of Witnesses, he has been in the organisation for a number of years, he will have learned there is no true friendship within that body – he may well welcome a friend he can trust. But if your opening discussions are based around your 'clever' dismissal of *Watchtower* doctrines, you will immediately be seen as part of Satan's organisation and the contact will cease. (The 'official' *Watchtower* view is that if you are a non-believer you *are* being manipulated by the Devil!)

The American 'pop' psychologist Dole Carnegie used always to say that the best way to get a person to change his mind is to do it in such a way that the person thought it was *his* idea in the first place. This is the strategy I would suggest using on our Witness friend as slowly the conversations move into *his* chosen areas.

The *kinds* of questions that might be asked of our newly acquired friend:

If I were making a study of the Mormons, do you think I should read books written by ex-Mormons?

(he Witness will say 'yes' ...)

If I were making a study of the Witnesses, should I read books by ex-Witnesses?

(Witnesses are forbidden to do so!)

What do you think of the many cults that forbid their members from reading texts from other groups?

(Again, the Witness has a problem – for *they* are forbidden to read other literature.)

How could I identify a false prophet?

(Deuteronomy 18, 20-22, tells us clearly that false prophets are those who foretell the future, and it doesn't happen. Witnesses *know* their organisation has often done this – this is a major reason why earlier publications have been withdrawn from all Kingdom Hall libraries.)

Opening a closed mind is the most difficult task imaginable. You are attempting to force the person to break down the wall they have erected in their mind that protects them from questioning the authenticity and security of their 'mother'.

Above all, remember, you will never open a closed mind by brilliant 'argument'. The individual hiding in his refuge is there because the world before the *Watchtower* came along was a lonely, miserable place. Only when an offer of a possible haven in the rational world is seen as a possibility will the target person gradually become willing to reason, to question, to agree on common principles. If this willingness cannot be engendered, you are wasting your time. The closed mind is only opened by successfully building up the self-esteem of the fundamentalist individual. This is a tremendously difficult task – BUT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!

The Protestant State can certainly emancipate the Catholics; but because they do not emancipate themselves, they remain Catholics.

Max Stirner

The Ego and Its Own, 1845

Hawking is attempting, as he explicitly states, to understand the mind of God. And this makes all the more unexpected the conclusion of the effort, at least so far: a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a Creator to do.

Carl Sagan

Introduction to Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, 1988

It is my own considered opinion that it is a much grander view of creation to envisage a god creating the rules that govern the universe and made it all happen than to think that god created the myriad of insects and other organisms one by one.

David Bellamy

Botanic Man, 1978

Nothing can be more contrary to religion and the clergy than reason and common sense.

Voltaire

Philosophical Dictionary, 1760

*John Shotton***Hindu Fundamentalism:
India's new scourge**

Hinduism is not a term that has a long history. It was the European adoption of the term 'Hindu' that gave it widespread currency in the nineteenth century, as also the attempts of Catholic and Protestant Christian missionaries to convert the Hindu/Gentoo to Christianity. The pressure to convert, initially dissociated with European commercial activity, changed with the coming of British colonial power when, by the early nineteenth century, missionary activities were either surreptitiously or overtly, according to context, encouraged by the colonial authority. The impact both of missionary activity and Christian colonial power resulted in considerable soul searching on the part of those Indians who were close to this new historical experience.

One result was the emergence of a number of groups such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Prathana Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society, the Divine Life Society, the Swaminarayan movement, et al, which gave greater currency to the term 'Hinduism'. Some of these were influenced by Christianity and Islam and some reacted against them; but even the latter were not immune from their imprint.

Embedded in many of these movements was the challenge from Christian missionaries. This was not merely at the level of conversions and religious debates. A more subtle form was the use made by Christian missions of the school, college and other educational institutions. Many who were attracted to these new 'Hindu' groups had at some point of their lives experienced Christian education. In the organisation of the educational institutions of the Arya Samaj, for example, the Christian missionary model plays an important role. The Saiva Siddharta Samaj in south India was inspired by the nineteenth century interpreter of Shaivism, Arumuga Navalar, who was roused to this vocation after translating the Bible into Tamil. The movement attracted middle-class Tamils seeking a cultural self-assertion and was to that degree a parallel to many of the other movements in the

country. Added to this was the contribution of Orientalist scholars who interpreted the religious texts from their own viewpoint which furthered the notion of 'Hinduism'. The impact of Orientalism in creating the image of Indian, and particularly 'Hindu', culture as projected in the nineteenth century was considerable, and religion was a major part of that image.

Those among these groups influenced by Christianity attempted to defend, redefine and create 'Hinduism' on the model of the Christian religion. They sought for the equivalent of a monotheistic God, a Book, a Prophet or a Founder and congregational worship with an institutional organisation supporting it. The consciousness was again of creating as a reaction to being 'the other'; once again by a Semitic religion. The monotheistic god was sought in the abstract notion of Brahma – the universal soul with which, according to the Upanishads, the individual soul or Atma seeks union and moksha; or else with the interpretation of the term deva or deity which in early English translations was rendered as God, suggesting a monotheistic God.

The worship of a single deity among many others is not strictly speaking monotheism, although attempts have been made by modern commentators to argue this. Unlike many of the earlier sects which were associated with a particular deity, some of these groups claimed to transcend deity and reach out to the Absolute, the Infinite, the Abstract. This was an attempt to transcend segmentary interests in an effort to attain a universalistic identity, but in social customs and rituals, caste distinctions were maintained between high and low.

The teaching of such sects drew on what they regarded as the core of the tradition: the Atma-Brahma relationship, the theory of action and rebirth (karma and samsara) and salvation lying in the union of the All-soul. The Book was either the Bhagvad Gita or the Vedic texts, especially the Upanishads. The prophet being altogether alien could at best be substituted by the teacher-figure of Krishna in the Bhagvad Gita. But Krishna was neither a Prophet nor a Son of God.

Congregational worship became the channel for propagating these versions of Hinduism. The discarding of the image by both Brahmo and Arya Samaj was like an allergic reaction. It was seen as a pollution of the original religion but, more likely, it was the jibe of idol worship which brought about this reaction.

Much of the sacred literature had been orally preserved and served a variety of social and religious ends. Some texts, secular in origin, were sacralised, such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Interpolations could be added as and when required, as for example

the Bhagvad Gita. This is a different attitude from the Semitic to the centrality of the Book or, for that matter, from that of the Sikhs to the single sacred text.

These new groups were in part the inheritors of the older tradition combining social aspirations with religious expression and establishing new sects. But at the same time they were trying to create a different kind of religion and gave currency to the term 'Hinduism'.

Traditional flexibility in juxtaposing sects as an idiom of social change, as well as the basic concepts of religious expression, now became problematic. In the absence of a single 'jealous' God, demanding complete and undiluted loyalty from the worshipper, there were instead multiple deities, some of which survived over time and others which faded out.

Thus, the major Vedic deities, Indira, Mitra and Varuna, declined with the rise of the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects in the first millennium AD. Shiv and Vishnu have remained major deities supported by various sects although not always in agreement with what the deities represent for them. This has not prevented the creation of fresh deities, as has been witnessed in recent decades with the very popular worship in northern India of the goddess Santoshi Ma.

The attitude to deity would in part explain the argument that it is not theology which is necessarily important in Hinduism but the mode of worship. The yajna was a carefully orchestrated performance of ritual with the meticulous ordering of every detail down to the correct pronunciation of the words constituting the mantra. Worship as part of Bhakti was different. The emphasis on oblation and sacrifice now transformed itself into devotion to the deity, sometimes even taken to the extreme of ritual suicide.

The deity was conceptualised in a variety of ways – abstract, aniconic, an image, an image elaborately sculpted and housed in an equally elaborate temple; and devotion could also be expressed in various ways. There was no requirement of uniformity in methods of worship or in who performed the ritual. There was little ecclesiastical order involved and no centralised church.

The question of conversion therefore became unimportant. In its absence, sects grew through segmenting off or through assimilating other cults or amalgamating similar sects. The religious sect was also an avenue to caste mobility. Origin myths of middle and lower castes often maintain that the caste was originally of higher status but a lapse in the ritual or an unwitting act of pollution led to a loss of status.

Imitation of higher caste norms or the dropping of caste obligations

would normally not be permitted unless justified by the creation of a new religious sect. The latter would initially be regarded with hostility by the conservative but if it became socially and economically powerful it could be accommodated.

The absence of conversion accounted for the absence of the distinction between the true follower and the infidel or pagan. Yet, distinctions of another kind were more relevant and sharply maintained, particularly in sects with a substantially upper caste following. These primarily excluded all those who were outside the social pale or the *mlecchas*, such as untouchables, tribals, foreigners, those observing the social mores of the foreigners and even upper castes who did not conform to *dharma* regulations. They were regarded as polluting because they performed neither the ritual duties nor the social duties required by the *dharma*.

It is often stated that one is born Hindu, i.e. into a particular sect whose regulations are to be observed, and cannot therefore be converted to Hinduism. In fact the idea of conversion came about only after the nineteenth century groups became active and this was the occasion of some debate. Previously it was maintained that each sect had its own regulations, obligations and duties which often drew both on religious antecedents and social requirements. Gradually, if a sect acquired a large following cutting across castes, it tended to become a caste in itself. It would perhaps be more correct to speak of the Hindu religions (in the plural) rather than of 'Hinduism' (in the singular). Some would argue that be *sanatan dharma*.

There was one category of renunciatory orders which did not include sects recruited from any caste. Some of these order restricted themselves to recruiting only brahmans but, in the main, most of them recruited from a variety of castes. Although theoretically the latter were open to all, needless to say members of the first four if not the upper *varnas* were preferred. Open recruitment was possible because renouncers were expected to discard all social obligations and were regarded as being outside the rules of *dharma*. Renunciatory sects were generally not expected to maintain a caste identity.

Joining such an order was also, in some cases, the only legitimate form of dissent from social obligations. The multiplicity of renouncers in India has therefore to be viewed not merely as inspired by other worldly aspirations but also with the nature of the links between social forms and dissent.

The Shramanic religions were similar to these sects in that they did recruit members from a range of castes although, as was the case also

with Indian Islam, Indian Christianity and Sikhism, converts often retained their original caste identity, especially in the crucial social area of marriage connections. Among renouncers of the non-Shramanic persuasion, the Dasnami order founded by Shankaracharya and the Vaishnava Bairagis were among the better known.

Sects batted on patronage, whether royal or other. Even the renunciatory orders were not averse to accepting wealth which ensured them material comforts as is evident from the many centuries of such orders scattered across the Indian landscape, in the past as well as now.

In addition to economic wealth, these institutions had access to political power and the intertwining of politics and religion was obvious. The real texture of Indian social history in the second millennium AD has been by-passed by the obsessive concern with Hindu-Muslim relations to the exclusion of the more pertinent investigation of how politics and religion at the level of the sects interacted.

Caste identities, economic wealth and access to power also contributed to providing the edge to sectarian rivalries and conflicts. Initially, in areas where Shaiva sects were establishing themselves, there was a persecution of Buddhists and Jainas. Such actions go back to Mihrakula and Shashaka who in the northern India of the mid-first millennium AD are remembered for their destruction of Buddhist monasteries and the killing of monks. Early in the second millennium AD, Karnataka witnessed the destruction of Jaina temples and images by Shaivite groups, and the sixteenth century records a similar series of events in Kakatiya territory.

The rewriting of texts to correct the prevailing perspective from Jaina to Vaishnava was a less gruesome form of religious intolerance. Once the Buddhists and Jainas were virtually out of the way, hostility among the 'Hindu' sects was not unknown, even between ascetic groups as is evident from the pitched battles between the Dasnamis and the Bairagis over the question of precedence at the Kumbh Mela.

Such antagonism was not that of the 'Hindu' against another religion but that of a particular sect expressing its hostility towards others. Tolerance and non-violence therefore have to be seen at the level of sectarian aggression. It is true that there were no Inquisitions. This was partly because dissent was channelled out into a separate sect which, if it became a renunciatory order, lost much of its social sting. In addition, there was no centralised church whose supremacy was

endangered. However, social subordination, justified by theories of pollution, replaced to some degree the inequities of an authoritarian church.

Religious violence is not alien to 'Hinduism' despite the nineteenth century myth that the 'Hindus' are by instinct and religion a non-violent people. One suspects that the genesis of this myth was in the requirements of nationalism stressing the spiritual superiority of Indian culture, of which non-violence was treated as a component.

Non-violence as a central tenet of behaviour and morality was first developed in the Shramanic tradition, that of Buddhism and Jainism. These were the religions which not only were allowed to decline but were persecuted in some parts of the country. One is often struck by how different the message of the Gita would have been and how very much closer to non-violence if Gautama Buddha had been the charioteer of Arjuna instead of Krishna. Gandhiji's concern with ahimsa is more correctly traced to the Jaina imprint on the culture of Kathiawar.

Not that the Shramanic tradition prevented violence, but at least it was the central issue in the ethics of Buddhism and Jainism and was emphasised to a far greater degree than in the ethics of most 'Hindu' sects. Sporadic killing apart, even the violence involved in the regular burning of Hindu brides in the city of Delhi as of late, does not elicit any threat against the perpetrators of such violence from the spokesmen of 'Hinduism'.

Sectarian institutions acted as networks across geographical areas, but their reach was limited except in the case of the major institutions such as those of the Dasamis, the Bairagis or the Nathpanthis. Bhakti as a religious manifestation was predominant throughout the sub-continent by the seventeenth century; yet curiously there was little attempt to link these movements to forge a single religion. This was partly because each tradition used a different language which imposed geographical limits and also because there was no ecclesiastical organisation to integrate this development.

The Radha-Krishna cult began gradually to take on a wider geographical identity with the expansion of Hindi and the encouraging of pilgrimages in the second millennium AD. The closest to ecclesiastical organisations were the institutions associated with the Shankaracharya movement, but these were concerned basically with Brahmanism. The Bhakti communities saw themselves as self-sufficient, with religious forms closely tied to local requirements.

The emergence of Bhakti has been linked by some scholars to what

have been described as the feudalising tendencies of the time and parallels have been drawn between the loyalty of the peasant to the feudal lord being comparable to the devotion of worshippers to the deity. Bhakti emphasises salvation through devotion to a deity and, through the idea of karma and samsara, was a convenient ideology for keeping subordinate groups under control. It was argued that they might suffer in this life, but by observing the dharma they would benefit in their next birth. The onus of responsibility was therefore on the individual and not on society. The emphasis on individual salvation gave the individual an importance which was absent in real life and therefore served to keep him quiescent.

Interestingly, the explanation of karma is not acceptable to lower caste groups who, while supporting the notion of rebirth, do not accept that they were born low because of misdemeanours in a previous birth. Common as is the belief in karma and samsara among many sects, it did not however preclude the growth at a popular level of the concepts of heaven and hell, as is evident in the widespread references to svarga and naraka going back to early times.

The segregation of social communities in worship and religious belief, and the absence of an over-arching ecclesiastical structure demanding conformity, was characteristic of the Hindu religions. Attempts at such structures were made by the founders of certain sects, the most prominent being Sankaracharya when orders were established and institutions founded in the four corners of the sub-continent (the pithas). In part, these were an imitation of the Buddhist sangha and the recognition of the strength of an institutional base.

But such movements were rooted in caste differentiations, unlike the Buddhists who in theory did not restrict the availability of their religion to any caste. The 'Hindu' institutions therefore came largely to cater to the upper castes and legislated (on the occasions when they did) for these castes. The lower castes were not important to such institutions which were not concerned with the beliefs, rituals and practices of such castes so long as they remained in a subordinate status.

The segregation of social communities and the relatively distinct religious identity of these led to the possibility of each group leading a comparatively separate existence. The clash could only come in the competition for patronage. This might partially explain the notion of tolerance with which the nineteenth century invested indigenous Indian religions. However, sectarian rivalries did exist, sometimes

taking a violent form, thereby projecting a different picture of the past.

Nor did this lack of tolerance grow with the coming of Islam. Curiously, although some Islamic popular belief was internalised, particularly among sects identified with the socially less-privileged, there was little overt interest in Islamic theology on the part of Hindu groups, except in a marginal way by some scholars maintaining that certain aspects of philosophy in the second millennium AD might be traced to Islamic influence. There are few major studies of Islam in Sanskrit or in the regional languages until much later. References to the Muslims were either to Turushkas/Turks in the early sources, which was the correct ethnic identity of the earlier rulers, or more generally to mlecchas.

Similarly, the more learned among Muslim authors, such as Abu'l Fazl, merely give resumés of Brahmanism when they come to the details of some of the Hindu religions which they speak of, since this was socially the most prestigious of them all. There is little detail of the other sects except in a very generalised way. Abu'l Fazl refers to the strife among the various indigenous religions which he attributes to diversity in language, as well as the resistance of Hindus to discuss their religions with foreigners!

The confrontation of Islam and Hinduism is often posed as two monolithic religions, face-to-face. In fact, for Islam the Indian experience must have been extremely bewildering, since there was no recognisable ecclesiastical authority or structure among the Hindus as a whole to which Islam could address itself. It faced a large variety of belief systems, of which the most noticeable common feature to Islam was idol worship – but even this was by no means uniform. Hence the frequency with which references are made preferentially to castes and ethnic communities – Rajputs, Jats, Zamindars and so on – in the context of the indigenous religions, and only on a very generalised scale to the Hindus.

It is often said that the Hindus must have been upset at seeing Turkish and Mongol soldiers in their heavy boots trampling the floors of their temples. The question is, which Hindus? For the same temple now entered by mleccha soldiers was open only to a few upper caste Hindus and its sanctum was in any case barred to the majority of the population consisting of the indigenous mleccha, and their feelings were immaterial to the caste of Hindus who had worshipped at these temples. The trauma was therefore more in the nature of the polluting of the temple rather than the confrontation with another religion.

I have tried to argue that if one is attempting to understand

'Hinduism' in history then one has to see it so far as possible in its indigenous form. The distinction between the two traditions of Brahmanism and Shramanism are significant. These separate identities were carefully maintained. In the eyes of the former the latter were obviously inferior and for this one only has to look at texts of Brahman authorship of the second millennium AD referring to monks and mendicants. Brahmanism also maintained a distinction between itself and other 'Hindu' religious sects such as those associated with the Bhakti and the Shakta movements which, although not Shramanic in the strictest sense, were nevertheless the inheritors of some of that tradition.

The separateness of the two was forced to narrow, though not to amalgamate, from time to time when historical situations demanded it. A formal closeness was imposed on them by the coming of Islam and the categorisation for the first time of all indigenous cults as Hindu where Hindu carried the connotation of 'the other'. Islam had a more extended dialogue with the inheritors of the Shramanic tradition but was relatively silent with Brahmanism.

A further crisis came with the arrival of Christianity riding on the powerful wave of colonialism. In the projected superiority of the Semitic religions, it was once again the 'Hindus' who were regarded as 'the other' and again included both the Brahmanic and the Shramanic traditions. This time the dialogue was with Brahmanism. Of the social groups most closely associated with power, the upper castes were the genitors of the new middle class and among them, initially, brahmins were significant.

Inevitably the Brahmanical base of what was seen as the new Hinduism was unavoidable. But merged into it were various bits and pieces from upper caste belief and ritual with one eye on the Christian and Islamic models. Its close links with certain nationalist opinion gave to many of these neo-Hindu movements a political edge which remains recognisable even today. It is this development which was the parent to the present-day Hindu Fundamentalism which is being pushed forward as the sole claimant to the inheritance of indigenous Indian religion.

It goes without saying that if Indian society is changing, then its religious expressions must also undergo change. But the direction of this change is perhaps alarming. The emergence of a powerful middle class with urban moorings and a reach to the rural rich would find it useful to bring into politics a uniform, monolithic Hinduism created to serve its new requirements. Under the guise of a new, reformed

Hinduism, an effort would be made to draw a large clientele and to speak with the voice of numbers.

The appeal to the middle class would be obvious. To those lower down in society there would be the attraction of upward mobility through a new religious movement. But the latter, having forsaken some of their ideologies of non-caste religious sects, would have to accept the dharma of the powerful but remain subordinate. A change in this direction would introduce new problems, as it has already begun to do. In wishing away the weakness of the old, one does not want to bring in the predictable disasters of the new.

Perhaps the major asset of what we call 'Hinduism', of the pre-modern period, was that it was not a uniform monolithic religion but a juxtaposition of flexible religious sects. This flexibility was its strength and its distinguishing feature, allowing the existence even of non-caste, anti-Vedic groups disavowing the injunctions of the Dharmashastras, which nevertheless had to be included within the definition of what has been called 'Hinduism'.

The weakening or disappearance of such dissenting groups within the framework of at least religious expression would be a considerable loss. If Hindu Fundamentalism could simultaneously do away with social hierarchies, this might mitigate its lack of flexibility. But the scramble to use it politically merely results in the realignment of castes.

Hindu Fundamentalism draws largely on Brahmanical texts, the Bhagavad Gita and vedantic thought, accepts some aspects of the Dharmashastras and attempts to present a modern reformed religion. It ends up inevitably as a garbled form of Brahmanism with a motley of 'values' drawn from other sources, such as bringing in elements of individual salvation from the Bhakti tradition and some Puranic rituals. Its contradictions are many. The call to unite under Hinduism as a political identity is anachronistic.

Social and economic inequality was a given fundamental of Brahmanism and whether one approves or disapproves of it, it was an established point of view. To propagate the texts associated with this view and yet insist that it is an egalitarian philosophy is hardly acceptable. Some religions, like Islam, are in theory egalitarian. Others, like Buddhism, restrict equality to the moral and ethical spheres of life. The major religions after all arose and evolved in societies and in periods when inequality was a fact of life and the social function of these religions was not to change this but to try and ameliorate the reality for those who found it harsh and abrasive.

Further, as a proselytising religion, Hindu Fundamentalism cannot accept a multiplicity of religious manifestations as being equally important: clearly some selected beliefs, rituals and practices will have to be regarded as essential and therefore more significant. This is a major departure from the traditional position. Who does the selecting and from what sources and to what purpose also becomes a matter of considerable significance.

Another factor of increased importance to this Hindu Fundamentalism is the 'Hindu' diaspora. 'Hindu' communities settled outside India experience a sense of cultural insecurity since they are minority communities, frequently in a largely Islamic or Christian society as in the Gulf or in Europe, North America or the Caribbean. Their search is often for sects which will support their new enterprise or, better still, a form of Hinduism parallel to Christianity and with an idiom comprehensible to Christians which they can teach their children (preferably, we are told, through Hindu schools and video films). Such communities with their particular requirements and their not inconsequential financial support will also provide the basis for the institutions and the ecclesia of Hindu Fundamentalism.

The importance of this 'diaspora' is clearly reflected not only in the social links between those in India and those abroad supporting the new Hinduism, but also in the growing frequency with which the Sanghs, Parishads and Samajs hold their meetings abroad and seek the support and 'conversion' of the affluent. The aspect of conversion is new and aggressive, both among 'native-born' Indians and whites. This is not to be confused with the guru cult in affluent societies where there is little attempt to convert people to Hinduism but rather to suggest to them methods of 'self-realisation' irrespective of their religious affiliations.

The creation of this Hindu Fundamentalism for purposes more political than religious, and mainly supportive of the ambitions of a new social class, has been a long process in the last hundred years or so and is now coming more clearly into focus. Whatever political justification there might have been for this development, as a form of nationalist assertion under British rule, no longer exists. Social groups in the past have expressed their aspirations in part by creating new religious sects.

The emergence of Hindu Fundamentalism is different both in scale and scope and is not restricted to the creation of a new sect but a new religious form seeking to encapsulate all the earlier sects. The sheer scale as well as the motivation call for considerable caution. Hindu

Fundamentalism claims to be re-establishing the Hinduism of pre-modern times; in fact it is only establishing itself and in the process distorting the historical and cultural dimensions of the indigenous religions and divesting them of the nuances and variety which was a major source of their enrichment.

Attempts to insist on its legitimacy increase the distance between it and the indigenous religious articulations of Indian civilisation and invest it with the ingredients of a dangerous fundamentalism. With each aggressive stance, based on the false alarm of Hinduism in danger (as when five hundred 'Hindu' untouchables were converted to Islam at Meenakshipuram out of a population of five hundred million 'Hindus'), this Hindu Fundamentalism forces a particular identity on all those who are now technically called Hindus. But not all would wish to participate in this identity. There is something to be said for attempting to comprehend the real religious expression of Indian civilisation before it is crushed beneath the wheels of this new Juggernaut bandwagon.

When one man is dying of hunger near another who is ill of surfeit, he cannot resign himself to this difference unless there is an authority which declares 'God wills it so'. Religion is excellent stuff for keeping people quiet.

Napoleon Bonaparte

The man who worships a tyrant in heaven naturally submits his neck to the yoke of tyrants on earth. He who bows his intellect to a priest will yield his manhood to a king.

G.W. Foote
Flowers of Freethought

But others ... will adopt the position which we have become accustomed to regard as specially religious, maintaining that, in some hidden manner, the world of fact is really harmonious with the world of ideals. Thus Man creates God, all-powerful and all-good, the mystic unity of what is and what should be.

Bertrand Russell

'A Free Man's Worship' in *Independent Review*, December 1903

*Silvia Edwards***Women Against Fundamentalism**

WAF Journal was launched as a direct response to the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie on the publication of his *Satanic Verses*. The aim of the periodical is to document and challenge the rise in fundamentalism in religions worldwide. The editors underline the connection between racism and fundamentalism in all evangelical groups where the call for a return to orthodoxy results in greater social control.

The editors define fundamentalism thus: 'By fundamentalism we are not referring to religious observance which we see as a matter of individual choice, but rather to modern political movements which use religion as a basis for their attempt to win or consolidate power and extend social control. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition is 'a strict adherence to traditional orthodox tenets held to be fundamental to the Christian faith. Opposed to all liberalism and modernism'. It also tells us that the term came into usage as recently as 1923.

The collection of articles is far-ranging and the contributions well-researched and highly informative. The first three articles were particularly interesting as they formed a three-part debate about the nature of fundamentalism with each writer familiar with the others' contributions. The common thread is the challenge to the idea that fundamentalism has associations with the past. We are told that Muslims themselves have no word for fundamentalism at all and the twentieth century Islamists argue that they are revivalists.

All contributors agree that the new zeal has particularly repressive consequence for women, especially in Muslim countries. Haleh Ayshar's article 'Women and the politics of fundamentalism in Iran' examines the attraction of fundamentalism for Iranian women. In an attempt to shift the emphasis away from condemnation of Islamist regimes and pity for repressed women, she looks at the reasons why many women are re-adopting the veil voluntarily. Many women in Iran have claimed that the western women's liberation movement has been of little use to them as they do not wish to surrender their feminine roles in order to compete with men on their own terms. They do not want

to become quasi-men and forfeit motherhood until their late 30s. Their way has been to fight repression through traditional means. Through re-interpreting the Koran they hope to return to the fourteenth century style golden age of Islam where women's desires were accommodated and where women had legal and property and rights.

Other articles in this journal address issues of fundamentalism in, amongst other places, Tibet, Northern Ireland, Israel and Turkey. It is strikingly illustrated and has two pages of readers' letters towards the back.

It is a very intelligently produced and timely publication and welcomes contributions from women and men alike. At a time when women's liberation issues are experiencing backlash and ridicule, these editors have produced a collection of articles which show that the fight for equality has by no means been won. This is an essential text for those interested in world affairs and perfect further reading for the readers of *Raven 27*.

WAF can be contacted at 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG, Tel: 071-272 6563. *WAF Journal* costs £3 and is available from Freedom Press Bookshop (please add 52p inland, 96p abroad, for postage and packing).

Women Against Fundamentalism was launched on 6th May 1989 to challenge the rise of fundamentalism in all religions. Among the founders and present activists of WAF are women from across the world and from a wide range of backgrounds, who are involved in many different political campaigns.

By fundamentalism we do not mean religious observance, which we see as a matter of individual choice, but rather modern political movements which use religion as a basis for their attempt to win or consolidate power and extend social control.

Fundamentalism appears in different and changing forms in religions throughout the world, sometimes as a state project, sometimes in opposition to the state. But at the heart of all fundamentalist agendas is the control of women's minds and bodies. All religious fundamentalists support the patriarchal family as a central agent of such control. They view women as embodying the morals and traditional values of the family and the whole community.

We must resist the increasing control that fundamentalism imposes on all our lives. It means that we must take up issues such as reproductive rights and fight both to safeguard and extend abortion rights and to resist enforced sterilisation. We must struggle against religious dogma from whatever source which denies us our right to determine our own sexuality and justifies violence against women.

Donald Rooum

Satanic Child Abuse 1990/91: the reports

The Satanic Ritual Abuse Epidemic of 1990 and early 1991 was reviewed, from media reports, in *The Raven* 15.¹

Some 45 children in Manchester, Rochdale and the Orkney island of South Ronaldsay, were removed from good homes into the care of the local authority on the grounds that they had been victims in Satanist rituals. Social workers in Nottingham complained on television and in the *New Statesman* that they, too, wanted to take children away from abusing Satanist families but the Nottingham police would not cooperate.

By April 1991 all the children had been allowed home, various social workers had resigned or been shifted to other jobs, and it was clear the Satanist abuse story had no substance.

Professor Jean LaFontaine, of the London School of Economics, was engaged to investigate the English cases (not the Orkney case, presumably to preserve the independence of the Scottish and English legal systems), and the report of her findings² has now been published.

Earlier, the Orkney case alone had been the subject of an Inquiry by the Scottish judge Lord Clyde, costing six million pounds. The Clyde Report was published in October 1992, and gave rise to a conference of lawyers, senior social workers and child care academics in November 1992.

I deal with the Orkney case first. The findings of the Clyde Report are summarised at length in the introduction to the verbatim record of the conference,³ and Lord Clyde contributed to the conference himself, a long speech on 'Lessons from the Orkney Enquiry'.

Curiously, neither any of the conference speeches nor (it seems) the Clyde Report itself make any mention at all of Satanic rituals.

Lord Clyde comments adversely on the fact that Orkney social workers acted on the unsupported testimony of a child in care. But he does not describe the child's testimony or discuss the mind-set of the social workers which pre-disposed them to accept her bizarre story. His terms of reference excluded him from saying whether he

thought the child's allegations true or false, but he was not forbidden to say what the allegations were.

One of his suggestions is that the period of training for social workers could be lengthened, but how long does it take to learn that circulars from nutters should not be believed, even if they are headed 'Confidential Report'? And if two years training is not enough to learn simple common sense, will three years be enough?

Another contributor to the conference was the eminent English judge Lord Butler Sloss, who conducted the inquiry into the Cleveland child abuse case of 1987. In that year, a couple of paediatricians at Cleveland Hospital read somewhere that a particular reflex response to tickling the anus was an infallible sign that anal intercourse had taken place. They tickled the arsehole of every child brought into the casualty department, for whatever reason, and the reflex occurred in about half of them. But instead of concluding that the test was not infallible after all, the two doctors concluded that bugging small children was an unexpectedly widespread pastime.

In Cleveland 121 children were seized from the hospital over a period of weeks, whereas in Orkney nine children were seized from four homes in a dawn raid. Lord Butler Sloss remarked that although the cases were superficially different, they are substantially similar.

The Manchester and Rochdale cases, on the other hand, resemble the Orkney case both substantially and superficially, and in timing. When the Orkney children were apprehended in February 1991, an inquiry was going on into the Rochdale case. That ended in March 1991, with the release of the remaining children and the ignominious resignation of the Director of Social Services. Sheriff Kelbie ordered the release of the Orkney children in April. The news media at the time certainly thought the cases were connected, but at the conference in 1992 Rochdale and Manchester were not even mentioned.

It looks as if there was a prior agreement among the participants at the conference to avoid all reference to the allegations of Satanic ritual. I have no idea why.

By contrast, Satanic ritual is the major concern of LaFontaine's report. With her assistant and colleagues, she studied 84 cases of alleged Satanic ritual, 83 in England and one in Wales, all but six of them in the period 1988 to 1991.

The report is very thorough, full of tables and diagrams, but disappointingly free of instances and anecdotes. The contemporary report in *The Raven* 15 is much less painstaking and accurate, but a lot more entertaining, in reaching much the same conclusions.

Three of the 84 cases were corroborated by the finding of altars, candles and ritual paraphernalia, as described by the victims. These cases, however, 'are not evidence of satanism or witchcraft ... The rituals are merely strategies to achieve the sexual abuse'.

The alleged disclosures of younger children were influenced by adults, in poorly conducted interviews.

A few older children described Satanic rituals unprompted, adding horrific elements in successive tellings. These victims, LaFontaine says, resemble adult survivors, damaged individuals with a known history of abuse, neglect and family problems. In some cases there is evidence to disprove their stories.

The case studies in depth revealed the influence of Evangelical Christians and professional specialists in Satanic abuse, American and British. 'Their claims or qualifications are rarely checked. Much of their information, particularly about cases in the United States, is unreliable.'

Satanism is 'an excitingly dramatic but uncausal' explanation of abusive behaviour, drawing attention away from the possibility that abusers may themselves have been victims of abuse. Belief in Satanism allows foster mothers and social workers to treat very damaged children with patience and sympathy. But 'demonising the marginal poor and linking them to unknown satanists turns intractable cases of abuse into manifestations of evil'.

Three passages in LaFontaine's chapter of conclusions are picked out in bold type.

Of Satanic rites: Their defining characteristic is that the sexual and physical abuse of children is part of rites directed to a magical or religious objective. There is no evidence that these have taken place in any of the 84 cases studied.

Of the substantiated ritual abuse cases: In these cases the ritual was secondary to the sexual abuse which clearly formed the primary objective of the perpetrators. The rituals performed in these cases did not resemble those that figured in the allegations of the other 81 cases.

Of the interviewing procedures: What is defended as 'what children say' may be nothing of the sort.

The following comments are my own. Not being an expert, I write with the confidence of one with no reputation to lose.

Believers in the supernatural try to gain the favour of supernatural entities by offering sacrifices. Sophisticated supernaturalists also believe that what is mental is worth more than what is physical, and offer mental sacrifices. What they give up is pleasure, either their own or that of their victims or both.

People please God by abstaining from the pleasure of sex, breakfast during Ramadhan or smoking during Lent. There are nuns who sacrifice the pleasure of a pain-free body by wearing tight armbands and saints are celebrated who wore hair shirts to encourage lice, rolled naked in nettle beds and performed amazing feats of abstinence from the pleasure of defecation.

The thugs, in eighteenth century India, always made friends of those they intended to murder, to please the goddess with their own bereavement and their victims' sense of betrayal. Worshippers of the ancient Semitic god Moloch or Milcom pleased him by throwing their own children, alive, into fires.

Most of us find the idea of child abuse unpleasant, and someone who abuses children for pleasure difficult to understand. But we are familiar with the idea of doing nasty things as a religious duty. Therefore mature and sensible people are open to the suggestion that the existence of child abuse proves the existence of a secret religious cult for which there is no other evidence.

LaFontaine lists the rituals alleged to take place at Satanist gatherings: 'the torture and sexual abuse of children and adults, forced abortion and human sacrifice, cannibalism and bestiality'. It is pleasant to know that our culture does not go in for such activities, but their non-occurrence is a contingent circumstance, not a law of nature.

For a non-religious observer, the most obvious characteristic of religion is a series of apparently pointless, ridiculous and sometimes horrible goings-on. When it is alleged that some activity occurs in connection with religion, the question to be investigated is not whether it is likely, but only whether it occurs in fact.

Notes

1. D. Rooum, 'The Satanic Child Abuse Epidemic 1990-91' in *The Raven* volume 4, Freedom Press, London, 1991, pages 245-250.
2. J.S. LaFontaine, *The extent and nature of organised and ritual abuse*, London, HMSO, 1994.
3. S. Asquith (editor), *Protecting Children, Cleveland to Orkney: more lessons to learn?*, proceedings of a one-day conference organised by Children in Scotland and the National Children's Bureau, Edinburgh, HMSO, 1993.

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