Features

Back to Basics

There is a continuous tension in most religious traditions between those who accept only the pristine elements of faith as imparted by the founders, often in holy writings, as the basis for religious belief and practices and those who temper the original message, and consequently modify their beliefs and practices, in the light of later wisdom and custom. In the last twenty years we have seen a resurgence of interest in, and growth among, the conservative elements in several of the main religious traditions. Colin Brown tell us in theoretical terms the distinguishing features of a Christian fundamentalist. A more empirical approach by John Knight identifies the New Religious Right in Australia. Peter Riddell shares the insights he has gained from several visits to Iran of the practical influences on that society of a fundamentalist Islamic faith. Martin Katchen looks at the resurgence of Jewish fundamentalism. Two books are reviewed for those who may wish to delve further into the field.

Witness or Dialogue? Christian Fundamentalists at Bay

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Since 1967 I have been responsible for teaching about Christianity in one of our introductory survey courses. Almost every year, during enrolment week, at least one student calls on me to discuss my presentation of this material. It soon transpires that the questioner is a Christian fundamentalist, sometimes an Asian converted by European missionaries, and words like 'sound', 'biblically-based', and 'genuine Christianity' spatter the inquiry. Usually no real dialogue takes place and such interviews are frustrating for both parties.

This article, then, emerges from contacts with Christian fundamentalists in university and church contexts over some years: in addition, for five years now I have taught a course on Fundamentalism at B.A.(Hons) level. My main question is this: what is there about the 'character' of Christian fundamentalism which might

help to explain the absence of genuine dialogue in contexts such as that mentioned?

In this area there is room for psychological considerations but, for two reasons, I have not drawn on these. I have no real expertise in this area and, moreover, what impresses me is what happens to persons who are drawn into or emerge from fundamentalist circles. Thus my focus of concern in this article is on aspects of fundamentalism that shape and sustain attitudes which inhibit dialogue.

But the term 'fundamentalism' itself raises problems. Within the limits of a brief article all I can do is to indicate what I have in mind when I write about Christian fundamentalism. It seems to me that the matter of definition in such cases is best approached utilising Wittgenstein's clue that definitions are a matter of 'family resemblances' and not a search for elusive essences. Thus, when I talk about Christian fundamentalism, I have in mind features including insistence on biblical inerrancy; strong affirmations about a range of doctrines including the virgin birth of Christ, his miracles, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection and his imminent second coming; the equation of Christianity with the fundamentalist version of it; separatism variously interpreted and a militant attitude towards movements like 'liberalism', 'modernism', and 'secular humanism'.

The revivalist heritage of fundamentalism helps to ensure that an experience of conversion, sometimes emotional and dramatic in character, often marks entry to fundamentalism. In addition such experiences are often linked with young persons' search for independence and identity. Sometimes, too, the conversion experience initiates deliverance from an acutely felt sense of disorder and meaninglessness or from the destructive forces of drug dependence or criminal proclivities.

Especially in the early stages of post-conversion experience, where the new identity is still a fragile construction, the sense of deliverance - even of bliss - is powerful, and yet immersion in the details of the fundamentalist world-view is incomplete, fundamentalists resist very vigorously any challenges to their new-found identity and salvation. Thus any discussion of religious issues with such persons is much more than a 'merely' intellectual matter.

But as converts continue in the fundamentalist way a further shaping factor plays its part. The historical study of fundamentalism has made very clear the important role that networks of institutions have played in nurturing and sustaining fundamentalists. Moreover such institutions tend to have a 'totalistic' character in their variety, range, and exclusion of other points of view except as targets for criticism.

In this connection a recent and important development has been the rise of 'Christian schools', quite prominent and expanding in the United States and appearing in other countries also including New Zealand and Australia. Such schools vary in character and their divorce from the surrounding culture is not and cannot be total. Nevertheless it seems clear that in such matters as library censorship and classroom practice the free discussion of views other than the fundamentalist is severely inhibited. Even in the upper levels of such schools students do not really engage in dialogue with a variety of views and those who hold them. The general stance taken is to affirm one particular view as correct, as identical with truth with a capital 'T', and not to accord to other opinions either equal time or equal

treatment. The preparation offered by such schools is not such, therefore, as to prepare students to engage in dialogue in a pluralist context and to accord genuine respect to the views of others. (Of course fundamentalists are not the only offenders in such respects: there are some intolerant radicals and liberals too.)

Even tertiary study does not always change this state of affairs depending, perhaps, on the type of study engaged in. One 'hunch' worth investigating is that fundamentalism among university students seems more likely to be found among those in commerce, engineering and medicine than among those in arts courses. If this is true, why is it the case?

There is no doubt that belief in biblical inerrancy lies at the heart of the fundamentalist outlook. This is regarded as the essential bedrock of certainty by fundamentalists and the Bible as the basic guide for individual and society. Uncertainty is removed by abolishing the 'hermeneutical gap' between text and interpreter. Moreover, within the fundamentalist community the Bible functions as the central, tangible, sacramental object, a counterpart to the Sacred Host of the Body of Christ in traditional Catholicism.

For the fundamentalist the Bible provides a series of non-negotiable assertions and, because the distinction between text and interpretation is effaced or ignored, the claim of inerrancy and infallibility spills over into fundamentalist claims generally. All this is inhibiting to genuine dialogue which involves readiness to grant that one's views, interpretations, or even the highest authorities on which one is relying, may be in error. The fundamentalist simply will not trade away biblical inerrancy and, in a sense, is right to take this line. Belief in biblical inerrancy is fundamental for fundamentalists.

There are other characteristics of the fundamentalist outlook, some related closely to the basic notion of biblical inerrancy, and all with a tendency to inhibit genuine dialogue with those of differing views. Clearly it will not do to label all fundamentalists as 'anti-intellectual'; the term itself is problematical and figures such as J.G.Machen always get cited as counter-examples in this context, and what about the creationists with, in some cases, their Ph.D.s? Nevertheless some fundamentalists are anti-intellectual in outlook and, over the years, fundamentalists have often countered me with texts such as: 'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world and not after Christ.'(Colossians 2:8)

But even the more intellectually inclined among fundamentalists are inhibited by their epistemology which, historically speaking, derives from Scottish Common Sense Realism. Clearly it is too much to claim that every fundamentalist comes to discussion impregnated by this particular philosophical outlook but, in broader terms, it is this epistemological position which prevails in fundamentalist circles whether its historical origins are recognised or not.

This particular epistemology operates with a pre-Kantian paradigm of knowledge, sets great store by 'facts' and commonsense, disparages the theoretical component in knowledge ('Evolution is just a theory' is a stock-phrase where fundamentalists are concerned), and holds that clear answers on all manner of questions are available to the 'pure in heart'. Thus, as George Marsden and others have pointed out, the fundamentalist is ill-

equipped to enter into discussion of rival interpretations of, say the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, or to face up to pluralism of belief generally. The epistemology of fundamentalism leaves little room for manoeuvre and some fundamentalists, when pressed tend to attribute what they regard as error to moral perversity, to the fact that those from whom they differ are 'sinners' in ways that the latter do not discern.

Buttressed by belief in biblical inerrancy and an inflexible epistemological outlook, fundamentalists tend to insist that only in their circles, is the authority of the Bible properly respected and Christianity correctly understood. Accordingly, within fundamentalist institutions little attempt is made to inculcate sympathetic insight into other varieties of Christianity since, with some qualifications (conservative Evangelical Protestants being a partial exception and 'anonymous' fundamentalists), other expressions of Christianity are simply not Christianity. Thus J.G. Machen in his *Christianity and Liberalism* denied the designation 'Christianity' to modernism and liberalism with that courtesy and rigidity which were his hallmarks.

Closely related is the point that fundamentalism is very much a party in opposition. It will not do to characterise it as out-and-out anti-modern since in some respects, fundamentalists have adapted to modernity, a fact which partly explains their survival and success. But they are militant and strongly so against what they see as the values of modernity, their own exclusion from socio-political power, and what they regard as the intellectual hegemony of godless 'secular humanism' and its close kin 'Christian' liberalism and modernism. Thus Nancy Ammerman entitles one of the chapters in *Bible Believers*, 'Warriors against Modernity'. This crusading mentality is not conducive to meaningful dialogue but is strongly encouraged in fundamentalist circles. It is aided, too, by what Hofstadter and Marsden have called the 'Manichean' outlook (world history seen as a straight-out conflict between truth and error, good and evil), the penchant for conspiracy theories and a tendency to demonise opponents.

These characteristics go closely with the point that whether in the 1920s or today fundamentalists are seized with a sense of cultural crisis coloured and heightened by the lurid clouds of apocalyptic eschatology. It is no time, therefore, for the free exchange of ideas about religious matters and to canvass, say, problems relating to the historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ. This is often regarded by fundamentalists as a diversionary tactic, a case of fiddling while Rome burns and souls yearn for the message of the everlasting gospel. What is needed, therefore, is an all-out evangelistic campaign and not discussion about the content of the message let alone conversation with those of non-Christian faiths, or of no religious faith at all.

These then are the main factors which, in my view, shape and sustain the fundamentalist outlook and inhibit dialogue. The precise mix and importance of such causes will, of course, vary from person to person, and group to group. But the overall effect is to nurture Christians who are incapacitated for dialogue and for full participation in the invigorating life of a religiously pluralist society.

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Australian Fundamentalism and the New Right

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Abstract

Drawing on a 1986 empirical study of Australian social attitudes, this paper examines the possible articulation of religious fundamentalism with New Right views. Religious fundamentalism is seen to offer a potential constituency for an Australian New Christian Right.

Introduction

This paper draws on the Smith, Knight and Maxwell (1986) survey of Australian social attitudes to examine the possible articulation of religious fundamentalism with New Right views in Australia. It seeks to ascertain the degree to which fundamentalism offers a potential political constituency to the New Christian Right, who that constituency might be, and what the implications might be.

Terms such as 'New Right' are of course difficult to pin down. While it is generally acknowledged that the New Right is not a monolithic phenomenon, its definition continues to be disputed. Thus it has been narrowly defined (eg, Green, 1987) as sharing the tradition of 'western classical liberalism', while broader definitions include 'free market devotees, libertarian political thinkers, moral conservatives, religious fundamentalists and biological determinists' (Sawer, 1982:viii). Wexler and Grabiner (1986:11) offer a useful systematisation of these groupings. They describe two groups 'in the current rightward reaction'. One group has an economic focus; its concerns are with 'the free market', small government, and so forth. It is the economic New Right. The other group is more concerned with social and cultural issues (eg, the nation, the family, religion and morality) from a conservative per-

spective. Its focus is on 'cultural restoration'. For this study of the possible association of fundamentalist views with social and cultural conservatism, and New Right economics, Wexler and Grabiner's classification seems most appropriate.

We begin by noting the obvious. There is no necessary connection between fundamentalism, conservatism, and the economic New Right. They may be a minority, but there are religious fundamentalists who reject conservatism, capitalism, and all their works. Nor do religious concerns form a necessary element of the growth of the New Right (cf. Chandler, 1984). Hence the manifestations of social conservatism and the economic New Right will differ, for example, in the U.S., Australia and the U.K. Thus church attendance and religious affiliation have traditionally been high in the U.S. and low in the U.K., while Australia remains in an intermediate position. Similarly, while Moral Majority type groups and Political Action Committees were prominent in the U.S. in the early 1980s, groups such as the Festival of Light seemed much less effective in the U.K., and in the Australian situation (except in Queensland under Bjelke-Petersen) single-issue groups (eg, anti-abortion, pro-censorship) attracted more support than fundamentalist lobbies. Much has been made of the similarities between Thatcherism and Reaganism. Some attention could well be paid to their differences (including the religious element). In short, the manifestations of the New Right will vary from country to country, and across time also.

That said, given the political prominence and apparent success of fundamentalist and 'Moral Majority' type lobbies in the U.S. in the Reagan era, a brief review of the U.S. situation might provide a point of departure for an examination of the Australian situation.

The U.S. Situation

The existence and effects of what Liebman and Wuthnow (1983) termed the 'New Christian Right' in the U.S. have been researched in detail. The general conclusion is that there was a religious New Right which had significant (though not overwhelming) political clout.

Thus Johnson and Tamney (1985) found that the main support for the Moral Majority came from two groupings: 'authoritarian Christian rightists' who wanted to maintain and restore traditional Christian practices and values; and those who watched a lot of religious television. However, while Christian rightism played a modest role in Reagan's success, 'political party identity and economic well-being' were far more important. In their view, religious beliefs and values have more influence on 'the private rather than the public realm'.

On the other hand, Simpson (1985) claims that 'by successfully politicising socio-moral issues', Moral Majority type groups allowed Reagan to 'identify with the closely-held personal moral values of the majority of Americans and to engage in a politics of morality'. Similarly, Miller and Wattenberg (1984) found that support for Moral Majority type groups reflected 'a politicised extension of religious beliefs', so that support for conservative policy positions on social issues increased linearly with religiosity. Religious attitudes related much more weakly, however, to conservative views on economic and foreign policy issues. Against the conventional wisdom, conservative

Christians were 'not predominantly less well-educated, elderly, lower-class, or Southern'.

Shupe and Heinerman (1985) noted the strategic political alliance of Moral Majority and fundamentalist groupings with the John Birch Society and the Mormon dominated Freemen Institute. Similarly, Zwier and Smith (1980), Liebman (1983) and Latus (1983) addressed the range, strategies and affectivity of Moral Majority type lobbies and Political Action Committees. In that context, Moore and Whitt (1986) argued against 'a single additive scale across conservative issues', showing that 'distinct coalitions form on specific issues'.

Significantly, whatever measures and criteria are used, studies generally agree that the support for the New Religious Right during this period was generally low (eg, 4%-12%). There is also general agreement on the types of issues on the New Christian Right's agenda: issues around public schools (eg, voluntary prayer, creationism and evolution, sex education), abortion, atheism, secular humanism, communism, the Equal Rights Amendment, pornography, homosexuality, drugs, gun control, military defence, free enterprise, the welfare state, and so on.

In short, the New Christian Right in the U.S. articulated the discourse of morality, cultural restoration, the family, religion and social integration with the discourse of monetarism, the market, individual freedom and the rejection of the welfare state. There is, however, no easy identification of ideology with class groupings. Finally, while fundamentalism as a social movement is certainly not a new phenomenon, and its influence in that period may have been over-rated, it constituted a political force with specialised and well-funded lobbies, skilled in the use of the media in mobilising voters and constructing interest group coalitions.

Given that fundamentalism has been a continuing phenomenon in the U.S. scene, the question is why it became a political force in the 1980s. Typically, explanations have been phrased in terms of status politics or cultural fundamentalism. In the former, the New Christian Right is the reaction of the socially or economically dispossessed (cf. Gusfield, 1966; Lipset & Raab, 1978). In the latter (cf. Liebman & Wuthnow, 1983; Wood & Hughes, 1984), the fundamentalist worldview provides the dynamic for action. An alternative position of interest group politics (eg, Lienesch, 1982) notes the importance of cadre leadership to mobilise discontent, whether status or cultural, and to harness populist issues and diverse constituencies for their own concerns.

Australia also saw a rightward swing in politics and economic policy during the 1980s. During this time fundamentalist type religious groups experienced considerable growth in numbers. Yet efforts (eg, Rona Joyner's STOP/CARE lobby, the Call to Australia Party, the League of Rights) to harness fundamentalist concerns to right-wing political ends have not, thus far, been very successful. Why is this so?

The 'What Australians Think' Survey

In early 1986 a 43 item mail-out questionnaire (Smith, Knight and Maxwell, 1986) was conducted across the three mainland eastern Australian states. The sample (3000) was randomly drawn from electoral rolls. Respondents were advised that their views were sought on a range of

Table 1. Five Dimensions on a New Right Agenda

	P/O	Response (%) Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
I.THE TRADITIONAL AUSTRALIAN WAY OF LIFE UNDER THREAT				
1.We need a greater spirit of patriotism in Australia today.	P	85.4	5.6	8.8
2.Basic skills are not given enough attention in today's schools.	P	84.0	5.9	10.1
3.The traditional Australian way of life should be maintained.	P	79.0	12.2	9.0
4.Law and order are breaking down in our society.	P	78.1	4.2	17.7
5.Society will fall apart if traditional moral values decline.	P	64.4	14.7	20.9
6.Radical fringe groups pose a real threat to our way of life.	P	70.2	12.2	17.6
7.The unemployed could help themselves more than they do.	P	81.7	9.1	9.2
8.The family is being steadily undermined.	P	72.7	9.1	18.2
9.The present levels of Asian migration will not harm our country.	O	27.9	13.6	58.5
II.TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY LIFESTYLE AND STANDARDS				
1.The Bible is the best guide for living.	P	51.8	16.2	32.0
2.De facto relations are morally wrong.	P	47.0	8.6	44.4
3.Christian standards should be the basis of our whole way of life.	P	68.5	8.8	22.7
4.Christian schools are better places to educate children.	P	41.2	14.9	43.9
5.Humanism and atheism are a danger to our society.	P	38.6	22.3	39.1
6.There should be strict laws against the personal use of marihuana.	P	63.3	10.4	26.3
7.As I.5.	P	64.4	14.7	20.9
8.As I.8.	P	72.7	9.1	18.2
9.Homosexuality between consenting adults should be legalised.	P	33.0	10.1	56.9
10.Restraints on x-rated movies should be relaxed.	O	20.2	7.0	72.8
11.Abortion should be a matter of personal choice.	O	76.9	3.7	19.5
III.A LIBERAL-PROGRESSIVE AGENDA (LIBPROG)				
1.Multiculturalism will divide Australian society.	P	38.0	16.8	45.2
2.Peace studies are dangerous propaganda.	P	22.4	31.6	46.1
3.The UN poses a threat to our free and democratic way of life.	P	16.4	20.6	63.0
4.Sex education should be taught in Australian schools.	O	81.5	6.4	12.1
5.As I.9.	O	27.9	13.6	58.5
6.Aboriginal land rights campaigns ought to be supported.	O	29.8	15.7	54.6
7.The feminist movement has been good for Australia.	O	42.3	21.2	36.5
8.The World Council of Churches does good work.	O	52.1	32.7	15.1
9.The conservation movement is right to seek greater protection of the environment.	O	66.4	8.7	24.9
10.Alternative lifestyles should be tolerated in our society.	O	67.6	12.8	19.6

	P/O	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
IV.ANGLO-DEPENDENT NATIONAL IDENTITY				
1.Australia should keep close ties with the Royal family.	P	54.2	11.7	34.1
2.We should uphold and preserve this nation's British heritage.	P	52.8	11.8	35.4
3.We should keep the Australian flag as it is.	P	73.0	9.1	17.7
4.Australia should become a republic.	O	21.0	18.0	60.9
V.THE NEW-RIGHT ECONOMIC AGENDA				
1.Government agencies should be sold off to private enterprise.	P	48.0	20.5	31.5
2.Free enterprise is the key to Australia's economic success.	P	82.2	10.8	7.0
3.Trade Unions have too much power in Australia today.	P	81.7	4.7	13.6
4.Socialism is undesirable in Australia.	P	63.4	16.1	20.5
5.Wages and industry should be deregulated.	P	33.3	25.7	41.0
6.The size of government bureaucracy should be reduced.	P	83.7	11.0	5.3
7.As III.6.	O	29.8	15.7	54.6
8.State aid should not be given to private schools.	O	39.7	7.1	53.2
9.Australia's wealth should be equally shared.	O	32.8	11.1	56.1

Polarity: P/O indicates that the agenda Preferred position or the Oppositional position lies to the left of our scales. **Responses(%)**: The Likert categories 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' have been combined as 'Agree', while 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' have been combined as 'Disagree'.

issues currently debated in Australian society. The Likert-type items (see Table 1) on a five point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' were drawn from material by a range of ideologues and right-wing groups and organisations supporting the 1984 anti-Labor federal election campaign. Demographic information for each respondent was also obtained. There were 1680 replies of which 1486 were useable for this analysis, the full results of which are reported in Knight, Smith and Chant (1989). A brief discussion follows.

The data contain five dimensions (see Table 1) obtained by principal factor analysis with varimax rotation. Dimensions 1, 2 and 4 contain the kinds of lifestyle and moral issues central to what might be called the cultural restoration movement. The representations are those of a mythical golden age of an Anglo-Christian Australian society. Dimension 3 specifies particular points of opposition to the welfare state and a liberal-progressive society. Dimension 5 contains the 'free market' agenda aimed at dismantling the welfare state and its policies. It provides a classic exposition of the agenda of the economic New Right.

Confirmatory factor analysis indicates that while there is a general dimension to which (with one exception) all the items in Table 1 contribute, the five dimensions (factors) and their items have a continuing identity. That is, there is a coherent identity consistent with a contrasting of

positions ('right' or 'conservative' and 'liberal' or 'left') not only within, but across the five dimensions. In that situation, the combination of cultural restorationism and New Right economics is generally dominant. At the same time, the five dimensions remain as separate entities within that configuration. That is to say, the data indicate the existence of an Australian New Right (incorporating cultural restorationist and neo-liberal economic views) whose agendas were widely known and acceptable to the majority of the sample. That given, the existence of an Australian New Christian Right can be investigated.

The Australian New Christian Right

So far as the New Right agenda was concerned, the demographic factor with most explanatory power was political allegiance, followed by religious affiliation, with lesser contributions from education, age, sex and occupation. The significance of party ideological factors is indicated in that National Party supporters were most supportive of the New Right in all dimensions, followed always by Liberal Party voters. Supporters of the Australian Labor Party and (more strongly) the Australian Democrats tended to a more 'liberal/left' position. The main influence of religion was the split between Christians and non-Christians, with the former being more likely to agree with the rightist position. At the same time, Christian respondents from other than the 'mainline' churches were generally most conservative on all dimensions. However, only at the polar positions did people possess clear-cut Right and Left characteristics. On dimension 1, for example, elderly Christians with low levels of education and conservative political allegiance contrasted with young non-Christian graduates with left political allegiance.

Dimension 2 (Traditional Lifestyles and Standards) which addressed issues relating to cultural restoration, and Dimension 5 (New Right Economic Agenda) were drawn on in testing for the linkage of religious fundamentalism with cultural restorationist views and market or New Right economic concerns.

Given that fundamentalism is not simply a sectarian correlate but can be found also in mainline churches, an operational definition was sought from the items in Dimension 2, rather than the demographic variable, religious orientation. Dimension 2 was used to define two contrasting groups: 'fundamentalist' or 'conservative Christian' and 'humanist' or those with a 'secular' orientation. The four relevant items were:

Christian standards should be the basis of our whole way of life.
The Bible is the best guide for living.
Christian schools are better places to educate children.
Humanism and atheism are a danger to our society.

Fundamentalism was arbitrarily defined as 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing' with at least three of these four items. There were 601 respondents (or 40% of the sample) in this category. Humanism (348 respondents or 23%) was defined as the converse of this position. An intermediate grouping (537 respondents; 36%) was also established. It should be evident that the results of this sort of definition, while certainly useful, are likely to be fairly coarse.

The elements of dimension 5 (free enterprise, deregulation, privatisation, small government, anti-union, etc) provided the basis for defining an economic New

Table 2. Two scales cross-classified by the New Right v. Socialist Index, and the Fundamentalist v. Humanist Index. The upper panel contains frequencies, and the lower panel contains scale means.

	Traditional and contemporary Lifestyle and Standards				The New Right Economic Agenda			
	FUN	INT	HUM	ALL	FUN	INT	HUM	ALL
ER	287	167	86	540	287	167	86	540
INT	310	364	247	921	310	364	247	921
SOC	4	6	15	25	4	6	15	25
ALL	601	537	348	1486	601	537	348	1486
ER	1.9	2.8	3.4	2.4	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.8
INT	2.0	2.9	3.7	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.8
SOC	2.0	2.9	4.1	3.5	4.1	4.3	4.2	4.2
ALL	2.0	2.9	3.6	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.8	2.4

Abbreviations: (rows) ER - Economic Right, INT - Intermediate, SOC - Socialist, ALL - Overall results; (columns) FUN - Fundamentalist, INT - Intermediate, HUM - Humanist, ALL - Overall results.

Right group. This was arbitrarily defined as agreement or strong agreement with the New Right position on seven or more of the nine items, while a 'socialistic' position was defined as the converse of this. As before, an intermediate group remained. 540 (36%) of the group were defined as New Right, 921 (62%) were intermediate, and 25 (2%!) supported a 'socialist' agenda. It should be evident, as with the fundamentalist vs. humanist index, that this is a relatively coarse index of the economic New Right.

The upper panel of Table 2 indicates the intersection of the fundamentalist/ humanist and New Right/socialist indexes. It can be seen that 287 (19%) of the total sample supported both fundamentalist and New Right views, while only 15 (1%) supported both humanist and socialist views.

The lower panel of Table 2 shows the mean scores, using a five point rating from 'right' (1) to 'left' (5), on the Cultural Restoration (Dimension 3) and New Right (Dimension 5) scales for the fundamentalist v. humanist index and the economic right v. socialistic index.

Fundamentalism is significantly more 'right' than 'humanism' on both cultural restorationist issues and new right economics, while the intermediate category remains intermediate on both dimensions.

The economic right is also seen to be significantly more conservative on social issues than the intermediate and socialistic groupings. Similarly, the combination fundamentalist/economic right is the most conservative on both groupings.

It is worth noting that these differences also obtain on the other three original dimensions. That is to say, fundamentalists are significantly and consistently more conservative or 'rightist' in their support of the traditional Australian way of life, traditional lifestyles and standards, an Anglo-dependent national identity, rejection of the liberal-progressive agenda, and the New Right economic agenda. we conclude that there is indeed an Australian New Christian Right and that fundamentalism is a significant contributor to the Australian New Right.

This study tends to confirm the received wisdom on the demographic correlates of fundamentalism. While females are slightly more likely to be fundamentalist and males are slightly more likely to be humanist, sex is not a significant discriminant. Age, however, is a highly significant discriminator, in that the proportion of fundamentalists increases with age, while humanists are most predominant in the younger groupings. In education, fundamentalism is associated with lower levels of schooling, while humanism is associated with higher levels (leaving certificate or degree). Fundamentalism is negatively correlated with income, while humanists tend to receive above the average income. Occupation-wise, humanists fall largely into the professional/administrative categories while fundamentalists are most likely to fall into the farming sector. All of these differences are highly significant, statistically. Not surprisingly, Queensland has a higher proportion of fundamentalists than New South Wales or Victoria, and fundamentalists are more likely to be found in rural than metropolitan areas. With respect to religious affiliation, however, 41% of fundamentalists were mainline Protestant or Anglican, 28% were Catholic, and 25% were Christian other, while humanists were 31% mainline Protestant/Anglican, 23% Catholic, 22% no religion and 15% Christian other. In politics, fundamentalist preferences were Liberal, 37%; National Party, 34%; ALP, 21% and Democrats, 5%. Humanist preferences, however, were ALP, 34%; Liberal, 31%; National Party, 24% and Democrats, 7%. The differences with respect to religion and politics were both highly significant.

Discussion

This analysis of the results of a 1986 survey of Australian social attitudes indicates that a significant section of respondents (almost one in five) held views which might be described as New Christian Right. They would appear to hold views similar to lobbies such as Rona Joyner's still functioning STOP/CARE (Society to Outlaw Pornography and Committee Against Regressive Education), the League of Rights or Fred Nile's Festival of Light. Their political commitment was considerably (71%) to the 'right' and the Liberal-National Party coalition. It may be that this was only because of the absence of more explicitly New Christian Right political parties. However, while the Call to Australia Party has been created in more recent times, it does not seem (as yet, at any rate) to have attracted New Christian Right supporters in sufficient numbers to give it anything more than a certain nuisance value.

This is perhaps explicable in terms of the discursive capacity of the two conservative parties to articulate a cultural restorationist and economic New Right perspective which incorporates the views and values of many in the New Christian Right. (A more detailed discussion of New Right discursive formations is found in Knight, Smith and Chant, 1989.)

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Impressions of Fundamentalist Islam: Iran Observed

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The western media portrayal of life in the Islamic Republic of Iran during the decade of the 1980s, following the revolution of 1979, was very rarely favourable. An occasional observer of post-revolutionary Iran could be forgiven for visualising a stereotype of a harsh regime which had as prime goals the clamping down on the local version of western pop sub-culture and the de-emancipation of women. Simply put, the Iranians have been portrayed for over a decade as the 'baddies' in several conflicts: the on-going tension with the United States; the surge in Islamic fundamentalism throughout the muslim world which went hand-in-hand with what appeared to be an active Iranian policy of exporting revolution; the Iran-Iraq conflict, during which the West saw Iraq as a buffer against Iranian fundamentalist expansion; and the dispute with Britain over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.

Not only did the image of Iran suffer, but the stereotype of Islam in general was badly affected by the various conflicts between Iran and the West. Iran was seen as the latter-day exponent of revivalist fundamentalist Islam, indeed the personification of the Islamic faith, and its actions which aroused so much hostility in the West led directly to a rapid eroding of the perception of Islam throughout the Western world (Von Der Mehden 1983).

Of considerable interest for our purposes is the Iranian perception of the post 1979 Islamic republic, and the claim that it is the first truly Islamic state to be established since the community assembled by the Prophet Muhammad in 7th century Arabia (Bakhash 1990:8). This paper [1] will focus on several significant features of contemporary Iran, placing them within an Islamic context, by reference to the Qur'ân and speeches and writings of leading Iranian Islamic revolutionaries.

Social Engineering

Post-revolution Iran is characterised by a single-minded, normative approach to restructuring society. There is little room in modern-day Iran for the pluralism of the West. The significant difference between the West and Iran in terms of the varying attitudes to pluralism, is that in Western societies there is a separation between Church and State, whereas in post-revolution Iran religious values underpin the entire philosophy and structure of the State. In Western societies, there is no single supreme guardian of absolute values. Rather, relativism has become the order of the day, and Western democracies place a high value on freedom of opinion, political persuasion and creed. In societies where religion is the formalised basis of the State, however, revealed scripture containing God's Word repre-

sents an absolute set of values, which overrides any human value systems (which are perceived as being inherently flawed). This makes for a strong, central moral code, which because of the acceptance of absolutes in terms of beliefs and behaviour, absolves the society of the need to allow for relativist pluralism to a considerable degree.

Thus, in an Islamic state, such as Iran, the ultimate point of reference for all matters, whether judicial, moral, ethical, or social, will be scripture: the Qur'ân, the Islamic Traditions of the Prophet, and the successive layers of Islamic literature built upon these two great sources. Any value system which is at variance with these sources is seen quite simply as being incompatible with God's Word, and thus wrong. There can be no room for the 'each to their own' syndrome of the West, as there is logically no alternative, equally valid system to that given to humanity by God. This belief in the divine origin of Islamic law is encapsulated in the teachings of the Ayatollah Khomeini, who said:

Islamic government is the government of divine right, and its laws cannot be changed, modified, or contested. (Hendra 1980:15)

It is important in this context to understand the impact that such pronouncements by Khomeini had on Iranians. He was accorded unquestioned authority as the *faqih* or supreme jurist. As his spiritual successor Ali Khamenei said in 1988, 'When the supreme jurist issues an order based on the interests of Islam and the society, that order is an order from God, a religious edict.' (Bakhash 1990:11)

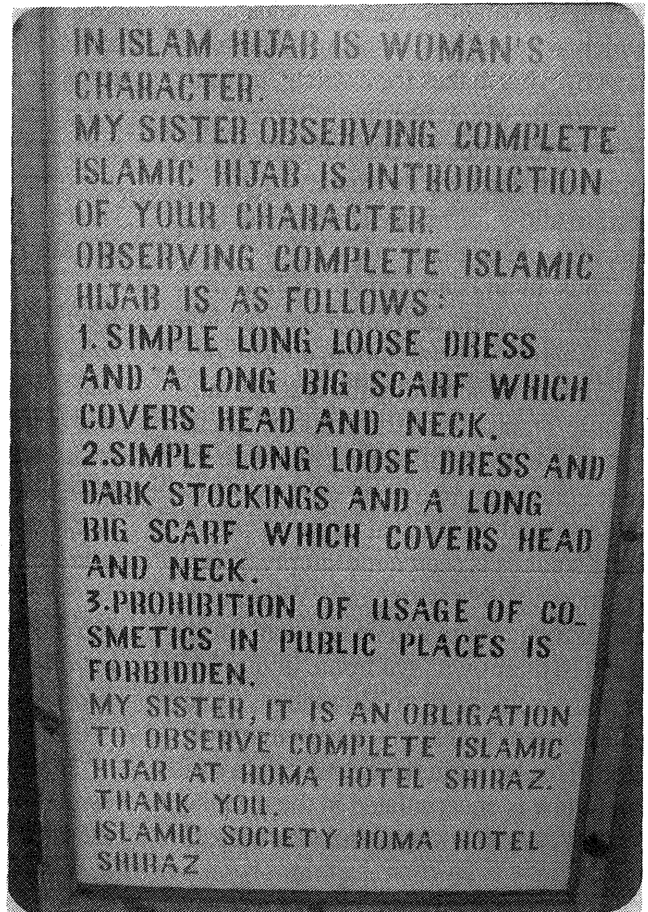
To reinforce the authority which he derived from his position, Khomeini regularly drew upon the authority of the Qur'ân. This is the essence of fundamentalist Islam: the recourse to revealed scripture as the primary point of reference in setting the goals and patterns of contemporary society. An example to illustrate the issue of the divine origin of Islamic law discussed above is found in Qur'anic verses which encapsulate the uniqueness and absoluteness of Islam, such as:

(Q3:109)You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah; and if the followers of the Book had believed it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors.

(Q2:143)And thus We have made you a medium (just) nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people...

Education in Iran has been used as an essential tool for social engineering since the earliest stages of the revolution. It was seen by the revolutionaries as having been an agent of negative values during the Shah's period of rule, and for two years in the early post-revolutionary period, Iranian universities were closed down, to allow time to purge the institutions of anti-revolutionary influences. But after this initial purification process, the universities have come to be seen as providing fertile ground for consolidating the revolution. This has had various manifestations. Firstly, there is an ideological screening process which ensures that both academic and administrative staff in prominent positions are supporters of the Islamic government. Secondly, changes to school and university curricula have served to reinforce revolutionary ideals. For example, school curricula now in-

clude a subject called Morals. An Iranian acquaintance, who teaches Morals in schools, described it to me as one of the most important aims of the Iranian education system, which wants to change the behaviour of Iranian children, owing to what he termed 'a crisis in social behaviour'. He demonstrated a very fixed view of what is right and what is wrong, and a resolve to bring up a new breed of Iranians who will be attuned to absolute values, as are found in God's Law.



A sign in an Iranian hotel reminding foreign women of the compulsory dress code.

The Moral Crusade

One of the most striking features about contemporary Iran is the intense preoccupation of the authorities with establishing and maintaining a strict code of sexual morality. Once again, the reference point is the Qur'ân, which gives very clear instructions, both in relation to sexual conduct, and also in connection with dressing in an appropriately modest manner. The following verses demonstrate this:

(Q24:30)Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do.

(Q24:31)And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands...

(Q24:33)And let those who do not find the means to marry keep chaste until Allah makes them free from want out of his grace.

The cornerstone device for enforcing appropriate moral conduct is the *hijab*,

the female headcovering which is mandatory apparel for every woman outside her home [2]. It is the means to ensure that women do 'not display their ornaments' as referred to above. The role of the *hijab* in a nutshell is as follows:

The philosophy behind the hijab for women in Islam is that she should cover her body in her associations with men whom she is not related to according to the Divine Law and that she does not flaunt and display herself. (Mutahhari 1987:12)

To supplement the *hijab* covering, Iranian women are forbidden to shake hands with men other than those in their immediate family, and devout Iranian women are trained to defer their gaze when meeting men. The purpose is to prevent the temptation for men to leer at women with lustful looks, which is forbidden by Islam.

The existence of clear Qur'anic injunctions regarding moral behaviour, and the implementation of these injunctions in the Islamic legal code which predominates in Iran, raises the issue of the appropriate punishment for miscreants. Which of the nation's members are most guilty of actions which are contrary to the spirit of these injunctions, and how does the system deal with law-breakers?

These questions were put to a young member of academic staff, who was a specialist in criminology and who also wrote articles for youth magazines on subjects related to crime among the young. The interview went as follows:

Q: Is crime a big problem amongst young people in Iran?
A: Yes, it is very important in Iran.
Q: What are the main crimes that young people engage in in Tehran?
A: Crimes against property and sexual crimes. These two categories are most important.
Q: You mean rape?
A: Rape in foreign countries is important, but in Iran, unlawful intercourse is a crime. Rape refers to relations between a man and a woman by force. In Iran, this is a crime, as are unlawful relations between a man and a woman (without use of force).
Q: What is the punishment for an unlawful relationship between a man and a woman?
A: If the man or woman is married, the punishment is death. Of course, to prove this crime is very difficult. If you look in the newspaper, you will have difficulty finding cases of this punishment, because proving it is very difficult. For example, there must be four witnesses to the act. They must completely see the act.
If the man or woman who commits the crime is not married, they receive one hundred lashes. Proving this is also difficult. There must be witnesses or a confession.

The punishments referred to above have been codified in the post-revolutionary Iranian legal system of civil law, with the details being drawn from the Qur'ân (Q4:15-16) and the Islamic Traditions.

An example of this detail concerns the identity of the witnesses required in order to prove a charge of fornication:

Article 91: Fornication is proved with the testimony of four reputable men, or three reputable men and two reputable women, whether it involves the punishment of flogging or the punishment of stoning to death.

Article 92: In cases where fornication involves only the punishment of flogging, it

is also proved with the testimony of two reputable men or four reputable women.

NOTE: Testimony of women alone or jointly with that of one reputable man does not prove fornication; rather such witnesses shall be subject to the punishment for slander. (Da'wati 1984:150-151)

During the 1980s, the precondition of there being witnesses to fornication for a verdict of guilty to be handed down was not always enforced. However, it appears that since early 1990, there has been some tightening up of the conditions for carrying out punishment for moral crimes, and it is now increasingly necessary for the prescribed number of witnesses to be produced before the law can be carried out, as defined above.

Minorities - Misfits of the Islamic Revolution

What is the place of minorities in a society with such a clearly defined set of social norms and absolute values? The issue of minority rights is addressed in Iran within the context of the broader Islamic community. This is illustrated by the following comment by the Ayatollah Khomeini:

The person who governs the Moslem community must always have its interests at heart and not his own. This is why Islam has put so many people to death: to safeguard the interests of the Moslem community. Islam has obliterated many tribes because they were sources of corruption and harmful to the welfare of Moslems. (Hendra 1980:28)

The above statement illustrates a fundamental point about contemporary Iran; namely, that most minorities are able to function as distinct social and religious groups providing that they acknowledge the supremacy and authority of the Shiite Islamic government and do not threaten this authority in any way. To this end, various minority groups have representatives within the Iranian parliament, and non-Islamic groups are free to practise their own forms of worship within certain limits [3]. Nevertheless, such 'freedom within constraints' runs counter to the human spirit of independence, and there is evidence of varying degrees of dissatisfaction among minority groups, whether social, political, or religious, who are out of step with the policies and persuasions of the Iranian authorities.

A Kurdish informant expressed such disaffection in saying that although he was a Muslim, he was regarded with suspicion because he did not assume the outward trappings of being a good revolutionary, such as regular attendance at the mosque, or remaining unshaven. Kurds complain of being subjected to ongoing, and sometimes violent, forms of discrimination by fellow Iranians partly because of their being Sunni Muslims, whereas the majority of Iranians are Shiites. It should be added that Kurdish resistance groups, struggling for an independent Kurdish state, have greatly contributed to a continuing distrust of the Kurds by the Iranian government. Such an open challenge to the central Islamic authority usually precipitates a Government clamp-down on what it perceives as a dissident group.

A minority group to feel the full brunt of official disapproval is that of the Baha'is. Unlike the Kurds, who are accepted as muslims, the Baha'is are treated

with disdain, and regarded as being preachers of a false, infidel creed. Persecution of this group has included confiscation of property, denial of basic civil rights, physical abuse, and imprisonment and execution (Amnesty International Report 1985:310). The fact that the Baha'i faith developed as an offshoot of Islam, and that the three central figures in its establishment are buried in a shrine in Haifa, Israel, has not assisted their cause in the eyes of the Iranian Government. The main Baha'i temple in Tehran has been closed down, and many Baha'is have left Iran since 1979 to settle in western countries, including Australia.

Jews are considered by Islam as 'People of the Book', and are thus accorded recognition as one of the official state religions, and are allowed to practise their faith providing they don't proselytise. Nevertheless, the frequent references to Jews in the Qur'ân are often highly critical, as was seen previously in the reference to 'the followers of the Book' in Q3:109. Though not arousing the ire of the Iranian authorities to the same degree as the Baha'is, Jews have nevertheless experienced varying degrees of discrimination, including being denied opportunities for advancement in government service, denial of import/export licenses for Jewish businessmen, and the withholding of various standard civic services from Jewish neighbourhoods. There are also reports of specially heavy taxes being levied against Jews, as well as other measures, such as refusing to grant permission for an entire family to travel out of Iran, thus detaining one member to ensure the return of the others. Some Iranian Jews have managed to leave Iran via Turkey, continuing on to Israel, where they have been accepted as new immigrants, joining a substantial community of ex-Iranian Jews now resident in Israel.

Thus, the official attitude to and treatment of minorities is largely dependent on the degree to which those minorities show allegiance to the overall rule of Islam. They enjoy a freedom with constraints and without a complete degree of equality. This is labelled discrimination in the West, but supporters of the Iranian government argue that the standard is sanctioned by Islam, so variants diverging from this Islamic standard are not deserving of complete equality.

Heroes of the Islamic Revolution

Preceding discussion has focused upon issues and forces identified as potential or actual opponents of the Islamic state. However, the Islamic revolution has not been simply preoccupied with addressing negative factors in society. An essential agent of the fundamentalist revolution has been the depiction of goals of acceptable Islamic behaviour. The most striking device for doing this is in the identification of heroes of the Islamic revolution for the benefit of the masses.

The most frequently depicted personality is Imam Khomeini, the spiritual father of the revolution and leader until his death in June 1989. Representations of Khomeini are found on all manner of constructions, from small columns to large walls of multi-storey buildings. In addition, one will also see paintings of Imam Khomeini's successor as spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as representations of various heroes of the revolution and martyrs of the war against Iraq.

Since 1979, many streets have been renamed, and now carry the names of personalities held up as models of

revolutionary ideals. A notable example is Khaled Eslambouli Street, named after one of the assassins of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Eslambouli is regarded as a hero in Iran because, as a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, he was responsible for exacting revenge on Sadat for the latter's signing of the Camp David Peace accords with Israel in 1979. The post-revolution Iranian regime is implacably opposed to the existence of the State of Israel. It sees the establishment of the Jewish state on former Islamic-controlled land, and Israel's control over the Islamic holy site of Al-Aksa in Jerusalem, as running directly counter to the previously-discussed notion of Jewish communities being acceptable within *dâr al-Islâm.* only as long as they accept Islamic sovereignty.

Many institutions carry the names of martyrs of post-revolutionary Iran. An example is Shahid Chamran University, named after a famous Iranian who spent several years in Lebanon assisting Lebanese Shiite forces in their struggles in the Lebanese Civil War, and who was eventually killed in the Iran-Iraq War. Another is Shahid Beheshti University, named after a prominent leader of the revolution and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who was assassinated by Mojahedin rebels in June 1981.

Perhaps one of the most prominent impressions which strikes the visitor to Iran is the cult of martyrdom which has been developed and is reinforced in a myriad of ways. In addition to the numerous streets, buildings, and universities which carry the name of a *shahid*, or martyr, one cannot fail to constantly encounter slogans, exhorting young Iranians to taste the glory of dying for Islam. Slogans such as 'Faith, Jihad, Martyrdom: the Only Way to Salvation' adorn both city walls and billboards on country roads. Waiting rooms in government offices will often include a large picture poster of young Shiite revolutionary guards, with their characteristic red headbands [4], marching ceremoniously on parade prior to embarking for some distant conflict on the Iran-Iraq border or in Lebanon. The ultimate goal seems to be admission to the Behesht-e-Zahra, the martyrs cemetery in the southern suburbs of Tehran, where rows of martyrs' tombstones surround a large fountain which spews out bright red water, representing the blood of the martyred heroes.

The common characteristic in the depiction of heroes of the revolution and models of good revolutionary behaviour is their commitment to the struggle against what are perceived as anti- Islamic forces for evil. This struggle is depicted as a fundamental dichotomy between good, represented by Islamic values and teachings, and evil, represented by non-Islamic, secularist, materialist value systems.

Whither Iran?

The temptation is to look at recent developments in Iranian society through the eyes of a completely different, western culture, and to judge it negatively as a result. Indeed, the reverse could also apply, and a number of my Iranian acquaintances who are sympathetic to the revolution were highly critical of what they saw as the advanced state of decay of western society, manifested in the decline in marriage, fewer people wanting children, rampant drug problems, and a preoccupation with self-serving materialism. Just as this latter assessment of the West is raw and simplistic, it would not be appropriate to

evaluate post-revolutionary Iran out of context. Rather, it is necessary to see it as a product of the Iran which went before, which was characterised by enormous social inequities and stark distinctions between the westernised elite and the less educated masses. In the revolution, the latter section of society finally found its voice, and the dramatic swing in the pendulum has been a function of political and social developments this century and the conditions existing at the time of the revolution.

So whither Iran? The initial fundamentalist scripture-driven fervour and zeal of the 1980s has been tempered somewhat during 1990 and 1991 by more pragmatic factors, brought about by considerable social and economic dislocation resulting from both the revolution itself and the eight year long Iran-Iraq War. There seems little doubt that the radical changes brought about by the revolution, in terms of social engineering based on Islamic values, will continue to be the predominant determining factor in society for some time to come. But we are also likely to witness a gradual breakdown of the simplistic portrayal of the Western 'bogey-man', which will coincide with a growing awareness on the part of Iran that it cannot quarantine itself from the West. Iran will continue to be the most dynamic force for change in the muslim world for some time to come, but its own increasing pragmatism will serve to add a degree of stability to current social and political trends throughout the muslim world.

Notes

1.The following pages describe impressions of Iran gathered during three visits which I made to Tehran between October 1990 and November 1991.

2.Very devout women will wear the hijab even within the home. Less committed muslim women wear it in public as is obligatory, but discard it as soon as they withdraw to the privacy of their own homes.

3. An example of such limits concerns the practice of Christian worship in Iran, where churches must avoid all references to Jesus as the 'Son of God' in their liturgy. Such a reference is expressly forbidden at several places in the Qur'ân, such as Q18:4-5 'And warn those who say: Allah has taken a son. They have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers; a grievous word it is that comes out of their mouths, they speak nothing but a lie'.

4. These bandannas are emblazoned with the ubiquitous Islamic exhortations, most commonly in the form of dedications to the Twelfth Imam, whose coming will inaugurate the reign of Truth and Justice, according to Shiite belief.

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Jewish Fundamentalism

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At the end of World War II, an observer in either Israel (then Palestine) or the United States, would have been hard put to see Orthodox or fundamentalist Judaism as anything other than a living fossil, soon to be superseded by more progressive forms of Jewish observance. After all, Eastern Europe, the heartland of Orthodoxy had been almost totally annihilated by the twin assaults of Communism and the Nazi Holocaust. Orthodox Judaism had shown little talent to this point in surviving in the corrosive environment of North America, South Africa, or Australia, which unlike Eastern Europe, offered positive incentives for Jews who would moderate their observance in the interest of fitting in and getting ahead. Moreover, in Israel a new breed of nationalistic Jew, the sabra, was emerging, aggressive, proud of his or her Jewish heritage, but having little use for such restrictions as Sabbath, which appeared to be almost universally accepted as an outdated restriction having little value in modern industrial society.

That fundamentalist Judaism has shown not only incredible staying power, but the ability to grow appears astonishing, but only to one who is not aware of similar trends in most other religions. Fundamentalist Judaism appears to be following many of the same social and religious dynamics as fundamentalist Christianity, particularly in the United States and to a lesser extent, Australia.

This article shall focus on these similar factors and how they contribute to the rise of American fundamentalist Judaism.

Robert Wuthnow, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University, has identified fundamentalism as essentially a response to modernity. Rather than being an authentic return to premodern folk pi-

ety, fundamentalism is essentially an attempt to update a religious tradition and to adjust and conform to the forms of modernity without accepting the substance of modernism. Fundamentalism identifies the priorities of the religious tradition, the *fundamentals* which must be adhered to. Across religious traditions, these fundamentals appear to fall in roughly three categories, purity, pentecostalism, and prophecy.

Purity comprises the laws and norms of the religious society. In Christianity, these include sexual mores such as prohibitions on divorce and premarital and extramarital sex, as well as strictures against alcohol. In Islam most of these strictures are included in the *Sharia* or Muslim legal system. In Judaism, these strictures (with the exception of the Christian prohibition on divorce(not found in Islam either)) are included in the *Mitzvot* or commandments.

Pentecostalism, besides referring to a specific Christian group of denominations, refers to the acceptance and cultivation of states of religious euphoria or ecstasy. In Christianity, examples abound in the ecstatic singing and preaching associated with pentecostal churches. In Judaism, Chassidism has historically filled this role, as it does today. Ecstatic singing, dancing and often drinking at *fahrbrengenen* (the Lubavitch chassidic term for celebration) are quite common in Chassidic movements, and offer a major religious attraction.

Prophecy is an emphasis on the fulfilment of end times speculation. The need for fundamentalists to fit current events into an expected prophetic framework is an aspect that appears to cross religious lines. In Shiite Islam, speculation on the revelation of the hidden Imam centred on the Ayatollah Khomeinei. In fundamentalist Christianity, as is well known, speculation has centred on the Book of Revelations, with current events being interpreted in terms of them. In Judaism, various sources have been quoted in attempts to relate current events to the end times regarding the coming of Moshiach. Although the current Lubavitch speculation is the most obvious example of this, it is not the only current example, as we shall see.

This preoccupation with end times is both a manifestation of and a support for an attitude of *premillennialism.* Premillennialism can be defined as a belief that the world is in a relatively undesirable period in which evil is relatively triumphant. This period will be followed by a cataclysmic change which is the millennium, which will usher in a new and perfected world.

Premillennialism is relatively common in religions. Hindus believe that we are in the dark Age of Kali. Shiite and Ismaili muslims await the coming of the hidden Imam. Fundamentalist Christians await the Second Coming of Jesus. And fundamentalist Jews await the coming of Moshiach.

A premillennialist stance makes it possible for a fundamentalist group to be skeptical and critical of the world, and of secular authority. If the world is not perfectible without a major upheaval, than progress is illusory. This fits with an already existing dissatisfaction with the world among fundamentalists.

Postmillennialism on the other hand, is rare among fundamentalist movements. Postmillennialism postulates that the world is past the millennium and that we are living in the new age, or to paraphrase Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss, 'the best of all possible worlds'. Postmillennialism thus,

world affirming, affirms the authority of the broader society.

During the middle ages, Judaism as a whole was premillennialist and Christianity as a whole was postmillennialist. The Church considered itself to be the new Israel, the Kingdom of G-d, Christendom, deriving its authority in the new age which allegedly began with the birth of Christ from the apostolic succession from Peter. The Second Coming was considered to be an event far in the future (although there was a great deal of theological speculation at around 1000 A.D.). Righteousness was vested in and in obedience to, an already existing authority structure, the Church, from whom even the State derived ultimate authority.

Judaism on the other hand, theologically denied the validity of Jesus Christ. Judaism maintained a theologically premillennial stance, emphasising the undesirability of *galut*, of exile, and praying for redemption from exile and the coming of Moshiach. The gentile world was not desirable, and gentile authority was not only illegitimate, but often downright hostile. Judaism thus maintained a world denying premillennial stance.

During the 17th Century, Judaism was rocked by the episode of the false messiah, Sabbatai Sevi. Attracting a large following, his movement took a postmillennial stance, claiming that since the messianic age had dawned, the existing Torah was to be replaced by a new, higher Torah, the 'Torah of Atzilut'. Although he was discredited in the eyes of most Jews following his acceptance of Islam as an alternative to execution, he maintained an underground following and his movement had profound effects on Judaism that has persisted to the present day. Most obviously, it left the mainstream of Orthodox Judaism hypervigilant when it came to the issue of innovations withing Judaism. New movements within Judaism, whether the Chassidism of the Baal Shem Tov in Eastern Europe, or the Kabbalism of Moses Chaim Luzzato had to run the gauntlet of opposition from rabbinic authorities who feared the rise of another Sabbatai Sevi. This vigilance was not necessarily misplaced, because Sabbataian movements, particularly that of Jacob Frank were quite active at the time, and continued to preach the doctrine of revolution against the law of Torah.

It is still a contentious issue whether followers of Jacob Frank played a major rôle in the initial development of Reform Judaism, following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War as Gershom Scholem has alleged. What is beyond contention is that Judaism developed postmillennial offshoots at the same time that some Protestant sects began espousing premillennialist doctrines. During the 1820s, Abraham Geiger developed a Reform Jewish theology that was postmillennial in nature. It denied the validity of the Moshiach concept, claiming that the world would gradually (or was gradually) evolving into a messianic age. The idea of the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of its sacrifices was denied. The adopting of the title of temple by Reform Jewish congregations was part of this denial. Laws such as sabbath and Kashruth were considered to be outmoded, a product of the previous unenlightened age. The Reform and Liberal movement in Judaism thus moved from the traditional world denying stance of Judaism to one of world affirmation, and was at least implicitly, postmillennialist.

At the same time Abraham Geiger was developing Reform Judaism in Germany,

a Scottish preacher named John Nelson Darby, founder of a sect called the Plymouth Brethren, was promulgating a *pre*-millennialist theology among protestant Christians. Darby emphasised the Christian Book of Revelations, which although it had been accepted into the Christian canon was little studied. He postulated that the world would end in a cataclysm known as the Great Tribulation, in which the antichrist would reign for 14 years, to be followed by the return of Christ. Somewhere during this time (most premillennialist fundamentalist Christians optimistically believe immediately before the Great Tribulation), faithful Christians would be caught up or *raptured* into heaven. Darbyism thus is an essentially world denying view of Christianity.

Darby's beliefs never caught on to a great degree in Great Britain. But during the course of the 19th Century, they became popular in the United States. This was partially the result of Thomas Schofield, a conservative protestant theologian in the United States, who devised a concise means of studying the bible. His Schofield reference bibles were easily read and studied and came to dominate conservative American Christianity at a time when the more dominant liberal traditions were appealing only to people of higher socio-economic status.

By the 1920s, when the fundamentalist-modernist debates began to polarise American religious opinion, the Schofield Reference Bible was already entrenched, and premillennialism the dominant millennial belief among American fundamentalist Christians.

At this time, the United States had developed a reputation as a wasteland for Orthodox Judaism. Over the course of the 19th Century, a pattern had developed, noted by Sklar and others, of pioneer Jews coming to the United States (and Australia) tending to be the poorer, less educated, and more alienated members of the Jewish community. Finding themselves in an alien land with little prejudice against Jews, but with few Jews with which to build communal institutions and reinforce religiosity, they quickly learned to attenuate their religious observances in the interest of survival and prosperity. The arrival of the pioneer Eastern European Jews in the US in the 1860s and 1870s and the first major wave of Russian Jews in the early 1880s fits this pattern. By the time that more solid members of the Jewish community arrived, often dislodged by persecution, as the second major wave of Jewish immigration was in the early 1900s, their friends and neighbours who had left earlier had made their adjustments to American (and British and Australian and South African) secular society, and were in a position to act as role models for their 'greenhorn' relatives who would often be in need of their financial assistance. Secularity thus became the norm in the new Jewish communities, aided and abetted by secularising movements from Haskalah to Bundism to Communism to Zionism that were sweeping Eastern Europe during the *fin de siecle*. Religious observance soon faltered in an environment in which if one did not work on Saturday, one would not have a job on the following Monday, even if one worked for a Jew. Moreover, Reform Judaism flourished in the United States as it was readily able to accommodate itself to the secular and postmillennial reality that at the time was not only dominant, but supreme in the United States in which religion was either regarded as a strictly private matter, or else was seen as a guide for social action, following the lead of the Social Gospel Movement, then coming

into ascendancy. The established Orthodox Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, following a pattern established during the early 19th Century of avoiding the dilemmas of emancipation by declining emancipation, initially wrote off migration (and migrants) to America (and Australia was unheard of) as a religious death sentence. This created a self fulfilling prophecy in which the United States received the worst of Europe's new rabbis and the least of its scholarship. Religious Jews were encouraged to remain in Europe if at all possible.

Nevertheless, such were the forces sweeping Europe that remaining in Europe was often not an option after World War I. The war dislodged many Jewish communities in Poland and Russia, and the Communist persecution of religious observance, often with secularised Bolshevik Jews in the vanguard, made the restoration of the shtetl communities not an option, particularly in those parts of Russia that were part of the new USSR. Although many attempted to settle in still non-communist parts of Eastern Europe (and some, particularly the Lubavitch communities attempted to carry on Orthodox observance illegally within the USSR), the United States began to be seen as more of a viable option for Orthodox communities. Orthodox Jews began to immigrate to the United States for the first time with the intent of reestablishing communities on American soil between 1917 and 1921, when new, ethnically based immigration restrictions largely curtailed this movement. It was enough, however, to begin the establishment of a religious infrastructure that could be built upon after the Second World War, when surviving communities could find refuge in the United States.

The first generation of Orthodox Jews in the United States, who arrived before World War II, and the second generation who arrived immediately after the war, tended to shun university education as a path to assimilation, relying instead on small businesses, and sometimes on particular niches, such as the diamond industry in New York City. This was a pattern that did not begin to be broken until the 1960s. As a result, Orthodox Jews tended to be less educated, and have lower income than less religious, more assimilated Jews.

This marginalisation was reinforced by events occurring in what was then Palestine. Although religious Jews had been the first Jews to return to the Land of Israel, beginning in the 18th Century, they for the most part had been content to study Torah and live on alms sent from Europe. The arrival of idealistic, aggressively secular and socialist Jews who made up the Zionist movement horrified them. They quickly came to oppose the Zionist movement as a violation of a contract made with the gentile nations in which Jews would not attempt to overthrow gentile authority and rebuild the temple and the gentiles would not persecute the Jews 'overmuch'. The creation of the State of Israel, they saw as an abomination and something that should not even be contemplated until the coming of Moshiach. Attempts to create a central religious authority in the 1920s were met by hostility and boycott, although a Chief Rabbinate for Israel was established under the leadership of Rabbi Avraham Kook. Rav Kook established a theology of religious zionism that while still is largely marginal to most hard core Orthodox Jews, helped bridge the gap between Orthodoxy and Zionism and in many ways, made Orthodox Judaism more ap-

proachable to many non-religious Jews who returned to Orthodoxy in the Baalei Teshuvah Movement of the 1970s.

Despite the objections of the then mainstream of Orthodox Judaism, the State of Israel was established, and with the exception of the *Neturah Kartah* movement and the Satmar Chassidim, the State of Israel won a grudging acceptance as a *fait accompli* among most Orthodox Jews, although the idea of a secular non-observant state governing Israel still provokes anger among them.

The unwillingness of Orthodox Jews to fully accept the Jewish state was one of the factors marginalising them until the 1970s.

It was a result of the social turmoil of the 1960s that fundamentalism, Christian and Jewish, escaped from marginalisation. Indeed the ethos of the 1960s has tended to delegitimate the entire notion of marginalisation. The 1950s had been marked by both a high degree of material progress and a high degree of conformity and social structure. Vance Packard, in his work *The Status Seekers* details how religious behaviour as well as income, tended to be determined by status.

Quite probably the United States was suffering from fatigue as a result of 35 years of continuous mobilisation to cope with the Great Depression, the Nazi menace, and Communism. Certainly liberal Jews played a major role in the destabilising effects of the 1960s. After all, the postwar American Civil Rights Movement was a coalition between African-Americans and Jews, aimed at eliminating prejudice once and for all as a factor in American life, in order to make another holocaust impossible and eliminate the last racial and religious barriers to full participation by both black Americans and Jews in American professional and public life. The values created by the Civil Rights Movement, however, interacted with the rebellion against religious and social conformity that began with the Beats in the 1950s, and culminated in the hippies of the 1960s. By the beginnings of the 1970s, in the course of their alienation and religious quests, a fair number of hippies (some of them gentile converts) had begun to find their way back to Orthodox Judaism and particularly Chassidic Judaism, just as hippies were finding their way to fundamentalist Christianity via the Jesus Movement. In both cases, the combination of premillennialism, which implied a critique of modern society, pentecostal enthusiasm, and personal purity, tended to meet hippie's model of the world and to provide them with a way of reintegrating with society and finding one's way in it as an adult, without surrendering to it.

Orthodox rabbis such as Rabbi Shlomo Carlbach of San Francisco, the Horneshteipler Rebbe, Rabbi Shloime Twerski of Denver, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn of New York, and the Bostoner Rebbe, Rabbi Horowitz, began to appeal to Orthodox Jews in the United States. In Israel, during the 1970s, rabbis such as Rabbi Noach Weinberg of Aish Hatorah Yeshivah and Rabbi Goldstein of the Diaspora Yeshivah, began to appeal to Baalei Teshuvah, educated young people. These Israeli baalei teshuvah yeshivot were not Chassidic and tended to be part of the Mitnagid yeshiva movement. As such, they quickly broadened the baalei teshuvah movement to include *Mitnagidim* (former opponents of the Chassidic movement) as well as Chassidim thus avoiding a possible cleavage on Chassidic-Mitnagid lines. They were joined by religious zionists led by Rabbi

Moshe Levinger of the Gush Emunim, a movement specialising in settling in the occupied territories, and the even more militant Rabbi Meir Kahane, an expatriate American rabbi whose Jewish Defence League brought a new muscularity to orthodox Judaism in the United States.

The espousing of fundamentalist Judaism by college educated Jews of higher socioeconomic backgrounds has tended to break down the marginalisation of Orthodox Judaism, just as a similar phenomenon has occurred in fundamentalist Christianity. Jewish fundamentalism has come to display a new self confidence based on a proven ability to attract educated and well-to-do people to religious observance. A college education is no longer universally feared as religious death. Although baalei teshuvim still tend to be snubbed in marriage by Orthodox from birth families, this difference appears to disappear in the second generation.

The spectrum of Orthodox Judaism is wide. It includes the Discovery Workshop, a workshop by Yeshivah Aish Hatorah whose major thrust is the proving of divine authorship of an inerrant Torah through the discovery of codes in the Torah (Pentateuch only) that are only discernible by computer, and are held to be statistically impossibly there by accident. It includes a wide range of shabbatonim, sabbath workshops aimed at acquainting people with torah observance.

One area of Jewish fundamentalism that has attracted a great deal of attention lately, particularly in Australia, is a growing fascination with prophecy and eschatology (end time speculation), particularly among Lubavitch chassidim. This speculation has been greatly aided by the momentous events of 1989, 1990, and 1991, which has been so momentous that it has inevitably resulted in messianic speculation.

During the period immediately prior to 1989, Israel had been going through a period of self doubt and self reflection caused by a combination of economic difficulties and the limited success of the 1982 Operation Peace For Galilee. This became even more apparent with the launching of the Intifada. The splits between the nonzionist or antizionist *charedi* wings of orthodoxy and the nationalist Kach and Gush Emunim movements became even more rancorous than they already were. All of this changed to a degree with the release of Soviet Jews by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989. In place of a stark and apocalyptic choice between territorial compromise, eventual demographic submergence by a rising Arab birthrate, and expulsion of Arab populations advocated by Rabbi Meir Kahane, the rising tide of Russian Jews provided some breathing room, if they could be successfully absorbed. In the face of these new possibilities, a new optimism emerged. This became even more apparent during the period of the Gulf War, in which the Lubavitch Chassidic Movement discovered a prophecy in *Yalkut Shemoni*, a commentary on the prophets, which appeared to link the Gulf War situation with the coming of Moshiach. The coincidental (or providential) juxtaposition of the start of the crisis with Tish'b'Av, the start of the ground war with Shabbat Zachor, and the defeat of Iraq and ceasefire with the onset of Purim created an expectation of the coming of Moshiach in Lubavitch that was reinforce by the death of the old USSR and its replacement by a commonwealth of its formerly constituent republics. Lubavitch had been steadily moving in the direction of declaring that the Moshiach is on the

earth ever since the Lubavitcher Rebbe's famous speech of Nissan 26, 5751 in which he declared that he had done all that he could to bring Moshiach and that the rest was up to his followers. By November of 1991, the Lubavitcher Rebbe was exhorting Jews to "open their eyes and see" that Moshiach was on this earth, and that all that was necessary was for people to realise the fact.

Nevertheless, Lubavitch had and has made it quite clear that it will continue to hold to a premillennialist line until the Temple is standing in its place. Lubavitch continues to adhere quite closely to the Maimonidean (*hilchat malkut*) definitions of the coming of Moshiach which hold that while a candidate may *probably* be considered Moshiach if he emerges from the House of David (many Chassidic Rebbes claim descent from the House of David through descent from Rashi), compel all of Israel to follow the laws of Torah and fight the wars of G-d (which Lubavitchers take to mean against assimilation), he can be considered to be Moshiach. Miracles, according to this conception are not necessary and Lubavitchers make much of the fact that Rabbi Akiva held Bar Koziba (Bar Kochba) to be the Messianic king even though he ultimately failed. Bar Koziba is held to be a *failed* messiah rather than a false messiah.

Just how much support messianism will or will not command outside of Lubavitch remains to be seen. Yet it is significant that the Lubavitcher Rebbe can raise this issue in the manner that he has without being condemned out of hand (at least as of the time of this publication) by the rest of Orthodoxy as a latter day Sabbatai Sevi. This is an indication that the messianic idea has a great deal of life in it within Jewish fundamentalism and remains an idea commanding a great deal of respect and fascination among Orthodox Jewish fundamentalists. The Maimonidean conception of Moshiach emphasises the difference between Moshiach coming 'in its time', 'like a thief by night' i.e. through natural means, and 'before its time', 'on the clouds', if Jews merit it, i.e. through undisputed miracles. Orthodox Jews pray that Moshiach come before its time, in a manner that is undisputable. This would obviously avoid the chance that one might be following a false messiah!

Current events have raised the fascination with Moshiach to such a level, however, that to close the door on any messianism that does not involve obvious violations of the laws of nature (violations which can also be faked) threaten to invalidate the entire concept. To in effect treat the coming of Moshiach as something that must always recede into the future is to express disbelief in the entire concept of Moshiach, which is one of the fundamental tenets of Judaism. For Orthodox Jews to do this would inevitably result in a failure of nerve which has been fatal to other religions in the past. This at all costs, Jewish Orthodox fundamentalism must avoid. It might be better in such circumstances to join a messianic bid that might fail than to attempt to falsify and thwart such a bid. A failed messiah at this point in history might actually be easier to live with than a false messiah. And there is always the chance that given the fact that there is a sovereign Jewish state for the first time since Bar Koziba, such a bid might actually succeed, even though the mainstream of Christianity and Islam (to say nothing of liberal Judaism) might have vested interests in its failure.

Jewish fundamentalism is a movement which has risen from marginality at the same time and for much the same rea-

sons, as Christian fundamentalism. It is a vibrant and dynamic movement. Reform Judaism has been making concessions in the area of patrilineality of Jewish descent that sets it at odds with the rest of Judaism and may yet force a schism. Conservative Judaism (and liberal orthodox) is suffering attrition from low birthrates, assimilation and intermarriage, particularly in the United States. But Orthodoxy has maintained a high birthrate (higher than any fundamentalist Christian denomination in the U.S.) and an integrated social system that has enabled it to both retain its members and attract new members from the rest of Judaism. Unless the risks of the messianic course prove to be its undoing it seems set to become the dominant force within Judaism in the next century.

Book Review

Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture
John Shelby Spong
Harper, San Francisco. 1991
ISBN 0-06-067509-8, 267pp. $14.95

Bishop John has understandably faced criticism from Christian fundamentalists and confessional conservatives because of his demythologising of the Bible and, on the other hand, academic free-thinkers are not sure about his crusade to remythologise the Bible (:237). The author realises that his quest to journey far more deeply into the meaning of biblical truth is more than either fundamentalists or liberals seem willing to do (:88).

However, for increasing numbers of spiritual seekers, Bishop Spong's understanding and use of the Bible makes much sense as he follows the usual hermeneutical stages of description, evaluation and application of the text.

1. He honestly studies and tries to understand the text as it was literally intended by the author within his or her original context.

2. He then pursues the liberal, scholarly aims of higher-critically evaluating the text, its date, its author, its sources, and other relevant data in order to establish what is factual and empirical history, geography and cosmology, and what is poetic, figurative, symbolic narrative, mythology and theology.

3. He then applies the life enhancing features of both its history and mythology anagogically to present life situations and to deeper human experiences where love, life, experiences of God, and issues in living are explored and appropriated.

Along with this hermeneutical approach, Spong sees the need to acknowledge the subjective and relative character of human endeavours (:232), to acknowledge that our scientific categories and realities no longer include supernatural categories (:236), and that in a choice, truth needs to come before orthodoxy.

The contents simply follow an intellectual and spiritual journey through the whole Bible. This includes the Hebrew account of creation and the Flood, Abraham's settlement in Palestine, the Hebrew slavery in Egypt, activities of the Prophets, protesters like Job, Ruth and Jonah, the emergence of Christianity, the apostle Paul's contribution, the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, Christmas and Easter, and who Christ is for people today.

There are many insights in this book which can assist in an appreciation of the Bible's original contexts, an honest higher-critical evaluation, and a spiritually satisfying application of both the factual surface and the deeper spiritual and symbolic truths of the Bible.

The author clearly acknowledges that there are concepts in the Bible which are repugnant to modern consciousness, including the deity's sadistic delight in killing the firstborn of every Egyptian household (:16).

He holds that claims of infallibility and inerrancy result in religious imperialism (:19), that the Bible is clearly not a scientific textbook (:25), that the earth is not flat (:26), that our earth is between four and five billion years old (:32), that life came into existence about three and a half billion years ago in the sea and moved onto the land about 450 million years ago (:38), and that a universal flood that covered the whole earth to the depth of fifteen cubits is not a fact in history but exists only in our mythology.

Bishop Spong is happy to affirm some of the values which the biblical writers affirmed (:33) but he sees the need to interpret our world in the light of our present knowledge and suppositions.

The familiar source theory of JEDP is used to make sense out of the composition of the Pentateuch (:43-55); Job, Ruth and Jonah are seen by the author as literary creations, not as persons in history (:64); the messianic thought is seen to be corporate rather than individual for the Jews (:65); and the Scriptures are seen as acculturated stories of a specific people who capture in their remembered history archetypal and eternal truths which we can still experience, enter and live, even today (:75).

However, although seeing the Bible as not literally true in a thousand details, the Bishop affirms that it does 'touch the deep wells of truth' (:86).

A critical approach towards the New Testament clearly touches conservative Christian nerves so the author devotes pages 77 to 244 to the early Christian writings.

Attention is drawn to the very early Aramaic and Jewish Christian stages of development in the Jesus traditions before the later Gentile stage now familiar in the writings of Paul and in the Gospels (:86).

The author sees Paul as a man of his times, whose attitudes were part of the widespread patriarchal system then but by modern standards are wrong. These wrong attitudes include especially the subordinate role of women and the institution of slavery (:101). In Spong's view 'it is the height of foolishness to try to claim eternal truth for Paul's culturally conditioned and time limited words' (:104).

The Gospels clearly cause problems as the gospel writers explain and mould the Jesus of history (:143) within their own context. Mark stressed Jesus' role as the Messiah both political and spiritual. In regard to Matthew, his zeal was greater than his research, resulting in disastrous biblical scholarship (:149) but his use of Messianic references in the Hebrew Scriptures, the use of the Pentateuch as a model for the five sections of his Gospel (:160) and his stress on Jesus as fulfilling the role of Moses and the Law had a strong appeal to Jews and Jewish Christians. Luke stressed the role of the prophet Elijah (:179) and John stressed the view of Jesus as the pre-existent Wisdom or Logos.

Comments on Christmas and Easter lead once again to the Bishop's emphasis on separating 'experience from narration'

(:222) so that historical fact and mythological fiction can be distinguished and both used spiritually for our journey through life.

The Bishop clearly indicates that he expects heated criticism from the extremes of fundamentalists, who crave for emotional security and religious certainty rather than the doubts of honesty, and from those addicted to free-thinking, shallow, 'empty, post-modern secularity', living in their carefully constructed spiritual vacuums (:134).

Somewhere in between the Bishop advises spiritual seekers to extract the 'essence of Christian truth... from the phenomenalistic framework of the ancient past' (:134).

I appreciated very much this book's challenges to the status quo and its attempt to establish an authentic, realistic, honest and up-to-date spirituality for our present age.

You can also test your reactions to these ideas by reading this remarkable best-selling book about the Bible.

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Blood of the Sword, Blood of the Cross
Reza F. Safa, Bromley, U.K., Sovereign World/STL Books, 1990. 107pp. Softcover, £2.95

This book immediately arouses curiosity by identifying itself as the testimony of a charismatic evangelical Christian who has taken the little-travelled path of converting from a fundamentalist Muslim background.

The first chapter sets the scene: a vivid encapsulation of the author's childhood in a large Iranian family, with an authoritarian and at times violent father whom he grows to dislike greatly, and a realisation on the part of the author that his own meticulous adherence to the laws and commandments of Islam, and the resulting recognition of his righteousness by those who know him, has left a feeling a dissatisfaction on his part, and a feeling of 'a lack of peace and joy in my heart' (p11). This is reinforced by the observation that his father's 'rebirth' as a devout Muslim has meant a change in his outward practices only - his father's inward character has remained the same.

On attaining adulthood, the author leaves Iran to undertake studies in the USA. With the Iranian revolution a year later, the author returns during the vacation to Iran, disillusioned with the US and holding utopian expectations of the Islamic revolution in his home country. He is quickly disillusioned even further by the bitterness and hatred he finds being mutually expressed by the forces competing for dominance in the chaos of post-revolutionary Iran. He tries to fill the void he is experiencing by becoming engaged to a relative, but this has little effect, and he leaves Iran for a second time, this time for Sweden.

In Sweden, the author has his first substantial debate with a Christian, in the person of a young American woman. In this debate, the author presents the standard litany of Muslim criticisms of Christianity: the blasphemy of calling Jesus 'the son of God'; the supremacy and finality of the Qur'an as divinely revealed scripture over the earlier revelations to Adam, Noah, Moses (the Torah) and Jesus (the Gospels), each of which Muslims believe were distorted and changed by the Jews and Christians; the Muslim belief that it was not Jesus who was crucified, but a look-alike.

The author is intrigued to continue the Christian-Muslim dialogue when the op-

portunity reappears, and he actively seeks out further interfaith dialogue, by walking into a cathedral and offering to do cleaning in exchange for lessons about Christianity. This leads him to two Swedish evangelicals, whose testimonies and influence provide the impetus for the author to decide to convert to Christianity. In taking this step, he lists a revealing set of contrasts between the practice of Christian faith of the two Swedes and the practice of his own Muslim faith. The author contrasts the Bible reading and spontaneous Christian prayer in the mother tongues of Christians with the reading of the Qur'an and rote prayer in Arabic, a foreign language for the majority of the world's muslims. The author also refers to the forgiveness, care and compassion for others, the renunciation of hatred and bitterness, and the avoidance of back-biting and lying among his Christian friends as against contrasting behaviour among the Muslim society which he has left behind.

Though disinherited and ostracised by his family because of his conversion, the author proceeds to devote himself to witnessing and preaching among the Muslim Iranian refugee community living in Spain. He meets and marries an American Christian, and they also preach in other European centres, including Communist Romania prior to the fall of Ceaucescu, where Christian worship was severely circumscribed. A partial reconciliation with his family occurs when he is visited by his sister and mother, who are relieved to see that he is not insane as they had suspected. This reconciliation is confirmed by a meeting with his father in Singapore, where his father tells him he is the luckiest member of their family as he is clearly the happiest and most fulfilled.

This book promises much because of the background of the author and his evident commitment to his new faith. This promise is not totally fulfilled, because the book is really a personal account of conversion and, in fact, essentially an autobiography. Much more could have been made of the Christian-Muslim divide, and how the author reconciled the two. He could have focused more on the Muslim context, by indicating why Christian missionary work faces such enormous difficulties. Moreover, in concluding the work by reiterating that good works and 'religion' do not lead to salvation, the author could have elaborated much more on the degree to which he views liturgical practice, good works, and laws and commandments as providing the cornerstones of the practice of Islam, through which he himself had experienced little more than an 'empty void'.

Nevertheless, readers who are interested in Muslim-Christian dialogue and debate should read this book. It is one of few personal testimonies written by former Muslims who have converted to Christianity, and as such, it provides an important insight into the dynamics of this dialogue.

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