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Fundamentalism and Terrorism:
The contemporary religious challenge

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Abstract

For nearly a century the term 'fundamentalism' has referred primarily to a set of specific Christian beliefs and an allied ultra-conservative attitude. However, usage of the term has broadened: 'fundamentalism', as a term indicating the position of a 'closed mind' coupled with a negative – even hostile – stance toward the status quo, has migrated into political discourse and the wider religious realm.

Fundamentalism broadly names a religio-political perspective found in most, if not all, major religions. Most disturbingly, it is now associated with variant forms of religious extremism and thus religiously-oriented terrorism. And it is Islamic modalities of terrorism that, rightly or wrongly, have come to take centre-stage in current world affairs.

This lecture will argue that the religious fundamentalism with which Islamist extremism is associated follows an identifiable paradigm that has wider applicability. Religious 'fundamentalism' denotes, among other things, a paradigm that paves the way from the relative harmlessness of an idiosyncratic and dogmatic belief system, to the harmful reality of religiously driven and fanatically followed pathways to terrorist activity. The lecture will attempt to describe and analyse this paradigm with reference to contemporary concerns.

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Introduction

Broadly speaking, the term 'fundamentalism' today names a religio-political perspective found in most if not all major religions in the contemporary world.[2] At the present time it is associated with various expressions of religious extremism and, most worryingly, with religiously-motivated terrorism.[3] In particular – though by no means exclusively – it is Islamic extremism and allied terrorist activities which are linked in our day to the idea of fundamentalism. Although both Christianity and Islam are susceptible to imperialist impositions of one sort or another, as history only too clearly has demonstrated, it is nonetheless the case that it is Islamic modalities of extremism and terrorism which have presently taken centre-stage in current world affairs. While there have been many studies undertaken on so-called Islamic fundamentalism,[4] the fact remains that it and, indeed, religious fundamentalism, in general, are much misunderstood within the public arena, at least in the West. The term itself tends to evoke a negative reaction of some sort; we none of us nowadays regard it with indifference. But what are we to make of it?

Since mid-2005 I have had cause to reflect on, and critically think through, the relationship between religious fundamentalism and contemporary religiously motivated terrorism. This lecture revisits, and further refines and extends, some initial work.[5] In my view it is imperative to attempt to critically understand any potential – let alone real – relationship between fundamentalism and terrorism. It

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[2] A very useful recent discussion can be found in Peter Antes, 'New Approaches to the Study of the New Fundamentalisms', *in* Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi R. Warne, eds., *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, Volume I: Regional, Critical and Historical Approaches* (Religion and Reason, Vol. 42, Jacques Waardenburg, Series Editor); Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 437-449.

[3] See for a discussion of typologies of religious violence, David Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Cults, Religion and Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[4] See for example Joseph E. B. Lumbard, ed., *Islam, fundamentalism, and the betrayal of tradition*. Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, 2004; Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Islamic fundamentalism since 1945,* New York: Routledge, 2005; Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: political Islam and the new world disorder*, Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2002; Mahmud A. Faksh, *The future of Islam in the Middle East: fundamentalism in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997; Ahmad Mawsilili, *Moderate and radical Islamic fundamentalism: the quest for modernity, legitimacy, and the Islamic State*, Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 1999; Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, eds., *Contemporary debates in Islam: an anthology of modernist and fundamentalist thought*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2004; Lawrence Davidson, *Islamic fundamentalism: an introduction*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003.

[5] See also Douglas Pratt, 'Religious Fundamentalism: A Paradigm for Terrorism?' *in* Rachel Barrowman, ed., *International Terrorism: New Zealand Perspectives*. Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 2005, 31-52; – 'Terrorism and Religious Fundamentalism: Prospects for a Predictive Paradigm.' *Marburg Journal of Religion*, Vol. 11/1, June, 2006, 15p; URL: http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/

is, I suggest, *the* contemporary religious challenge, without equal. International travel, national economies – the price we pay for our petrol – are all impacted today not so much by the convolutions of foreign policies and international relations, or even by global economic and political power plays, as such. Rather it is competing and impositional religious ideologies, taken to extreme, that presently impinges on all our lives and constitutes a defining feature of our times. An upsurge in the totalising claims of fundamentalist ideologues – in Islam, certainly, but also in Christianity, as well as in Hinduism, Judaism and other religious communities – together with the utilisation of globalized communication, transportation and related modern technologies, means that the issue of religious fundamentalism requires careful consideration and critical analysis.

I contend that the fundamentalism with which Islamist extremism is associated arguably follows an identifiable paradigm that has a wider purview. Given the contemporary pressing need to be able to identify, predict, locate and so counter any potential terrorist extremism born of certain intense expressions of religion, usually identified in some way as 'fundamentalist', then the task of analysing the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism so as to construct a paradigm capable of providing both interpretation and, perhaps, a measure of predictability, would seem an imperative task. It is this task I seek to address. In order to do so I shall review the definition and meaning of the term 'fundamentalism', discuss some aspects of the issue of fundamentalism and terrorism with specific reference to the current Islamic context of it, then proffer my own analysis of religious fundamentalism so as to show the interconnecting complexities of an ideological paradigm that allows for a progression from the particularities of a religious belief system to the commitment of atrocities in the name of that system.

Fundamentalism: the genesis and meaning of a term
In its Christian religious context, the term 'fundamentalism' originated in America. A series of booklets, issued during the second decade of the twentieth-century and simply titled *The Fundamentals*, was published to promote the view that there is a bed-rock defining and non-negotiable set of traditional Christian

doctrines.[6] From the proposition that Christianity rests on this set of fundamental doctrines there arose, *inter alia*, the use of the term 'fundamentalism' to refer to the generic idea proposed by the publication of the booklets. At the time the badge of 'fundamentalism' was proudly worn: true religion was combating the inroads of a destructive liberalism. Subsequently, 'fundamentalism' has achieved a wider application and attracted considerable academic interest.[7] One very significant study in this regard was the five-year 'Fundamentalism Project' which commenced in 1987. It was sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and, during the 1990s, led to the publication of several substantial volumes.[8] These showed that religious fundamentalism can imply a narrow, strict and limited metaphysics and set of doctrines, which to a greater or lesser degree hardly impinge on the wider life of a society; or it can mean a worldview perspective that engenders, if not demands, the advocacy of a socio-political ordering and action to achieve an intended outcome. Further, these studies showed that an imagined 'golden-age', believed to have pertained at the religion's foundation, is held up in the context of a fundamentalist position as the model and reference point for contemporary reality. Also, in response to the possible critique that religion, and in particular fundamentalist religion, is but an epiphenomenon riding on what are really political ideas and actions, or that fundamentalism is really just a passing fad, such studies have only served to highlight what subsequent history and recent events underscore: that religious fundamentalism is a deeply rooted phenomenon that can give rise to, rather than simply feeds upon, political acts.

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[6] See for example: Keith Ward, *What the Bible Really Teaches: A challenge for fundamentalists*. London: SPCK, 2004; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The roots of fundamentalism: British and American millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London: SCM Press, 1977; George M. Marsden, *Understanding fundamentalism and evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991.

[7] See for example Santosh C. Saha, ed., *Religious fundamentalism in the contemporary world: critical social and political issues*, Lanham MD.: Lexington Books, 2004; Lionel Caplan, *Studies in religious fundamentalism*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987; Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: the fundamentalist revolt against the modern age*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989; David Westerlund, *Questioning the Secular State: the worldwide resurgence of religion in politics*, London: Hurst, 1996; Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: the resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the modern world*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994; Leonard Weinberg and Ami Pedahzur, eds., *Religious fundamentalism and political extremism*, Portland, OR.: Frank Cass, 2004.

[8] See Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; - *Fundamentalisms observed*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; - *Fundamentalisms and the State: remaking politics, economies, and militance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; - *Accounting for fundamentalisms: the dynamic character of movements*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994; - *Fundamentalisms comprehended*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

However, the wider use of the term 'fundamentalism' has not been without problems and difficulties. It does not transfer well into religious contexts other than Christian, and it is imprecise enough even within the Christian camp. Nevertheless, the term has gained wide coinage and we have to live with it and utilise it as best we can. In a nutshell, 'fundamentalism' is today often defined in terms of what it is 'against'. In a general sense it is used as "a pejorative description for anyone who is regarded as having a closed mind with regard to a particular issue".[9] And a key difference between religiously-driven political actions today, in contrast with any previous point in history, is the pervasive context of globalisation. Instead of localised, even regional, levels of action, the technology and mentality of a globalized world now allow for a degree of internationalisation of the ideologies and activities of so-called fundamentalist movements as never before.

If recent events tell us anything, it is that religion, especially in its fundamentalist forms, must not be taken lightly or dismissively ignored. The surrealistic drama of hijacked aeroplanes assaulting the grand edifices of modernity may have been replaced by the more pervasive and insidiously terrorising small-scale targeting of transportation infrastructure and the innocents of the cities who happen to be there at the explosive moment, or the making of all travellers virtually everywhere – and certainly if going to, or via, America – to be regarded by airport security services as potential bombers. But what is the outcome? There may be an associated rhetoric of the meting out of punishment in respect to a purported transgressing of divine justice, but even this serves to reinforce the fact that this is but a petulant terrorism enacted out of what can only be described as a frustrated fundamentalism: the temper tantrums of a cognitively challenged worldview; the descent of a religious ideal into the clutches of criminality. In reality the calculated randomness of such anarchic activities can achieve no other end than the fomenting of disorder and social panic. And to the extent we comply and acquiesce – albeit in the name of 'security and safety' – the terrorist project enjoys

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[9] Bryan Gilling, ed., *"Be Ye Separate": fundamentalism and the New Zealand experience*, Red Beach: Colcom Press, 1992, xi.

a measure of success. But let us now look a little closer at the issue of fundamentalism and terrorism, especially with regard to Islam.

Fundamentalism and Terrorism

One contemporary commentator, Tariq Ali, offers an insightful critique.[10] In regard to the so-called war against terror, he categorises the current contest as occurring between two fundamentalist trajectories. On the surface, one is religious, namely the Islamic world, and the other political, namely America, or the Americanised, globalized, and secularised West. This latter, in Ali's view, is characterised by a shameless use of disproportional military power and the former by a carefully targeted fanaticism. Ali's fundamental thesis is that the predominating dynamic in world affairs is a clash of fundamentalisms, religious and political, and in both realistic and idealistic senses. What is being played out in Iraq, for instance, involves a combination of political and religious fundamentalisms as both real and idealised systems. The political ideal invoked in respect to the invasion was that of a Western 'coalition of the willing' contending with the totalitarian regime of Saddam Hussein. The ostensible aim was to liberate the world from fear of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. But there also emerged – especially as these weapons seemed highly elusive – the aim of liberating the Iraqi people from political oppression in order, among other things, to obtain religious freedoms. Such were the idealised rationales for war.

On the overtly religious side, the ideal espoused was that there was no attack intended on religion as such. Saddam Hussein may have happened to be Muslim, but it was not Islam *per se* that was the target. Yet the promotion of freedom to be religious within Iraq – that is, to be able to freely follow the religion of one's choosing – together with the making of positive overtures to a diversity of religious leadership within the country, was offered as inherently part of the overall 'change-management' dimension of the invasion plan. Thus, despite protestations to the contrary, the conflict may be cast in religious terms as yet another clash of the West's secularised Judeo-Christian religious system with that of Islam *per se*, and, of course, winning yet again. This is an ideal perceived to be

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[10] Tariq Ali *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso, 2002.

the case by some cadres, at least, of Christian fundamentalists in the West. This is especially so in the US with respect to the American New Religio-political Right, which had been relatively dormant since the Reagan years, and which re-emerged in the context of the election, and re-election, of President George W. Bush. This ideal, whether perceived or manifest, of the superiority of a conservative Christian West winning over Islam has clearly been viewed as a threatening reality, one that demands to be actively resisted, by many Muslims the world over. More pointedly, it reinforces a general fundamentalist viewpoint – that is found in both Christian and Muslim fundamentalist variants – that pitches Islam and Christianity as eternal adversaries. Much the same fundamentalist scenario holds for Islam and the Jews, as any survey of contemporary Islamic and ultra-orthodox Jewish rhetoric would testify. Which side is regarded as ultimately victorious depends on the religion espoused by the fundamentalist. The rules of engagement are the same either way. God/Allah will guarantee the ultimate victory: the believer is simply enjoined to fight the good fight.

But the war on terror is a war of ideology; in particular, a war against the dominance of certain religious fundamentalisms. The key is that religious terrorism derives from an ideology of religious fundamentalism. An English newspaper commentator, writing in the aftermath of the London bombings of July 2005, seemed to get the point. Rather than taking up arms in the so-called "war against terrorism" the real issue was recognised as having to do with the "battle to discredit an ideology … it is an idea that caused the attack, and it is the idea that must be undermined".[11] Authorities in England were soon reported to be "examining literature for clues to the precise ideology" that may have inspired the London bombers.[12] Of course, by virtue of being "extremists", individuals who carry out terrorist atrocities are properly disowned by the community of faith with which they are otherwise identified. Their actions are condemned as un-Islamic, as contrary to Quranic dictate, and inimical to normative Islam. Investigations into the London bombings revealed that as far back as January 2005 there was mounting concern within the young men's own Muslim communities that their

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[11] Johann Hari, *New Zealand Herald*, Saturday July 16, 2005, p. A2.
[12] *New Zealand Herald*, July 19, 2005, p. B2.

hardening fundamentalist and extremist attitudes and opinions were taking them far beyond the pale of normative Islam. Indeed, they had been ostracised and told they were not welcome in certain mosques because of their advocacy of "inappropriate teachings": their "increasing fundamentalism" had estranged them from their own.[13]

Alongside rejection of aberrant behaviour, there is also a direct and outright denial by some – possibly many – from within the Islamic community of any Muslim link to such a situation in the first place. Attempts to redirect responsibility elsewhere, including claiming the attacks were the work of America or Israel, are not unknown. Such paradoxical and absolute denial of Islamically-driven terrorism, by Muslims, is based on an ideological stance which goes, in effect: 'Given that such terrorism harms Muslims and besmirches Islam, any true Muslim could not possibly commit it.' This line of thought surfaced after the 9/11 attacks when a Muslim mentality of denial led to rumours of Jewish conspiracy theories as the root cause not Islamic disaffection, let alone an Islamic ideology as such. Straws of denial and deflection were being desperately clutched at by some. As Waleed Aly has remarked:

> An emotive confusion drives denial and this is demonstrated by the inconsistency of the reasoning that accompanies it. Too often, those who deny that Muslims are in any way responsible for terrorism also blame a belligerent Western foreign policy towards Muslim nations for the terrorist backlash. Such Orwellian doublethink destroys the necessary credibility to inspire honest engagement.[14]

On the one hand there is a refusal, on ideological grounds, to believe fellow-Muslims could commit such acts of terrorism; on the other hand Islamic extremists will target Muslim and non-Muslim alike on equally ideological grounds. So what is driving contemporary globalized Islamic extremism and terrorism? Is it just a contemporary socio-political aberration in a religious guise?

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[13] *Ibid*

[14] *The Australian*, Wednesday July 13, 2005, p. 13.

Are these little more than the anarchists of our age? Arguably, a potential measure of the propensity to terrorism can be identified in terms of a scrutiny of certain forms of Muslim rhetoric, namely when there is unequivocal advocacy of the view that, vis-à-vis an Islamic context 'passive oppression' has been eclipsed by an intentional 'active oppression' against Muslims and Islam. An example of the former would be the British foreign policy of non-action in Kashmir or Chechnya; and of the latter its active involvement in the war in Iraq.

That is to say, military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq or wherever – the so-called 'war on terror' or whatever else may be deemed to express 'active oppression' – may be taken by Muslims as, indeed, acts against Islam itself. So, acts against Muslims in a specific context are translated into acts conducted against Islam generally and universally, thereby calling forth and legitimating, *qua* the logic and rhetoric of jihad, an aggressive Islamic response. Where such rhetoric of advocacy and argumentation is fomented there may well be a case for pre-emptive countering action on the part of the authorities concerned. The problem, of course, is that such action only reinforces the rhetoric.

If a clutch of media reports following recent atrocities, and even police actions to intercept the actors before they act, are anything to go by, it would seem local moderate Muslim communities appear unable to foresee the possibility of terrorist activities emanating from their midst. This suggests that there is a very real difficulty for religious people to understand the range of ideological options, and the significance of the shifts that occur in an individual's ideological stance, from within their own religion. This would seem acutely the case for Muslim communities right now, but should in no way be deemed a uniquely Muslim issue. But where does all this leave the wider society? How are we to address the challenge of fundamentalism and terrorism? The primary component in any strategy aimed at countering religiously motivated terrorism, I suggest, has to be in respect to identifying, and addressing, ideological rhetoric and elements within communities from which potential terrorists are likely to come, and by which they are likely to be nourished. But to do that, to make sense of any potential data or evidence, we need a framework of interpretation, a lens of perspective. It is in

respect to this that we now turn to an analysis of religious fundamentalism as offering a paradigm for terrorism.

Religious Fundamentalism as a paradigm for terrorism

Both Christianity and Islam have within their history and ideology a paradigm for an approved, even sanctioned, death: martyrdom. Yet in both cases the root idea of martyrdom was a death that provided, or was in itself, the occasion of witnessing for the faith. The root meaning of the Greek-derived 'martyr' and the Arabic 'shahid' was the same: a witness to the faith, and in both cases the originating context was that of a legal connotation.[15] Dying in the defence of one's faith community, or as a consequence of persecution because of one's faith identity, soon emerged as a specialised meaning, thus reserving the respective terms to mean willing preparedness to be killed for the sake of one's faith. In neither case has suicide or murder ever been normatively sanctioned as a component to, or the equivalent of, martyrdom.[16] But it would seem that today, something has changed – at least in respect to certain forms of Islamic extremism wherein the willingness to die, to be killed, for one's faith has been extended to embrace both active self-killing (suicide) and the killing of others (murder).

If there has been an ideological shift taking place, even if only within the more extreme forms of Islam for example, what has allowed this to occur? In a nutshell the answer is fundamentalism, but it would be an injustice to assume that it is the direct result of fundamentalism *per se*. Rather it is something about fundamentalism as such which, applied to certain Islamic contexts for example, allows for such development. But it is clear that the terrorist use of martyrdom is by no means peculiar to Islam.[17] Kamikaze pilots of World War II and Tamil Tigers in the late 20th century are two examples that lie outside the Muslim domain. Yet in all cases it can be argued that a form or paradigm of religious fundamentalism – whether Shinto, Buddhist,[18] Hindu or Islamic, among others –

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[15] See Brian Wicker, ed., *Witnesses to Faith? Martyrdom in Christianity and Islam*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
[16] Cf. *ibid*, 8.
[17] Cf. Brian Wicker, Peter Bishop and Maha Azzam, 'Martyrdom and Murder: Aspects of Suicidal Terrorism' *in* Wicker, ed., *op. cit*., 123-136.
[18] See for example Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*. New York: Weatherhill, 1997.

provides the key to understanding the motivation and the modality. Fundamentalism is both a specifically focussed mindset and a certain kind of narrow worldview, a *modus operandi*, which can apply to just about any sphere of human activity, but especially so to religion and politics, for both are concerned with the context and aims of human existence. So it is to the paradigm of fundamentalism that I now turn.

As a framework phenomenon that applies to more than just religion, fundamentalism is comprised, I suggest, of at least fourteen key factors. Others may be adduced, but these fourteen, and the way they are interconnected, need to be carefully understood. For it is these features, collectively and cumulatively which, I suggest, move a fundamentalist mindset from the quirky to the critical, from atavism to aggression, from benign eccentricity to socially endangering activity. The factors I have identified are analysed in terms of seven sets of paired features.[19] I contend it is the particular sequential combination of these factors which is important, not just the elements themselves.

Set 1 – Principal Presuppositions:
(i) *Perspectival Absolutism* and (ii) *Immediate Inerrancy*
The fundamentalist perspective is inherently absolutist: all other relevant phenomena are simply explained on its terms, or viewed in a relativising way with reference to it. Fundamentalism, as a mindset, is first and foremost a mentality that expresses the modernist project writ large: only one truth; one authority; one authentic narrative that accounts for all; one right way to be. And, of course, that way is my way, declares the fundamentalist. Further, the fundamentalist perspective deems itself privileged in respect to this absolutism, for it implies superiority of knowledge and truth. Indeed, this is inherent to holding an absolutist perspective as such. Absolutism of outlook or worldview is a mark of fundamentalism, but not of itself a signal of potential terrorist activity in respect of that worldview. That comes later.

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[19] This analysis constitutes an exercise of a priori critique and reflection. The task of discerning any similar analyses – if indeed there are any – by way of an exhaustive literature review let alone the task of empirically testing the paradigm, awaits time and the necessary resources to attempt.

Allied to absolutism is the view that the grounding text – be it political manifesto or holy writ – is to be read as conveying an immediate truth or value, without error; that is, inerrant. However, the assertion of the immediate inerrancy of the text – that is, reading the text as being immediately applicable and providing a non-mediated access to ultimate or divine truth – in fact involves an implicit assertion that there is only one normative interpretive reading allowed, namely that which is undertaken through the fundamentalist's lens. A fundamentalist's presumption of textual immediacy and inerrancy is, of course, but one interpretive option. Nevertheless, from the fundamentalist perspective, alternative and variant interpretations are deemed inherently false or heretical, and so are rejected.

These two interconnected factors – perspectival absolutism and immediate inerrancy – comprise the foundational or principal presuppositions of religious fundamentalism which, on their own, might simply indicate one among many options for the expression of religious belief. Most often a secularist, an agnostic, or a religious liberal in the West would likely view these factors to be the essence of fundamentalism: an atavistic expression of religion, a quirky mindset, a rather odd out-of-step religious mentality, proof positive that religion amounts to little more than fairy-tales. Easily ignored, best avoided, of no consequence or significance in the greater scheme of things. But, I contend, this is not all there is to fundamentalism.

Set 2 – Authority Derivation:
(iii) *Apodicity Assumption* **and (iv)** *Narrow Narrative Indwelling*
Building directly upon the preceding set, the third and fourth factors of my analysis of fundamentalism constitutes the basis of authority claimed by fundamentalism as such, namely, in the first instance, the assumption that the authority source, most usually textual is unambiguous thus requiring no interposing hermeneutic.[20] This is sometimes understood in terms of 'literalism', but for a fundamentalist the key issue is that the authority of the text is such that no intermediary interpretive framework is required – the text itself provides

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[20] Such sources are not necessarily scriptural: for example, together with the relevant scripture there are many other possibilities of textual sources upon which a fundamentalist might rely: it is not simply the Qur'an that can provide warrant for Islamic extremism but also selected references from texts of Hadith.

pellucid expression of truth, whether in terms of an abstract universal, or in respect to a pragmatic or programmatic articulation of the values and views espoused by the fundamentalist *as* the truth. This provides the authorisation underlying the preceding presupposition of immediate inerrancy.

Paradoxically, of course, any so-called 'literalist' reading, or regarding a text as not requiring any intentional hermeneutical application, is itself a modality of interpretation, namely a fundamentalist one. It is often assumed, by a fundamentalist, that a 'direct' reading of the text can be made so as to avoid the murky waters of interpretation; that is, there is no need to apply any sort of intellectual critique or scrutiny of the text: meaning can be immediately read off; the text at hand is clear in its composition; the message conveyed by the text is apodictic. Not so. The fundamentalist makes the assumption that meaning and truth can be directly read without recourse to a frame of meaning that supplies a key to understanding. Again, not so: every so-called fundamentalist reading of the *Bible*, the *Qur'an*, or whatever, necessarily requires a prior held framework of understanding about the nature of the text and the meanings of the key terms and concepts employed.

Nevertheless, allied to the assumption of apodicity is the factor of narrow narrative indwelling. Arguably all religious people 'indwell', to a greater or lesser degree, their respective religious narrative. The life references, points of meaning and frameworks of understanding which inform a religious individual's existence are more often than not traceable to the paradigms, models, values and so on, that are given within the religious narrative – the scriptural record as well as ancillary histories/stories and so forth – than derived from the intellectual ratiocination of doctrine and dogma. Where the narrative base is broad, the religious life that indwells therein likewise reflects breadth. But where the base is narrow, the resultant indwelt religious life is correspondingly confined. So my thesis is that, in the case of fundamentalism, a distinguishing factor has to do with the narrowness of narrative indwelling. It is, indeed, this very narrowness which often marks a fundamentalist out from the wider religious tradition and community which, in contrast, will have a tendency to admit a wider reading of its narrative and a

capacity to indwell it in respect to symbolic meanings and aesthetic allusions, for instance, with a measure of interpretive flexibility.

Set 3 – Contextual Scope:

(v) *Ideological Exclusivism* **and (vi)** *Polity Inclusivism*

Fundamentalism's third set includes two factors which, in their apparent paradoxical juxtaposition, yield the scope of the context of fundamentalism. The first is ideological exclusivism wherein, because there is only one reading, only one interpretation, of the grounding text allowed, the ideological view expressed therein, or built thereon, is inevitably an exclusive one. No competing or variant ideological view is granted credibility. A fundamentalist perspective will exclude, virtually automatically, anything that relative to it appears 'liberal', that is, that admits of, for example, any limitation, provisionality, otherness, openness or change. Religious fundamentalism excludes religious liberalism. Similarly, secular fundamentalism often excludes religion *per se* on the same sorts of grounds. Ideological exclusivism works in multiple directions.

But alongside this exclusivity there may be discerned, as a sixth factor to fundamentalism, a form of inclusion, namely polity inclusion. This is the propensity to include, in respect to considerations of the policies and praxis of social organisation, all others that fall within the fundamentalist's frame of reference or worldview understanding. This may still appear innocuous, especially if the fundamentalists concerned are a minor or marginalised group in terms of the wider society in which they exist, or where such an inclusivist stance finds a more benign setting within a normative or orthodox religious tradition. Nevertheless, in terms of this paradigm analysis, the fundamentalist, for whom polity inclusiveness is a primary element, is now poised to become activist – to act on this inclusivism in terms of polity, whether covertly (as in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints vicariously baptising the dead) or overtly (as in the Taliban's insistence that everyone in Afghanistan live according to their application Islam, and variations on this theme found currently in parts of Pakistan and Nigeria).

So, the apparent paradox of fundamentalism evincing both exclusivism and inclusivism as two of its core features is resolved. Excluding all other ideological variants and perspectives necessarily implies the wholesale inclusion of a society in terms of the outworking of polity considerations. Thus, for example, the fundamentalism of a resurgent Islamist perspective naturally insists not just that all Muslims should live according to Islamic Law, but that all members of the society in question, irrespective of religion, should likewise submit to this Law Code – understood, of course, to transcend human values and codes by virtue of being "God's law" – or be made so to do. We hear of this call being issued by Islamic activists from time to time in different parts of the Muslim world; we may indeed find some expressions of it closer to home, albeit if only wistfully, or merely in principle, entertained.

Set 4 – Identity Structure:
(vii) Communitarian Intent **and (viii)** *Individual Constraint*
The fundamentalist mindset is not simply a matter of opinion and perspective as held by an individual, or by a collective of individuals. Arguably, fundamentalism *per se* tends to embrace a particular dynamic wherein there is given expression to what we may call a 'communitarian' intent, on the one hand, symbiotically juxtaposed with some form of 'constraint' placed upon the individual who is a member of that community, on the other. The identity of a fundamentalist individual is bound up necessarily with the identity of the fundamentalist community. Indeed, the stronger the fundamentalism, the tighter this relation which, I suggest, comprises the identity structure of fundamentalism.

The factor of 'communitarian intent' denotes the way in which fundamentalist movements place value, to a greater or lesser degree, upon membership of the community, and the upholding of its values and norms, as essential to the community such that the identity of individuals within the community is thereby proscribed. Thus the factor of 'individual constraint' is the necessary corollary, and the two factors go together to form the structure of fundamentalist identity, irrespective of the specific religion. Many examples can be adduced to make the point; that of the Exclusive Brethren, which has been in the headlines recently,

may suffice. With respect to the Islamic idea and ideal of the *ummah* – that notion of community which roughly parallels the Christian concept of '*ecclesia*' – membership of it is essential, not voluntary, for the muslim individual such that withdrawal from the community on account, for example, of a change in individual religious identity, is viewed as apostasy: a treasonable offence attracting severe sanction in some quarters. To this extent Islam presents as a fundamentalist religion *per se* – which in many respects it is. But that does not mean Islam is *necessarily* inherently violent. Nevertheless, this set of factors, to the extent they are legitimately part of a paradigm arguably may contribute, in the end, to a predisposition and justification of violent behaviour. Of course, this has been the case, historically, for Christianity, at least in the form of Western Christendom. And there are Christian denominations and sects for whom the essential dynamic of fundamentalist identity structure would certainly apply.

Set 5 – Implicit Verification:
(ix) *Narrative Correlation* and (x) *Rhetorical Corroboration*
Principal presuppositions granted, the derivation of authority established, the contextual scope adumbrated and identity demarcated, the evolving fundamentalist perspective begins now to move from a variant conservative expression of a religious worldview to a more intentional advocacy of religious viewpoint as being, *par excellence*, the expression of authenticity and truth applicable for, or to, all. This comes about, initially, with the deepening of the correlation between the religious narrative espoused and the reality, or *sitz-im-leben*, of the religious community concerned. Any phenomenology of religion will be able to articulate some such measure of narrative correlation as an otherwise quite normal feature of religion as such. That is to say, normatively a religion will proffer some degree of correlation between its narrative and the 'real world' in which the followers of the religion live – otherwise religion would reduce to a simple and obvious fairy-tale. However, a distinction can be made between the broader traditions of a religion whose narrative correlation will be relatively loose, flexible or at least provisional, and the fundamentalist whose degree of correlation will be that much greater and intense. Indeed this factor sharpens – and is prefaced by – the factors of absolutism and inerrancy. For a fundamentalist the correlation

will be such as to yield an unambiguous outcome – America *is* the Great Satan, ontologically, for example – whereas, for a non-fundamentalist critical of the West, America may be deemed or judged satanic in a more general way. The difference is one of the degree of correlation between the religious narrative and the external realities of the world in which the fundamentalist lives.

Allied to narrative correlation is the factor of rhetorical corroboration. Here the discourse of fundamentalism can be more readily tested, perhaps. For in the articulation of narrative correlation there is likely to found a corresponding intensification of a corroborating rhetoric that situates, endorses, and justifies the fundamentalist perspective vis-à-vis the judgements and assessments made about the external world in terms of narrative correlation. Rhetoric will be sharp and self-affirming; judgements will be clear and reflective of both the correlation factor as well as the corroboration factor. Thus the perspective of the fundamentalist derives implicit verification and the scene is set for the next step, namely the application of the values espoused from out of the fundamentalist's narrative.

Set 6 – Value Application:
(xi) *Otherness Negated* **and (xii)** *Self-Superiority Asserted*
At this stage in the development of a fundamentalist's outlook the sense of self-affirmation and confidence is such that the values of fundamentalism are actively and intentionally applied. And these values are primarily two: the negation of otherness or alterity, and the corresponding assertion of self-superiority over all opponents, real and putative. The negation of otherness is perhaps critical at this juncture for the scene set by the third set of factors – the contextualising exclusivism and inclusivism – now emerge into a devaluing and dismissal of the 'other', whether in terms of rival community or competing alterities, ideological or otherwise. Indeed, such alterities may be – and in fact often are – demonised. The religiously 'other' on this view is often cast as 'satanic', or at least seriously and significantly labelled as a hostile opponent, and so hostilely regarded. In the process of negating the other, the self is asserted as inherently superior. My God is greater than your god. My Truth reigns over your ignorance. The authenticity of

my faith contrasts with the feeble delusion you entertain. My laws express the divine reality directly which is infinitely superior to the laws which derive merely from human ideas. The salvation offered by my faith is the real thing by contrast to the lost way that you proclaim. And so we might go on. However it is expressed or referenced, it will be clear enough that the fundamentalist is applying the key value set of negativity to 'otherness' and a corresponding assertion of self-superiority. The scene is now well set for the seventh and final set of factors I have analysed as the components of the paradigm of fundamentalism – the rendering of an explicit justification not just for a viewpoint but also for actions premised on that viewpoint.

Set 7 – Explicit Justification:
(xiii) *Sanctioned Imposition* **and (xiv)** *Legitimated Extremism*
It should be clear that, once the preceding sets of factors are in operation, it is but a short step to the final two, which denote the expression of fundamentalism in some form of direct socio-political action. For the thirteenth factor sees the very imposition of the fundamentalist's views and polity as, in fact, sanctioned by a higher or greater authority – whether that authority is conceived in terms of deity or the dynamics of historical necessity. This reference transcends the local, particular, ordinary taken-for-granted freedoms of everyday life with the requirement to be, live and do in accord with the fundamentalist's ideological dictates.

The sanctioning of the imposition of the fundamentalist's programme leads naturally to the fourteenth and final factor of this analysis: extremist action is now legitimated. Once there is in place a sense of transcendent sanction for programmatic action, the way to the legitimising extreme behaviours to achieve the requisite outcomes is eased. Japanese *kamikaze* pilots and Palestinian suicide bombers are two examples – now 'classical' in terms of recent history – of the outworking of the features of fundamentalism that culminate in extreme actions. More complexly, as we have recently seen in Afghanistan, not only was it the case that all good Muslims ought to submit naturally to the *Shari'a*, according to the fundamentalist ideals of the Taliban, but indeed all of society should be made to

submit, like it or not, for impositional submission is an inherent element of Islamic extremism. Submission to the dictates of the fundamentalist is at this juncture a matter of necessary imposition, as Afghani women found to their cost, for example. And the alternative to even an involuntary submission is outright destruction: hence, from the Taliban's extremist perspective, the Buddha 'idols' had to be destroyed. How else does the extremist ensure that the imposition that has been sanctioned can actually be effected? Sanctioned imposition and legitimated extremism are the two sides of the one coin in the currency of terror.

Conclusion

Fundamentalism is not simply a religious or even political option in terms of belief perspective. It is a package-deal phenomenon denoted by a sequence of factors whose cumulative impact once – or if – the seventh Set is reached, can be devastating. The Taliban, to turn to this example of Islamic fundamentalist extremism, took an absolutist, inerrant and exclusivist line with respect to their religious identity and behaviour, which was extended to include all who were within their purview – namely, the inhabitants of Afghanistan. Actions taken to effect their aims were deemed sanctioned by the highest authority – *Allah* (or God) – and their extreme measures were in consequence deemed legitimated. Thus no opposition was brooked; all had to submit and obey, or face the consequences. To the extent my analysis of the paradigm of religious fundamentalism *per se* is in any way apposite and accurate, and to the extent that empirical evidence – derived for example from speeches, pamphlets etc. – can be adduced such that there is a clear correlation with the paradigmatic elements as I have outlined them, then I suggest that this provides a basis, at least, for an empirical measure for the detection of extremist religious fundamentalism – Islamic as well as any other – likely to lead to terrorist activity. Of course, religious fundamentalism *per se* does not necessarily lead to terrorism. There are examples aplenty of religious fundamentalists who are pacifist in outlook and demeanour, including the vast majority of Muslims. But fundamentalism may lead to terrorism; and in some cases it does. Hopefully this paradigm analysis will help explain why, and assist in the process of addressing it.