

FUNDAMENTALISM: Assault Against Democracy

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"Have you ever wondered why America has become one of the most immoral nations on earth, yet has more Christians than any other? ...I believe there is still time to save this country from turning into another Sodom and Gomorrah."

Dr. Jerry Falwell
Pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church
President, Moral Majority, Inc.

Back page, The Battle for the Mind, Tim LaHaye
(Fleming H. Revell Co., 1980)

"Every good Christian ought to kick Falwell right in the ass."

Senator Barry Goldwater
Republican, Arizona

Newsweek, July 27, 1981, p. 24

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PROLOGUE

Recently I was asked to write a position paper for the California Appellate Court regarding a suit brought against Santa Cruz Planned Parenthood, the California State Board of Education and others by a group calling itself the Women's Committee for Responsible Government. This group claimed that Planned Parenthood and the state agencies were involved in a kind of conspiracy to teach a religion they defined as "Secular Humanism," and that this was forbidden by First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

The Women's Committee, of course, was a political arm of certain Christian fundamentalists who considered themselves to represent the "moral majority." This was part of a crusade to force public schools to return to the teaching of old fashioned absolutist sexual morality, with all of its repression, shame and psychological ills.

My job was to demonstrate that there was no organized religion or church institution known as "Secular Humanism," and that the similarity in approach between the public school sex education curriculums and the tenets of the American Humanist Association (!) existed only because both were based on the constitutional and human rights philosophies of Jefferson, Paine, Franklin and other founders of American democracy. The open and free discussion of all value systems, rather than the absolutist moralism of fundamentalist Christianity, is the only "moral" approach to teaching sensitive material in a pluralistic classroom!

Reading through the long petition by the fundamentalist petitioners, I was struck with the ambition and scope of their attack upon basic democratic principles. I recalled my years on the faculty at the University of California in Santa Cruz teaching Religious Studies, and the constant opposition of various fundamentalist adult and student lobbies. Their goal was to turn the Religious Studies program into a forum for fundamentalist Christianity, and I was the Antichrist who stood in their way. Many of them took my classes in New Testament Greek hoping to gain my knowledge and authority in biblical studies to be used for their own purposes. Perhaps if they could parse a Greek sentence from the New Testament, it would add to the authority of their literalist interpretation.

It was always satisfying to hear from those fundamentalist students who went on with biblical studies in graduate school, because they had always become so much more reasonable in their views. It is amazing what education, study and research can do for one's religious opinions!

The youth that flocked to the cults of the sixties became the "new Christians" of the seventies. They were not attracted by the prophetic risk-taking of the mainstream Christian churches, who had alienated much of their membership and lost significant financial support for the sake of the civil rights and Vietnam struggles. It was not the courageous social morality of the Christian churches that attracted them, but the experiential, peer-group cultism of charismatic Christianity.

Neo-fundamentalism blossomed in the early seventies, nourished by the financial resources that had been withdrawn from mainstream churches and diverted to conservative institutions who felt religion had no business in politics.

How differently they feel today!

America was demoralized by Vietnam and disgraced by Watergate. People hungered for a return to simple values, strong leadership and America's lost glory. To use a biblical phrase, it was with "itching ears" that they heard fundamentalist preachers shift America's guilt to other nations, races, religions and political philosophies. Sweet charismatic Christianity provided a culturally acceptable mode for the same kind of spiritual growth that had been popularized in the foreign cultism of the sixties. Now there could be Christian psychism, Christian healing, Christian gurus--all sanctioned as a return to the primitive New Testament church.

With youth and money on its side, American fundamentalism literally exploded into an international force. Instead of air-dropping Bibles and brassieres to the natives, however, it now had major funds to establish schools, train missionaries, purchase radio and television stations.

The fundamentalists did not support Jimmy Carter's bid for election in 1976. He was too close to the mainstream Christian social morality, being an evangelical--not a fundamentalist. They grew to hate him and his enlightened policies.

But fundamentalism became a potent political force in Ronald Reagan's race for the presidency in 1980. Although it was clearly the issue of the economy that defeated Carter in 1980, fundamentalism made alliances with Catholics, Jews and conservative Republican groups to push the Reagan candidacy. At the same time the anti-fundamentalist Washington establishment, news media and university intellectuals all closed ranks in a radical critique of the Carter presidency. Their attitudes reflected regional intolerance and religious prejudice. They made it extremely difficult for Carter to govern effectively, thus setting up the Reagan-fundamentalist victory.

So here we sit, in the midst of a wealthy, politically sophisticated campaign to radically "reform" America according to the absolutist moral values of

American neo-fundamentalism. The reformers have massive funding, their own colleges and universities, extremely active publishing facilities rivalling the U.S. government, fully equipped television training and production studios utilizing the latest satellite broadcast techniques. They are organized into political cadres from local grassroots to national and international levels. They are now doing their best to stack local, state and federal legislative bodies with politicians who will represent their reforms.

But are they merely "reforms?" Emphatically not!

They are proposals to radically alter American constitutional democracy, restrict religious and other freedoms, destroy the public education system, abridge the hard-won gains in American civil rights, and impose a multitude of tyrannies.

As I will show in the following pages, the American fundamentalists have more in common with the Iranian Islamic fundamentalism than they do with Christianity. Like the followers of Khomeini, they consider America to be satanically evil and corrupt. They want to institute a rule of Christian fundamentalist "ayatollahs" who control American legislative policy.

Christian fundamentalists are poised for an all-out assault on traditional American democracy. They want to eradicate the ideal of Jefferson, Paine and the framers of the constitution in favor of the puritan Federalism that originally opposed it.

Fundamentalism is the avowed enemy of science, human rights, religious freedom, and humanistic values. In its own ignorance, it is also the enemy of Judeo-Christian spiritual truth as taught by the prophets of the Old Testament, and by Jesus Christ and his disciples in the New Testament. As an American phenomenon, with some analogies in Germany and elsewhere, fundamentalism is anti-American. As a religious phenomenon, it is a grossly materialistic Christian heresy.

The time has come for people of good will and common sense to stand up against fundamentalist tyranny. Politicians must have courage to oppose, not appease, the vociferous fundamentalist lobby. Educators must not permit the "creationists" to enforce the teaching of their religious doctrines in public school science classes as an alternative to "evolution." Medical doctors and health care professionals must take a stand against the so-called "pro-life" anti-abortion extremists, with their shrill demands for the human rights of a fertilized ovum. Ministers of main-line Christian churches must take a vigorous offensive against fundamentalist dogmas, biblical literalism, apocalypticism and moral absolutism.

The fundamentalist assault on democracy is an ideological attack upon the basic tenets of a civilized, educated and humane America. It must be taken seriously,

challenged and morally refuted.

Most important, Christians must take immediate and decisive action to disassociate themselves from the fundamentalist agenda for America. In the minds of most people, evangelical Christians are the same as fundamentalist Christians--which is simply untrue. The fundamentalists broke away from evangelical Christianity over a century ago, accusing the evangelicals of atheism, immorality and lack of zeal. Although modern fundamentalists call themselves the "true" evangelicals, shunning churches like that of former President Jimmy Carter, there are major differences between traditional southern evangelical Christianity and modern cultic fundamentalism.

The fundamentalist analysis of America's problems as an apocalyptic moral decline is simply wrong. America has never been a finer or fairer place to live than it is today. Never before has America been so concerned for the rights and opportunities of minorities, the morality of foreign policy, the quality of consumer goods or the ethics of its politicians. The public interest in spirituality and religion is as high now as it has ever been, and continues to characterize American democratic culture.

America's moral dilemma has been caused by industrialization, unemployment, racial and ethnic pluralism, the effects of civil and foreign wars--not by loss of the Puritan biblical ethic. The renunciation of that ethic has been part of America's higher spiritual development. America has transcended primitivistic moral values just as the ancient Hebrews, with their prophetic Book of Deuteronomy, transcended and revised the primitive martial laws of pre-agrarian tribal life.

Fundamentalism has taken a relatively unchallenged offensive against American ways, values and mores. The time has come to vigorously meet that offensive. In the course of that bitter conflict America will find realistic solutions to its social, political and moral dilemmas--rather than moralistic platitudes.

I don't expect a fair fight, but let the battle begin!

SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS

It has been two years since I wrote this book. Since then I've found no publishers, but just recently a few good books have appeared that address the political implications of Moral Majority, Inc., and its legion of other right-wing quasi-religious political action groups that are outspending Caesar to win control of the nation. I recommend LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR SOME: DEFENDING A FREE SOCIETY FROM THE RADICAL RIGHT'S HOLY WAR ON DEMOCRACY by David Bollier, published by Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 250 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003. So far Ungar is the only publisher who has dared to oppose the conservative right, and he is sole publisher for the other four or five books on the subject, working with People for the American Way.

More facts have come to light. James Watt, recently discredited Secretary of the Interior, like many other Reagan appointees, is a fundamentalist Christian. As such, he rationalized his anti-environmental policy by noting that the Bible teaches the world is about to end (pre-millinarian apocalyptic theology shared by all fundamentalists). Therefore good Christian stewardship demands that the nation's natural resources be used up as quickly as possible!

President Reagan's office declared upon receiving Watts' resignation that regardless of successor, Watts' environmental policy would remain in force.

Dear reader, the same perverse religious fundamentalism that informed and justified actions of the Ku Klux Klan in the early twentieth century and racist resistance to the Civil Rights movement of the sixties--the same theology that inspired the assassin of Martin Luther King, Jr.--now informs Moral Majority, Inc., Liberty Lobby, the Plymouth Rock Foundation, National Christian Action Coalition, the Pro-Family Forum, the Heritage Foundation, Freedom Council, the Creation Science Research Center, Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, American Life Lobby, Christian Voice, Coalition for Better Television, and hundreds of other local, state, and national fundamentalist political action groups engaged in holy war against "secular humanism," i.e., American democratic philosophy. It strongly affects foreign policy concerning communism and the state of Israel, which it supports for theological reasons, no matter what the moral issues. The Begin coalition had a free hand in ruining Israel's economy, provocatively settling the West Bank and displacing even more Palestinians, and carrying out aggressive military campaigns that subverted the Camp David agreements only because of the pro-Israel fundamentalist lobby in Washington. The Reagan administration has resisted gen-

uine attempts at nuclear arms control until the coming of a campaign year forces token action only because of the anti-communist, pro-military-superiority urging of the fundamentalist and conservative coalition lobbies in Washington. Meanwhile people like James Watts get away with public comments that there are only two kinds of Americans--Republicans and traitors--and people who claim to be Moral Majority representatives in San Jose (later disclaimed by Falwell) give out press releases that their policy is to execute homosexuals.

Well, maybe they're right. Maybe the end of the world is coming soon. If anyone can bring about nuclear war and world dictatorship, these zealots--with their apparently limitless tax-free funding, TV satellites and huge PR budgets--can usher in the apocalypse! Their negative political action campaigns to dis-elect all their opponents using a form of political action group that has no ceiling on contributions have been effective. They use all the "dirty tricks" in the book, like broadcasting untruths and slanders against opponents two weeks before elections--things that will later be disproven in court, but too late to stop the influence on the elections.

All these things are done in the name of "morality," because with self-righteous zealots the end always justifies the means. Any means may be used when the enemy is Satan himself, right?

Recently I debated Cal Thomas, Vice-President for Communications of the Moral Majority. The debate was held on October 10 at the University of California in Santa Cruz. Given half a chance, the audience saw through this slick, experienced "hired gun," who travels the nation converting college liberals in speaking engagements and writes books for the Christian book store market using pro-democratic, Jeffersonian arguments twisted to support the idea that Moral Majority is really a "nigger" (to use his term) minority whose First Amendment rights are constantly trampled upon by liberals (!).

I had the exquisite pleasure of publically disemboweling Mr. Thomas in fair, civilized debate. That is why you will never see this kind of forum used again by Moral Majority. When Cal Thomas misquotes Isaiah and invites his opponents to "come, and reason together" with him (1:18), where it is God, and not the prophet, who speaks ("Come now, let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."), he illustrates the tremendous spiritual ignorance fundamentalists have even of the Bible! As zealots who claim biblical "inerrancy" and yet don't even understand what the Bible says, they haven't even a basis for biblical authority. I know that for a fact because my Ph.D. is in Biblical Studies.

Fundamentalist abuse and perversion of biblical interpretation to justify all kinds of immoral ideas--racism, anti-feminism, holy war, monopoly capitalism, banning of medical abortion, substitution of biblical Creation for scientific evolution in the schools, abridgment of God-given human rights, crushing of God-inspired prophetic dissent--is so flagrant and evident to any Christian biblical scholar who uses the canon of dominical teaching (the words of Jesus) as his hermeneutical standard that he or she is sickened by what passes for "biblical theology" in this sectarian movement.

These self-styled "Christians" have also managed to do something never before thought possible. They have found a way to serve both God and Mammon! The combined "ministries" of the supposedly Reverend Jerry Falwell, for example, brought in the astounding amount of 71 million dollars in 1981, and have undoubtedly doubled the take by now!

They have also found a way to use the tax-exempt IRS status of legitimate religion as a right-wing political tool. Ultimately, this will lead to all religious activities losing the major portion of their tax exemption in the U.S., when these people are finally repudiated in public sentiment. This probably will occur (it happened in England with the Puritans), but how late in the game?

What will America suffer before it awakens to the regnant evil that already controls a significant portion of democratic civil process?

When will educators, politicians, clergy, medical professionals and all the others directly influenced by supposedly "pro-moral" right-wing issues wake up and take a stand against Creationism, p.a.c.'s, fundamentalist theology, anti-abortionism, and all the rest?

Moral Majority targets four basic areas for "pro-moral" action. They want to outlaw abortion, short cut civil rights to crack down on drugs, porno, and street crime, censor and theologize public school education (i.e., religiously propagandize the schools), and rabidly support the state of Israel, right or wrong. In other words, they propose either immoral solutions, or define things as "moral issues" that are merely politically right-wing policies!

The real moral issues of our time are nuclear war, racism, political oppression, drug abuse including drunk drivers (who kill more American each year than the Vietnam war did!), world starvation, world poverty and disease, anti-feminism, the rape and pollution of the environment, the dumping of toxic waste, the high cost of medical care, and a host of complex social issues that cannot be solved with slogans, tokenism, and attempts to legislate puritanical laws that neurotically concern themselves with homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and personal

vices.

Ultimately there are absolutes in human morality. They constitute the "self-evident" and "God-given" postulates of human rights, freedom, and democracy.

But they are not moral absolutes! The greatest moral teacher of all time, Jesus Christ, did not substitute a whole canon of "Thou shalts" and "Thou shalt nots" for the Old Testament Law.

Instead he taught what must be recognized as spiritual absolutes. They concerned not the whats of moral living, but the hows.

He didn't spend his time taking cheap shots at homosexuals. In fact, his most severe rebukes were aimed exclusively not at "sinners," but at the self-righteous religious establishment of his time. His severest moral rebukes were directed against the self-righteousness of religious fundamentalists and biblical literalists, who saw themselves as better than other people and imagined themselves to have a divine mandate to morally reform the "sinners" by public almsgiving and other shows of piety calculated to serve as moral examples for others!

The religious fundamentalists of today are the spiritual heirs of New Testament Phariseeism, and they stand in the same opposition to Jesus Christ and his Message today as the Pharisees did then.

Lewis Keizer

October 13, 1983

I

THE FUNDAMENTALIST PHENOMENON

Holy war rages against the United States of America. The principles and traditions of American democracy are under ideological siege by such diverse groups as Iranian ayatollahs, communist and socialist commentators, Arab sheikhs and various third world guerilla politicians.

To this list we must now recognize a powerful new foe--the Christian fundamentalists.

Unlike the communists, they pretend to have strong roots within American tradition. They claim to be heirs of the "In God We Trust" spirituality of the American founders.

Unlike the ayatollahs, their cult leaders are American citizens. Their membership is drawn from a zealous minority of American citizens who, though generally lacking in higher education, are vigorously at work to radically change American institutions. This is being done in the name of moral reform, for to them (as to the communists and the Iranian ayatollahs) America is a decadent and morally corrupt society in need of dictatorial leadership that brooks no opposition.

They imagine that they alone carry the true teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as the spirit of the American founders. Though comprising a minority of the voting citizens, they are convinced that they have heaven's mandate, and are thus representative of the "moral majority." That is, most citizens, if only given the chance to hear the fundamentalist preaching, would morally concur.

Fundamentalists have taken strong positions on political, educational, social, religious, human rights and even medical issues--positions which they consider to be infallible and morally absolute. It is their religious duty to enforce them upon society through lobbies, innumerable political associations, boycotts or whatever means are available to them.

Since these are extraordinary times, they reason, extraordinary means are justified. In other words, the end justifies the means.

In this chapter we will explore just what the religious phenomenon of fundamentalism is, its basic psychological and philosophical characteristics in all religions and cultures, and the moral dilemma that has caused fundamentalism to arise with such power in contemporary American society.

Further chapters will trace the historical roots of Christian fundamentalism from the earliest Christian heresies, discuss its abuse of biblical interpretation, examine fundamentalist utopian social goals, political strategies, and demonstrate the grave threat fundamentalism poses to the ideals of American constitutional demo-

cracy, the advance of contemporary spirituality, and the emergence of viable moral solutions to current political, social and educational dilemmas.

Fundamentalism in World Religions

The term "fundamentalism" is one that was originally applied to southern white evangelical sects in the years following the Civil War. It is not a term used in the study of religious history and phenomenology.

However, Religionsgeschichte has drawn most of its technical jargon from regional or cultural terms. Shaman, for example, was the name for the priestly medicine man in a specific East Asian tribe. Since it is one name for an institutional office shared by many tribes in Asia and ancient America, it became conventional to use the terms "shaman, shamanism, shamaning, shamanistic" in a general and comparative way.

In the same way, the term "fundamentalism" describes not just a form of American piety, but a common and familiar form of piety in world religions.

The newspapers refer, for example, to the Iranian Shiites of Ayatollah Khomeini as Moslem or Islamic fundamentalists. The Hare Krishna movement is a form of Hindu fundamentalism. The Chasidic Jews of Jerusalem are Jewish fundamentalists.

In primitive or tribal societies fundamentalist sects have usually arisen as what have been called "messianic" cults under charismatic leaders.¹ They include the cargo cult of New Guinea, the Ghost Dance and other prophetic religions of the North American Indians, certain Latin American, Southeast Asian and African cults, and historical sects within Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Shinto.

Often these sects arise in reaction to oppression by colonizers anxious to convert the native people to a new religion and culture. Most of the recent fundamentalist cults outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition have emerged in opposition to Christian evangelism, later merging with it to create new hybrid forms like the Name of Jesus cult in Brazil, or the saint cult of the Mexican brujas.

These and many more represent "fundamentalistic" phenomena in world religions.

Fundamentalism exists as a form of piety in many religious traditions because it characterizes a specific psychological approach. Like the higher mysticism of various religions, it has a life of its own, and might more properly be categorized as a religion of its own. Thus it is accurate to say that Christian fundamentalism is more characteristically "fundamentalist" than it is Christian!

¹Cf. The Religions of the Oppressed, Vittorio Lanternari (New York, 1963)

The following elements characterize fundamentalism in world religions. Below each element I have compared American Christian fundamentalism (right) with the Islamic fundamentalism of the Iranian followers of Ayatollah Khomeini (left).

Iranian Fundamentalism

American Fundamentalism

A. VIGOROUS OPPOSITION TO MODERNISM

Hatred of European and American industrial technology, individual freedom and human rights philosophy, women's rights; suspicion of university education

Hatred of science, biblical criticism, so-called "secular humanist" human rights and social compact philosophies; antagonism against universities

B. ADVOCACY OF A STATE RELIGION

Shiite Islam under moral control of powerful ayatollahs

Fundamentalist Christian Zionism under moral control of "priests" (Rev. 20.6)

C. ETERNAL SECURITY

Service to the cult, especially in a martyr's death, guarantees eternal bliss

Service to the church and right belief guarantees eternal bliss

D. SPIRITUAL ABSOLUTISM

There is no God but Allah, and Khomeini is His only living prophet

Christianity is the only true religion, and fundamentalism is the only true Christianity

E. MORAL ABSOLUTISM

Only the Shiite laws and traditions are God's true Law

The fundamentalist interpretation of biblical values is God's true Law

F. THIS IS THE "END TIME" OF APOCALYPTIC PROPHECY

Khomeini is the Imam that was to come for the new age

After the communists defeat Israel and cause world nuclear holocaust, Christ will return, the "Rapture" of the Church will occur, the First Resurrection and Judgment, then the 1,000 year rule of Christian "priests"

G. DEMONISM AND SATANISM INCARNATE IN ALL ENEMIES

Americanism and communism are under the control of satanic forces, as well as all Westernization

"Secular humanism," the United Nations, UNESCO, the National and World councils of churches, and all non-fundamentalists are under satanic control

H. EVANGELISTIC ZEAL

Public demonstrations including flagellation and emotional public witness

Missionary crusades and media campaigns to "witness" and gain converts

Iranian FundamentalismAmerican Fundamentalism

I. BELLIGERENT CAMPAIGNS

Jihad or "holy war" against America, with great exultation in symbolic victories; concern to humiliate and utterly destroy human enemies

Vituperous "crusades" or holy campaigns against liberal politicians, "secular humanists," members of other religions. In recent past also included religiously inspired pogroms against Jews, and KKK activities against blacks

J. NEGATIVE VIEW OF MANKIND AND THE WORLD

Entire Western world and communist block corrupt and under satanic influence

America (and world) morally corrupt; American leadership spiritually barren; education system from preschool through graduate school under sway of false and ungodly philosophies; other churches and religions corrupt

In extreme forms, religious fundamentalism becomes fanatic. The imagined goal or end justifies any means, because the present is a time of final crisis, and unique times demand unique actions. Assassination, indiscriminate public bombing or poisoning, kidnapping of innocent victims--these and many more have been justified in the minds of religious zealots throughout history, even though theirs may be a pacifistic and humane religion.

The warning is sounded to the early Jewish Christians in danger of religious persecution, imprisonment or stoning to death by zealots of the Pharisaic sect:

"Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service!" John 16.2

Homicide and/or mass suicide is not uncommon in the history of religious fundamentalism. Homicide or holy wars involving genocidal butchery of women, infants and the elderly are generated by the fundamentalist extremist's sense of pure self-righteousness, since he acts as God's instrument of judgment on the unrepentent heathen. Mass suicide is chosen by communities at times of eschatological disappointment because their view of life and the world is so negative--why go on living, when they can go to their heavenly reward in the honor of martyrdom? This, of course, has no comparison to true martyrdom, which is non-suicidal and rarely voluntary.

Other elements that characterize fundamentalism in world religions include adherence to charismatic cult leaders--usually emotionally persuasive "salesman" types who amply make up for what they lack in education, skill or study by their zeal and iron-clad opinions; development of subcultural or cult social dynamics,

including special language or theological jargon, specialized social conventions with a strong pecking order among members of the sect; strong pressure upon the individual cult member to constantly prove his loyalty through actions, demonstrations, public witness; emphasis of the cult goals over the individual freedoms of the members; a sense of being among the elite inner circle, the church within the Church, and among the special chosen or elect.

Fundamentalism is a kind of religious extremism. It is a puritanical form of piety that seems to be generated by social crisis and a need for order, certainty, security. It is motivated by a desire to possess all truth, righteousness and divine approval--not as an individual person, but as a member of an elect community. It is also motivated by a desire for return to "fundamental" values and the ways of the ancestors, not unlike the modern nostalgia for a return to the soil and nature. Finally, it is motivated by a desire for emotional religious experience and group charismatic phenomena. It is a way for people to feel good about themselves.

Unfortunately the "groupness" of fundamentalism generates a social dynamic that requires a common enemy, which is ultimately everything outside the group. It also demands a willingness to subordinate the individual mind to group dogmas. The apocalypticism of fundamentalist cultism is its basic belief structure, and keeps the individual from straying outside the group by offering eschatological rewards and warning against eternal punishments for all cult enemies.

It is this us-versus-the-world mentality combined with the sense of divine mission and righteousness that has made it easy for fundamentalist Christians to act belligerently towards people of other races, religions, philosophies and national origins. The bitter battles between white Southern Baptists and Methodists in the last century graphically illustrate this tendency, as well as the revival of the Ku Klux Klan by Baptist fundamentalists, with its subsequent persecution of black people and Jews.

Religious fundamentalism has always existed in world religions. It is a form of piety that appeals to a certain psychological mentality, and that blossoms at times of social disorder or cultural crisis.

Christian fundamentalism is not "true" Christianity, but a heretical form that cares little for the teachings of Jesus and much more for the apocalyptic speculations of primitive Christian literature.

The Roots of Christian Fundamentalism

American Christian fundamentalism is a schismatic offshoot of the evangelical Baptist tradition, which is part of mainstream Christianity. The evangelical tradition finds its roots in Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening of colonial times, but fundamentalism takes its roots directly from what it conceives to be the authentic New Testament Church. In other words, all past tradition is cast away, and the only religious authority is the Bible, as interpreted by fundamentalist preachers.

This is interesting, because it explains why so many fundamentalist churches are reviving the old Christian heresies of second through fourth centuries. Using the New Testament Church as their starting place, they are doomed to tread all the ancient dead-ends and byways as they progress in their piety. Instead of learning from church history, they are reliving it all over again from scratch! As fundamentalists they are easily led into the ancient "fundamentalistic" traps.

Here are some of them.

Corinthian Gnosticism; Nicolaitanism

These were "fundamentalistic" sects that adhered to the teachings of a single charismatic leader and parted with the rest of Christianity. Their charismatic rites included free love advocacy, much like the modern Children of God, recently renamed by themselves the Family of Love. The Children of God were originally a fundamentalist church organized to imitate the New Testament church and take all doctrine from the Bible. Their strict communistic social structure was an admirable reconstruction of the primitive Church. One difference--sect leader David Berg was quite unlike James, Peter or John, who presided over the Jerusalem Church! The Family of Love uses sex as evangelical bait for recruiting new members. Founder Berg, who was a kind of white Father Divine, taught that Jesus had sex with Mary and Martha, "...because I saw Mary making love to him in a vision I once had!"²

Montanism

Like other heretical sects from Asia Minor, the second-century Montanists

²Children of God, Family of Love, John Moriconi (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1980), p. 13

believed they were the true Christians and all the others were false. The founder, a charismatic prophet named Montanus, was closely associated with two female seers, Prisca and Maximilla. He was a biblical literalist and believed that he had deciphered the Apocalypse of John. According to his calculations and visions, the New Jerusalem would descend from heaven near Pepuza in Phrygia. These were the "end times," so the coming of Christ could be expected momentarily. He and his followers went up onto the mountaintop to await the descent of the New Jerusalem. Like the Jehovah's Witnesses eighteen hundred years later, who expected the Second Coming in 1914 (all we got was World War I!), when the eschatological hope failed to materialize it was pushed off into the "near" future and rigid rules of moral behavior, ascetic practice and dietary laws were enacted. The fanatic piety of the Montanists was famous for many decades, and many Christians were converted to Montanism including the North African theologian Tertullian.

Among the early Christian churches of the New Testament period (we can't speak of a single "Church" except in theory), many of them were apocalyptic in orientation, expecting an immanent return of Christ. This fundamentalist error was corrected by the writer of John's Gospel, who "realized" eschatology by showing Christ as already present with his Church through the Holy Spirit.

Montanism is a form of apocalyptic fundamentalism that has appeared countless times in church history. Its prophets ("false prophets," as they are known in early Christian literature) reveal an historical date for the end of the present Age. This produces a great crescendo of evangelistic furor until the time the cult is scheduled to ascend the mountain top to await the coming of Christ "in the air," as it says in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (or to await the coming of the flying saucers, as in current cultic mythology). When Christ doesn't show, a new revelation will be transmitted--the coming has been delayed! Until that time the believers are to live as a community under the direction of the prophet, who will give them rules and more revelation.

Montanism is one of the earliest historical roots of apocalyptic Christian fundamentalism. All subsequent episodes have followed the same familiar pattern, and there is no reason to doubt that the current apocalyptic furor will end just as the Jehovah's Witness furor ended--with what scholars know as the good old "delay of the Parousia!"

Inquisitors and Pardoners

During the thirteenth century in Europe the Inquisition was begun against all dissenting or heretical religious minorities. The Dominican Order, more than all others, was given charge of finding and dealing with dissenters. The issue

was not correct doctrine, but abdication of the state religion under Rome. Independent pre-protestant communities were persecuted, tortured and even massacred.

This form of religious zeal occurs in many secular manifestations with nationalistic persecution of groups (like the medieval Jews, or the Moravians) under the guise of religion.

The Pardoners in England (with other names in Europe) were the custodians of public morality. The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer give us a unique view of the corruption of this office, which sold papal pardons or "indulgences," dispensations from God's punishment in the afterlife for sin. The Pardoner was a strict conservative moralist who had the power to fine and imprison people for their moral vices--adultery, gluttony, profanity, etc. He could hold hearings and conduct investigations into the private lives of people at his discretion, for his was an appointed office.

These two forms of fundamentalistic piety--forcing dissenters to recant, and regulating the private lives of people by punishing moral infractions--were perpetuated in the protestant tradition by the Puritans, whose forebearers were the bitter enemies of Thomas Jefferson and his democratic ideals.

The Early Protestant Sects

Each of the early protestant factions followed strong leaders whose ideas became the basis for sectarian belief. Martin Luther developed many of the fundamental doctrines of protestantism. Swingli and Calvin created rigid, work-ethic communities.

Lutheranism quickly became an excuse for peasant revolts and violent revolutionary uprisings. Catholic churches with their priceless artwork and organs were mercilessly bludgeoned to bits in the name of God, and loyalists were beaten and murdered. This sort of fanatical zeal is typical of extreme fundamentalistic piety. It provided the violent force needed by the American colonies to win their independence from England, as an element of Puritanism.

Calvinism settled into a powerful community dynamic that had no toleration for other religious doctrines, and promulgated the dogma of double predestination--all people were predestined for either salvation (us) or eternal damnation (them). Thus there is no sense in pitying those doomed to hell, since they deserve it anyway, and no sense trying to convince an unbeliever.

Calvinist fundamentalism illustrates that "evangelism" is not characteristic of fundamentalism, although there can be evangelical fundamentalists (as there are today). The sense of self-righteousness with condemnation of all others is the basic attitude of fundamentalism--not a concern to "save" others.

Puritanism

The Puritans of seventeenth-century England and the colonies are, in fact, at the historical root of American fundamentalism--not the "New Testament Church," as claimed by the modern fundamentalists. They themselves saw their roots in the Old Testament, as the separated "remnant" of the true Israel.

They took all their laws straight from the Old Testament (not from the teachings of Jesus, which were often set in contrast to ancient laws!). They wanted to purify Christianity by using the Bible alone as the Church's true authority--not tradition, doctrine or common sense. They come closer than any of their contemporaries to being true fundamentalist biblical literalists.

Unfortunately they seem never to have read what Jesus or Paul had to say about the difference between Old and New Covenants. In an important sense they took most of their guidance from the Old Testament, thus were legalistic, moralistic and quite ascetic.

They carried on a protestant form of the Inquisition ("witch hunt") in Salem and other New England towns, although to their credit they finally realized the wrongness of this tyranny and were the first regional group to publically end the practice, decades and even centuries ahead of the Europeans and Spanish. The English simply hadn't participated in witch hunts (no thanks to the Puritans).

Soon after the founding of the Plymouth Rock colony, the Puritans gained political power in England. They beheaded the king and put Oliver Cromwell in his place. From that moment for several years (until Cromwell's death and the end of the Puritan tyranny in England) fundamentalist politics prevailed. Dissent was cruelly smashed. The people were forbidden to celebrate Christmas, since it was a "pagan" holiday, not a pure Christian holiday, and public criers strolled the streets of London bellowing, "No Christmas! No Christmas!"

Like the Prohibitionists of the early twentieth century, the Puritans believed that they could legislate morality--their kind of morality. They wanted to radically reform and morally purify society, according to their sectarian mores.

They were despised by the general populace, and rightly so. Meanwhile, back in the American colonies, they continued the practice of punishing people for minor infractions or vices by locking them in the public stockades, where all could ridicule and abuse them. They punished their children with beatings using clubs, and maintained an absolute terror of tyranny in the classrooms, where children were given sadistic and psychologically warping punishments for minor offenses like looking the wrong direction, misspelling a word or speaking out of turn.

Thus, the fundamentalist approach to political power, social control and

the education and discipline of children.

It is not any wonder that America cast off its Puritan conventions! No person in his right mind would idealize them or want to return to them.

These, then, are some of the roots of Christian fundamentalism--though none of them can be properly called "fundamentalism" as we know it today. Yet each of these kinds of precursors--the anomic sect lead by self-inspired charismatic prophet, the apocalyptic doomsayers, the persecutors of dissent, the moral censors with power over personal lives, the self-righteous community prepared to let the rest of the world go to hell, the violent crusaders bludgeoning people and property in the name of God, the moral "puritans" who want to impose their values on all of society and won't tolerate the taint of pluralism or individual conscience--each of these impulses belongs to a "fundamentalistic" mentality, and each contributed to the full flowering of Christian fundamentalism as it sprouted from the Puritan movement, which carried its seeds to this continent.

The Development of American Fundamentalism

While one cannot speak of "fundamentalism" per se before the fundamentalist controversies of the post-Civil War period, all the elements of an American fundamentalist Christianity existed in the earliest Puritan churches.

The greatest single channeling of fundamentalist belligerency was concentrated in the political radicalizing that led to the Revolutionary War with England. Clergy of all dissenting and minority sects were passionate advocates of separation from England, and joined together for political reasons in spite of their mutual antipathy. They were known at the time as the "Black Regiment," addressing their church membership regularly with fiery sermons arousing revolutionary fervor. Where many of the mainline protestant churches (Anglican, Lutheran, Quakers and pacifistic German groups) were in favor of reform without bloodshed, the angry fundamentalistic sects cried for independence. The English response? Send in a bishop!

"For us of the twentieth century, it is very, very difficult to recover imaginatively a real understanding of the enormous effect of this controversy on the opinions and feelings of a pious, dissenting people grown accustomed to ecclesiastical self-government and currently engaged in a struggle to protect their liberties in the civil sphere."³

The last thing the dissenters wanted was a bishop, who would undermine their

³Carl Bridenbaugh, Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775, p. 313, quoted in A Religious History of the American People, Volume I, Sydney E. Ahlstrom (New York, 1975), p. 439

local political-ecclesiastical power structures and speak out with authority against revolutionary concerns. It was undoubtedly fear of episcopacy on the part of fundamentalistic religious leaders that generated their vigorous support of independence.

The power and energy of fundamentalistic Puritanism was basic in creating the kind of violent provocation that resulted in bloody revolution.

As Ahlstrom declares, the source of revolutionary conviction, and the belief that a kind of holy war could be justified, "lay in the religious substratum, which was always Nonconformist, Dissenting and Puritan in its basic disposition."⁴

The Puritans seized upon the idealism of the Enlightenment as political rationale for violent revolution and total, radical independence. They adapted the ideas to their own advantage because they were a dissenting minority hungering for civil rights, self-rule, and religious toleration. For this reason the leaders of Enlightenment political theory--Milton, Locke, Trenchard and the rest--were greater heroes in the colonies than in their native England.

Once the revolution was over, however, and the chickens had come home to roost, it became apparent to the fundamentalistic Puritans that Enlightenment ideals were not in their self-interest. Under their chosen leader, John Adams, a new political philosophy was written in the Federalist Papers--one that was inimical to civil rights, religious toleration, and the ideals of freedom and justice that we take for granted today.

In other words, fundamentalistic philosophy had intruded into the American political process. Its great enemy was Thomas Jefferson. The conflict with Jefferson, who must be regarded as the founder of American political philosophy and what the modern fundamentalists call "secular humanism," illustrates in great detail what the current biblical assault on American values is all about. It is the subject of the next chapter.

Thanks to Jefferson, fundamentalistic philosophy was finally excluded from American political philosophy. Traditional American values and social morality derive from the humanistic Enlightenment ideal, rather than from Puritanism. It is these traditional values (human rights, religious toleration, free speech, etc.) that today's fundamentalists are calling the "secular humanist" philosophy, and that they want modified to fit fundamentalist (Puritan) canons, which they claim are the "true" traditional American values.

⁴op. cit., p. 439

Puritanism survived as an ultra-conservative force into the nineteenth century and raised a few moral crusades to punish "Sabbath breaking" and other heinous offenses, but underwent a great modification once the apocalyptic enemy, King George, had been defeated. It splintered and fragmented with other dissenting groups into a sectarian revival that brought Presbyterianism, Methodism, and a second Great Awakening to the fore. Deism and Unitarianism became the religious philosophies of the educated classes, with Enlightenment idealism establishing its rightful seat in the American religious as well as political arena. Freemasonry was a potent force among intellectuals and the founding fathers as well.

Until the time of President John F. Kennedy, most presidents have been (if only for political reasons) high degree Masons. The occult Hermetic symbolism of Freemasonry still appears on American currency and seals. Of the religions listed by federal elected officials, an inordinately high percentage of them have been Unitarians. All this reflects the power of Enlightenment philosophy in American traditional religion.

We must understand that it was not in the mainstream of the Christian Church that radical ideas like democracy, human rights, freedom and equal justice evolved. Such ideas were considered by the medieval Church to be impious and rebellious. As a result there had been secret societies formed as early as the period of the Crusades. They were comprised of intellectuals and reformers of good will who refused to abandon their religious ideals simply because the Church told them their humanistic idealism was secular and opposed to the laws of God. It was from their tradition that the Enlightenment took its roots. Freemasonry was the main form of protestant intellectual mysticism (as opposed to quietism and pietism), and it remained a vital force among the upper class founders of American democracy.

Fundamentalistic religion would probably have vanished from the American scene had it not been for the Civil War. This holocaust, with all its tragedy and violence, totally destroyed the social and cultural structure of the South. After the Civil War, white southern churches, surrounded by the primitivism of the black churches and the poverty of the South, developed revivalist and evangelical characteristics.

Previous to the Civil War the Baptists had agitated for secession. Their role in whipping up the South to rebel and become independent had been much like that of the Puritans in creating a climate for the Revolutionary War. With the defeat of Dixie, the social conditions for the rise of fundamentalism were ripe. What would its characteristics be?

"In the final analysis, all the endogenous messianic movements (i.e., fundamentalist movements--ed.), regardless of their cultural level, are impelled by their nature to escape from society and from the world in order to establish a society and world of their own beyond history, beyond reality, and beyond the necessity of fighting to bring about change and improvement."⁵

That is exactly what the white southern fundamentalists did--since they couldn't secede from the Union, they decided to secede from the world--to create their own biblical reality, much as the revivalist black churches had already done under slavery.

It was they who invented the term "fundamentalism,"⁶ which meant going back to the Bible for all truth (scientific, geographical, astronomical, legal, etc.). Since the fundamentalists were poorly educated, the Bible seemed like all the book learning they would ever need--after all, it was the inspired Word of God, wasn't it? Then everything it said should be true and make sense to simple folk, right?

No more seminary training--no more education of the clergy. All one needed to be a minister was a Bible and a big mouth. In fact, the mouth was the most important thing, since it was the "gift of gab" that made the difference between a poor Southern white minister and one who was a bit better off.

In describing this kind of phenomenon in religions, Lanternari points out that such groups do not engage in political action until after they have withdrawn from the world into their own subculture. First there must be a period of separation, then from their other-worldly base they begin holy war against their enemies.⁷

This is precisely what the fundamentalists of the post-Vietnam era did. In the early seventies their big attraction was that they were "apolitical"--they kept out of politics. That is because they were in the process of reacting and building a subculture. In the eighties, fully established, they now go out to wage holy war in a massive, well-orchestrated political campaign to destroy their historical enemy--a free and pluralistic society.

As Lanternari puts it, their purpose now becomes "to defeat the enemy rather than to escape from him."⁸

⁵The Religions of the Oppressed (op. cit.), pp. 248-249 (Italics my own)

⁶A Religious History of the American People (op. cit.), Vol. 2, pp. 169ff.

⁷Op. cit., p. 249

⁸Ibid.

American fundamentalism as we know it today has its strongest roots in the Fundamentalist movement originating in the white Southern churches of the post-Civil War period. Baptists and Methodists competed for congregations, with acrimonious attacks on each other as being the devil's tool, the ruination of America, and so on.

"As late as 1927 only 4 percent of the Southern Methodist clergy were seminary graduates, and only 11 percent had college degrees. It is most improbable that the Baptist situation was any better. In the Negro churches it was very much worse. With few exceptions, moreover, Fundamentalism reigned unchallenged in the denominational colleges and seminaries throughout the region. Their predominantly rural and small-town constituency made the Southern churches the strongholds of social patterns and ways of thought that were increasingly anachronistic. These churches could and did marshal public opinion on a wide range of social questions and enforce those forms of the Puritan ethic that had begun to assume a characteristically Southern tone in the early colonial period."⁹

The greatest issues were science, biblical criticism, liberal politics, white supremacy (in the white churches, from which blacks were barred until quite recently), evolution, and northern modernism.

Of these issues the modern fundamentalists have accepted biblical textual criticism, some forms of science, and modified their racist policies--although whites and blacks are still de facto members of separate congregations in much of the South.

In the twentieth century fundamentalism has had ups and downs, with an explosion (as did all forms of Christianity) after World War II. It suffered setbacks during the sixties because of the civil rights movement, which generated negative public opinion against segregation and other repressive philosophies of fundamentalism.

As a result of the national traumas of Vietnam and Watergate, however, fundamentalism began a boom nationwide (instead of merely in the South) that has made it into one of the wealthiest and most powerful interest groups in the country.

Today it controls evangelical Christianity with its apocalypticism, Puritan morality and antihumanistic goals. Christian bookstores have become havens of a religious counter-culture, with "Christian" literary products of all kinds--Christian comic books, Christian educational materials, Christian marriage and family counseling, Christian political philosophy, lists of Christian goods and services nationwide. Christian housing developments, schools and even whole towns are appearing. The New Jerusalem (so the fundamentalists think) is descending on earth.

⁹ A Religious History of the American People (op. cit.), Vol. 2, p. 185

All the trappings of Southern Baptist sectarianism are still there, but disguised to make them seem palatable. The one major change is that modern radio and television preachers have radically altered their style.

The old radio preachers were hell-and-brimstoners, doomsayers, or used car salesmen types. They relied on getting out many words with high emotions and persuading by means of sheer will power.

When the neo-fundamentalists began to attract nationwide following in the late sixties and early seventies, they recognized the value of media technology for evangelistic purposes, especially that of television--for radio was becoming outmoded. They soon discovered that the kind of television presentation that worked was quite different from the old radio approach. The success of Reverend Ike and other low-key television ministries stressing abundance and material well-being pointed the way.

Contemporary fundamentalist evangelism looks down its nose at the old Billy Sunday or later Billy Graham kind of public crusade. Instead of a travelling road show, modern evangelism uses the latest techniques of propaganda and national organizing. For a decade it has been organizing the campuses--not through the inter-campus ministries of mainstream churches (which it considers to be "unbelievers"), but through separate organizations such as InterVarsity. National television presents late-night or satellite broadcasts of major-budget regulars like the P.T.L. ("Praise The Lord!") Club. "Christian" television networks broadcast nothing but religious propaganda on an eighteen- or twenty-four hour basis.

These shows and networks are beginning to present their political views--always with a disclaimer that they are advocating them, in an attempt to avoid the equal-time requirements of the F.C.C. The fundamentalists have organized countless non-profit "moral" organizations whose goals are patently political.

The assault on democracy is only just beginning. Fundamentalist preachers appear on television in a relaxed, low-key mode. They appeal to emotion, sentiment and conservative consensus values in order to appear mainstream and trustworthy. They avoid hitting you with doom, the destruction of the world, the Second Coming, the Rapture. You'll get all that later, after you've been initiated. They don't want to scare you off by showing their hand right away.

Let's take a look at the first great American who was forced to confront the ugly philosophy of fundamentalism. His name was Thomas Jefferson.

II FUNDAMENTALISM AGAINST DEMOCRACY

Since the time of George Washington, fundamentalistic sects have waged religious crusades to abridge the rights and freedoms of American democracy. These sects appear during times of social crisis (Revolutionary War, Civil War, etc.) and develop a strategy of adversary politics in order to gain secular power.

Although it has been true that these movements eventually succumb to the greater spiritual power of constitutional democracy and the moral condemnation of the citizenry at large, the fact remains that during their ascendancy they do great harm. What is more, democracy has always had its own clear-sighted champions who stand up and fight for its lofty principles. Without them, democracy might have been easily overwhelmed. This has happened in other countries, and it can happen in America.

The sobering fact about the recent rise of religious fundamentalism is that for the first time in American history this force has wealth and membership enough to gain political control if the voting public remains apathetic.

President Reagan was elected by one of the smallest voting minorities ever to sway a national election. The danger now becomes that elections go not to the candidates of general choice, but to those who have committed, zealous voting blocks comprising ten to fifteen percent of the voting population.

Today we are in a spiritual situation with many parallels to post-Revolutionary War America. The people have been exhausted by social conflict, splintered by controversy, yet unified by foreign attack (i.e., Iran). Mainstream church and synagogue membership has fallen to a new low, and fundamentalism is rampant.

"(Church) difficulties were the product of distraction, attack, and apathy; and the greatest of these was apathy. A colonial people almost congenitally exercised with religious questions of all sorts--and possibly exhausted by or in reaction against the Great Awakening--became preoccupied for forty years chiefly with the problems of politics. When independence was achieved, social unrest flared up again, as in western Massachusetts, where outraged farmers under Daniel Shays resorted to armed force in 1786. After the federal Constitution had been ratified, unrest was translated in bitter partisan political struggle. When revolution in France and a new European war complicated the issues and aroused even fiercer passions, the churches had little opportunity for recuperation; and even if they had, the intellectual climate was too debilitating. By the end of the period church membership had dropped both relatively and absolutely, so that not more than one person in twenty or possibly one in ten seems to have been affiliated; in many churches membership itself became increasingly nominal."¹⁰

¹⁰A Religious History of the American People (op. cit.), p. 443

Under these conditions, which have many parallels to the sixties and seventies of our era, two kinds of spiritual movement spread in antithesis to each other. On the one hand was the development of rationalism and the Enlightenment spirit, upon which the ideals of American democracy were founded. On the other hand was a neo-Puritan revival that resulted in a splintering of fundamentalistic sects and a powerful movement to gain political control of the fledgling American government.

The basic opposition of these two forces--which might very well be characterized as "Secular Humanism" and Christian fundamentalism--bring the very issues at stake in the 1980's into sharp focus.

The champion of democracy who at that time arose to defend its principles and establish it as the American form of political philosophy was Thomas Jefferson.

Today's religious fundamentalists, if they know anything at all about history, must recognize that the conflict between Jefferson and the Federalists is spiritually, morally and philosophically identical to the conflict between modern humanistic politicians and Christian fundamentalists. What is more, they must also admit that it was the humanistic philosophy that became central to American political and traditional values--not the neo-Puritanism of the Federalists.

"A new conception of freedom and equality took shape, involving conceptions of God, man, human rights, the state, and history, which became inseparable from the Enlightenment's outlook on reality. On 4 July 1776, these conceptions became a cornerstone of the American political tradition; during this period they were given further embodiment in state constitutions (and in due course in the federal Constitution). In the words of the nation's Patriot heroes and Founding Fathers these ideas were woven into the very texture of American thinking. The American nation was born in the full illumination of the Enlightenment, and this fact would permanently distinguish it from every other major power in the world."¹¹

Thomas Jefferson Versus Federalist Fundamentalism

The revival of Puritan moralism during the spiritual depression following the American Revolutionary War established itself as a political force in the Federalist Papers. The term "federal" is from Latin foedus, "a compact, alliance," and refers to a mixture of Puritan biblical theology and political thought. The word referred also to other social compact ideas and has come down in our idea of the United States as a political federation, with the "federal" government at its head.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 439-441

However, Federalism was a potent conservative political force in the post-war period of early America. It opposed the rationalists, Deists, Unitarians and assorted liberals of the time with bitter moral criticism, and succeeded in forging a political alliance to back candidates that would appease its dogmatic ideas. John Adams was their man, and Thomas Jefferson their greatest foe.

George Washington had appointed Jefferson his Secretary of State, since Jefferson was educated and well acquainted with the humanistic ideals of the French Enlightenment--being, in fact, a great advocate of democracy and other humanistic doctrines. Jefferson was at the head of the southern Republican interests--educated, polished, cultured and reflecting the wealthier landed Americans.

His arch-enemy was Alexander Hamilton, who headed the northern commercial interests descended from the Puritan and Calvinist tradition. There was considerable sentiment among these conservatives for an American monarchy based on biblical ideals of an earthly, theocratic Zion. If not this, then at least an authoritarian regime that would legislate morality and establish Puritan Christianity as the state religion. These were the Federalist moral ideals.

The Federalists considered themselves to be authorities on management of a federal budget--after all, they were the commercial shopkeepers and industrialists, the Calvinistic experts in money. Under their patronage Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, hoped to gain the presidency.

President Washington kept both men in office as a kind of counterbalance, and most probably to mollify the two antithetical political forces of his time. But to Jefferson this was a mistake, since there was a monarchist movement afoot among the Federalists, and the possibility of a coup d'Etat after Washington's death or retirement existed.

"Jefferson said (to President Washington--ed.) that he was disturbed by Hamilton's monarchistic machinations. The President denied that there was any monarchist movement in the country; and even if there were, it did not amount to much--'he did not believe there were ten men in the U.S. whose opinions were worth attention who entertained such a thought.' Jefferson countered that 'there were many more than he imagined.' He argued that 'tho' the people were sound, there were a numerous sect who had monarchy in contempl(atio)n. That the Secy of the Treasury was one of these.' He quoted Hamilton as having said that 'this Constitution was a shilly shally thing of mere milk & water, which could not last, & was only good as a step to something better.' There was, Jefferson said, a powerful group in Congress that had benefitted from Hamilton's financial policies and was, therefore, 'ready to do what he should direct.' The President frankly admitted that such a group did exist in the legislature, but he doubted whether it could be 'avoided in any government.' Jefferson refused to accept this point of view. 'I told him there was

great difference between the little accidental schemes of self interest which would take place in every body of men & influence their votes, and a regular system for forming a corps of interested persons who should be steadily at the orders of the Treasury."¹²

President Washington let the situation ride, and Jefferson wanted very much to be free of political office so that he could go out on the streets and oppose what the Federalists were doing. He was not only shocked by their monarchism, but by their financial policies. According to Jefferson,

"Hamilton kept on saying that 'there was no stability, no security in any kind of government but a monarchy,' and he was deliberately creating a privileged class of financiers and rentiers. Members of Congress and of the Administration, encouraged by Hamilton, were being tempted to make money in stocks and in speculation. That put an end to their independence. Such behavior on the part of representatives of the people shocked Jefferson."¹³

As you can surmise, conservative politics, authoritarian government, Puritan morality and big money capitalism all went together from the nation's earliest times, and were an affront to democratic ideals.

How much more would Jefferson be shocked by today's alliance of fundamentalism and big money!

After four years of beatings by the Federalists, Jefferson tendered his resignation and retired. But in 1796 Washington refused to run for a third term, and it was clear that his Vice-President, John Adams, would win the election with Federalist support. The Republicans nominated Jefferson, but Adams won. In accordance with the political practice at that time, Thomas Jefferson became Adams' Vice-President. But Jefferson found by analyzing the vote that he had come within a hair's breadth of being elected President, and resolved that since the American people endorsed his democratic ideals he would remain in government and fight for them.

In 1797, led by Alexander Hamilton, the Federalist Party went on a campaign to convince President Adams to declare war on France. The people of France had beheaded their monarch (an offense against all the Federalist monarchists and their God!). Moreover, the ideals of the French humanistic Enlightenment were filtering over the American shores by means of a stream of immigrants imbued with democratic views--foreigners who were considered by the conservative Federalists to be fomenters of rebellion against the government.

"One Federalist Senator said that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was full of 'United Irishmen, freemasons, and the most God-provoking democrats this side of hell!' Professional patriots grew hysterical and club

¹² Jefferson: A Great American's Life and Ideas, Saul K. Padover (New York, 1962) pp. 90-91

¹³ Ibid., p. 91

ladies (or their contemporary equivalents) were trembling with expectation. The upper classes, particularly in New England, 'scared easy.' Good ladies expected to be murdered in their beds, or meet a fate worse than death, at the hands of the godless Frenchmen and wild Irishmen. And who was to blame? That man Jefferson!"¹⁴

Thus in the summer of 1798 Congress in a panic of extremist conservative pressure passed the Alien and Sedition acts. These were designed to stifle political dissent, especially democratic and free press criticism of President Adams, and to stem the tide of foreign immigration.

"The sedition Act was so broad and inclusive that it virtually abolished the Bill of Rights. The Federalists were out to destroy republicanism, Jeffersonianism, Jacobinism, and radicalism in one fell swoop. If in the process they also blasted away the democratic foundations of the nation, so much the better, they thought."¹⁵

Even staunch Federalists like Marshall and Hamilton thought the Party had gone too far. Jefferson watched and waited for the Federalists to destroy themselves with this tyranny--so great was his faith in the intelligence and good will of the American people.

The witch hunt began, and first to be brought up on charges was Matthew Lyon, a Jeffersonian Congressman from Vermont who had been born in Ireland, but distinguished himself in Washington's army and had a strong reputation as a Patriot. His crime? To publically criticize President Adams in print. He had said that he could not support Adams when under his administration he witnessed the public welfare taking a back seat to, "a continual grasp for power, in an unbounded thirst for ridiculous pomp, foolish adulation and self avarice," with "men of real merit daily turned out of office for no other cause but independency of sentiment," and the "sacred name of religion employed as a state engine to make mankind hate and persecute each other."¹⁶

In other words, the President's administration had come to resemble a royal court, with flattery, adulation and inside moves. The religious fundamentalists were in the driver's seat of government to force a de facto state religion down everyone's throats. The situation closely parallels our own in the 1980's.

Jefferson could do nothing overt. He watched the kangaroo courts insult, fine and imprison some of his greatest supporters. But covertly he was on the move. He wrote long letters clearly defining the issues, knowing that they would be read in secret meetings and public houses. He began organizing his constituency for what would be perhaps the most significant presidential election this country has ever known.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 108

¹⁶Ibid., p. 109

¹⁵Ibid., p. 108

The campaign of 1800 was unique in its bitterness and vigor. Jefferson and the Republican champions of democracy ran against John Adams, now totally in the political debt of the Federalists.

"The gloves were off. On the Federalists' side it was a struggle to preserve power for the rich and the privileged. On the Jeffersonian side it was a battle to keep America a democracy, with liberty and opportunity for all the people."¹⁷

The religious, moral and philosophical issues became crystal clear in this election. The fundamentalistic clergy attacked him with a cruelty that Jefferson could never forgive. Chief among his degraders was the Rev. William Linn of New York. He accused Jefferson of teaching immorality, atheism and revelry. He wrote that Jefferson once pointed to a run-down church building and said, "It is good enough for him that was born in a manger." This, according to Linn, was a remark that could come only from an infidel who is the enemy of Christ.

"Does Jefferson ever go to church?' the Reverend asked. 'How does he spend the Lord's day? Is he known to worship with any denomination of Christians?'... 'Let the first magistrate to be a professed infidel, and infidels will surround him. Let him spend the Sabbath in feasting, in visiting or receiving visits, in riding abroad, but never in going to church; and to frequent public worship will become unfashionable.'¹⁸

Several liberal clergy came to the defense of Jefferson's spiritual worth.

"He has for a long time supported out of his own private revenues, a worthy minister of the Christian church--an instance of liberality not to be met with in any of his rancorous enemies, whose love of religion seems principally to consist in their unremitted endeavors to degrade it into a handmaid of faction."¹⁹

The Federalists were an upper class minority whose hatred for the common person and democracy was made plain in Dennie's Portfolio. Here is a quotation reprinted in all the Federalist newspapers of the time:

"A democracy is scarcely tolerable at any period of national history. Its omens are always sinister...It is on its trial here, and the issue will be civil war, desolation and anarchy. No wise man but discerns its imperfections, no good man but shudders at its miseries, no honest man but proclaims its fraud, and no brave man but draws his sword against its force."²⁰

Jefferson won the election against the Federalists in a landslide vote, but he was still not President. Aaron Burr, a machine politician also running on the Jeffersonian platform, received an equal number of votes, throwing the election to the House of Representatives for a tie-breaking vote. Here was a chance for the Federalists to crush Jefferson, but they were unable to. Why? Because Jefferson's old enemies, Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, knew that of the two men, Jefferson was the man of honor. They refused to participate in a Fed-

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 113

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 117

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 118

²⁰ Ibid., p. 121

eralist plot to turn the election to Aaron Burr in exchange for political favors. In spite of their Federalist affiliation, Hamilton and Adams cared more for the public good and allowed Jefferson his rightful victory.

The great historical importance of Jefferson's struggle to preserve American democracy is known to most school children. What is less generally realized is that Puritan fundamentalism attached itself to the Federalist political ideal, which in itself was a product of the fundamentalist revival.

"The Federalist Papers, published in 1787-88, as well as John Adams's defenses of the American constitutions, can be read as Puritan contributions to Enlightenment political theory."²¹

Jefferson's personal religion was the greatest moral issue of the Federalist struggle. It was not understood by his opponents, who could see him only as a pagan or an atheist. But Jefferson was a man steeped in the Judeo-Christian heritage who believed that all fields of knowledge--not merely the realms of sectarian religious dogma--were expressions of divine knowledge, and that all moral truth resided in the heart and conscience of man.

"The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath," said Jesus to his conservative moral critics who saw him violating ancient Sabbath laws.

Jefferson might have paraphrased it thus: "Government is made for man; not man for the government." Jefferson, who made a list of the teachings of Jesus for his own personal study (the Jefferson Bible), was steeped in the high moral teachings of Jesus Christ. They were integral to all Jefferson thought and wrote.

Jefferson was a humanistic Christian, but he was attacked as an atheist!

Christian Fundamentalism Against Humanistic Values

The Puritan revivalism that opposed the Enlightenment humanism of Jefferson was fundamentalistic, but it was not what today we call Christian fundamentalism. The modern fundamentalist movement originated in the post-bellum South as revivalist, holiness and charismatic prophecy sects splitting off from parent evangelical churches. The movement cut across denominational lines, creating new schools of literalistic biblical interpretation such as radical adventism and dispensational premillennialism.

The religious fervor and zeal of these new schools attracted converts hungry for religious meaning, and they grew under their schismatic leaders. Violent controversy was stirred, mainly in the southern churches where the heresy was strongest.

²¹ A Religious History of the American People (op. cit.), p. 441

Dispensationalism (an interpretation of the Book of Revelations) made its greatest victories under the theological leadership of Cyrus I. Scofield, whose Bible editions are still standard for many fundamentalists.

"The movement's distinctiveness seems to arise in part from its dual insistence on strict (biblical--ed.) inerrancy and a unitary view of the Bible. Hence both Old and New Testament apocalyptic texts (especially Daniel and Revelation) are interpreted as parts of one divine plan, with the result that Old Testament ideas play a dominant role. This is accompanied by a clear distinction between God's plans for Israel and for the Church, at least this side of eternity. The more common view has seen the Church as a new Israel, in which case New Testament eschatological ideas become dominant...In the first place it insisted undeviatingly on the absolute verbal inerrancy of the Bible as the 'inscripturated' Word of the unchanging eternal God; every word and phrase was deemed capable of revealing not merely data for the historian and philologist, but divine truth. Its extensive use of typology, its commitment to numerology, and its dependence on highly debatable (not to say fanciful) interpretations of some obscure apocalyptic passages have led many to insist that its interpretation is anything but literal. Yet its repudiation of historical criticism (of the Bible, i.e., treating it as literature and history--ed.) was well-nigh total, except insofar as it was driven to textual problems in the original languages...It...retained Archbishop Ussher's old dating of the Creation around 4,000 B.C."²²

The mainstream Christian churches reacted strongly against the heretical and schismatic movement.

"They could not accept the dispensationalist claim that all Christian history was a kind of meaningless 'parenthesis' between the setting aside of the Jews and the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom. This claim aroused violent reactions because it provided a rationale for destructive attitudes and encouraged secession from existing denominations. Especially objectionable was the tendency of dispensationalists to look for the Antichrist among the 'apostate churches' of the 'present age.'...To many denominational traditionalists the new conceptions, far from being 'fundamentals,' were fundamental heresies."²³

Nevertheless "fundamentalism," as the movement called itself, was getting back to the Bible, studying the infallible Word of God, and championing the authority of the King James Bible over Pope, priest, tradition, science and all "human" institutions. How little they realized that the King James Bible was merely a "human" translation of extremely difficult ancient literature.

A favorite joke about the fundamentalists was that often their preachers did whole sermons on italicized words in the King James Bible--words that were italicized because they hadn't existed in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts, and were simply added by editors to clarify the translation!

²²A Religious History of the American People (op. cit.), pp. 280-281

²³Ibid., pp. 281-282

Fundamentalism succeeded in eventually winning more strength in the South than the mainstream churches were able to retain, and they busied themselves with spreading their doomsday messages far and wide. Out of this fervor the Jehovah's Witnesses came into being, the Seventh Day Baptists and Adventists, the Holiness and Pentacostal churches, the Church of Christ, the Nazarenes, and various Baptist splinter groups, each separately convened and differing in name.

According to their reading of what the Bible directed, the following ideas were God's moral commandments:

Male Supremacy: Thus opposition to Women's Suffrage and equality

White Supremacy: Thus opposition to black civil rights, and even formation of white supremacy religious groups like the Ku Klux Klan, whose duty was to defend whites from black progress or political power

America as the Chosen Land (New Israel): Thus religious patriotic fervor, "America right or wrong," but with Secessionist ideals of states rights over federal government

Old Testament Law as Modern Moral Law: Thus concern for Puritan virtues, sexual mores, harsh and punitive prisons

Bible as Ultimate Textbook: Thus "Creationism" versus Evolution, religion versus science

Very little concern for the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament was ever expressed in fundamentalism. The greatest concern was for the apocalyptic passages of Old and New Testaments, and whatever passages could be construed as moral injunctions (Proverbs, Deuteronomy, etc.).

In other words, the pre-Christian religion of the ancient Hebrews was revived in an apocalyptic, historically inaccurate version, and spread far and wide.

The preachers of this religion looked everywhere for the Antichrist and their satanic foe, pointing the finger at other denominations, politicians, school boards and most especially anything foreign or educated. It was important to identify and expose the spiritual enemy. The enemies were uniformly identified in many fundamentalist churches as the following:

Science, especially biblical critics who treated the Bible as literature in order to learn better its true teachings.

Liberal Political Thought, especially the Christian liberals and university professors, northern and Washington politicians

Foreign Culture, which was "Un-American (i.e., non-southern)" and unbiblical, especially other religions (instruments of Satan)

Mainstream Christianity, including traditional evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Mormons, Spiritualists (demon-possessed)

All in all, fundamentalism was a regional southern phenomenon that made inroads in other locations from a southern base. Before the most recent recrudescence of fundamentalism nationwide, the greatest flowering of it was in the 1920's, when it tried to legislate against science in the schools.

The Scopes Monkey Trial was the high-water mark of this powerful political attempt to keep science out of the Tennessee public schools. At issue was whether the non-biblical doctrine of evolution should be banned from public curriculums because it contradicted (or seemed to contradict their understanding of) the biblical story of Creation.

Laws banning the teaching of evolution in public schools were passed in the state legislatures of Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi and Oklahoma. John Scopes, a new high school graduate on his first teaching assignment, had taught evolution. He was brought to trial.

Against him was the powerful William Jennings Bryan. In his corner was the brilliant Clarence Darrow. The confrontation made headlines across the world, and although Darrow won his point, the decision was later overturned by the Tennessee State Supreme Court on a technicality.

"The campaign to halt the teaching of evolution and kindred theories in the schools was not only a movement of the rural South. Ministers of great congregations in the North also provided leadership. Through the World's Christian Fundamentals Association led by William Bell Riley of the large First Baptist Church in Minneapolis, the Fundamentalist movement gained nationwide scope. At the association's ninth annual convention in 1927--with representatives of several allied organizations present--it made plans for a coordinated approach to all state legislatures. Its publications, special conferences, and organized efforts served not only to unify the movement, but to keep it oriented toward the premillennial dispensationalism being advanced in many churches and Bible institutes. Especially in its efforts to gain anti-evolution laws in the states, it was supported by the Bible Crusaders of America, almost the personal agency of a single wealthy founder, George F. Washburn of Florida. From Wichita, Kansas, Gerald B. Winrod led his Defenders of the Christian Faith. The existence of many of these organizations depended upon a single dynamic leader; yet they did maintain contact with a vast constituency of conservative Protestants and win countless local victories. In the process, no doubt, innumerable Americans were convinced that modern science was not only incompatible with Christian orthodoxy, but destructive to the moral order."²⁴

Since the twenties fundamentalism has had ups and downs, but it has remained a permanent influence in American religion, especially southern protestant Christianity. It has made extensive use of radio and other media ministries, the

²⁴Ibid., p. 398

printed word (Bible tracts and mass pamphlets), evangelistic and revival ministries. It has built huge, successful congregations with multi-million dollar budgets, and gone on campaigns to raise massive funds for Christian colleges and lower schools.

With the rise of modern fundamentalism, the enemy began to be seen as a unified religious-moral-philosophical force. This enemy was the cause of America's perceived moral decline, political weakness in the world of the sixties and seventies, and the failure of public educational and social institutions.

Fundamentalists knew that the enemy was science, foreign culture and liberal philosophy, and the more educated of the early fundamentalist Christians sometimes used the term "humanism" to describe the Devil's philosophy.

According to a recent syndicated feature article by Los Angeles Times Religion Editor Russell Chandler,

"The dictionary says humanism is 'the character or quality of being human; devotion to human interests.' Another entry says a humanist is 'a student of human nature and human affairs.' Also, humanism is 'devotion to those studies which promote human culture,' and humanities are 'learning or literature concerned with human thought and relations.'...Modern humanism is descended from the intellectual awakening in Western Europe that began in the late 14th century, initially in the city-states of Italy...Philosopher-historian Will Durant wrote that 'the humanists liberated man from dogma, taught him to love life rather than brood about death, and made the European mind free.' Historians consider that much of the humanism today sprang from the 18th-century Enlightenment, its worldly focus on free thought and human reason as the highest resources, and from the emergence of the scientific method."²⁵

But, Chandler goes on to point out, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious leaders have "periodically denounced secular humanism, saying that it is the culprit for declining standards of morality, since secular humanism considers morals to be manmade rather than absolutes grounded in the divine authority of the Bible."²⁶

With the rise of the conservative-fundamentalist political coalition during the Reagan presidential campaign, "secular humanism" was identified as the demonic enemy of mankind. Chandler quotes from a book called Save America by H. E. Rowe:

"The moving force behind humanism is Satan. Humanism is basically Satan's philosophy and program. Certain features of it may sound reasonable, but it always leads to tragedy, simply because it ignores the guidance of God."²⁷

Rowe is not an uneducated southern preacher. He is a trained economist!

²⁵"'Humanist Conspiracy' Chief Target of Religious Right," The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon, July 26, 1981, p. E1)

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

The main apostle of the crusade against "secular humanism" today is California minister Tim LaHaye, whose Family Life Ministries and Christian schools form a major economic block in San Diego. He says,

"It is all very simple...We are being controlled by a small but very influential cadre of committed humanists, who are determined to turn traditionally moral-minded America into an amoral, humanist country. Oh, they don't call it humanism. They label it democracy, but they mean humanism, in all its atheistic, amoral depravity."²⁸

The italics are my own. LaHaye has made it very clear just who and what the fundamentalist Christian enemy is--something that some people might call democracy.

People like Thomas Jefferson.

²⁸Ibid.

III THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND

Perhaps the most influential of the modern fundamentalist anti-humanists is the Rev. Tim LaHaye, whose recent book is entitled, The Battle for the Mind.

I quote from the endorsements on the back page:

"One of the most important books of our time. It is 'must reading' for every Christian. In every battle we must know two things: what we are fighting for and what we are fighting against. Pastor LaHaye has clearly exposed the regnant evil of our time--secular humanism--and has revealed the evil nature and origin of the beast..."

"Join Dr. LaHaye in sounding the alarm--the hour is late, the humanists are on the march."

"The stranglehold of humanism on life in America must be our best-kept secret. Gratefully, Tim LaHaye has now revealed it for everyone to understand and tells how humanism's corrosive impact on the morality of America can be stopped as you and I take initiative."

Since LaHaye seems to be the main spokesperson for the assault against humanism, let us examine what he has to say.

It is instructive to note that he does not begin the book with anything about humanism, but rather a chapter on how the human mind works. His basic thesis is that you are what you see and experience. In other words, a person becomes whatever his environment makes him, and is totally at the mercy of the environment, except insofar as he can change that environment.

"The old truism, 'You are what you read,' could be enlarged to, 'You are what you see.' What the eyes feast upon forms an impression on the mind, which in turn feeds the emotions. Just as drugs or alcohol influence thoughts and feelings physically, what we see and hear affect (sic) our thoughts and emotions."²⁹

The poor grammar notwithstanding, LaHaye is trying to score a point for the Puritan idea that we must cleanse and purify our environment in order to be morally pure ourselves, and that if we don't do this, we will be morally affected.

This is most definitely the ancient Hebrew concept of purity, and is quite biblical. The idea was scathingly refuted by Jesus Christ, who walked among the moral degenerates of his time and ate with "publicans and sinners." To put the refutation into the words of Jesus:

"Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him...For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a man."³⁰

²⁹The Battle for the Mind, Tim LaHaye (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1980), p. 19

³⁰Mark 7:14-23

This is only one example of the ignorance fundamentalists demonstrate about the historical teachings of Jesus. A great man like Jefferson abstracted all the words of Jesus from the New Testament and created what is known as the Jefferson Bible--a compendium of all the teachings of Jesus--which he studied and committed to memory.

A supposedly "Christian" minister like LaHaye, on the other hand, is grossly unfamiliar with the teachings of Jesus. This is what I mean when I say that fundamentalism is less a form of Christianity than it is a religion of its own. It calls itself Christian merely because our culture is Christian, and it uses the Christian Bible to give authority to its own doctrines, which are most decidedly not Christian.

In another chapter I will contrast biblical Christian teachings to those of the fundamentalists, and clearly demonstrate that fundamentalism is not biblical.

Returning to LaHaye's book, I note (p. 15) that he stresses that there is a "difference between the brains of men and women." Although fundamentalists tend to soft-pedal their traditional male supremacy dogma in the light of contemporary pro-feminist feelings, they take antifeministic political positions like anti-abortion and defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment.

"It takes an enormous amount of money to fight amoral, government-backed legislation. Take ERA, for example. Five million federal dollars were provided for the Houston fiasco called the IWY (International Women's Year, an idea that originated in the Kremlin in Moscow, according to U.S. News and World Report). It turned out to be little more than a rallying call to pass the ERA..."³¹

The fundamentalist opposition to women's rights is especially difficult to understand in the light of Jesus' constant teachings about the equality of male and female, and St. Paul's reminder that in Christ there is no male or female.³² Plenty of male supremacy and antifeminism exists in the ancient portions of the Bible, and in certain of the late pastoral epistles of the New Testament, however, so that biblical proof texts can be easily found if one wants to espouse antifeminism--and the fundamentalists do. Apparently the fundamentalist women love it, too, which reveals a bit more about the personal and interpersonal psychology of fundamentalism. Repressed guilt, feelings of self-worthlessness, and a willingness to trade freedom and independence for "eternal security" are characteristic.

³¹The Battle for the Mind (op. cit.), p. 236

³²Galatians 3.28, cf. Luke 20.27-36 et al.

The basic gist of LaHaye's opening chapter on how the human brain works is that the outer environment must be purified if the inner person is to remain moral.

"In the name of free speech and freedom of the press we have polluted the minds of our young with pornography until crime and sexual assaults are now commonplace. The problem will not diminish until we elect public officials with sufficient moral sanity to pass laws prohibiting the distribution of corrupting materials."³³

As we have seen, this contradicts the teachings of Jesus, who understood the process of sanctification as an "overcoming" of the immoral environment--it worked from the inner conscience and motives to the outer manifestations, not vice versa. Moreover the Christians were to sanctify the world, not the world sanctify the Christians. The world's evil is "necessary" for the Christian to experience and grow. Without it, all would be static, self-righteous and spiritually stunted. The life of the spirit must have challenge and trial to be vital.

But the fundamentalists advocate a morally neutral world where literature is censored, freedom of speech and the press is severely abridged, and education has become indoctrination rather than study.

One wonders also what the big problem about sex indicates. LaHaye equates free speech and a free press with "pornography" (see above quote) and crime. As I read the dictionary, pornography is the written or photographic portrayal of sexual intercourse. While this is certainly tasteless, and appeals to voyeurs, curious youth and various psychologically immature prurient interests, the connection with crime is unrealistic. Except in the case of sex-and-violence pornography, where rape and murder are portrayed, and which properly fits the category of obscenity--an entirely different matter--, simple girlie magazines just aren't that evil.

The connection, of course, lies with the revival of the Puritan ethic among fundamentalists. In this code of values, sexuality is identical with sensuality--a moral vice. Psychologically, sex is a loaded issue for fundamentalists--loaded with repressed libidinous energy in the finest Freudian tradition.

It appears to me, then, that the fundamentalist is a psychological "type"--a kind of cultural dinosaur that has regressed to Victorian sexual modes. I would venture a guess that there are many sexual problems among the fundamentalists such as frigidity, impotence, marital incompatibility, lack of closeness and real intimacy between marital partners. This is the kind of psychological climate that breeds the very sexual aberrations (like homosexuality and sado-masochism) that fundamentalists so vigorously oppose!

³³The Battle for the Mind (op. cit.), pp. 19-20

"Simply defined," says LaHayes, "humanism is man's attempt to solve his problems independently of God."³⁴

This, of course, is certainly not what humanism is! It is a warped and tendentious view of humanism, rooted in a century of fundamentalist fear of modernism, science and social change.

For LaHaye and the fundamentalists, the central core of "humanism" revolves around the Humanist Manifestos I and II originated by a small group of intellectual utopians, first in 1933, and then again in 1973, when the median age of the signers was 77--hardly a vigorous movement! In fall of 1980, B. F. Skinner, Isaac Asimov, Walter Kaufman, Sidney Hook and biologist Francis Crick were among sixty-one signers of the Secular Humanist Declaration, a revision of the two previous manifestos. The main purpose of the Declaration was to denounce the absolute morality of the fundamentalists and call for a return to science and reason.

To quote Chandler's feature article:

"Men and women are free and are responsible for their own destinies and ...they cannot look toward some transcendental being for salvation,' the statement contends. The declaration complains that secular humanists are unable to gain a sufficient platform for their views while the 'views of preachers, faith healers and religious hucksters go largely unchallenged.' The major religious bodies count their membership in the multiple millions, while the American Humanist Association, and the Ethical Culture Society total an estimated 10,000, according to Paul Kurtz, editor of The Humanist magazine."³⁵

As a humanistic Christian I find the materialistic ideas of rationalistic scientists and philosophers to be a kind of fundamentalistic anti-religion. I would criticize militant atheism as an extremist view that is either unable or unwilling to accept the cultural wisdom and experience of mankind. The elevation of intellect over feeling, intuition and spirituality is not only a psychological mistake--it is an intellectual fallacy!

But on the other hand, the inbred group who signed the Secular Humanist Declaration cannot in any sense be seen as representing humanism. They are a militant faction of intellectuals who share a kind of passive atheism, strong moral concern about the intellectual deception of people by the fundamentalist morality fraud, and hope that mankind will accept responsibility for its self-created problems.

They purposely chose the term "secular humanism" in order to incite and challenge the fundamentalists, since the term has been a fundamentalist buzz-word for many years.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 26

³⁵ op. cit.

But humanism and humanistic values are not represented by the effete extremism of the Secular Humanist Declaration, nor are the sixty-one signers of this document part of a unified world humanist conspiracy to subvert the spiritual and moral values of mankind. It is simply untrue that, "we are being controlled by a small but very influential cadre of committed humanists," as LaHaye has claimed.³⁶

This worldwide conspiracy theory is a paranoid fraud, like the Jewish world conspiracy of the American Nazi Party. Moreover, it is a devious and prejudiced fraud because it blames a huge population of human beings for the world's ills, and agitates for sanctions against them.

This is the kind of delusion that causes mentally unbalanced people to assassinate public figures, thinking they do God and man a great service. To agitate for adversary politics and teach doctrines of world conspiracy is incredibly irresponsible social leadership--but certainly central to the tradition of fundamentalist preaching!

LaHaye fills his book with graphic models to illustrate his points--a throw-back to the days of illustrated Bible tracts for people who were illiterate--and seems especially concerned to make statistical comparisons of population groups. He wants us to understand who the good guys are, and who the bad guys are.

He estimates that there are 275,000 humanists in the United States who are in collusion. They control the government, education and the news and print media.³⁷ Their organizations include the A.C.L.U., American Humanist Association, Ethical Culture Society, National Endowment for the Arts (and Humanities), National Organization of Women, all labor unions, television networks, radio networks, newspapers, Hollywood movies, magazines, the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations, the United States Supreme Court, state governments, federal and state government bureaucracies, public education (K-12), all colleges and universities (except the fundamentalist ones), and school textbooks at all levels!³⁸

Whew! What a conspiracy!

They are opposed by only one group--the Christian churches, "predominantly controlled by pro-moralists."³⁹ By "Christian churches" reference is made only to those congregations that subscribe to the fundamentalist theories. All others are not really Christian.

An example of this mentality is demonstrated in an interview with President Carter quoted by LaHaye:

³⁶The Battle for the Mind (op. cit.), p. 142

³⁷Ibid., p. 186

³⁸Ibid., p. 183

³⁹Ibid., p. 186

"We asked, 'Mr. President, in view of the fact that at least twenty percent of the American people are Christians, why is it that in the first three years of your administration you have not appointed one visible Christian to your cabinet--a judgeship or other high level of government?' He paused momentarily and then denied that this was the case. 'I have several religious people in my administration,' he explained. '...Vice President Mondale is a very religious man and came from a very religious family. His father was a minister, his father before him was a minister, and his brother is a minister.' What the President said is true, but what he did not say is that Vice-President Mondale is a self-acknowledged humanist."⁴⁰

The tremendous self-righteousness it takes to exclude other Christians from recognition typifies fundamentalism. It is the old "everyone's wrong but you and me, and I ain't too sure about you" mentality!

This carries on in the attitude toward other religions and cultures. Using simple diagrams again, LaHaye shows that the enemy is not only humanism, but all other religions. Humanism is categorized as another foreign, satanic religion, along with "Confucianism, Buddhism, Muhammadanism, Babylonian Mysticism,* and Humanism (Wisdom of Man)."⁴¹

Thus there are two categories of religion--Biblical (Judaism and Christianity, the Wisdom of God), and Pagan (all the others, including Humanism).⁴²

To LaHaye it is all very simple:

"Either God exists and has given man moral guidelines by which to live, or God is a myth and man is left to determine his own fate. Your response to either position will usually determine your attitude toward such issues as abortion, voluntary school prayer, pornography, homosexuality, capital punishment, the priority you place on traditional family life and many other social problems."⁴³

To keep things simple, LaHaye has devised a little "test" his readers can give a candidate for public office to determine his moral fitness. It consists of a grilling on his positions concerning abortion, private schools, etc. If the person passes, vote for him.⁴⁴

There is no room for dissent--no concern for a healthy, democratic representation of pluralistic views in fundamentalist politics. LaHaye illustrates this with a pericope from his travels:

"After a seminar in Illinois, where I had spoken out on the need for churches to start Christian schools because of the dangers of humanist teaching in the public schools, the seminar chairman drove me to the airport. To my surprise he announced, 'We don't have that problem in our community. Four of our five school-board members are born-again Christians, and we refuse to hire humanists in our system or use harmful text-

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 139

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 133

⁴² Ibid., p. 133

⁴³ Chandler, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 240ff.

* I.e., Astrology?

books.' He then related their agreement that no member could leave the board until he recruited another pro-moral Christian candidate to take his place. If all 16,000 school districts in America were run that way, we could break the stranglehold that the humanists now have on the minds of America's youth."⁴⁵

If all 16,000 schools districts in America were run that way, we'd be living under the foulest, most tyrannical form of mind-control possible, and American democracy would die!

The subject of LaHaye's book is mind-control. But he is not advocating freedom from mind-control. He is advocating total, cultic submission to it.

LaHaye and his ilk are spiritual kin of Hitler, the Ku Klux Klan and all historical movements that have depended upon prejudice and indoctrination for their perpetuation. Fundamentalism is a cult of fear and Puritan authoritarianism.

LaHaye claims that Puritan religious theology is the basis for American government and American traditional values:

"Most colonists were Englishmen, and almost all were Europeans, who brought to the New World a Reformation mental attitude. Some, it is true, introduced the Enlightenment heresies of Voltaire, Rousseau, and others, but these did not predominate. Therefore, our government of law was based on a respect and reverence for God..."⁴⁶

Either LaHaye is totally ignorant about the origin of American democratic philosophy, or he is lying, for our Constitution, Bill of Rights and the writings of the Founding Fathers are permeated with Enlightenment humanism! The only accurate description of the hybrid philosophy that created America must be the term, "Christian humanism."

The God of Christian humanism was not the Puritan patriarch of fundamentalistic sects, but the Supreme Being of Locke, Jefferson and Franklin. He was the Godhead of Christians, Jews and all religious sects--not the exclusive possession of the Puritans. He was the God of (heaven forbid!) the terrible Unitarians, against whom LaHaye thunders, perpetuating the intolerance of his Puritan forebearers.⁴⁷ The phrase "In God We Trust" was not a sectarian creed, but a humanistic reverence for all religions, and an acknowledgment that they sprang from the same eternal Source.

LaHaye tries to make it appear that true Christians could not possibly be humanists, and true humanists could not possibly be theists, let alone Christians. After all, the humanist is obsessed with the following vices: "Sex, pornography, marijuana, drugs, self-indulgence, rights without responsibilities, disillusion-

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 192

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 38

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 134

ment with America."⁴⁸

This is a rather unflattering picture of me, since I am a humanistic Christian, and the implications of the fundamentalist attack on humanism have been offensive to most Christian people, even evangelicals, whose religious style has been pilfered by the fundamentalists.

"Even some evangelicals are speaking up for a well-defined humanism. Mark A. Noll of Wheaton College, an evangelical bastion in Illinois, has said: 'In spite of pressures from some humanists and some believers to divorce Christian and humanistic values, it is not only proper, but necessary, that a category such as "Christian humanism" exist.'"⁴⁹

A brave statement from an evangelical, but an extreme understatement of the facts. LaHaye has tried to distinguish between Godly scientists and humanistic ones in his book, and does a chapter entitled, "Humanism is Unscientific." By admitting the validity of science in a highly qualified way (which is practically unavoidable these days!), LaHaye then censors science by listing who the good guys were--Bacon, Kepler, Boyle, Newton, Pascal, Faraday and Maxwell were all "biblical." But Darwin and all modern scientists are tainted humanists.⁵⁰

This will be big news for all the world's historians, who had thought that Bacon, Kepler and the rest were medieval humanists whose radical ideas offended the current religious establishment. They were also Christians, and sometimes Freemasons and members of other mystical or occult societies that were most unfundamentalist!

LaHaye propounds a bizarre theory. In effect, if a nation is "biblical," God blesses it and it flourishes. When it becomes "unbiblical" it suffers. Bad news for all the non-biblical nations like India, China, Japan, who nevertheless seem to have flourished and suffered at different periods. He says:

"England saved Europe from Napoleon in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but by the twentieth century, she had so lost her biblical, Reformation base of thought that she needed the assistance of America to overthrow Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolf Hitler..."⁵¹

In fact, England didn't lose her Reformation base of thought; she radically rejected its Puritan influences after the Cromwellians were tossed out on the ears in the seventeenth century! But that happened before Napoleon, not after.

LaHaye claims that American government is "Bible-based," and that the American form of education is "Bible-based." His arguments to prove these contentions are too sparse to quote, since he asserts these things as matters of faith. But they are simply untrue. Both constitutional democracy and public education are products of the humanistic Enlightenment.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 136

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 35-36

⁴⁹Chandler (op. cit.)

⁵⁰Battle, pp. 103ff.

LaHaye shares the self-righteous messianism of so many fundamentalist preachers, who feel that God has appointed them, as the prophets of old, to speak His Word to His Chosen People.

"You may wonder why a minister and a Christian educator for over thirty years opposes humanism so vigorously. There are two reasons: I am a committed Christian, and I am a committed American. Humanism is viciously opposed to both. Besides, I am commanded to warn the children of God when danger lies ahead."⁵²

Are he and his ilk really Christians? We will explore that in a later chapter.

Is LaHaye a committed American? Is fundamentalism any more "democratic" than its precursors, the Federalists and their Puritan divines?

LaHaye refers to, "humanism's influence, which has moved our country from a biblically based society to an amoral, 'democratic' society during the past forty years..."

It is true that humanistic ideals, and not fundamentalist fanaticism, have been the moral force behind such "democratic" movements as civil rights, women's suffrage, science in the classroom, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation. It is true that humanist morality brought about racial integration, the toleration of labor unions, the preservation of a free press and the political right of dissent. Even further, it is true that humanism was the force behind the overthrow of monarchs, the making of revolutions, the discoveries of science, the rejection of tyranny in all forms--political, philosophical, religious, psychological.

Yes, Mr. LaHaye, America has moved away from the English Puritan political theology of colonial New England. But it has done so by inspiration, not by way of decline. It has moved to a higher and truer scale of values.

The evil eye that you and your reformers use to constantly assail America for its supposed moral flaws is a projection of what is within you, as Jesus said.

America is good. Though embattled with criticism from all quarters, and though it struggles with all the new issues that the world must soon meet--industrialization, racial and ethnic pluralism, abuse of its natural resources--America is the pioneer. It is America that will find solutions to the world's problems, not any other nation. Not the Arabs, not the Japanese, not the Russians.

America struggles with the great problems that the entire world will one day face. The greatness of her democratic institutions is belittled by fundamentalists like you and the other ayatollahs. But those institutions will prevail against all assault, while your human creeds and dogmas will wither away.

⁵²Ibid., p. 138

IV

THE FUNDAMENTALIST MORAL CRITIQUE OF AMERICA

We have seen clearly that fundamentalism is in direct opposition to the basic tenets of American constitutional democracy.

Before we see how badly it distorts Christianity, however, we must examine the moral critique fundamentalism has developed about modern America.

This critique is the basis for its current vogue, and lays the groundwork for its proposed solutions to America's moral dilemma.

LaHaye identifies the following areas of moral concern: Abortion, homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, gambling, infanticide and euthanasia, parents' rights (of educational choice), drugs, and religious humanism.⁵³

A more detailed listing of America's moral faults can be found in America at the Crossroads by John Price, an attorney from Indiana associated with the fundamentalist religion. Like LaHaye, he includes economics as part of his moral critique, reflecting the Calvinistic roots of fundamentalist theology.

Let us look at Price's critique.

The Economy

Jesus, of course, never made a criticism of the Roman-Palestinian economy. He espoused poverty, and advised people to give away their wealth.⁵⁴ Secular economics was totally unrelated to his message.

But the fundamentalists are Christian Zionists, like their Calvinist and Puritan precursors. They consider the United States of America to be their holy nation, because they draw parallels between themselves and the prophets of the Old Testaments (from where most of their social regulations are drawn).

All this in spite of the fact that only twenty percent of the nation calls itself Christian, by their own definition.⁵⁵ They are neither moral nor a majority, and America is certainly not a fundamentalist nation, or a New Israel!

Price defines economic guidelines as either the government's or God's.

"In America today, as in most countries of the world, we have deviated from godly principles of finance and money management. Our deviation is so significant that our nation stands on the brink of economic ruin."⁵⁶

His basic premise is that all of our economic woes--inflation, high interest rates and monopoly pricing, to name a few--are caused by allowing the existence of debt.

In the Old Testament, and especially in the theology of the Calvinist and Puritan colonies of New England, debt was a sin. There were two reasons for this idea.

First, the Hebrew-Aramaic word for "sin" was chayyub, "debt." In the Lord's

⁵³ Ibid., p.194 ⁵⁴ Mark 10:23 ⁵⁵ LaHaye, p.139 ⁵⁶ America at the Crossroads, John Price (Wheaton, Ill., 1979), p.13

Prayer God was asked to forgive one's "debts" in the Calvinistic tradition, and the Old Testament Book of Proverbs made it clear that indebtedness (being a loss of freedom) was a sign of foolishness. This, when combined with the Calvinistic thrift and independence ethic, made indebtedness a "sin."

In other words, instead of "sin" being a spiritual debit, economic debt became a spiritual sin! Incredible sermons and books have been written throughout American history, and especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, portraying Jesus as the ideal businessman. This, of course, was because of the need of commercial-class believers who were small shop owners, or even monopoly capitalists like the obscenely wealthy Andrew Carnegie, to identify with the Jesus of their faith--a Christ who has always been portrayed as caucasian by the white Europeans, black by the African negro, and oriental by the eastern Christians.

But Jesus was not a shopkeeper or a businessman. The only parts of his message that could possibly be misinterpreted to sound like business philosophy were his parables about house stewards, which extoll the virtue of fidelity, not thrift! Nevertheless they were used as proof-texts for Calvinist economic theology.

The fundamentalists have inherited this non-biblical tradition, which they claim as God's true economic plan.

This doctrine is now being used by the fundamentalists to explain why we have inflation, high interest and all the other economic woes of a wealthy nation. The solution? Call a constitutional convention and legislate a balanced budget! All we little guys have to do is make certain those Washington bureaucrats are hog-tied and can't overspend. Then the nation will prosper, being godly and biblical.

This is preposterous! Anyone of any political persuasion who has seriously studied the federal budget knows that a radical, absolutist solution like the one being proposed by the self-styled reformers would cause the immediate collapse of state and federal government. The nation would be ruined, vulnerable, and within a few years would be in debt to the Arabs or other multinational moneylenders.

Where do these people think we get houses, automobiles, appliances? We simply save up the money and buy them when we have enough? God, no! We receive credit, based on future income and stability of present economic circumstances, and that alone is how 99% of American home-owners are able to become independent of rent, build equity, and gain some wealth.

The same is true at the federal level. Our government extends credit to itself based on the nation's fiscal stability and faith in the future industriousness of our people. In this way we are able to purchase the military, social and

educational goods we need to remain secure in a war-torn world, socially stable, literate and comfortable. Without the credit we extend to ourselves as a national community, we would soon be overwhelmed by totalitarian economies like that of the U.S.S.R., which has all the cheap labor, free soldiers and low-cost resources it needs because of its totalitarianism. The Russians don't have labor unions or military retirement benefits. They don't have decent housing for the masses, or lawyers to protect consumer interests. They can follow "God's economic plan" quite easily, because "God's plan" is anti-humanitarian and cruel!

I am not an economist, but I am damned glad to be a home-owner and to enjoy a reliable car, a sailboat and other things I'd never be able to afford without credit.

It doesn't take a wizard to realize that if the federal budget were suddenly forced into balance by a constitutional amendment, money would get a lot tighter than it is now, and Americans would be forced to borrow from foreign lenders instead of themselves. Interest rates would skyrocket and credit would be available only for the wealthy.

Federal deficit spending is done responsibly (on the whole) and only after much debate and compromise. It amounts to no more than simply borrowing from ourselves, and it supports the greatness of a humane America.

Finally, if we must speak of God's economics, it is Jesus who advises to always give to those in need, and to lend to all who ask.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." ⁵⁷

The "heart" of the Puritanical, Calvinistic fundamentalists is in their pocketbook! I've never heard so much squawking about Mammon from any group, religious or not, as I have these past two years from the fundamentalists. Let them hear the words of Jesus: "You cannot serve God and Mammon!"⁵⁸

"Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you."⁵⁹

What a great contrast between those words of Jesus, and the Calvinistic proverb, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be!"

The simple fact is that American economic policy, for all its excesses and faults, is straight out of the humane Judeo-Christian tradition. It offers more equal opportunity, consumer rights and fair distribution for a larger number of people than any other economic system in the world. Adjust it, yes. But castrate it--absolutely not!

What's more, I wouldn't want to open up our national constitution to a con-

⁵⁷ Matt. 7:19

⁵⁸ Matt. 7:24b

⁵⁹ Matt. 5:42

stitutional convention at this time, with the fundamentalists hungering to revise the whole thing. They would do what the old Federalists wanted, but were prevented from implementing by Thomas Jefferson and the southern Republicans.

So much for "God's economic plan!"

The Oppressive Hand of Government

We are told by the fundamentalists that human freedom is being encroached upon by big government and excessive regulation.

This, by the way, is the only context in which "human freedom" will ever be a concern to the fundamentalists. All their other talk about freedom has to do with how badly it is abused, and the difference between "freedom" and "license," and how freedom of speech, of the press, of art, of pluralistic values, etc., etc. is corrupting America's morals.

Just what is government regulating, anyway? Is it regulating our freedoms? Is it censoring our books? Is it regulating our personal morality? Absolutely not! It is the fundamentalist moralists who want to regulate those things.

No, the government is extending consumer protection, guaranteeing the civil rights and economic opportunities of black, chicano and other minority Americans, keeping harmful drugs off the counters, and insuring standards in building and other trades.

The government does these things only because we, the public, have demanded such agencies come into existence. We have chosen to delegate the protection of the public-at-large from fraud, irresponsibility and criminality. We don't want chemical dumps near our homes. We don't want harmful things in our drinking water. We don't want medications that are supposed to have only five grains of a substance but, because of sloppy production, contain five hundred grains and kill our children. The list is very, very long, and therefore regulatory agencies and their rules are large and complex--in order to be fair to both producer and consumer. In fact, as recent events have shown, too many regulatory bodies are run by the very people they are supposed to regulate! The public is still not getting a fair shake, and under Reagan it will get even less of a fair shake because, frankly, his constituency comes from the producer voting block.

Actually, the fundamentalist concern about government regulation has historical roots in the isolationist independence of the colonial Puritan communities. Their leaders wanted to exercise absolute authority over them, without interference from English bishops or any civil authority. They were anomic, eccentric and saw

themselves as God's special elect community--separated from the evil world, surrounded by the demons of the wilderness, and totally self-reliant.

This is a common phenomenon in the fundamentalism of all religions.

"Many movements seek to attain the heavenly abode by founding a "holy city," which, in most cases, is regarded as the "new Jerusalem." Such are the recent messianic cults of Brazil at Canudos, Joazeiro, and Contestado...A "holy war" is sometimes unleashed from a "holy city" against the evil powers operating within the society but regarded by the faithful of the cult as an external force because, in following their prophet, they have become isolated from that society...In the final analysis, all...are impelled by their nature to escape from society and from the world in order to establish a society and a world of their own beyond history, beyond reality..." ⁶⁰

The same is true of today's fundamentalism. It has established its own counterculture, with "Christian" schools, manufacturers, comic books, etc., but with the idea that America itself belongs to them. When they fail to gain control, as I am convinced they will (I have the same faith in the ultimate common sense of the majority that Jefferson had), the movement will retire into "Christian" communities, condos and housing blocks, eventually losing its youth and withering into obscurity--barring more national disaster.

The "government regulation" issue really belongs to businessmen. It is they who feel overburdened by the paperwork and bookkeeping necessary to keep the I.R.S. off their backs. Now that is something with which we can all identify, because even personal income tax has become a monster.

The answer to that problem, however, doesn't take biblical inspiration. We know that to be fair to everyone, and to make sure everyone pays his or her fair share of the tax burden, we must have regulation. On the other hand, a major emphasis in the administration of this regulation must now become a commitment to simplifying it--even the whole personal income tax system--and making it equitable.

If the fundamentalists feel that the answer is to "get government off our backs" then fine--let them all go somewhere else, like Antarctica.

Aren't they the ones who used to say,

"AMERICA--LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT!!!"

Crime and Morality

Price's third chapter deals with the subject that most concerns all Americans--the rise of violent crime in the U.S.

⁶⁰ The Religions of the Oppressed (op. cit.), p. 248

I read through it eagerly, hoping to get a new insight. My hopes were dashed. As it turned out, nearly all of his chapter dealt not with violent crime, but with victimless crimes--"drug abuse, homosexuality, pornographic movies, alcoholism, adultery, sexual promiscuity."⁶¹

Wait a minute! Those are certainly moral vices, and there are laws regulating and even criminalizing some of them in certain contexts. But they are not my main concern.

Let me list what I'd call America's "crime and morality" problem: street crimes like mugging, murder, rape, property destruction (arson, riot, etc.); racial discrimination; unequal and "unspeedy" justice in the courts; white-collar, scientific and consumer fraud or irresponsibility; robbery of homes and vandalism of private and public property; corruption of politicians.

Mr. Price's analysis of the causes for crime is this:

"First, our people have turned from God. Our young are not generally instructed in God's Word...Secondly, crime is increasing in quantum jumps because it's so successful."⁶²

I would agree with Mr. Price that crime does pay, and that the inefficiency of our criminal justice system contributes to the growth of crime. A successful conviction is obtained for far fewer than one out of ten homicides, and criminals do have an 80% chance of not even being charged. That stinks.

I would also agree that American youth generally lack a strong set of moral values, but would argue that it has always been this way.

What Price means by their being "instructed in God's Word" is not a moral education, but a catechetical, dogmatic, moralistic indoctrination.

That sort of thing is not a matter of education, but of child-control or discipline. And that is something, minus the religious dogma, this nation's youth needs--discipline.

As an educator I am appalled at the lack of attention and discipline most kids exhibit. Love is nurture, and good nurture means teaching a child to be sensitive and responsible in his actions. If a child is not properly disciplined by a caring parent (all it takes is one), he or she will not develop the self-discipline to excel.

I would agree that child-rearing is one of the most serious problems we have in the nation, and that parental permissiveness is too often an excuse for abandonment of parental responsibility. Children are capable of much more than most of us realize. They must be nurtured, challenged and given good examples--not aban-

⁶¹America at the Crossroads (op. cit.), pp. 59-85 ⁶²Ibid., p. 65

doned to the television sets and neighborhood gangs.

But group indoctrination is not the way to teach morality. It seems to work for a while. The fundamentalist kids are highly controlled people, and few of the younger ones become juvenile delinquents.

But they haven't learned real values because they haven't been allowed to experience, to make bad choices, to fail. For them, morality is a veneer of proverbs and verbal counsel.

Sure, it's ridiculous to think that we can all go out and experience every basis for morality. But by having the personal freedom to "sin," we learn what is good in our hearts, not just in our minds.

Ultimately it will be conscience, not commandments, that creates our personal values, and we must be allowed to search them out. If so, we will be astounded to see what a coherent consensus of morality we have.

I quote now from a petition for an original writ of mandate filed against the California State Board of Education and other parties by the Women's Committee for Responsible Government, demanding that the state-funded sex education program be stopped, and claiming that it violates the First and Fourteenth amendments to the U. S. Constitution because it advocates "Secular Humanism," which they define as a religion.

According to their demand that fundamentalist moral absolutes, like the wrongness of premarital sex, be taught in public schools, they claim:

"While the state's teaching of a radical new ideology with no empirical basis establishes a religion of secularism at variance with the statutory directive, the teaching of principles of traditional morality is not an establishment of religion because its primary purpose is secular and its principles emanate from the traditional moral and religious undergirding of both the state and nation. Since we are a religious people, an a priori ideology of secularism may not be established by the state whereas a system of empirical morality reflecting a religious heritage, but having a secular purpose, may be established."⁶³

But are we "a religious people," and what are the "principles of traditional morality?" Aren't these principles those of Jefferson and the Founders? Aren't these the "traditional" American morality--not those of the Puritans?

Fundamentalism conceives of morality as a body of statutes that have absolute and literal authority over mankind. Rather than believing that law is made for mankind, they claim that mankind was made for the law! But Jesus taught, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."⁶⁴ Then fundamentalist morality

⁶³The case is currently under review and I do not have a case number. Quotations will refer to the page number of my copy. Here, p. 91

⁶⁴Mark 3:27-28 and parallels

contradicts the teaching of Jesus at the very outset, never having understood the radical spiritualizing of Old Testament statute law by Jesus and his disciples, one of whom (St. Paul) said:

"The letter (i.e., the literal statute law) kills, but the Spirit gives life."⁶⁵

When it comes right down to it, the fundamentalists believe that our rising crime problem is because the American people have allowed vices like pornography their rights. By allowing Playboy magazine to exist, the American people have polluted their environment with nudity, which is another vice, according to LaHaye.

"Early in Genesis, the Creator followed man's folly by giving him animal skins to cover his nakedness. Ever since, there has been a conflict concerning clothes, with man demanding the freedom to go naked. The Renaissance obsession with nude 'art forms' was the forerunner of the modern humanists's demand for pornography in the name of freedom. Both resulted in a self-destructive lowering of moral standards."⁶⁶

The trouble with all this is that the fundamentalists don't really distinguish in their minds the difference between a moral vice and a crime. The medieval English pardoners and Puritans had the same problem. They wanted to punish moral weakness or vice with criminal penalties, fines, public mockings and imprisonment.

I submit that fundamentalist moralism is not a solution to America's moral dilemma, and that in fact it is part of the problem. Fundamentalist moralism blinds us to true morality. It throws up a smoke-screen of fraudulent values that obscures real moral issues and warps our perception of them.

Fundamentalists have traditionally opposed basic civic rights for racial and other minorities, such as the gay community. They have run kangaroo courts in the South, tarred and feathered people, even burned their homes and committed homicide in the name of God. This is part of American history, and we all know it's true. The Ku Klux Klan is a fundamentalist religious fraternity that burns the cross of Jesus Christ in its ritual.

I'm not going to hold up a banner for homosexuality. To me, homosexuality is an inborn trait--and is socially undesirable. My attitude toward a homosexual who goes around loudly proclaiming his sexual deviation, proselytizing and evangelizing, is quite uncharitable. To me he's just a fundamentalist fairy. But no one has the right to abridge his rights, abuse him, beat him or run him out of town on a rail. That would be immoral and un-

⁶⁵ II Corinthians 3:6

⁶⁶ LaHaye (op. cit.), p. 30

constitutional--in a word, un-American.

My attitude toward drug abusers, alcoholics, obsessive masturbaters, prostitutes or persons afflicted with other weaknesses is one of pity, not punitive anger. I don't blame them for America's problems, although they are certainly not part of the solution to those problems.

The condemning attitude of the fundamentalists is a far cry from the response taught by Jesus:

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye!"⁶⁷

If the fundamentalists are Christians, then they must believe that they are so morally pure that they have the right to critique all the rest of us! There is no "log" in their own eye, so they can be the moral watchdog of America. They alone can judge between men--a right reserved for God in biblical tradition.

Or is it possible that the fundamentalists simply don't know the teachings of Christ and the Bible?

In my attempt to be charitable towards them, I assume the latter.

An Intelligent and Moral Approach to America's Problems

Good willed people all over the nation have been working to find and implement solutions to America's problems, and they have been quite successful. No, they don't take the revivalist's approach--a one-shot faith healing that gives the appearance of cure, but fails after the tents are folded and the show hits the road.

Rather, they are hard working people who wage a daily struggle to redirect street gangs, counsel those with marital and emotional problems, design fair and equitable budgets, educate minority children. They are politicians, medical personnel, teachers, social workers and a host of others devoting their lives to the service of God by means of helping their fellow man. A good number of them don't define what they do in religious terms, but all the same it is in the one Spirit.

These are the workers that the fundamentalists call "humanists." Because they are man-centered and man-concerned, rather than Bible thumpers, their work is valueless.

⁶⁷ Matt. 7:1-5

Well, back to the Bible again:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."⁶⁸

It has always perplexed me that the fundamentalists can't recognize God's hand in all the good work done by non-professing Christians or non-religious people. The New Testament is full of the teaching that service to fellow man is the measure of service to God. They are one and the same.

"He who loves is born of God," period. Not "he who is a fundamentalist," but, "he who loves." Or as Jesus said in Mark 3:35, "Whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Not whoever belongs to a church, or whoever subscribes to fundamentalist dogma, but whoever does God's will, in or outside of any church.

Jesus tells an interesting parable of sheep and goats. In the final judgment day all people are brought before the judge, who will divide the good people from the evildoers, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats at shearing time.

But there is a big surprise! Turns out that all the religious people who called on God and said, "Lord, Lord"--the very pious ones with all the religious language and dogma, and all the "Thank you, Jesus!"--are the goats. The other people--simple peasants and non-religious people with good hearts and works of loving service--are chosen for heavenly bliss.

When the religious ones demand to know why they are not chosen, the Son of Man (Jesus called himself the Son of Man, not the Son of God) says:⁶⁹

"Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."

Astonished, they want to know when they ever saw him hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick or in prison and did not minister unto him. He replies:

"Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you have not done it to the least of these, my brethren, you did it not unto me."

Jesus taught his personal brotherhood with all human beings, not with just his disciples or the "Christians." The beautiful short stories of Tolstoi illuminating the identity of Christian ministry and world service are far more biblical than the stingy, closed ideas of so-called "Christian" fundamentalists.

⁶⁸I John 4:7-8

⁶⁹Matt. 25:31ff.

There is only one area that specifically religious ministry has been successful in providing a solution to an American problem, and that is with the Salvation Army and various rescue missions. I have great respect for their work, having seen it first hand. At first (in the early part of the century) the rescue missions were dogmatic and fundamentalistic. But over the decades they have become humanized. The people who do the work have learned not to pressure their clients with religious dogma, but to offer real services, love and realistic personal help.

But the old skid row areas have been remodeled, and the rescue missions have modernized. They now closely resemble secular social services, and while retaining their religious spirit, they complement government services, working closely with them.

Religious ministry had the appearance of being successful a few years ago in drug rehabilitation of youth. But most of the religious drug addict programs were merely instruments for proselytizing youth, using the moral issue of addiction as a club to drive them into the cult. These kids traded addiction for totalitarianism, and few of them were ever able to leave the "community." Addicts weren't cured; they were simply recruited and then kept in line under a strong authoritarian cult system.

The fact is that so-called humanistic, non-religious workers have been the main force in addressing and helping solve America's problems--not fundamentalists.

One such person is Andrew Cherlin of the department of social relations at Johns Hopkins University. An article of his recently appeared in the "My Turn" section of Newsweek magazine. It was entitled, "How to Help the Family."

Cherlin points out that between the early 1960's and the mid-1970's, the national divorce rate more than doubled, the birthrate fell to a new low, and the number of working mothers rose sharply, so that now about 50% of all married women hold jobs.

Has this occurred because America is becoming immoral? The supposedly "pro-family" fundamentalist advocates think so, and they have a solution.

"We are told by these self-styled 'pro-family' advocates that outlawing abortion, banning busing, allowing school prayer and prohibiting sex education are the ways to shore up the family. But...the conservatives' social agenda sadly fails to address the real pressures on American families today."⁷⁰

What has really happened to put pressure on marriages and child raising? Cherlin's "humanistic" research and concern for the real problem lead him to the following observations.

⁷⁰"How to Help the Family," Andrew Cherlin, Newsweek, July 27, 1981, p. 10

"As we moved from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one, the economic value of children declined and people had fewer of them."

In older days, a farmer could use his kids for cheap labor and do quite well for the period of his family's greatest economic need. Cherlin continues:

"As the production of goods and services shifted from the home to the factory or the office, women were drawn into the labor market, thereby becoming more independent of men."

Women's labor was much cheaper than men's, because the men were the main support of their families, and women were rarely given positions of high responsibility. The situation has changed somewhat, but women are still paid less for the same work as men nationwide. Women's economic independence resulted in the Women's Suffrage movement, and the vote was extended to adult women after a protracted battle that convulsed the nation. Until that point of history, husbands had been able to divorce their wives, but not vice versa. This inequity soon changed, and the march toward full and equal rights for women pressed forward. The Equal Rights Amendment would permanently establish women's rights. Thus it is being vigorously opposed by the fundamentalists.

Cherlin adds:

"And as the school, the hospital and the old-age home took over many of the functions family members used to perform for each other, men and women found it progressively easier to live nontraditional family lives."

Families no longer owned acres of property, but lots. Their homes were no longer large Victorians that could house two or three generations comfortably, but one-to two-thousand-square-foot boxes that became unreasonably crowded if grandma or grandpa were cared for during the period of old age--another phenomenon, since good nutrition and medical science created whole generations of elderly people living a decade or more beyond their parents' life expectancy.

The public no longer had the leisure to train and teach children at home, since both husband and wife, or single parent, were forced to be at the work place during the day, with only weekends off. Therefore a great deal of public funds went into developing high-quality public schools.

Many people think that the 1950's typify American family life as it was and should be. But the fifties were "a historical aberration: the patterns of the 1960's and 1970's better fit the long-term trends," says Cherlin. The fifties saw a post-war boom period, in which more people married younger and had more children. "Because many of us were either parents or children in the baby-boom years following the war, we tend to think nostalgically that the 1950's typify the way twentieth-century families used to be." But that is an illusion.

The trends we now face--increasing divorce, mothers in the work force--have been on the rise ever since the Civil War.

"These trends are an inevitable part of our nation's development. We can no more keep wives at home or slash the divorce rate than we can shut down our cities and send everyone back to the farm. No amount of exhortation by conservative moralists can reverse the trends; nor can they be turned around, as some conservatives appear to believe, by constitutional amendment. In other words, whether or not abortion is prohibited or school prayer is allowed, married women will continue to work, the birthrate will stay relatively low and the divorce rate will remain high. Whether or not students are bussed to achieve racial balance or taught about sex in the schools, tens of millions of employed men and women will be trying hard to both work and raise a family. And millions of single parents will be facing the difficulties of bringing up children and supporting them alone...At the moment, however, conservative political activists and policymakers who are concerned about the family have succeeded in focusing public attention on their pet agenda. By steering us in the wrong direction and by pretending that we can turn back the clock, they are doing a disservice to the very cause they claim to serve."

Then what might be some solutions to the pressures and problems of the American parent, who is caught in a double bind of working in order to financially support children, or doing without economic needs in order to spend time with children?

"In fact, the No. 1 recommendation of the delegates at last year's White House Conference on Families called for the adoption of flexible working hours, more shared and part-time jobs with prorated benefits, pregnancy and infant care leaves and other changes in personnel policies designed to make it easier for working mothers and fathers to care for their children."

Not too dumb, huh? And it was Jimmy Carter's White House (the man whose Christian Vice-President was a "self-acknowledged humanist") that cared enough about the American family to sponsor conferences where brain-storming solutions might be found. And, it was those agnostic, non-Christian, "humanist" bureaucrats working for the government who came up with those not-too-dumb ideas.

You will also find those same ideas advocated by a Hollywood movie (Satanic though it be!) called Nine to Five that made the rounds in 1980.

What do the fundamentalists think about the idea of making the workplace humane and family-nurturing? You can bet they'll oppose it on ideological grounds. It's not "God's plan."

That is what I mean when I say that fundamentalism is part of America's problem--not a part of the solution. It vigorously opposes truly moral and caring solutions in favor of its own immoral agenda.

There are many other qualified, concerned people like Andrew Cherlin hard at work analyzing America's problems in crime, judicial inequity, juvenile delinquency, the family, emotional and sexual deviation, and on down the line. They have already come up with excellent "solutions," but are fighting fundamentalist conservatism tooth and nail just to keep the few programs they have.

Planned Parenthood has an excellent sex education program in California that is helping to stem the tide of teenage pregnancy and venereal disease, but do the fundamentalists support it?

No! They try to destroy it. Why? It offends their sectarian Puritan ethic.

Why don't they just refuse permission for their kids to attend the sex education courses? After all, they are voluntary and require parental permission.

The answer to that question is this: The fundamentalists are now waging holy war against American democracy, American institutions and the freedoms our forefathers shed their blood to keep. They want everything their way, and they will not accept reasonable solutions.

The fundamentalist moral critique of America is shallow, ill-researched and ill-willed. The solutions fundamentalism offers are a fraud.

Until the fundamentalists are ready to study and dialogue with those already hard at work in the field, their solutions will remain a fraud. They are simply unqualified to offer any solutions--both morally and intellectually.

What is more, if they were to study and dialogue with those already working on the solutions to America's moral dilemma, they would soon drop their fundamentalist ideas. Just as light overcomes darkness, so knowledge disperses the smoke-screen of fundamentalist rhetoric and dogma.

V
FUNDAMENTALISM AGAINST FREEDOM

Fundamentalism has a short range and a long range agenda. The short range agenda involves strategies and political reforms with which most of us are familiar. The long range agenda is a bit more obscure.

Let us look at the whole agenda of fundamentalism and see how it affects our democratic, constitutional freedoms.

The Short Range Agenda

Fundamentalists have made self-interest alliances with Catholics, Jews and conservatives both to further their goals and to gain wider support than their minority congregations offer. They need voting blocks, and have cleverly strategized to push certain single-issue campaigns in order to appear strong to elected office-holders, and thus have more clout as a separate interest group.

A few politicians who see through this deception and are unwilling to bow to fundamentalist pressure have made public statements. Perhaps the most significant of these is Senator Barry Goldwater, the grand old man of American conservatives. He is concerned about the inroads people like Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority, Inc., have made into the economic supporters of conservatism.

According to a recent article in Newsweek:

"He sees the threat to conservatism from the hard right, with its money-raising abilities," one Senate staffer says."⁷¹

Particularly irritating to him was the alternating support and back-stabbing of Jerry Falwell who, objecting to the appointment of the first woman to the Supreme Court, announced that every good Christian should be concerned. Goldwater replied, upon hearing this news:

"Every good Christian ought to kick Falwell right in the ass!"⁷²

Amen, brother Barry!

Fundamentalists are trying to manipulate American conservatives in ways they won't long tolerate. In the parting of the ways that must come, however, conservatism will suffer loss of economic base and block votes. Distinguished conservatives will find themselves on the receiving end of the fundamentalist moral critique, charged with being "lukewarm" conservatives, non-revived Christians, or even "humanists." Their elected officials will find themselves targeted for defeat in the next election, with Bible-believing fundamentalists supported in their place. This new breed of politician will have a national bankroll behind him that is controlled not by the Republican Party, but by Jerry Falwell and his ilk.

They will also find that their opponents have hot and cold media power, including advocacy in all the fundamentalist churches, who are also embarked upon a nationwide registration campaign to make certain all their people go to the polls.

⁷¹"Barry Goldwater Tastes New Life," July 27, 1981, p. 24

⁷²Ibid.

The fundamentalist strategies for short term legislative victories include an all-out war against "Secular Humanism," which they regard as a Satan-inspired instrument of the Antichrist in these Final Days.

No longer will they sue local school districts over sex education, evolution, dress codes and other of their issues. Now they have the legal power to go directly to state appellate courts for mandates that will immediately cut off funding for existing "humanistic" programs.

They have convened national meetings to organize "Christian" boycotts of media advertisers who sponsor shows they consider to be sexually immoral, and have already succeeded in spooking major sponsors--in effect, they are now censoring national television production.

They have targeted liberal politicians and successfully unseated them in the last election. In the flush of victory they plan to direct their major political effort into this activity until state and federal legislative bodies are filled with their cult members or the politicians who will meet their demands out of fear of losing a job.

It is clear that the fundamentalist support of Israel's militancy, even with the reticence of many American Jewish supporters, has given the Begin administration the feeling of American carte blanc. Israel's recent actions, since the Reagan victory, have been adventuristic, provocative and a great danger to Middle Eastern compromise. The fundamentalists expect a Middle Eastern holocaust, and are trying to provoke it to fulfill their apocalyptic ideas.

Here are some of the basic fundamentalist short term political goals, with a brief assessment of their effect on constitutional freedoms.

Outlawing of Abortion

No one thinks abortion is good, and its supporters aren't waving flags for it. They are merely trying to stop the blind moralism that wants to outlaw all abortion, at any stage of pregnancy, for any reason.

The moral objection to abortion began with the charismatic movement in Roman Catholicism in the late sixties, and was an outgrowth of papal pronouncements on birth control. The Pope said it was immoral to use any form of birth control resulting in the death of a fetus, even as a fertilized ovum. The main biblical base for this was the Catholic sin of Onanism, named for Onan, who practiced birth control in the Old Testament by removing his penis before ejaculation and "spilled his seed upon the earth."

This was considered immoral by the Old Testament writer because Onan was refusing to do his religious duty, which was to impregnate his dead brother's wife.

In ancient times the Hebrews believed that people were not individuals, but corporate beings, like grapes on a vine. The idea was also Egyptian, and a product of ancient thought. Thus individual people belonged to a geneological "line," which was their familial identity. For this reason David was instructed to kill the whole family of Saul, his entire "line," women and infants, in order to purify the monarchy and avoid future vengeance from that "line."

In the same way, sin belonged to a person's "line," and God would visit punishment for the sins of a person on his descendents "unto the tenth generation." Sin was "original," which is to say, "genetic."

In the case of Onan, his brother had died leaving a barren widow. Hebrew law required him to take her as his second (or third) wife and impregnate her, so that his brother's "line" would be continued on earth, and his brother's "memory" or afterlife could continue.

But Onan refused to impregnate her, and "spilled his seed upon the ground."

His sin was not using a time-honored method of birth control, but in refusing to accept the responsibility of raising children for his brother—a religious duty for the dead. The Catholic priests, however, with their long history of sexual asceticism, interpreted this as a statute against masturbation. Later it became fodder for the Catholic anti-birth control doctrine. Finally, it became the biblical basis for the immorality of "murdering" human germ cells (eggs, sperm and fertilized ova).

In order to gain a popular consensus, since the Catholic position against I.U.D.'s and the Pill were unpopular with Catholic laypersons, the Roman strategists hit upon the anti-abortion issue. If they could strengthen the anti-abortion issue on the basis that it was killing "babies," and therefore taking human life, they could extend that support for their anti-birth control doctrine, which is essentially the same issue—all human life at all stages is sacred.

The Catholic anti-abortion strategy got underway in the early seventies, with horrible propaganda films purporting to show millions of mid- and late-term unborn babies murdered and thrown out with the hospital garbage--something that just wasn't true. There were abuses, but it was not medical practice to kill second and third trimester fetuses at the time of the campaign, and it never was the practice.

It is as ridiculous to call a fertilized ovum a human being with human rights as it is to call a sprouting acorn an oak tree. Becoming a human being is a process, in any practical sense, rather than an absolute. Otherwise where do we draw a line? Is the sperm human? Some other body cell? Is it murder to

cut our hair, wash our skin with a scrub-brush, or otherwise kill living cells?

Obviously not. There is a point at which we become a full human being with social rights, and all traditional authorities agree this occurs after the first trimester of birth. These were the authorities consulted by the U. S. Supreme Court when it rendered the controversial decision on abortion.

The old midwives considered a fetus to be a baby when the "quickening" or discernable heartbeat manifested--often simply a kick by the fetus, and certainly not the real moment when the heart begins beating, but usually at the end of the first trimester. The Greek philosophers believed the same thing.

For anti-abortionists to accuse those who request, perform and support the necessity of this operation of "murdering babies" is immoral. While it is true that we need more definition of legal abortion, and that abuses and excesses must be prosecuted, it is simply immoral to outlaw abortion altogether.

Why? Because it would be an abridgment of individual moral choice and the right over one's own body. It would have severe social implications, bringing unwanted children into the world, causing pregnant women to risk death or prison in order to get an abortion, prosecuting medical personnel whose individual conscience would force them into illegal operations.

Concerning the rights of the unborn, they have the right to be loved, to be born into healthy bodies, and the right to die. They have the right to a good life--not one with a diseased, deformed body or as the abused child of an unfit parent. While the fundamentalists apparently believe that the person is the body and the body is the person (a grossly materialistic view), I and many others feel (along with the teachings of the New Testament) that people are souls, not bodies, and that they come into bodies prepared for them in the womb. If one of these fetus-bodies doesn't work out, another better one, with a better social ambience, can be grown.

After all, Jeremiah tells us that God "formed," i.e. "created" him in his mother's womb. Even the fundamentalists agree that Creation takes at least seven days!

In any case, the alliance of Catholics and fundamentalists would cause the good Baptist preachers of yesteryear to spin around in their graves, since their usual line about the "apostate" Catholics was that to have anything in common with them was akin to devil-worship. Anti-Catholicism is so ingrained in the fundamentalist moral theology and apocalyptic millenarianism that the alliance cannot last. The fundamentalists took on the issue because it was popular; not because they really care about it. They didn't need the feminist vote anyway, and it was a

good way to feel self-righteous, anti-establishment and sub-culturish.

Sexual Immorality: Outlaw Sex Education and Homosexuality

The issue of sex education turns a fundamentalist livid. The state has no right to indoctrinate children with "secular humanist" amorality, they cry. It has no business substituting its relativism for our moral absolutism, claiming that sex has different meanings in different cultures, and among different individuals. It hasn't the right to override parental morality with "humanistic" ideology.

Wait a minute! Sex education was begun to deal with the results of promiscuity among youth--venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, etc.--and evolved into an excellent curriculum preparing youth for adult love and marriage. It has an excellent record confronting the problems of V.D. and pregnancy, and has been implemented at the discretion of local school boards, who themselves decide upon curriculum content.

What is more, parental permission is needed before any child can take the classes, and parents are informed of the course content. That means no fundamentalist student is forced to take sex education.

Does that satisfy the fundamentalists? No, because they want to control sexual ideas for all the people in our pluralistic society! To save us from ourselves, they want to outlaw sex education, or to limit it to a course teaching absolutist sexual morality (premarital sex is illegal and wrong, nudity is immoral, homosexuality should not be socially tolerated, etc.).

The strategy used to be to sue local school boards. It was not successful. Now the strategy has become to sue the state boards of education in order to get a mandate stopping funding of these programs. If this ploy is successful, it will be used against other programs the fundamentalists don't like.

Homosexuality is a buzzword for fundamentalists, because it is so clearly described in the Bible as a vice characterizing the decadence of a society--in that case, Roman society (which, by the way, didn't become politically weak or decadent for another three hundred years after the charges were made by early Christian writers). Homosexuality is "unnatural" and "godless," a result of atheism.⁷³

Whether one agrees with St. Paul or not, the citizens of this nation, homosexuals included, are guaranteed their civic rights as long as they do nothing criminal. Homosexuality is not defined as a crime, except in certain cases (rape, seduction of a minor, etc.), and in certain townships where archaic local statutes have gone unchallenged by constitutional authority.

⁷³Romans 1:26-27

The fact is that the varieties of human sexuality are far greater than had been generally known, since sexual deviation was kept secret--"in the closet." With the demand of women for equality in sex as well as in other things, the twentieth century has opened the closet door. This has been good and bad. Good, because the possibility of better sexual relations has become real. Bad, because sexuality has been de-sacralized and opened to new deviations.

In the past only medical doctors knew that venereal infections occurred in the rectum, or that spinsters were sometimes known to contract vaginal infections that can be communicated only by dogs. Now we all know this kind of stuff, and while we don't find it very attractive, neither do we organize crusades to tar and feather these people.

Unless we're fundamentalists.

As for the issue of homosexuals teaching in classrooms (and all the related fundamentalist scare-tactic postulations), the only reason for firing them must be solicitation. In my judgment, advocacy of gay rights is not solicitation, but advocacy of "gay liberation" or "gay pride" is public promotion of homosexuality, and is a form of solicitation. If a teacher tries in any way to promote, solicit or transmit homosexuality to his students, he ought to be fired.

But refusing to hire a person who is not a known solicitor, simply on the basis that someone claims he is gay, or that he frankly admits this in a confidential statement (which he should not be forced to make in the first place), is unconstitutional.

It may be a vice or an illness to be "gay," but it most certainly is not a crime. From what I can tell, it's neither a vice nor an illness, but a learned sexual response (except in the case of a transsexual, who is morphologically homosexual but biologically heterosexual). A homosexual is simply a person who has learned to give and accept erotic love from someone of the same sex, and that becomes as important, fulfilling and mysterious to him (or her) as heterosexual love is to someone like me. Many homosexual couples live the major portion of their lives together in a way that, to me, seems very moving and quite "moral."

It was less than a year ago that fundamentalist moral-majority types from Los Angeles suggested lining up all the "queers" in San Francisco and shooting them. How's that for an abridgment of civil rights?

Criminalize Drug Abuse and Prostitution

The fundamentalists want to severely penalize those who commit what have been called "victimless" crimes like drug abuse and prostitution. These things have been the subject of inconsistent legislation because they are really moral vices rather than serious crimes. Some states outlaw prostitution, others do not (or earlier in the century did not). Different states have different penalties for smoking or selling marijuana and various other forms of drug abuse.

In fact, these "crimes" are investigated and the offenders arrested by members of what is usually called the "vice squad."

There is much debate about what position the federal government ought to take on these issues, and how the states might uniformly prosecute these offenses. Most people realize that drug abuse is a psychological-emotional problem, rather than a crime. Most prostitutes are themselves victims, rather than hard-core criminals, although in the recent decade many have taken to ripping off their clients. Drug use is also closely connected to the commission of crimes.

One thing seems clear in all the years of drug rehabilitation work that has been done in America: Punishment is not the answer to the problem of drug abuse. It certainly has no effect on prostitution, either.

Will criminalizing these offenses and severely punishing them keep new offenders from coming out? I believe it could have a strong effect in stemming the tide, but is it the way we want to approach the problem? By dehumanizing the existing drug users and prostitutes, as we would by adopting Storm Trooper tactics, and by destroying what remains of their civil rights, we would become an inhumane and tyrannical society.

Stop the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

The fundamentalists believe that the Bible teaches male supremacy, and that it is immoral for women to be set in leadership positions over men, except in certain kinds of situations. They especially dislike the strident feminists of the sixties and seventies, whose excessive anti-masculinism went straight to the testicles of male fundamentalist leadership.

The main cause of the crisis in the American family is feminism, so they believe, whether they are willing to put it in such honest terms or not.

"In God's creation of the family organization, he appointed the father and husband as head of the household. Wives are admonished to be submissive to their husbands, and children are to obey their parents (Eph. 5:22; 6:1). The chain of command is clear: God, husband, wife, children."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ America at the Crossroads (op. cit.), p. 75

That is baloney! St. Paul's comparison of the husband's patriarchy in the Roman-Hellenistic family to Christ's patriarchy over the Church is not given in order to sanction patriarchy in the family. It is given to illustrate what the believer's attitude toward Christ ought to be. Paul uses a common institution to illustrate this relationship. In other places he uses other authoritarian human institutions to illustrate the relationship between man and God--institutions like slavery. Does that mean St. Paul was sanctioning slavery and holding it up as an example of how life on earth ought to be? Emphatically not! He was using an existing (and corrupt) human institution to illustrate a point.

This kind of biblical interpretation, by the way, leads to the charge that the Bible can be interpreted however a person wants to use it--which is not true. But it is a fact that quotations from the Bible have been used throughout history to justify slavery, monarchy, male supremacy and racism. The reason Paine and Jefferson saw themselves as agnostics was that the churches of the time were using the Bible to either justify monarchy, or to justify democratic revolution! The Bible was written at times in history when patriarchy, monarchy and slavery were the rule, and it is easy to find passages that seem to support these human institutions.

Jesus, however, was a feminist. He was one of the only ancient rabbis who accepted female disciples. He taught that men and women were essentially souls, not sexes, who in their final development would "neither marry" like men "or be given in marriage" like women, but would be "equal to angels and are offspring of God."⁷⁵ He taught the femininity of Godhead in his unique doctrine of the Holy Spirit (a feminine phrase and concept in Hebrew and Aramaic; later made into a neuter form in Greek, then a masculine form in the Latin of the Roman Catholic Church!). He showed pity, not condemnation, for prostitutes and adulteresses, and encouraged women to drop their "women's work" and join him in the traditionally masculine after-dinner conversation.⁷⁶

Fundamentalists cleverly avoid publishing explicitly anti-feminist doctrine, instead leaving its advocacy to their loyal womens-group leaders. None of them are ordained ministers, of course, with authority to preach to men. They keep their place for, as an anti-feminist writer of the early church (not St. Paul, but one claiming to write in his name) stoutly declared:

"I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."⁷⁷

Obviously the fullness of Jesus' teaching was far from realized in the

⁷⁵Luke 20:36, Mark 12:25 ⁷⁶Luke 10:38-42

⁷⁷I Tim. 2:12-15

early churches. It is still far from realized today, but in many cases so-called "secular humanism" is closer to the spirit of Jesus than the Christian churches, with its concern for human rights and sexual equality.

The fundamentalists raise a spectre of women in the infantry, women and men forced to use the same bathrooms, unisexism, lesbian mothers and homosexual fathers if the ERA passes. Fears like that are twisted nightmares. Already the congress has ruled out the idea of a women's draft registration. Equal legal rights for women is fair and just, and no one has any business standing in the way of that dream.

The fundamentalists claim that if the ERA passes we will become a unisex nation, but that's not their real fear. The truth is this: The ERA will put fundamentalist women, as citizens of the U.S., into an untenable position as submissive Christians. Fundamentalist sexual attitudes will have to change and become seemingly "unbiblical," or else fundamentalism will have to give up its sudden visibility and retire into obscurity to keep its "biblical" base, losing much of its membership and creating schism between men and women.

Fundamentalism has a stake in keeping equal rights from American women, because it believes women do not inherently have equal rights, and that this is God's will. It will deny the majority of American women their rights in order to keep its own dogmas alive. Keeping the ERA from passing thus becomes a religious duty.

Self-Protective Sub-Cultural Legislation

The fundamentalists want to protect their right to form their own "Christian" schools, and to keep them non-profit, tax-exempt institutions. That is fine and constitutional. There is nothing wrong about that, and their right to do so must be strongly supported.

Private education is a terribly important freedom. Parental choice in education is a basic right.

They want school prayer legalized in public schools. It was made illegal in a landmark decision supporting the right of non-religious and non-mainstream religious children not to be forced into Christian prayer by zealous public officials.

Praying in public to a pluralistic, mixed group is a touchy thing. To address a prayer to God is traditional in America, as it is done in the installation ceremonies of elected officials including the President. But to conclude a prayer "in the name of Jesus Christ" is as offensive to Jewish Americans as it would be to Christians to conclude a prayer "in the name of Mohammud."

As a man who prays and meditates daily, I find public prayer of any sort a

pain in the ass, frankly. I don't like to be asked to lead public prayer, nor do I like to have some preacher deliver a public sermon to me between his "Oh, Lord," and "Amen."

Jesus, by the way, didn't care for it either. He said:

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in churches and in public, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into a private place and pray to your Father who is in private, and your Father who sees in private will reward you."⁷⁸

Fundamentalists love public prayer, public protestations of their piety, and evangelical orgies of public confession, praise and hymn singing. Their idea of allowing what they call "prayer" in the schools means "public prayer," in which one worship leader stands up and speaks to God for everyone.

Bunk! This is just another form of fundamentalist solicitation. To me, that would be almost as bad as homosexual solicitation by a teacher, and I certainly don't want my children exposed to it.

The only way I could accept voluntary prayer in public schools would be if such prayers were not led by a teacher, and if they were done privately in a separate location, inconspicuously. The moment that voluntary public school prayer became simply an instrument for fundamentalist solicitation, I'd go after some hide with a big stick.

That's a pretty subjective evaluation of the effect of school prayer on my parental choice and my children's First and Fourteenth amendment rights, but I believe the point has been made.

The fundamentalists want speedy punishment of criminals and harsher penalties for crime. They back the death penalty. Fine. I can go along with all that.

But somehow I don't like their motives. They are accurately described in an ancient moral lesson from one of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs--a sacred book considered by the first- to fifth-century Christians to be part of their Bible, written during the "intertestamental period" by a Pharisaic divine:

"Whatsoever a man doeth, the hater abominateth him: and though a man worketh the law of the Lord, he praiseth him not...For it will not hear the words of His commandments concerning the loving of one's neighbor... For if a brother stumble, it delighteth immediately to proclaim it to all men, and is urgent that he should be judged for it, and be punished and be put to death...For as love would quicken even the dead, and would call back them that are condemned to die, so hatred would slay the living, and those that had sinned venially it would not suffer to live."⁷⁹

⁷⁸Matt. 6:5-6

⁷⁹The Testament of Gad 3:2-4:6, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Pseudepigrapha, R.H. Charles, ed. (London, 1964), p. 340

The Long Range Agenda

In order to fully understand where fundamentalism wishes to take us, we must examine its long range ideology. Though these ideas are apocalyptic and mythical, they are literal and historical to the fundamentalists. As such, they understand them politically, in terms of current events, contemporary international relations and their short range political goals for America.

First, we must understand that the fundamentalists don't want to save America. They believe that America is corrupt, and its destiny is ultimate destruction.

They believe that everyone but them is a moral degenerate:

"These felons who live all around us, who are our neighbors, or our second cousins, or our boss's kids, don't perceive their crimes as against God, because they don't recognize God."⁸⁰

They alone are righteous.

Among them, however, are leaders who believe that the current affairs of America are a separate issue from the coming Tribulation. LaHaye says:

"The seven-year tribulation period will be a time that features the rule of the anti-Christ over the world. I cover this extensively in my book The Beginning of the End. It originates with the signing of a covenant between Israel and the anti-Christ, which he breaks after three and one-half years. That tribulation is predestined and will surely come to pass. But the pre-tribulation tribulation--that is, the tribulation that will engulf this country if liberal humanists are permitted to take total control of our government--is neither predestined nor necessary."⁸¹

The problem of how to regard the present time in the light of biblical apocalyptic is that it doesn't seem to be covered, so that short range goals for fundamentalists center on issues that seem in their self-interest and project their Puritan morality in the name of saving America from God's wrath for the immediate short term--like plugging up holes in a rowing dingy in order to make a trip ashore.

But the fundamentalists have no long term stake in America. They believe it will be violently destroyed in the near future and that American constitutional liberty will vanish from the earth.

Israel

upon which

The major historical event \wedge fundamentalists base their certainty that these are the last days is the establishment of modern Israel. In the Apocalypse of Daniel (which refers to events in the ancient world, and doesn't claim to prophecy modern times), there is reference to the return of the Jews to their homeland and the end of the "times of the gentiles" in Jerusalem. This is taken

⁸⁰ America at the Crossroads (op. cit.) p. 65 ⁸¹ The Battle for the Mind (op. cit.) pp. 217-218

to prophecy the establishment of the modern state of Israel, and the end of non-Jewish control of Jerusalem in 1967.

This is the lynchpin of fundamentalist premillenarian apocalyptic, and it is unthinkable to them that Israel should internationalize Jerusalem--even though this is the only intelligent solution. Therefore they back Israel's militancy to the hilt, even if it means the genocidal extermination of the displaced Palestinians, using American weapons sold to Israel.

If this isn't immoral, I don't know what is!

The return of the Jews to Israel is linked in the fundamentalist mind with the Second Coming of Christ--even though it is not so linked in the Revelation to St. John, which is the Christian apocalypse. They have tried to harmonize and unify all the different prophecies in the Old and New Testaments, and feel they have the cipher which unlocks them all and makes each one a part of the other.

This is nonsense. Each prophecy in the Bible was made at a specific time for a specific situation, and most of them have been fulfilled. When Jesus spoke of the tribulation of the Jews, he referred to the terrible events of A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was besieged and the temple first defiled, then destroyed. It was out of this prophecy that the Revelation to St. John was constructed--it, too, being a fundamentalist attempt to unify all Jewish prophecy. The Book of Revelation was a cause of serious heresies like Montanism for several hundred years in the early churches, and was rejected as part of New Testament canon until the compromises of Constantine resulted in its uniform inclusion--mostly as a memorial to the Roman persecution of the Christian saints, which it was thought the book described. To them, the events of Revelations had already passed, and the one-thousand year reign of the saints with Christ was beginning with the Byzantine adoption of Christianity as its own state religion.

But the fundamentalist stake in their biblical interpretation keeps them ardently in favor of Israeli militancy, as they look forward to the attack of Antichrist on Israel and its destruction.

The current fundamentalists thinking is that anyone who doesn't support Israel will be cursed, because of Abraham's two sons, God blessed Isaac (father of the Jews) and cursed Ismael (father of the Arabs).⁸² I quote from a pamphlet entitled Support Your Local Jew. This is in cartoon form, so I reproduce the scanty text:

⁸² Gen. 12:3; 27:29

"The curse in in effect today (list of all the African nations that experienced draught--these are the same that broke diplomatic relations with Israel). Here's another example! God blessed England because of Queen Victoria (A God fearing ruler who read her Bible for guidance). Great Britain grew in power until 1918, and because England forgot about God's little-known promise to Israel...God has cursed England! She is finished as a major power...because she crossed the Jews...Russia will attack the U.S. when she moves on Israel. How badly the U.S. will be hit depends on how loyal we are to Israel... Will we dump Israel for a tank of gas?...If we do, God help us...(And you know he won't!)...After World War III, Israel enters 'The time of Jacob's troubles'...the worst 7 years of her existence: 2/3 of all Jews die."⁸³

W. S. McBirnie, "one of the men most admired by the American people" in 1964 according to a Gallup poll, and recently consultant for 20th Century Fox's Damien: Omen II, tells us in his recent book, Anti-Christ:

"The great unleashing of what will amount to World War III will come, as previously shown, according to the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39, and will involve Western Europe in the conflict when Eastern Europe, led by Russia, moves to seize the oil fields of the Middle East."⁸⁴

The whole force of modern fundamentalism is to provocatively oppose Russia, support Israel right or wrong, and expect world holocaust starting with conflict in the Middle East.

Do we want politicians with these ideas running America?

With the state of the world, these could easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. The fundamentalists have doped out a possible future which they want very much to be actualized because, they believe, in so doing the Second Coming of Christ can occur.

But I warn them plainly, the result of a third world war will not be the coming of Christ! It will be destruction, regression and horror.

Russia and China

The United States must fatalistically expect a nuclear attack from the Russians, because Scripture has predestined it.

"It's a one day fire war...1/4 of the world's population dies as a result...Israel survives this holocaust."⁸⁵

After this comes the Antichrist, whose armies will come from the East and challenge the West for the great Battle of Armageddon. The invaders? They will be the Chinese.

⁸³(Chick Publications, Chino, Cal., 1976)

⁸⁴Anti-Christ, W.S. McBirnie (Dallas, 1978), p. 104

⁸⁵The Kings of the East (Chick Publications, Chino, Cal., 1975)

"Does this sound farfetched? Have you heard of the super highway the Chinese are now building for this invasion? It moves through Manchuria, Mongolia, Nepal, Tibetan Himalayas, West Pakistan, into Afghanistan heading toward Israel. A huge dam has just been constructed in N.E. Syria at Medinathal Thawa on the Euphrates River. Two more are going up on the Euphrates, one in Turkey and one in Iraq. They will be complete in time to dry up the Euphrates for the Kings of the East to cross for their invasion."⁸⁶

The Euphrates has to be dry, you see, because Rev. 16:12 says so.

In other words, the Russians and the Chinese must remain our national and religious enemies, regardless of what changes might occur in their forms of government and culture.

Therefore the fundamentalists and the Reagan administration have cut off arms limitation talks (SALT) with the Russians, and the United States is embarked on an all-out race to attain superiority to Russian conventional warfare. The mentality of the kind of adversary politics we experience within the nation from the fundamentalists is being carried into international relations and foreign policy as well.

Do we really want war and eventual holocaust? Have we no other choice in our relations with Russia and China?

The Antichrist

After Russia declares war on Israel and the U.S., the Antichrist, who is a person alive today (as in the Omen I and Omen II movies), will arise and take power over what remains of Europe.

"The Antichrist will be the catalyst and leader of this new Europe. He will come from one of the nations which was part of the old Roman Empire and will wage small wars of conquest, and then by a satanically inspired series of brilliant political maneuvers, forge again the equivalent of a united Europe. From that base he will impose a peace upon the Middle East and move toward world government, utilizing war, peace, deceit and his own tremendous personality to bring it about...Europe is rife with godlessness and unbelief...fiercely devoted to pleasure, productivity and profit. It is ripe for a leader, given the very real threat which is now posed by Soviet imperialism...When threatened, she will unite as a restored Roman Empire, ready to play out the last themes of time."⁸⁷

That pretty much covers it, doesn't it? Christian America and Israel are doomed to stand together against the rest of the ungodly world, which will become

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Anti-Christ (op. cit.), pp. 105-106

the domain of the Antichrist.

"By the end of his 7 year reign...the world is in chaos! The ecology is ruined...plagues are hitting everywhere. From his headquarters in Jerusalem the Beast orders the death of every Jew...because they will not worship him. 2/3 of all Jews are killed...it looks hopeless." ⁸⁸

Gee, I'm just hoping that the ecology won't be ruined after the 4 year reign of Interior Secretary James Watt!

Looks like the Jews get to suffer again, huh? Christian apocalyptic has never been very good news for Jews, who have suffered the religious hostility of Christian fundamentalists for thousands of years. The seeming alliance of fundamentalists and Jews over the issue of Israel is based on some very shaky propositions, it seems to me.

Well, anyway, suddenly Christ appears with his legions of angels and smashes the Antichrist, thus beginning a thousand years of fundamentalist government on earth.

This act of a deus ex machina to save the faithful fundamentalists like the U.S. cavalry at the last possible moment is called the Second Coming.

The Second Coming

From earliest times there have been Christian apocalypticists who wanted the world to end. They got this heritage from the Jewish and Roman apocalypticists, who took it in turn from the Chaldean mystics. The Chaldeans were astrologers who noted that the zodiacal houses and signs were no longer where they were supposed to be. Somehow the whole universe was slipping off its moorings, and instead of spring beginning with the sun in Aries, it had regressed almost to Pisces, the end-sign. (They didn't know about the precession of the equinoxes due to a long-term motion of the earth's axis.)

So the Persians developed a doctrine that it was the end of an age, and that a new age was dawning. It was thought in many circles that the world would end in fire, and a new earth come into being. The oppressed Jews of Palestine developed their apocalyptic and messianic ideas around this theme as well, so that early Christians had a mass of revelatory literature to draw upon--much of which is either lost or no longer considered to be Christian.

Jesus was not an apocalyptic teacher, contrary to ~~what~~ Schweitzer and the early twentieth-century school of liberal biblical critics thought. Rather, the

⁸⁸ Kings of the East (op. cit.)

early Christians, especially the gentile Greeks, developed apocalyptic ideas in trying to interpret the teachings of Jesus for themselves. As a messianic cult, they came up with the same kinds of ideas found in messianic cults worldwide, in all religious tradition--which included the idea of the return of their Jesus. Writers like the authors of the Fourth Gospel tried to clarify and dispel these fundamentalist myths, but they continued. They are preserved in many parts of the New Testament, and even put into the mouth of Jesus.

What did Jesus really teach? Did he glorify himself as God and demand to be worshipped? Did he say that he would return in glory to conquer the world?

Hardly. Those would be the ravings of a gnostic megalomaniac. The Fourth Gospel, which refutes apocalypticism, still puts all the early Christian teaching about the meaning of Jesus into the mouth of Jesus, making him sound like a megalomaniac, but we know from the synoptic gospels that he didn't speak in this way. We also know from literary traditions of the time that it was common for a disciple's glorification of his teacher to be written as doctrine of that teacher, coming from his own mouth.

By getting behind the literature of the New Testament and examining the teachings of Jesus that have not been altered to fit particular theological views of the writers (which can be easily identified and isolated), we see that Jesus taught only one apocalyptic doctrine--that of the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. It was this, in fact, that enraged the Jewish religious establishment.

Jesus taught the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy about the coming of the Son of Man--literally, the "Humanist." In Daniel all the world kingdoms are compared to beasts. But the rulership of God under His just followers is represented by a human, not animal, figure whom Daniel calls "one like unto a son of mankind." This refers to the eventual coming of a just, humane form of government that God will not allow to perish from the earth. This dominion is "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away."⁸⁹

Jesus believed in the eventual triumph of just, humane government on earth, in spite of the Roman tyranny, and taught that it would occur. When would it happen?

"Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven... only the Father."⁹⁰

Contrary to what the fundamentalist false-prophets claim to know, Jesus said not even the angels could know. But Jesus did say that his followers would know when to leave the city of Jerusalem by keeping aware of politics.⁹¹ They in fact did leave Jerusalem right before it was besieged by the Romans and escaped the

⁸⁹ Daniel 7:14

⁹⁰ Mark 13:32 et al.

⁹¹ Mark 13:28-31

terrible suffering of the people trapped inside. Their zealot leaders wouldn't let them out, and the Roman siege wouldn't allow food in. According to the historian Josephus, people were forced to eat the decaying bodies of the dead. The Christians, however, had escaped this "tribulation."

There is, in fact, no doctrine of a "second coming" to be found in the teachings of Jesus. It appears only in the writings of the early churches.

What did Jesus really teach? This is too long a subject for this book, but there is one type of parable Jesus used often, and it illustrates how off-base the fundamentalists are.

In this parable the master of an estate leaves his property in the charge of his servants. He will return, but when is not certain. After he leaves some of the servants begin fighting among themselves or abusing their trust, but others do their work faithfully. Even others take charge of certain areas and creatively manage the estate, causing it to expand and flourish.⁹²

When the master returns, he comes "as a thief in the night," wanting to catch his servants in their candid behavior. Those he finds who have abused his trust, he punishes. Those he finds faithful and productive, he rewards.

This is Jesus' approach to life. What he says is that mankind lives in a world in which God is absent. As opposed to what the fundamentalists say, God is not walking around with us waiting to be asked for favors. God may be approached only in prayer--not face to face--like making a long-distance telephone call.

We are with God before birth, and return into his presence after death (the unpredictable coming of the master--which the fundamentalists interpret as the Second Coming of Christ). We are morally accountable for our actions, and are rewarded or punished after death based on how we live on earth.

But in life we are, so to speak, on our own. We are like children who have been set free and independent, and must earn our right to be heirs of the Master.⁹³

Yet it is the attempt of humanity to responsibly manage its own affairs that infuriates the fundamentalists! "No, no!" they cry. "God is present right now to manage your affairs, and anything you try to do independently will be sin!"

What a way to raise children, if God be a Father. His offspring will always be simple basket cases--never mature, never responsible, never able to "rule" by themselves. (This gives us some insight into the fundamentalist ideals of child raising and schooling.) Yet, according to Jesus, the goal of man is to become an

⁹²Matt. 25:14ff.; Mark 13:34ff.
et al.

⁹³Gal. 4:1ff.; 5:1ff. et al.

heir and co-creator with God--not an eternal child.⁹⁴ It is man's duty to learn and earn what will one day be his partnership with God in managing the universe.

Thus the concept of "stewardship" that appears in these teachings is not the literal management of money, as in the parable, but the management of one's moral life. Stewardship is a spiritual, not material, virtue. A misunderstanding of this was incorporated in the Calvinistic moralism that equated sound fiscal policy with moral virtue before God!

It is clear that Jesus intended his prophecies to apply only to his generation. At the end of the long "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13, which contains the whole prophecy of Daniel and covers most of the Book of Revelations, Jesus says:

"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place."⁹⁵

It was statements like that which caused the liberal biblical scholars of the post-Schweitzerian school to postulate that Jesus thought the world would end in his time, and was wrong. Better scholarship allows us now to realize that apocalyptic doctrines of the early churches were formed by some Christians in trying to interpret and understand Jesus. Jesus himself taught a realized, mystical concept of the immanence of God's Malkuth or Rulership (not "Kingdom") to which he invited all people to submit (not "repent"). The "kingdom of God" was "within."

In spite of all this, the fundamentalists expect a literal, political and material "Second Coming" at the end of this century, after America and Israel have been destroyed and the world is in the hands of a universal dictator.

They have a stake in this kind of a future.

Do we want them running our country?

⁹⁴ Matt. 25:23; Those who "over-come" are to judge the angels, take charge of realms, etc.

⁹⁵ Mark 13:30 et al.

VI FUNDAMENTALISM AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

Have you ever wondered where the fundamentalists were when mainstream Christian clergy and lay persons were laying it on the line for black civil rights in the early sixties? I'll tell you where they were.

Their ministers were barring blacks from their congregations, because (as the Bible plainly shows) the black races are descendents of Ham, whose skin was scorched black as a punishment from God. His son Canaan was cursed by Noah:

"A slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers (Gen. 9:25b)."

Thus it was God's will that black people should be slaves, and the fundamentalists preferred this racist rationale for the righteousness of traditional southern white prejudices over the slight nagging of merely "human" conscience.

Many fundamentalists went further, and used their religion as an excuse to wear the coward's white sheet of the KKK. Claiming "state's rights" they opposed racial integration of schools, forcing federal intervention like the bus-ing legislation to be imposed. They became deputy sheriffs with mean dogs and super-powerful fire hoses, lead-filled night sticks, steel helmets--and a religious mandate to beat the hell out of those uppity niggers and their northern friends.

So righteously did they perceive their cause that they even committed murder.

By contrast, some of the strongest aid to the civil rights cause came from the southern evangelical churches, whose stake in the issue was even higher than that of the interloping northerners. They had to live every day in the South and face the ugly dangers to their families and children that taking a moral stand provoked. But the northerners could pack up and go back home.

Civil rights was a real moral issue, not a phony one. It took real guts, not merely shallow Puritan disapproval, to take a stand. It was physically dangerous for a Christian to follow the humanitarian teachings of Jesus in those days.

The civil rights struggle clearly set true Christian teaching against fundamentalist dogma, and called for a moral decision in every church, among every congregation. The result? Half the people left, taking their money with them.

Those who made the wrong moral decision often left their southern evangelical church and affiliated with a fundamentalist "back-to-the-Bible" sect. That is the demographic base for the first major growth of neo-fundamentalism in this generation.

The same rending of mainstream Christian congregations in the South occurred over a century ago when the Fundamentalist movement began. Fundamentalism continues to be a schismatic heresy of evangelical Christianity that feeds on social-cultural crisis. It is a religious parasite.

Even the best that can be said about the founding of American Fundamentalism in the post-war South by J. I. Packer, a modern Evangelical, is negative:

"American Fundamentalism did not in every respect adorn its doctrine. We honor the original Fundamentalists for their zeal to defend and spread their evangelical faith, but at a generation's distance we can see serious limitations in the witness which they made...As time went by, Fundamentalism withdrew more and more into the shell provided by its own interdenominational organizations. Partly in self-defense, the movement developed a pronounced anti-intellectual bias; it grew distrustful of scholarship, sceptical as to the value of reasoning in matters of religion and truculent in its attitude toward the argument of its opponents. Something less than intellectual integrity appeared in its readiness to support a good cause with a bad argument. Its apologetics were makeshift, piecemeal and often unprincipled and unsound. Its adventures in the field of the natural sciences, especially with reference to evolution, were most unfortunate. Here, where the Fundamentalists' confidence was greatest, their competence was least, and their performance brought ridicule and discredit on themselves. Fundamentalism lacked theological energy and concern for Christian learning. It grew intellectually barren. Culture became suspect. The responsibilities of Christian social witness were left to the purveyors of the 'social gospel'...The Fundamentalist episode has not been a happy chapter in the history of Evangelicalism."⁹⁶

Packer quotes American evangelical scholar N. B. Stonehouse concerning the positive and negative achievements of Fundamentalism. He says that to the extent the Fundamentalists were stressing evangelical doctrines about God and man, they did well, and were simply defending historic Christianity against the zealous anti-religiosity of nineteenth-century liberals. But on the other hand he admits that Fundamentalism produced "certain excrescences" that were not Christian.

"Oftentimes pietistic and perfectionist vagaries have come to be accepted as the hallmark of fundamentalism. And a one-sided other-worldliness, often associated with a dogmatic commitment to a futuristic chiliasm, has come to be widely regarded as essential to fundamentalist orthodoxy."⁹⁷

These modern evangelicals--one British and other other American--have made a crystal-clear distinction between what today might be called evangelicalism and fundamentalism. (The distinction was not made in earlier decades.) We saw the distinction during the civil rights period of the late fifties and early sixties, and we see the distinction right now--Reagan is supported by fundamentalists, but Carter was supported by evangelicals, and the twain shall never meet.

⁹⁶ "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God, J. I. Packer (Grand Rapids, 1980), pp. 31-32

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 33

The evangelical position is Christian; the fundamentalist position is not. Evangelicals are not anti-intellectual or anti-humanistic; fundamentalists are religiously so. Evangelicals are not dogmatic creationists; fundamentalists are. Evangelicals are not dogmatically opposed to biblical criticism; fundamentalists are. Evangelicals are not dogmatic apocalypticists with premillennialist myths dominating their future; fundamentalists are.

But the two forms of religion are associated in the public mind, because the external trappings of denominational style so resemble each other--understandably so, since fundamentalism is a schismatic movement from evangelical Christianity. What is worse, a large number of evangelicals have been recently drawn into alliances with the fundamentalist camp over single-issue politics and the need for moral reform.

Fundamentalism has what seems to be a stranglehold on American evangelical religion. It holds the purse-string, and has created a system of political-action cadres that constitute a formidable political-economic power in contemporary culture. They are active at all levels--local through federal--and intoxicate even the most faithful evangelicals with the prospect of world evangelism.

The same situation existed during the second century, when the heretical Marcion, defeated in his bid to become Bishop of Rome, began an establishment of Marcionite churches that eventually far outnumbered the "catholic" churches of Rome, Greece and Asia Minor. At that time the situation seemed hopeless, and the doctrines of Marcion prevailed.

Marcion created the first Christian Bible--a collection of the Gospel According to Luke and ten Pauline epistles. He used this Bible as his authority for doctrine, since he himself lacked the authority of the traditional Church. Like the modern fundamentalists, he used only a part of scriptural tradition to justify his dogmas. Unlike them, he edited what he had chosen, instead of making selective use of the larger tradition, as fundamentalists do. Unlike the fundamentalists, he was totally antinomian, believing in the rule of love over all the laws of the Old Testament--an over-radicalization and simplification of Jesus' teaching that had mass appeal. But like the fundamentalists, he held the purse-strings and the membership.

How was the Marcionite movement set right? First, certain apostolic fathers like Bishop Ireneus of Lyon took it upon themselves to speak out and write against what was happening. Second, Marcion himself finally died. Over a period of time the Marcionite churches either disbanded or became "catholic," i.e., Christian.

The same thing must happen today.

The distinctions between Christian religion and that of the fundamentalists are numerous. They include doctrine, worship and practice, and cannot be adequately described in this brief work.

However, there are some important general differences that are of special interest, and must be described.

Faith as Dogmatic "Belief"

Protestantism has been a schismatic, splintering movement from the beginning because it was a "protest" against Roman Catholic religious abuse. It lacked the unity of tradition and the authority of apostolic succession in its ministry that the Catholic Church had, yet it knew the rightness of its cause. To what authority could it appeal? Not the Pope, not the episcopacy.

Protestantism based its source of religious authority on the Bible.

Wycliff and other scholars had made translations of the Latin Bible (the Vulgate) into native languages like German and English, so that people untrained in Latin, as the priests and nobility were, could read it for themselves. This, then, was basically a democratic impulse--to give the common man the same religious sources that the hierarchy had.

Immediately readers of the vernacular Bibles realized how different the religion of Jesus was from that exemplified by the Church, and pietistic communities arose practicing what were thought to be truer forms of Christianity. Monastic and other reforms had been the precursor to the more popular "protestant" movement, and they had been tolerated as long as their leadership had submitted to papal authority. But now things were out of hand, and political enemies of the papacy were beginning to use religious dissent as a trump card.

Martin Luther was a professor of Bible whose study of scripture had led him to post the famous Ninety-Five Theses--a listing of contradictions between biblical teachings and Catholic practice. His cause was protected by certain nobility for their own political reasons, and Luther was free to elaborate what he thought was a truly biblical and reformed theology.

Central to Martin Luther's biblical theological insight was a new concept of "faith." Luther hated the Roman practice of selling indulgences, or papal remissions of sin that were supposed to shorten one's time to be spent in Purgatory after death. The Church taught that one's moral "works" earned him his heavenly reward, and that these included donations to the Church. Punishments, on the other hand, could be remitted in the afterlife by good works, or through purchase of papal indulgences.

Luther knew this was not biblical, and developed his theory that salvation came through God's "grace" as a free gift--not an earned or purchased commodity--to counter the Roman theology. He claimed the authority of St. Paul's epistles for his new ideas.

Then what was faith? It was the instrument of salvation. It was the "work" that earned salvation. Theoretically, said Luther, one needed only "faith" to be worthy of heaven in the afterlife--not works.

(Luther especially disliked the Epistle of James, which said, "Faith without works is dead!" He called it the "epistle of straw" and wanted it removed from the New Testament canon.)

Well, this sounded marvellous to the protestants, who wanted a one-to-one pipeline to God without the necessity of ecclesiastical intermediaries, and the idea of salvation by faith became a basic tenet of protestant theology.

But what was "faith?" Unfortunately it was understood as "belief." That is because for centuries it had been rendered by the Latin root cred- as in "creed." For this reason the protestant concern for "belief" emerged as its unifying characteristic. All we had to do was read the Bible to get the right doctrines (in opposition to the doctrines of Rome), and we would have a basis for correct belief.

Unfortunately the protestants failed to understand that the Bible is a collection of many schools of thought from many historical periods, and that it simply doesn't contain a unified dissertation of coherent, consistent philosophy. Soon the protestants were at each other's throats over issues of biblical interpretation. One sect "believed" one thing, and another "believed" something else. Who was right?

Creeds, confessions and articles of religion appeared from the many different protestant sects--each differing from the other. Violent emotions flared, with one sect declaring that whoever didn't "believe" its way was doomed to hell, and another sect closing fellowship or communion to all other protestants.

Some of the issues: The Baptists "believed" that children should not be baptized, and that to be a true Christian one must have an emotional conversion experience and then be baptized as an adult in flowing water. The Presbyterians, by contrast, felt that baptism was not a physical, but a spiritual matter. One could be baptized with flower petals, if desired. Anglicans felt that anything could be "believed" as long as it didn't contradict Scripture, but some congregationalists felt that unless a practice or idea was specifically in Scripture, it must be avoided.

And on and on through history, straining at gnats and swallowing camels.

Jesus satirized this legalistic, petty approach in his observation of the strict fundamentalistic Pharisees. Because the Old Testament dietary rules forbade eating insects, the most rigid of the religionists would strain their broth in public as they ate. They did this to demonstrate how zealous they were, and as an evangelical "witness" to true religion. But Jesus laughed and said that although they did succeed in straining out the flies, they "swallowed a camel"--a meat that was considered far more unclean. What was this "camel?" Their self-righteous religious opinions that made them better than all others in their own eyes.

Fundamentalists love camel broth, and so did the early protestant sects.

But all this backbiting was quite unnecessary--strange as it may seem--because it was based on an error in Martin Luther's biblical translation. You see, the New Testament was written in Greek, then later translated to Latin. The word for "faith" in Latin is from the root cred-, which translated the Greek root pist-, which means something like "belief," but more in the sense of an agreement or covenant.

But Jesus didn't speak in Greek--he taught in Aramaic, and the word he used was from the Hebrew root amen, which doesn't have much at all to do with "belief!" It means "faithfulness, perseverance, keeping of a covenantal responsibility."

Aha! Now we see why an ancient Christian writer could say, "Faith without works is dead," because what he really said was, "Faithfulness without works is dead."

The fact is this: All the places in the New Testament where reference is made to "faith" should really read "fidelity, faithfulness." All the places where "belief in" (pistuein eis) Jesus is mentioned should be translated "keeping faith with" Jesus, or God.

Christian faith is not a matter of credal belief! It is a matter of practice. Jesus refers to the "faith" of a mustard seed that allows it, though the smallest of seeds, to grow into the greatest of bushes. Here faith means "perseverance," not "belief." The follower of Jesus must be faithful and persevere, and by so doing he or she will "work" out (ergadzomai) his or her salvation.⁹⁸

So protestantism is wrong. Faith--the key to salvation--is a matter of works, according to biblical teaching. But Luther was not wrong, because the "works" to which he refers are not personal conduct, but the "works" of Jewish law, or Torah. St. Paul made it clear that Christians need not be circumcised or in any other way be forced to follow the hundred-thousand details of Jewish law his opponents wanted to impose on the new gentile followers of Jesus.⁹⁹ It was these "works"--sacrifice of doves and lambs, tithing to the Temple, etc.--against which Paul contrasted the Christian ideal of faithfulness to the spirit of the ancient law.

⁹⁸ Philip. 2:12 katergazomai

⁹⁹ Cf. esp. Galatians

Let's make this all a bit less abstract. What is the "biblical" Christian response to a social conflict like black civil rights of the late fifties?

One school of protestant theology would actually oppose black rights because of Noah and Ham. Another school would claim it is a civil issue that has nothing to do with religion, and we should steer clear of it. This school would quote from St. Paul's admonitions to obey civil authority.

But although both of these positions can find biblical passages to support their responses, neither of them is authentically biblical.

The authentic response, which might be rooted in a deep and comprehensive understanding of the teachings of Jesus and Paul, or might more simply be rooted in the impulses of conscience, good will, and a good heart, would be to rise to the defense of black human rights--even though it might be the dangerous and difficult course of action.

Biblical faith doesn't mean standing by and observing the civil rights struggle, all the while telling yourself that you're a good Christian because you hold the correct doctrines and dogmas!

It means acting, taking part, "working out" your fidelity to God in the context of human life.

There is only one situation where public "witness" (Gk. martyr-) is an act of fidelity, and that is when one takes a risk to proclaim and stand for Christian principles. The Greek word means, literally, "martyrdom."

When the fundamentalists think they are pleasing God by blabbering on using their religious lingo, they are being quite non-biblical. The only time that the "confession of faith" spoken of by St. Paul means anything is when it's a risk--as it was in the early period of the churches, but most assuredly is not in free American society.

Since the Reformation the mainstream protestant churches have developed strong and good-willed biblical systems of theology. Creeds and dogmas have become outmoded, communions are open, and ecumenism is the rule. (Yet these are seen as weaknesses by the fundamentalists!)

The medieval equation of "faith" with "belief" has been rectified everywhere but among the fundamentalist Christians. "Belief" is still their main issue. All one does to become a born-again Christian is to "accept the Lord," which means swallow the dogma--hook, line and sinker.

We have seen what many of these beliefs are--male supremacy, premillennialist apocalyptic theory, moral absolutism, the literal Creation, etc. They are warped, mean-spirited ideas developed by human minds--and not very good minds, I might add.

Abuse of the Christian Bible

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy was a logical development of the protestant delegation of all authority to Scripture. At least, it seemed logical.

There were problems with it, even in the text of the New Testament--even, in fact, among the teachings of Jesus. St. Paul devotes major portions of certain epistles to demonstrating that the Old Testament scriptures are not to be taken literally, and that the only way to understand them is by using a perspective of love. They were written for an ancient generation, at a time when mankind was a kind of child in need of a rigid pedagogue or tutor. Now, however, mankind must come of age and grow into the full measure and stature of Christ.¹⁰⁰ In this endeavor it will be the Spirit of God, and not the letter of Scripture, that will teach us.¹⁰¹

Jesus came into constant conflict with the Pharisaic scribes and lawyers, who made detailed literalistic interpretations of Scripture and accused him of Sabbath-breaking and many other offenses. Jesus countered by preaching, "You have heard it said of old that...but I tell you..."¹⁰²

He admonished his critics (who attacked both his morals and his biblical base) that they, who now adorn the monuments of the prophets, would have been among those who stoned them if they had been alive in those days, so far were they removed from understanding the message of the prophets.¹⁰³

When some of his critics came to him spouting Scripture he said:

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life."¹⁰⁴

The early Jewish Christians were greatly hated by the Jewish rabbis because the use they made of Scripture was allegorical, typological and anything but literal. Jesus and his followers were anything but biblical literalists, and this fact stands out glaringly to anyone who undertakes a serious study of the New Testament. It makes it difficult to justify biblical inerrancy, especially when the opening of Mark's Gospel contains a quotation from Malichi prefaced by, "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet!"

The inerrancy of biblical texts is impossible, because the Bible was transmitted over many centuries through many different scribes, some of whom added or erred or omitted. In fact, the admonition at the end of the Book of Revelations warning that whoever adds or subtracts from the words of the text will be punished, appears in at least ten different variations according to which manuscript we use!

¹⁰⁰ Gal. 3:19ff.

¹⁰¹ Gal. 4:1ff.

¹⁰² Matt. 5:21ff.

¹⁰³ Matt. 23:29ff.

¹⁰⁴ Jn. 5:39

Basically, a dogma of biblical inerrancy is impossible on textual grounds, at the outset. Whose translation shall we use--the King James, which was based on only a few manuscripts that were late and textually corrupt? The latest state-of-the-art Greek edition from the international center at Württemberg, Germany, based on tens of thousands of recovered sources? Sounds good, but who decides which variations are the most ancient and authentic--the humanistic staff of biblical critics at Württemberg?

Even if there were such a thing as an absolutely reliable text of the Bible (and there is not), what do we mean when we say the Bible is inspired by God? Isn't it a fact that human beings wrote the books of the Bible--fallible, prejudiced, short-sighted creatures of history through whom God acted to provide what would one day be collected as the sacred literature of Christianity? How purely could these human beings transmit this inspiration, without coloring it with their own minds?

Assuming this literature is "inspired," what do we mean by that idea? The fundamentalist dogma implies that God used the human writers of the Bible as mere puppets to literally receive what he dictated. Is that possible? Were the writers of the Bible acting like scribes in a heavenly steno pool?

Doesn't seem like it when you read St. Luke's gospel, for example. It, along with the Book of the Acts, is a long letter written to someone named Theophilus. The writer (who is anonymous--the gospel is merely attributed to Luke by tradition) seems to think he is writing a long letter--not taking a dictation.¹⁰⁵

In St. Paul's letters it is not God who dictates, but Paul himself. His epistles are actually written down by a disciple and only signed by Paul.¹⁰⁵ In fact, Paul is careful to distinguish different levels of authority in his own writings. At one place he will say, "I think I have the Spirit of God with me," at another he will declare that what he says is true because it is a teaching of Jesus, and in another he will say, "I, not the Lord, say..."¹⁰⁷

Nowhere in the Bible do any of the writings claim to be infallible. In fact, Scripture is recommended only once as an important part of Christian piety, in the following terms:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵Luke 1:1ff.

¹⁰⁶I Cor. 16:21 et al.

¹⁰⁷I Cor. 7:12

¹⁰⁸II Tim. 3:16-17

Nowhere does the Bible say it is infallible, but rather in the one quoted passage it does use the word theopneustos, "breathed-into by God." This word is usually translated "inspired" with the sense of "in-spirited" by God, but the word is taken very consciously from the Septuagintal reference to God's creation of man and woman as living souls. Thus the word means that the Scriptures are like a body of dust that has received the breathe of life. In other words, like mankind, the Bible is partly human and partly divine. One part is corruptible, the other eternal.

This philosophy is easily discernable in Second Peter, a late pastoral epistle circulated by a disciple of Peter (or someone of the Petrine school) during a period of conflict with schismatics:

"So also our beloved Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." 109

Clearly the abuse of Christian (and Jewish) Scripture has been a problem from the very beginning--from the legalistic ideas of Paul's Judaizing opponents who wanted Christians to follow the Jewish Old Testament Torah to the antinomian Marcionites, the millenarian apocalypics of the Montanist heresy, all the way through protestant Puritanism and modern American fundamentalism.

What, then, is the Bible? It is a collection of sacred writings spanning over a thousand years of history and representing ancient martial law, settled agrarian monarchical temple cultism, the inspired teaching of the prophets, the wisdom schools of Job and the later Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). For the early Christians other scriptures of the intertestamental period were sacred--writings of the Enoch, Solomon and Twelve Patriarch schools, for example (cf. Jude 14), that were later dropped from the canon for the sake of brevity. Finally the four Christian gospels with the epistles or circulating letters of Paul and other early teachers, and the Book of Revelations.

This collection of literature represents not a single, monolithic philosophy. Rather, it represents the growth and progress of an evolving consciousness leading finally to the master-teachings of Jesus. This is the Christian understanding of the Bible.

Note two important points. First, the ultimate authority for Christians is Jesus Christ, and his words in the New Testament. This was the religious authority to which Jefferson went in his personal studies. Second, in the Old Testament, religious thought progresses from lower to higher forms of spirituality. That is

¹⁰⁹II Pet. 3:15bff.

why there are contradictions between the older and newer parts of the Old Testament, and between the New Testament and the Torah.

The progress is not from Genesis through Malachi--the literary order of the Old Testament. Rather, it is from the oldest parts of the Old Testament history (the court chronicles, Judges, etc.) through the prophets and finally the wisdom schools of the post-exile period. One cannot know the order without studying the Bible using literary criticism, for the Bible (unlike most of the teachings of Jesus) is not a coherent, self-explanatory whole.

For example, the older parts of the Old Testament take for granted the idea of genetic sin--that God visits the sins of the parents on the children.

Then, a few centuries later, along comes the prophet Ezekiel who challenges this ancient moral code. Speaking in the Name of God he declares that from now on each person is responsible for his own sins, not those of his parents--a radical concept at the time, yet one we take for granted.

"The word of the Lord came to me again: 'What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die. If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right...he shall surely live, says the Lord God."¹¹⁰

This kind of theological reform instituted by the prophetic teachings that occurred between the time of King David and the Babylonian exile over five to six hundred years humanized Israel. They resulted in a Second Law, called Deuteronomy, that incorporated the prophetic insights with their radical demands for individual (rather than corporate) covenantal relationship with God.

But the Deuteronomic reform was overridden by the later wisdom school of Job. The Deuteronomic concept was that if an individual person were righteous, God would reward him in life with prosperity. If he were evil, God would punish him with disease and poverty.

This didn't fit reality very well, especially after the defeat and exile of Judah. In actuality the righteous were often those who suffered in life, and the wicked were those who prospered. The entire Job cycle deals with the inadequacy of older Deuteronomic theology to make sense out of life, and posits (for the first time) a doctrine of Satan--a lawyer in the divine court of God whose duty is to prosecute mankind in order to test and try their righteousness. Here, God is not the source of evil, but his Prince Satan--who ultimately works for the betterment of mankind.

¹¹⁰Ezek. 18:1ff.

The next time we meet Satan is in the intertestamental literature. Here he is no longer a member of God's court, but is the leader of rebellious fallen angels, who are the source of evil on earth. By this time a strong ethical dualism has taken hold of Jewish theology.

To make a long story short, the theological ideas of the New Testament writers had advanced beyond this, and new elements like the femininity of deity (Shekinah, Wisdom or Holy Spirit), sainthood and the path of sanctity, the reward of the righteous in heaven after death rather than on earth, the inner (rather than outer) righteousness, etc. make what appears at first glance to be a radical break from the Old Testament. If one knows the intertestamental literature, however (as did the early Christians), there is no radical break. A major portion of what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, appears in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and other literature one- to two-hundred years older.

In order to understand the teachings of Jesus in more than a cursory way, one must study the whole development of Jewish spirituality. But what if we know nothing about this?

Then we are stuck at some lower rung of the ladder, like the fundamentalists when they claim that God rewarded Victorian England by making it strong, but punished post-World War I England by making her weak. This is nothing more than simple Deuteronomic moral theology of the sort that is repudiated in Job and totally rejected in the New Testament.

The Christian teaching is that what happens to people in their lives is independent of their righteousness before God. Their "reward" is not earthly. God is the bringer of good, not evil. Evil (and the "Devil") is something that is rooted within a person--not something outside him. We are the cause of our own problems, not God.

"Let no one say, when he is tested, 'I am tested by God;' for God cannot be afflicted by evil and he himself afflicts no one; but each person is tested when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death."¹¹¹

It is wrong to say, "How could God allow this to happen?" The evil things that happen in life are not "God's will," as the colonial Puritans said. They are merely evil things that we, as human beings, must do our best to conquer. The world's evil, whether a product of man or of nature, is man's challenge. Ultimately, then, "evil" is essentially that which is not understood by man. The answer

¹¹¹James 1:13ff.

to the problem of evil lies hidden within mankind. God offers wisdom, spiritual knowledge, inspiration. But the work must be done by mankind as a disciple and junior partner of God. There is no other way.

The Bible, then, is not a simple answer for those wanting absolutist solutions to the mysteries of life. It is not a textbook of biology, cosmology, or anything else. It is a record of spiritual history that shows from whence we have come, and points to whither we go. Most of all, it shows us how other generations have forged the path. This also we must do.

Fundamentalists hate the idea that mankind is evolving spiritually (or has evolved biologically). They want the whole mystery of existence right now in a nutshell. They have the audacity to think that they, with their tiny human minds, can apprehend all absolute truth. To believe that theirs is the end generation, for whom all prophecy was made, and that they are the chosen few who please the God of all eternity, the Lord of Life, the Almighty and Everliving Source, the Mind of the Universe of Universes!

The Bible reflects the highest apprehensions of Godhead that mankind could achieve in the generations of old (within the Judeo-Christian tradition). There are other scriptures, some of them newer and with higher spiritual insights--and equally fallable with respect to their various settings and cultures.

Perhaps the most accurate thing to say is that the Bible is a sacred instrument that links us with what transcends mankind, but it must be used properly. In the hands of ignorant and ill-willed people it becomes a justification for the worst elements of human nature.

Fundamentalism is Not Christianity

It is imperative that Christian leaders waste no time in repudiating fundamentalist ideas. The fundamentalist movement has all but taken over the evangelical churches, and given another few years will control the economic bases of all Christian seminaries and schools. The mainstream churches will wither, and the fundamentalist ones flourish. Fundamentalism will pass for "Christianity," speak for Jesus Christ, and vigorously pursue its political ends.

Let me make it quite clear: Fundamentalism is not Christianity!

In order to better illustrate this assertion, I will remind the reader of several facts that I have tried to demonstrate:

1. Fundamentalism is common to all religions. It is not a specifically Christian phenomenon.

2. Fundamentalism takes its historical roots from English and American Puritanism, which was an extremist protestant sectarian movement. In other words, fundamentalism is a schism that developed from another schism, and most lately originated in the post-Civil War years as a schism from evangelical southern Christianity. In other words, it has all the pedigrees of "heresy."

3. Fundamentalism opposes the humanism of protestant and catholic churches, and the humanistic values of American constitutional democracy, which spiritually evolved from Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages.

4. Fundamentalism does not follow the teachings of Jesus, but bases itself in premillennial apocalyptic speculation and Old Testament theology.

5. Fundamentalism has a track record of racism, anti-feminism, anti-humanism, anti-intellectualism, antagonism toward science, with leanings toward monarchy, Zionism and non-democratic authoritarian secular politics.

6. Fundamentalism is a political, not spiritual, phenomenon that opposes traditional Christian pacifism with its concern for military and war strategies.

7. Fundamentalism is uncharitable, unforgiving and insensitive to social welfare programs that originated in Christian tradition and characterize Christian service.

The list could go on.

The point is that fundamentalism is a cult that has managed to accumulate tremendous clout, both politically and within the churches. In its latest form it seriously threatens American democratic institutions, the separation of church and state, and the Christian tradition.

The churches must take a stand, no matter how much it hurts.

Americans need the religious and moral issues clarified. They need to see the Christian ministry vigorously oppose fundamentalism.

If so, it will be a different story than it was during the sixties. A new generation has grown up, and the values that Christians sacrificed so much to defend the sixties are meaningful to them--even if they weren't to their parents.

It won't be easy, but we can win.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps I ought to end this book like the fundamentalists do, always with a list of concrete political actions that one can take to "prove" his faith and strike a blow for Neo-Puritanism.

Things like: Run for local political office; Write your congressman; Join with other local reformers; Above all, send money!

Well, the opposition to the fundamentalist assault on American institutions is not very organized at this time. Normal Lear, producer of All in the Family and other hilarious television series' that satirize prejudice in American life, has been targeted by the fundamentalists for destruction by the boycotting of any companies that might sponsor his shows. Lear is an intelligent and witty "humanist" who has organized a non-profit group to fight the fundies. There are other groups who find themselves doing battle with these antagonists, and I provide a listing of them in an appendix for those interested in supporting their efforts.

However, all of these are fighting from a defensive position in order to save their funding or programs from destruction. They are not in a position to actively engage, debate and take an offensive against fundamentalism.

The job belongs to the Christian churches, ultimately. It is they who must mobilize against fundamentalism, because it is the most dangerous heresy that has ever arisen in Christianity. It has the power to co-opt and corrupt Christianity, and permanently warp Christian teaching.

Therefore I call upon the Christian ministry, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox, to unite in an offensive against fundamentalist tyranny. Evangelicals, especially, must dissociate themselves in no uncertain terms from fundamentalism, if that is still possible.

Yes, I'm calling for schism, dissention and ideological warfare in America. I'm asking Christians to take the same risks and make the same sacrifices they did in the sixties. We can't get hurt any worse than we did in the civil rights struggle, and we've already lost the big-money conservatives.

We're lean and hungry, and many of us have battle scars.

Let us do what has to be done.