Religion, Terrorism and the Limits of Freedom

Contemporary Christian Extremism:
Fundamentalism, 'Extreme Religion', and the threat of Terror

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Introduction

For nearly a century the term 'fundamentalism' has referred to a set of specific Christian beliefs and an allied ultra-conservative attitude. However, usage of the term has broadened: the term 'fundamentalism', broadly speaking, names today a religio-political perspective found in many if not all major religions in the contemporary world. Most disturbingly, it is associated with variant forms of religious extremism and thus religiously-oriented terrorism, in particular – though by no means exclusively – that of an Islamic ilk (Pratt, 2006). Movements of a fundamentalist type are evident in Islam, certainly, but they may be found also in Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and other religious communities. Contemporary fundamentalism is not the sole province of any one religion. And the upsurge in the totalising claims of fundamentalist ideologues, of whatever religion, together with the utilisation of globalized communication, transportation and related modern technologies, means that the issue of religious fundamentalism itself requires careful attention (Pratt, 2007). In this paper I examine the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism and its expression in terms of a paradigm analysis that leads to a discussion of the wider context of religion and terrorism, and of religious extremism, and finally to Christian extremism.

Religious Fundamentalism

In some respects 'fundamentalism' may be understood in terms of whatever it is 'against'. The term is often used as "a pejorative description for anyone who is regarded as having a closed mind with regard to a particular issue" (Gilling, 1992, p. xi). Peter Lineham (2006) observes that the history and identity of fundamentalism is, indeed, quite complex. "It is sometimes said that moral panic explains the appeal of Fundamentalism. Certainly the issues which stimulate political action involve a crisis mood that Christian civilisation is at risk. Fundamentalism is after all a popular movement which flourishes by interpreting current issues in simplified and distorted ways (p. 8)". As a subject of

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critical academic scrutiny, fundamentalism, in its Christian context, has been the focus of a number of notable books and studies (Barr, 1977; Marsden, 1991; Sandeen, 1970; Spong, 1991). This has broadened out into studies on a wide-ranging front, inclusive of both religious and political variants of fundamentalism. Martin Marty (1989) has observed that, in general, "fundamentalisms look backward and set out to 'freeze' some moment, some event, some text or texts from the past as the perfect place in time or space from which to measure" life in the present (p. 1). An imagined 'golden-age', believed to have pertained at the religion's foundation, is held up as the model and reference point for contemporary reality.

Furthermore, in response to the criticism that religion, and in particular fundamentalist religion, is but an epiphenomenon riding on what are really political ideas and actions, or that fundamentalism is really just a passing fad, such studies have only served to highlight what subsequent history and recent events underscore: that religious fundamentalism is a deeply rooted phenomenon that can give rise to, rather than itself relies upon, political acts. Religious fundamentalism can imply a narrow, strict and limited metaphysics and set of doctrines, which to a greater or lesser degree hardly impinge on the wider life of a society; it can mean a worldview perspective that engenders, if not demands, the advocacy of a socio-political ordering and action to achieve an intended outcome. I suggest that, indeed, 'religious fundamentalism' denotes a worldview-type that can be found across different religions in the world today. Specifically, the term connotes a paradigm that paves the way for a shift in mentality from the relative harmlessness of an otherwise quaint, ultra-conservative religious belief system; to a religiously motivated and fanatically followed engagement in aggressively impositional, even terrorising, activity. Understanding the structure, logic, and implementation of this paradigm is of vital importance in today's world.

A paradigm of fundamentalism

As a framework phenomenon that applies to more than just religion, fundamentalism *per se* comprises, I suggest, at least twenty factors. Others may be adduced, but these factors, and the way they are interconnected, need to be carefully understood, for, I suggest, collectively and cumulatively they describe the movement of a fundamentalist mindset from the quirky to the critical, from atavism to aggression, from benign eccentricity to socially endangering activity, including outright terrorism. The factors I have identified are analysed in terms of a progression of ten 'features' – each being a set of paired factors. These ten features are further sub-grouped into three 'phases' so as to yield a sequence of passive, hard-line, and impositional forms of fundamentalism. Again, it is the sequential combination of these features and factors which is important. It is not possible to elaborate in detail on the paradigm in this paper – I refer the interested reader to my work upon it published elsewhere (Pratt, 2007). Other scholars, who have likewise attempted a deeper understanding of fundamentalism, have sought to identify distinguishing defining features of fundamentalism *per se* (Barr 1977, Caplan 1987, Marsden 1991, Juergensmeyer 2000, Ruthven 2004, Saha 2004). By contrast, I seek, and

suggest, a more nuanced understanding by way of exploring the dynamics of the sequential development that is arguably inherent to the paradigm and thus exposes the ideological structure of fundamentalism more precisely. It helps in the distinguishing of genuinely extreme religion from that which is rather more narrow or focussed in terms of beliefs, values and behaviours. A religious conservative, for example, is not necessarily a fundamentalist according to this paradigm; and there is a considerable gulf between the 'merely' or 'passive' fundamentalist and the impositional fundamentalist who lives and enacts a form of religious extremism.

In essence, my hypothesis is that all forms and expressions of religious fundamentalism begin with, or at least include, the factors which denote the passive phase. Much conservative religiosity would identify with this phase and would not be overly troubled by that. Indeed, variant forms of reactionary conservatism across both Christianity and Islam, as well as other religions, would easily classify as expressive of passive fundamentalism. However, some religious groups or movements go beyond this such that we may identify them as belonging to the second, hard-line, phase. Most typically sectarian movements, for example Jehovah's Witnesses, the Moonies, the Exclusive Brethren (at least until recently) tend to fit within the more overt 'hard-line' phase (Barrett, 2001). But, arguably, there are some which, incorporating all the marks of hard-line fundamentalism, then go further to manifest what can be perhaps best described as variant forms of an 'impositional' fundamentalism. It is here that we discover the propensity for fundamentalism to yield to terrorism.

Terrorism, as a descriptor for extreme and violent behaviours, is not solely the province of religious fundamentalism. But it can be, and sometimes is, the end-result of a fundamentalism trajectory. It is an expression, or outcome, of extreme religion. This is the issue that faces us today, in both localised and globalized modalities. An absolutist perspective does not necessarily result in terrorist behaviour. Not all fundamentalists are terrorists. Yet, given a progressive ideological development it is arguably the case that religious fundamentalism may – as indeed we know that it does – produce a terrorist. At the same time, it must be always remembered that religious fundamentalism *per se* does not necessarily lead to terrorism. There are many religious fundamentalists who are pacifist in outlook and demeanour. But fundamentalism may lead to terrorism; and in some cases it does.

Of course, there will be other religious – and non-religious – groups and movements who likewise wish to influence wider society, to advocate policy and values, to effect change, in accord with their agendas. But they are nowhere near terrorism or even extremism, for they lie outside the fundamentalist paradigm. The desire for change, and active participation in socio-political processes, does not of itself equate with fundamentalism, let alone terrorism. It is not activism *per se* which is at issue, rather that fundamentalism which is expressly and intentionally impositional. If the Taliban has proved to be a model of the development of an Islamic fundamentalist extremism, recent events involving the Exclusive Brethren sect in Australia and New Zealand, as well as North America and elsewhere, demonstrate how a former 'hard-line' fundamentalist

group from within the Christian frame can move, ideologically and behaviourally. This fundamentalist Christian group would now classify as 'impositional', for its ideology and agenda are imposed, or impinge, directly or indirectly in some way or another (and usually negatively) upon the wider society.

A passive fundamentalist group to all intents and purposes 'minds its own business' so far as the rest of society is concerned; a hard-line group perhaps somewhat less so, but an impositional group does not. An impositional fundamentalism wants to see things change to fit its view of how things should be, and will take steps to make its views known and, if need be, act imposingly to bring about change – by covert or overt interventions, including fomenting revolution or enacting terrorism. Not all fundamentalist groups necessarily become impositional, of course, and if they do they may not necessarily resort to violence and terrorism in the attempt to achieve their aims. The Exclusive Brethren, as an example of a fundamentalist Christian movement, has certainly demonstrated a recent transition from a hard-line to an active impositional phase, but other factors of their orientation and religious ideology would not support an expectation that this will issue in outright terrorism and its associated violence. On the other hand there are examples of non-religious movements of protest, such as anti-vivisectionists or Greenpeace, who will give evidence of all three phases – albeit in some modified form – of the fundamentalist paradigm. There will certainly be expressions of a relatively passive sort (people who hold sympathetic views); dimensions of a hard-line approach (people who publicly and dogmatically advocate the movement's views and policies); and from time to time instances of a clear impositional polity at work wherein disruptive, even violent, actions will take place (i.e., by people who are the 'extremists' of the movement). But the key difference between such secular groups oriented to a cause, and contemporary forms of religious fundamentalism that are inclined to an impositional activism and so extremism, is that the former are highly specialised and focussed – it is relatively clear as to who are the protagonists; who the target – and the latter rather more wide-ranging in terms of scope and likely arena of application.

Religious Extremism
Another dimension to exploring the relationship of religion to terrorism is that of a consideration of extremism as such, for it is extreme forms or expressions of religion and religious ideology which, under the guise of fundamentalism, is arguably the point of connectivity between religion and terrorism. The ordinarily religious person or community does not engage in violence as a matter of course: religions normatively espouse values of peace and harmony, even in contexts of challenge and contestation. So, the first step in considering religious extremism is to ask an obvious question: what is the meaning of 'extremism' as such? And a second step will be to discern and describe an ideological template of religious extremism.
What does 'extremism' mean?
The term 'extremism' evokes a sense of being at the margins, of existing on the boundaries, of functioning at the edges; in other words, extremism suggests the

extremities. And any organisation or group that is, in this sense, extreme will tend to manifest a tenuous link to whatever is the appropriate 'centre', or give evidence of a loose connection to the relevant normative tradition. In this respect, extremism expresses heterodoxy against orthodoxy. But extremism can refer to something else altogether; even, indeed, the opposite of being 'at the margins', and that is being at, or claiming, the centre. Here the term connotes degrees of intensity or sharpness of focus; extremism suggests fanaticism. And in this case an extremist ideology or group will claim the relevant central position exclusively and, in so doing, will proclaim the apropos normative tradition intensely. Extremism in this sense takes group identity – its religion or tradition – 'to an extreme'; not by a move away from the centre, but conversely by intensifying its self-understanding and self-proclamation as representing, or being, the centre. Here extremism expresses ultra orthodoxy against orthodoxy.

It is important to note, I suggest, that either way extremism belongs to a 'tradition'; extremism, by definition, has to do with the extremity or centring of an existing tradition, or religion, with which the extremist is concerned: the religious extremist thus requires specific religious identity as the primary reference for self-legitimization. By contrast, religious cults and other radical alternatives do not belong to a tradition – by definition, they are other-than a normative tradition or religion (Bromley and Melton, 2002). I now return to the fundamentalist paradigm to further explore the meaning of religious extremism.

A Five Point Profile of Religious Extremism

In effect, the second half of the aforementioned sequential ten-feature paradigm of fundamentalism, incorporating features of the hard-line phase of fundamentalism together with those of impositional fundamentalism, may be taken as a five-point profile of religious extremism. On the one hand, religious fundamentalism excludes, virtually automatically, anything that relative to it appears 'liberal'; on the other this same fundamentalism can display a propensity to include, in respect to considerations of the policies and praxis of social organisation, all others that fall within its frame of reference or worldview understanding. This holding together of an *ideological exclusivism* with an *inclusivist polity*, where it occurs, comprises the 'contextual scope' of fundamentalism which is a mark of hard-line fundamentalism and, I suggests, gives the first point of a profile of religious extremism as such.

The second point of reference for religious extremism is the feature of 'condemnatory stance' which involves the factors of *negative judgemental values* and a *pietistic tyranny*: it is in the expression of judgemental values that hard-line fundamentalism displays its real stance toward any who would dissent from within, or oppose from without. In so doing, the contours and expression of piety can take a tyrannical form. Inherent in this is often a deprecating attitude towards others, whether in regard to virtually any other (the world at large), or focussed on specific others (particular groups of categories of people such as Jews, Blacks, or gays). The feature of condemnatory stance sets the seal on the hard-line phase and sets the scene for the phase of impositional fundamentalism. The third point of the profile is 'negative value application', which is a feature of what I call

the 'impositional' phase or type of fundamentalism. It occurs where *alterity, or 'otherness'* per se *is negated* and, as a necessary corollary, the *superiority of the self is asserted*. The 'other' is often cast as 'satanic', or at least seriously and significantly labelled as a hostile opponent, and so hostilely regarded. However expressed or referenced, it will be clear that the fundamentalist is showing signs of deepening extremism in applying negative valuation to otherness as such, together with a corresponding assertion of self-superiority vis-à-vis any 'other'.

As the shift from a merely 'hard-line' to an actively impositional fundamentalism takes place, we discover two critical factors at work: *sanctioned imposition* and *legitimated violence*. The former sees the very imposition of the fundamentalist's views and polity as, in fact, sanctioned by a higher or greater authority, howsoever that is conceived. This leads naturally to the legitimating of extreme violence and so a platform of justification being established, at least in the mind of the impositional fundamentalist. Sanctioned imposition and legitimated violence are the two sides of the chief coin of justification in the currency of religious extremism. They form the feature of explicit justification which is a mark of impositional fundamentalism and the fourth point in the profile of religious extremism.

The final profile point is the feature of enacted violence; here the specific values and rhetoric of the fundamentalist's ideology issue in overt behaviours. This involves the penultimate factor of *manifest contempt* and the end-result factor: the *terrorist* or otherwise *violent event*. On the one hand, manifestations of contempt, as an expression of negative judgements and the negation of the 'other', are often instantiated in various contemptible behaviours – intimidation, coercion, violent and destructive actions directed at non-human symbolic targets: works of art, places of worship, and so on. Such behaviours may be *ad hoc*, simply manifesting an underlying contempt in a comparatively spontaneous fashion. On the other hand, there is certainly the phenomenon of intentionally organised terrorism where extremism knows no bounds: the terrorising of a targeted populace is itself both means and end. For it is only so that the extremist ensures that the imposition, that has been duly sanctioned, can actually be brought about.

Religion and Terrorism: the wider context

Definitions of terrorism are legion (Schmid, 2004). Intimidating the innocent as a modality of action is perhaps one general mark, as is the fact that, for the most part, terrorism involves violent behaviours undertaken for political and/or ideological purposes (Taylor, 1991). Indeed, Veitch (2002) notes "a major problem in trying to define terrorism" lies in the fact that, for the most part, terrorism "sets out to threaten a recognised governing authority, by terrorising and intimidating innocent civilians" (p. 27). More broadly, terrorism may be regarded as comprising a complex of criminality, psychology and ideology: there is no single or simple definition or analysis (Kruglanski and Fishman, 2006; Taylor and Horgan, 2006). Terrorism has many root causes as well as differing frameworks of self-understanding (Reich, 1998). Among them is religion, the relative significance of which, as a factor to be considered in its own right vis-à-vis

contemporary terrorism, is only recently recognised. And religion and terrorism are a powerful mix. As James Veitch (2002) has remarked, "When religion empowers political terrorism then the terrorism apparently has no limits and acknowledges no boundaries" (p. 30).

Alex Schmid, a leading international expert on terrorism, has explored the definition and context of terrorism in terms of "five conceptual lenses", thus providing a multi-perspectival framework. These five lenses comprise crime, politics, warfare, communication and religious fundamentalism (Schmid, 2004). As a criminal act, terrorism is defined as "the intentional commission of an act usually deemed socially harmful of dangerous and specifically defined, prohibited and punishable under the criminal law" (p. 197). Noting the distinction between *mala prohibita* which identifies something being wrong by way of prohibition by statute, and *mala per se* meaning something wrong or evil in and of itself, Schmid suggests a narrow definition of terrorism in respect to *mala per se* crimes as apropos. Terror is a crime. The political context of terrorism is most usually that of heightened conflict, tension, or other crisis moments whereby terrorism may be enacted as one of several instruments of political strategy. Schmid points out that conflict and tension are not of themselves malevolent or illicit; they may indeed be the fulcra of needed change and advance. Terrorism in this context is often allied to, if not equated with, liberation struggles, or freedom-fighting. But at the same time, terrorism may be enacted as part of a bid for power and dominance: it is then simply a tool for imposition. In the context of outright war, however, the relationship between war and terror is complex with, most usually, the terrorist actors regarding themselves not as 'terrorists' *per se*, which universally has a negative connotation, but rather as 'warriors' fighting for (in their view) a just cause. Schmid holds that terrorist acts may be regarded as a specific category of violence, effectively the peacetime equivalent of a war crime.

Communication, however, is of the utmost importance for terrorism: not only must an act be carried out, even more importantly it must be known to have been carried out, and by whom. Terrorism is as much about image as it is about reality; or rather, the terrorist image, or communication, is as much the point as the terrorist act as such. Ideology and intent need to be communicated; the act is as much an attention-seeking moment as it is a terrorising one for, as Schmid avers, the terrorist uses violence against one victim in order to influence another: "Thus terrorist violence is undertaken principally for its effect upon others rather than the immediate victims (Schmid and de Graaf, 1982). As has been noted, somewhat trenchantly, "the attack on the defenceless and the innocent is not an unsought side effect but is rather a deliberate strategy of political persuasion and dissuasion aimed at others than the direct victims themselves (Bailey, 1972, p.87)". Extremist ideologues who champion terrorist violence are often media-savvy: in a cynical yet very real way the medium is the message.

Now, when it comes to the question of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, Schmid notes a long history of association between terrorism and religion including, for example, Hindu Thugees from some 2500 years ago; Jewish Zealot-Sicarii some 2000

years ago; and medieval Islamic assassins of 900 or so years ago. The paradigm of sacrificial offering – where an innocent victim is killed for a higher, transcendental purpose, perhaps even for the benefit of many – together with the paradigm and history of martyrdom, are taken to re-cast death and killing within an ennobling frame of reference. Performed within a religious context, or under a religious construct, an otherwise destructive act is transformed, and so rendered acceptable. The following of a higher dictate or command is deemed to obviate otherwise normal attributions of culpability. Schmid cautions that a religious framework can only provide a partial view on to the nature of terrorism; terrorism is a multi-faceted phenomenon. His point of reference, apart from his own five-fold lens approach, is the Final Report of the high level Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism (A/57/273S/2002/875 Annex) which states:

> Terrorism is, in most cases, essentially a political act. It is meant to inflict dramatic and deadly injury on civilians and to create an atmosphere of fear, generally for a political or ideological (whether secular or religious) purpose. Terrorism is a criminal act, but it is more than mere criminality. To overcome the problem of terrorism it is necessary to understand its political nature as well as its basic criminality and psychology (Para 13).

Schmid advocates setting a consideration of terrorism in an even wider framework; I would not be alone in advocating the taking the religious dimension evenly more seriously giving it pride of place if you will, especially where there are obvious overt links between the terrorist and a religion (Cf. Juergensmeyer, 2000). To what extent may we see this applying now to Christianity? What is there to say about contemporary Christian extremism?

Christian Extremism

Eugene Gallagher (1997) notes that a group "that defines its mission as 'religious' is claiming a very powerful form of legitimacy" as this claim, and its outworking in behaviours, "can become particularly problematic and threatening to the social order when a group also espouses a strongly anti-government ideology" (p. 63). Thus, if "such a group acts or threatens to act on its principles, the need to evaluate its claims to religious legitimacy becomes urgent". Gallagher is clear that religious sensibilities lie at the core of many radical, or extremist, right-wing ideologies; in effect, they represent forms of religious – indeed Christian – extremism. Gallagher goes on to identify three strategies that are found in common: "the attempt to identify the essence of a religion through scriptural exegesis, the fabrication of a civil religion to serve political goals and the adoption of fundamental forms of religious expression to underscore the paradigmatic value of certain past events" (p. 64). Among others, he examines the interpretation of the Christian Bible in *The Field Manual of the Free Militia* and the myths and rituals that are growing up around the date of April 19, most famously, perhaps, the date of the destruction of the home and church of the Branch Davidian sect outside of Waco, Texas

in 1993 and of the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. For my purposes I shall restrict myself to the following examples of Christian extremism: the Christian Identity movement; The Church of Jesus Christ Christian; The Phineas Priesthood; and Destiny Church New Zealand.

Christian Identity (CI)

Christian Identity is a form of highly racist, right wing and socially conservative Protestant Christianity. It is not a single church or institution, but rather an "umbrella concept" ideology shared among a number of different groups on the far right of Protestant Christianity in regard to which a wide variety of specific theologies, or theological emphases, may be found (Gardell, 2003, p. 118). In essence it preaches the gospel of an Aryan Israel, that is, the 'gospel' of a non-Jewish Aryan (or white) Christ. Wesley Swift, of the New Christian Crusade Church, in Los Angeles, was one of the first and most important CI preachers. Theologically, CI subscribes to a literalist reading of the Bible; the plain word of God revealed to the faithful. The Bible is the ultimate authority. CI adherents also believe in the real presence and existence of Satan, and as 'Satan' is not regarded as an abstraction or metaphor, but rather as a real being, a dynamic of real conflict is set up between the righteous and the fallen. It is important to note that CI, on the whole, refer to God not as Jehovah, but Yahweh, thereby co-opting the Israelite name for God as their own and underscoring their claim to be the true Israelites (which the Jews most certainly are not)[1].

One of the major theological platforms of CI beliefs is 'Two Seed theology' which holds whilst that Cain and Abel both had Eve as a mother, Abel had Adam as a father but Cain was fathered by the serpent that seduced eve in the Garden. From Cain is descended all the 'unclean' races, particularly the Jews who are understood to be literally the sons of Satan and thus not only are they genetically conditioned to oppose the sons of Abel (i.e., the Anglo Saxon races), they are equally beyond all redemption. Today there are two mutually oppositional divisions within the movement, viz.: "hardcore" and "soft" (Gardell, 2003). Hardcore CI holds that Jews are, quite literally, the descendants of Satan. The Christian gospel is meant for Aryans (pure-blood whites) only, for a spark of the Aryan God exists in the white race; non-whites, by comparison, are "mud races" such that for whites to breed across these races is to extinguish the divine spark: "The Original sin … is miscegenation, transgressing God's order of creation that every living thing should only be with its own kind" (Gardell, 2003, p. 121). To mix race genes is to mongrelize creation, for the result is that a God-given purity is rendered impure; hence resistance to the prospect of such impurity is by way of exclusion: the races are to be kept apart. Arguably, it would seem hardcore CI issues in a form of racial Gnosticism; racial hierarchies are embedded in aetiological myths.

Politically, Christianity and National Socialism are regarded as necessary correlates for CI and, theologically, God is understood to call his people to trigger the apocalypse so

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1 See: http://kelticklankirk.com/swift_seed_of_the_dragon.htm

as to usher in the end of the age. In this regard the true Israel will be God's army in the apocalypse and, meantime, an elite cadre – the Phineas Priesthood (of which more below) – who hold a dispensation to punish transgressors of divine law are mandated to execute divine justice. CI "has no equivalent to the rapture doctrine … (rather)… believers expect to partake in the global cleansing" of the earthly war of Armageddon (Gardell, 2003, p. 126). Thus CI, at least in its hardcore variant, holds an eschatology of imposed purification. Indeed, in a 1990 direct linking of CI to the Phineas Priesthood, it was "suggested that individual zealots could atone for Israel's transgressions by assassinating homosexuals, interracial couples, and prostitutes" (Gardell, 2003, p. 126). Thus hardcore CI results in violent extremism; its members are, in effect, Christian terrorists. By contrast, soft CI regards Jews as only allegorically descended from Satan. The negative value remains, however, but it is not underpinned by an aetiological myth believed historically or genetically true. For soft CI, Israel is a guide for the nations and others will benefit from the Aryan Christ. Politically, National Socialism is regarded as a secular diversion. Soft Christian Identity "rejects as misguided the hardcore theology of violence" (Gardell, 2003, p. 118). Yet broadly representative sermons accessed through a website[2] range over the theme of being divinely separated-out; that the true Israelites are the members of the White (Adamic) race – not the Jews; and that contemporary secular education in America is aimed at diluting (i.e., mongrelizing) and so destroying the white race; that there is a plot to destroy America which involves "surrender to the sovereignty of an super imposed government, greater than ours … by submission … and made up of a majority of people who are not of our race". This must be opposed, along with immigration). There is support for the idea of racial differentiation by divine decree and to the rhetorical question 'Was Jesus Christ a Jew?' the answer is a resounding no.

The Church of Jesus Christ Christian/Aryan Nations (CJCC/AN)

After the death of Swift in 1970, Swift's ministry, the Church of Jesus Christ, Christian (so called to make the point that Jesus was not a Jew), was taken over by one Richard Butler, who changed its name to the 'Church of Jesus Christ Christian/Aryan Nations' (CJCC/AN), with COJCC being the religious arm, and Aryan Nations being the political arm. The Church then became the centre of a large, influential and politically successful organisation; in effect a rally-ground for many of the United States hard-line white supremacists. Theologically, this Church, or extremist movement, has its roots in the British Israelite movement that held that the English nation (or race) was descended from the prophets and notables of the Old Testament. The British Israelite movement was born, in part, out of the phenomenon of British Imperialism and the propensity for many Englishmen to see their world spanning empire in theological terms – the British were obviously God's chosen people, just like the Israelites.

Here we have a distinct clue to Christian extremism as such; the juxtaposition of a theological perspective with a self-perception of superiority and biblical-like chosen

2 See: http://www.newchristiancrusadechurch.com/sermons/sermon1.htm

status. Further, while not necessarily actively antisemitic, the British Israelite movement lent itself to antisemitism in that it denied the essential 'jewishness' of the Jewish people and negated the integrity of their identity. The Church of Jesus Christ Christian/Aryan Nations has played a significant role in the shaping of some forms of Christian extremism, with currently two groups who continue to use the name, one of which had even proposed an alliance with Al Qaeda on the basis of sharing the same enemies: the Jews and the American Government, which is also referred to as the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG).[3] But of specific interest for our purpose is the nebulous Christian extremist movement known as the Phineas Priesthood.

The Phineas Priesthood

This group also draws heavily on CI ideology and is prone to violence. The Phineas Priesthood is not an organisation as such, having adopted the modus operandi of participating in a leaderless resistance. The name comes from an account in the Hebrew Bible where it is recorded (Numbers 25) that an Israelite priest, Phineas, killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman while they were having intercourse in the Tabernacle precincts, by running them through with a spear. In the Bible, Phineas is commended for having prevented Israel's fall to idolatrous practices brought in by Midianite women, as well as putting a halt to the desecration of God's sanctuary. God seems to applaud the spontaneous act of the original zealot. Today, members of the Phineas Priesthood use this deed as a justification for using violent means against interracial relationships and other forms of alleged immorality. Ideologically, this group opposes the mixing of races, homosexuality, and abortion. It is also marked by its antisemitism, anti-multiculturalism, and opposition to taxation. There is no governing body as such, no formal gatherings, and no membership process. One becomes a Phineas Priest by simply adopting the beliefs of the Priesthood, and acting upon those beliefs. Women are not generally permitted to become members. Members of the Priesthood are often considered terrorists for, among other things, planning to blow up FBI buildings, abortion clinic bombings, and bank robberies.

Destiny Church New Zealand

At first glance it may seem somewhat controversial to include our own home-grown Destiny Church in a listing of clearly unsavoury Christian Extremists. My point, however, is not that Destiny is necessarily in the same league as the aforementioned American examples of Christian extremism, but that it can be placed firmly within the overall religious extremist profile. With a network of congregations in New Zealand, a foothold in Australia, and a history of high-profile political activity, public interventions, and media-savvy promotion, Destiny Church is certainly attracting close scrutiny. The leadership style of Brian Tamaki is highly autocratic, and the movement's ideology is theologically and politically highly conservative, if not reactionary. Strict adherence to

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3 See: http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/03/29/schuster.column

the teachings as given by the Church leadership is called for. Although there is no evidence it is at the point of Terrorist or violent activity in the way in which some Christian extremist groups in the US have been, nonetheless, I would argue that, ideologically, it is up there with much of the rhetoric, posturing and value espousal we find in extremist organisations. Here are my reasons.

Tamaki has declared the Labour-led government of New Zealand to be "anti-Christian", even "inherently evil". Opposed to the New Zealand Religious Diversity Statement which seeks to uphold religious plurality, Tamaki has said, in a number of media releases and reports, that his church is ready to wage war on "secular humanism, liberalism, relativism", on "a Government gone evil" and on the "radical homosexual agenda". Destiny Church has been active in campaigning for a return to what it considers to be "Christian moral values" in New Zealand society. In August 2004 members of the Church undertook a protest rally against the proposed Civil Union legislation. Under the banner 'Enough is Enough', the rally drew some 5000 protesters, all dressed in menacing black uniforms, to the steps of the Parliament. The structure of the church's organisations, educational and socialisation programmes is also telling. A highly managed programme embeds a member into the life of the Church, and advances the individual into its particular life of faith and theological and ideological emphases. So, it may not be extreme in the sense of enacting an ideology of terror, but the Destiny movement is arguably extreme in terms of fundamentalist ideology, and so heading in the direction of a terrifying, if not terrorising, expression of religious fundamentalism.

Christianity and Terrorism: concluding remarks

In each instance above, religion is used to provide a primary sanction of an extreme, even violent, resistance to the status quo. Religious fundamentalism issues in multifarious forms of extremism (Weinberg and Pedahzur, 2004). Islamic extremists may have caught attention and headlines; Christian extremism has somewhat less so. But extremism, as with fundamentalism, is found within all religions. For those extremists who consciously model themselves as militias, "religion unequivocally provides the ground and the motivation for all of their actions" (Gallagher, 1997, p. 65). The ideological interlinking has been explored, with emphasis given to Christian expressions of extremism. Historically, Christianity has known extremism in a number of guises (Tyerman, 2004; Perez, 2004). Often these have involved the application of violence for political and spiritual ends or the engagement in violent clashes in respect to competitive theologies and so on; this is a matter of historical record. Both marginalised and fanatical variants of the faith have arisen and have themselves been the subject of repressive and extreme measures.

In the contemporary world there is evidence of an upsurge in fundamentalist mentality and groupings within Christianity sufficient to suggest that fundamentalist extremism is not just the province of Islam but that Christianity is able to produce similar extreme ideology and related actions. Christianity knows its own extremities and its fanatics; fundamentalism can and does yield extremism; extremism can and has yielded

terroristic violence. Counter-terrorism needs to be a multi-pronged activity if freedom is to be truly upheld.

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