1
The Nature of the Beast

Religion has always been a disruptive force. When Karl Marx famously described religion as 'the opium of the people', he was painting only half the picture. It is true that religious leaders have often provided spiritual sanction for the status quo. By promising the poor and dispossessed great rewards in some other world so long as they did not cause trouble in this one, religious ideologies have often diverted potentially radical energies into safe channels. But religious ideas have also inspired revolutions; simply by asserting that there is some power higher than the monarchs and magistrates of this world, religion always has the potential to shake the settled order.

Religion taken very seriously is too rich a diet for most people. We cannot all become monks or mullahs; someone has to till the fields and mind the cattle, or serve the French fries and programme the computers. Hence in most cultures we find a division of spiritual labour. A small number of people serve the gods while the rest of us confine our religious observances to a few rituals, fund the religious virtuosi in our midst and try within reason to live what our religious leaders tell us is the good life. If it wishes to retain the loyalty of the population at large, the dominant religion must accept laxity. It may punish severely those who challenge its authority, but it cannot for long expect the people to remain feverishly religious. However, there will always be zealots (a label originally

applied to Jewish enthusiasts) who reject such compromises, and social ferment will occasionally amplify their voices. Every society will at times experience the disruption that disposes people to religious explanations for their troubles and to religious enthusiasm as their solution. Religious revolts and reformations and revivals may be crushed by the establishment, or they may succeed and become the new establishment. Either way the fire burns out and there follows a period of calm – until the next wave of enthusiasm.

This book is about the modern zealots. One of their signs is intolerance. In September 1986, the Indian-born but thoroughly anglicized Muslim Salman Rushdie, published *The Satanic Verses*, a novel that was taken by some readers to lampoon the Prophet Muhammad. The title was derived from the legend that verses 19 to 23 of the Qur'an originally referred to three pre-Islamic deities as daughters of Allah (Elias 1999: 100). Initially the strongest criticisms of Rushdie came from Muslim leaders in India and Pakistan, but the controversy took on a new urgency in February 1989, when the Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a legal judgement (or *fatwa*) denouncing Rushdie as a blasphemer who should be punished by death. The placing of a bounty on his head provoked outrage across the Western world.

There is no shortage of examples of militant Islam in the modern world. We could mention the Muslim Brotherhood, formed in Ismailiya in 1927, and dedicated to restoring Islam to prominence in Egypt. Its members fire-bombed cinemas and restaurants frequented by unbelievers. They attacked and scarred women who were not veiled. And they sought power by assassination. The Brothers killed two prime ministers; a third escaped three attempts on his life. They murdered a chief of police, an interior minister, a chief justice and scores of other officials. The movement initially supported the 1952 July Revolution in which young army officers apparently dedicated to pan-Arabism seized power, but 'amicable relations did not last long' (Ramadan 1993: 155). The officers banned the Brotherhood; the Brothers retaliated in 1954 by trying to assassinate Gamal Abd al-Nasser, the chief power behind the coup and by then prime minister. He survived and gradually the Brotherhood became more moderate. It was legalized in the 1970s by Nasser's successor as president,

Anwar Sadat, who saw it as a force to counter increasingly powerful left-wing groups. Its place was taken by more radical Islamic groups and Sadat was himself murdered in 1981 by an Islamic militant. The gun used in the killing had 'In the name of Allah the avenger' inscribed on its barrel.

Sadat's death was emblematic of Islamic fundamentalism in that it involved both Israel and the United States. Israel offends the Muslim because Islam lays claim to the same history and the same territory. It also offends because the formation of the state of Israel displaced many Muslims and constrained Muslim access to a number of their holy sites. But it particularly offends *Arab* Muslims because Israel has repeatedly defeated its Arab neighbours' attempts to destroy it, most spectacularly in the Six Day War of 1967, when Israel captured territory from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. In signing a peace accord with Israel, Sadat had also signed his own death warrant. That deal had been brokered by the United States, which for many Muslims is the Great Satan.

The United States is anathema for essentially three reasons. Two are quite straightforward: its long history of interference in the politics of the Middle East and its support for the state of Israel. The third is more complex, but can be summarized as its being the primary carrier and exemplar of modernity. Its great economic and military power is deeply resented by Muslims who can see it both as an insult to their national pride and as a slight on the true faith of Islam but, power aside, Western culture is a threat to Islam and the United States is the main promoter of Western culture.

These combine to make the United States an obvious target for Islamist terrorists. In February 1993, a bomb at the World Trade Center in New York killed three people and injured hundreds. Had the building collapsed thousands would have died, which is what did happen in September 2001, when terrorists hijacked four airliners and flew two of them into the twin towers.

At first sight, Islam may seem unusually violent: three of the four caliphs who succeeded the Prophet were assassinated. But comparisons need to incorporate a sense of history and context. No present-day Christian bishop would assert, as did an Iranian ayatollah, that 'killing a hypocrite who refuses to reform is more worthy than a thousand prayers' (Taheri 1987:

19), but such sentiments were commonplace in pre-modern Christianity. One only has to think of the Crusades, the European wars of religion, or the Spanish Inquisition to appreciate that the present Christian emphasis on the message of love may owe almost as much to the evolution of social order in Western societies as to the intrinsic nature of the Christian religion.

Judaism has its fundamentalist groups. Best known is probably Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful). Founded in 1974, it built a base among the Jews who settled in the West Bank territory captured from Jordan during the 1967 Six Day War. The Faithful saw the war, in which Israel not only survived but gained large areas of the lands occupied by Jews in Old Testament times, as a clear sign that Jehovah 'did not desert his people in their worst moment' (Sprinzak 1993: 409). Initially looking for an accommodation with the Arab inhabitants of the captured territories, Gush Emunim gradually became more militant and violent. One site for conflict was the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which was held to be the burial ground of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives, but which for centuries has been a Muslim mosque. The government tried to hold the ring and allow Jewish settlers to pray there for limited hours. Then it arranged to have the site shared, which led to frequent skirmishes between Jews and Muslims. With the growth of settlements in the occupied West Bank, Gush Emunim took on the role of a vigilante force, revenging Arab attacks on the settlers. The most dramatic retaliation came in 1980, when several Arab mayors of West Bank towns were crippled by car bombs. 'The plan was to injure these people severely without killing them' and thus leave them as enduring reminders of Israeli power (Sprinzak 1993: 473). Although much Gush Emunim violence was justified in secular terms as protecting its people, some schemes were self-consciously intended to have religious symbolic value. Just as militant Muslims took Sadat's signing of the Camp David peace accord as an evil act, so some members of Gush Emunim felt that Prime Minister Menachem Begin's signature on that treaty was not so much a political mistake as God's judgement on them for some sin. They concluded that only a major act of retribution could restore God's favour. They planned to blow up the Dome of the Rock, the

third most holy Muslim shrine, which sits on the site of the first and second Jewish temples in Jerusalem. The plans were eventually shelved because none of the rabbis consulted was willing to approve the action.

The final chapter of this book will consider whether the major world religions differ in their potential for generating violent extremist movements. It is enough to note here that none has been free of them. We might expect fanaticism to be common in Christianity, Islam and Judaism, where there is a single god, rather than in religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, where the variety of gods (or the varieties of forms that the divine can take) should create a climate of tolerance. After all, if one is used to accepting that people may worship different gods, it is a little difficult to insist that this particular group deserves to be persecuted or imposed upon. Nonetheless, there are aggressive Hindu and Buddhist movements that have been described as fundamentalist.

In December 1992, Hindu radicals sacked the Muslim mosque at Ayodhya. The Babri Masjid mosque had been built in 1528 on the site of what Hindus would later claim was the birthplace of the god Rama, with funds given by Babur, the first Mogul emperor. In the nineteenth century the British tried to keep the peace by dividing the site between Muslims and Hindus, but they periodically fought over it. A large mob planned to sack it in 1984 and was only halted by the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Ironically, she was killed by Sikhs retaliating for her troops' attack on the Golden Temple at Amritsar. In opposition, leaders of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party encouraged those committed to building a new temple to Rama on the Ayodhya site. Once in power, they, like the British and the Congress Party before them, tried to rein in their more fanatical supporters and find a viable compromise.

Buddhism is taken in the West to be a tolerant, pluralist and pacifist religion, but in Sri Lanka, which the majority Buddhist Sinhalese population shares with the Hindu Tamils, Buddhist monks have at various times been involved in political conflict. Prior to the formation of the Sri Lankan state in 1948, monks pressed the British to recognize the primacy of Buddhism. They were instrumental in preventing the first independent governments extending certain citizenship rights

to the Tamils and when, in the 1970s, the Tamils gave up trying to win acceptance within the state and turned to fighting for independence for the Tamil north-east, monks led the violence against the Tamils and against those of their own religion and race who were thought insufficiently robust in defence of the integrity of Sri Lanka (Tambiah 1993). Buddhists have been able to persuade themselves that the demerit that comes from taking human lives will be cancelled out and excelled by the merit that comes from promoting the true religion.

In 1970 Alice Moore, the wife of a fundamentalist pastor, was elected to the school board of Charleston, Kanawha County, West Virginia. In 1973 she ran a successful campaign to ban sex education from the public schools. The following year she turned her attention to the content of school textbooks. She organized a series of meetings to protest against the 'secular humanism' that she believed many school books promoted. People started circulating petitions. Parents withdrew their children and blockaded schools. The coal miners came out on strike in support of the parents. The local chapter of the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan become involved. Three schools were fire-bombed and shots were fired at teachers. The imprisonment of a fundamentalist pastor for arson did not prevent Moore's group winning almost all the board seats at the next school board elections.

That particular outburst might owe something to the general climate of violence in the West Virginia coalfields, but another example of religiously inspired violence in the United States concerns a national crusade. In November 1987, Randall Terry, a 27-year-old born-again Christian from New York State, organized a picket of an abortion clinic in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. What was formally constituted the following year as Operation Rescue quickly achieved notoriety for harassing clinic staff. According to the movement, by 1990 there had been over 35,000 arrests of its members. In common with many religious fanatics, Terry believed that his form of confrontation was effective not only because of the difficulty it caused to abortion clinics but also because of the way in which it forced the Christian community to take sides: 'God is using us to separate sheep from goats . . . There are a lot of people who believe this is going

to be the seedbed for revival in the church, the locomotive to bring reformation in our culture' (in Ginsburg 1993: 558). By the end of 1985, 92 per cent of abortion clinics reported a range of attacks from picketing to vandalism, but some protestors went further. In 1984 in Pensacola, Florida, the Ladies Center Clinic was bombed by two young men active in the Assemblies of God. Ten years later a young Catholic man murdered two people in attacks on abortion clinics in the Boston area and a former Presbyterian minister killed two people at a clinic in Pensacola.

Violence and religious extremism

Although its ideology is religious, fundamentalism is not just a religious movement. If it was, it would be of little concern to anyone outside the particular religious tradition to which it belongs. What forces it on the attention of all of us is its desire to reshape the world at large, and that often involves violence. However, not all violence is fundamentalist and not all fundamentalists are violent. To help clarify what interests me, I should like briefly to explore the possible links between religious and secular motives and to set aside some apparently similar phenomena.

Even when the combatants are of the same religion, God is commonly invoked to justify what are essentially secular national or ethnic conflicts. During the First World War, Christian leaders on both sides blessed their troops and claimed divine support, but very few people involved thought that they were fighting a specifically religious crusade. The religious rhetoric was deployed to add solemnity and gravitas to a mundane quarrel.

At the other end of the continuum, we have the thoroughly religious crusade or, in the language of Islam, the jihad. In pursuit of its universal mission to conquer the entire world for Allah, Iran attempts to export its Islamic revolution. Although it exploits mundane struggles, the primary purpose of Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda movement is to purify the faith and conquer first the notionally Muslim countries and then the entire world for Allah.

Between the extremes of primarily secular and primarily religious conflict, we find a large number of cases where both sorts of motives are inseparably intertwined. This is not surprising. Although religions may sometimes redraw maps, they generally spread to the edges of pre-existing political or military units and the ethnic and linguistic groups that commonly make up those units. Looked at the other way round, the formation of states or the boundaries of ethnic groups that strive for statehood often map on to pre-existing religious and ethnic identities. Hence wars are often fought on religious and secular grounds simultaneously. Religion is not just a convenient sign of difference (like the contrasting colour shirts of opposing football teams); it is also often deeply embedded in the sense of ethnic or national identity. It provides each side with a justification for seeing itself as superior (we obey God) and the enemy as inferior (they are the infidel).

Anything involving large numbers of people will be driven by a variety of motives; people with differing interests form alliances, and even individuals can have complex drives. The Russian troops in Dagestan and Chechnya were attacked in 1999 by secular nationalists who wished to push the Russians out of the southern Caucasus, by Muslim fundamentalists keen to regain for the true faith land that was once Islamic and by people who saw the creation of a new state as the best way of promoting the true faith.

The point of this is simply to note that, as we have already seen in many of the examples given above, fundamentalism may derive its character not just from arguments within some body of believers about what God requires but also from largely secular nationalist struggles. We will not understand fundamentalism if we try to divorce it from the social, economic and political contexts in which it arises. However, it is primarily religious movements that concern me.

What is fundamentalism?

In order to make the subject manageable, this brief study will concentrate on two very different sorts of fundamentalism: the communal and the individual. In chapter 3 I shall examine

closely Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, where a particular kind of religion is associated with big issues of economic development, geopolitical power and social evolution and where what is at stake is the relative power of communities. In chapter 4, I shall consider the very different fundamentalism found among conservative Protestants in the United States. Although ethnic and racial considerations are not entirely absent, American fundamentalism is essentially a voluntary association of self-selecting individuals, competing to define the culture of a stable nation-state.

We could describe the communal fundamentalism of Islam as pre-modern and the individualistic Protestant fundamentalism as modern. Such a designation would capture the point that the close ties between religion, ethnicity and nationalism found in the contemporary Islamic cases (and those of Hindu, Jewish and Sinhalese fundamentalism) were once common in the West and are now rare. In chapter 2 I shall outline a series of social changes that accompanied the modernization of the Western world. Some of these seem so closely tied together that we can think of a common evolutionary pattern. But it would be unhelpful to expect the rest of the world to follow the history of the West. Societies no longer (if ever they did) develop in isolation from each other, all separately working through the same changes, but on a different timetable. Chapter 3 should make it clear that, far from being solely a response to internal developments, Islamic fundamentalism owes a great deal to the direct influence of the West on the Middle East. In brief, although we could note that present-day Islamic fundamentalism is in some respects closer to the European wars of religion of the seventeenth century than to Protestant fundamentalism, too great a stress on the old and the new will mislead more often than it illuminates.

Although fundamentalist movements may have little of substance in common, being a product of their own religious tradition and social circumstances, they share some abstract features, and I shall introduce these briefly before considering in more detail what has produced fundamentalism. The term first designated an early-twentieth-century movement within American Protestantism which campaigned against liberal and progressive changes within the Protestant churches and thus acquired by implication the anti-modernist meaning.

The term was also used early on to identify a particular stance on the way in which the world would end. In the Christian tradition there are two crucial arguments about the end of the world. First, although all Christians differ from Hindus and Buddhists in supposing that the created world has a short life (made quite recently and due to be terminated soon), they argue about quite how short. Periodically, some Christians have supposed that the apocalypse is imminent, that they are living in the 'end times'. But there is also a second argument about the order in which the various events that can be discerned from the Bible will occur. Some Christians believe that the Day of Judgement will divide the saved from the damned, the godly from the ungodly, before the promised thousand-year reign of righteousness (and hence are called 'pre-millennialists'). Others think that Judgement will follow the millennium (and hence are called 'post-millennialists'). This simplifies, but there is an obvious link between the general social climate and the relative popularity of the two polar positions. In times of social crisis and economic depression, the more pessimistic pre-millennialist view tends to dominate. In periods of social optimism, such as that enjoyed by the United States in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the post-millennialist view tends to be more attractive.

In the American context, 'fundamentalist' was used to identify pre-millennialists of an apocalyptic bent. Although this is narrowly speaking a stance on biblical interpretation, it was also a general assumption about the powers and ability of humankind. The progressives, apparently supported by the evident success of modern people in controlling and improving their environment, tended to see life as good and getting better. The fundamentalists (who were more commonly found in those regions and classes that were benefiting least from US prosperity) stressed the sinful and precarious position of humankind, and accused the progressives of usurping God's powers.

Although this was a specifically Protestant argument, most religious traditions have some similar tension between optimistic and pessimistic views of the present age. Most also have some sort of millenarian strand: the notion that we live in the end times and that the Messiah or his equivalent is about to

return and bring this world to a close. There is a strong strand of millenarianism in Shi'ite Islam that expects the Hidden Twelfth Imam to show himself soon. Within Sunni Islam the tradition of the Mahdi – the 'rightly guided' one who will return and set the world to rights – periodically asserts itself. In 1979 some 500 Saudi radicals, mostly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, seized the Grand Mosque at Mecca. The demands were political: expel US troops from sacred soil, depose the royal family and stop oil exports to the United States. But the attempted coup was inspired by the belief that its leader, Mohammed Abdullah al-Qahtani, was the Mahdi (Furnish 2005: 60–2). Among the Lubavitcher sect of Chassidic Judaism there is a strong messianic streak.

Believing that we are at the end of the world need not provoke radical action. A common response is to retreat from the world to cultivate one's personal piety in seclusion while quietly awaiting the end, but in many religious traditions we find some notion that disruptive action may hasten the desired Day of Glory. The faithful may believe that the Messiah's return will be speeded if his people abandon all forms of temporal support (by, for example, destroying their possessions) and throw themselves on his mercy. Or, and this is where the apocalyptic vision becomes revolutionary, the corrupt political establishment may need to be brought down. Even if not accompanied by a refined 'end times' theology, fundamentalism in every religious tradition often derives a particular edge from a vague sense that we are on the brink of something dramatic or cataclysmic.

From its rather specific US Protestant roots, 'fundamentalism' has been broadened to describe merely the most conservative expression of some religious bloc (for example, Roman Catholics who continued to use the form of the Latin Tridentine Mass after the 1960s Second Vatican Council had encouraged churches to develop modern services in the local languages). By the end of the twentieth century, once the Iranian revolution had overtaken Christian versions as the defining image of fundamentalism, the word was being used to mean any group which took its religion very seriously, advocated a distinctive way of life or expected public policy to conform to religious requirements. And, like 'cult', the term was often used simply to denigrate some religious group the

writer or speaker did not like. Especially when used by liberals within the same religious tradition, 'fundamentalist' has become a term of abuse suggesting a lack of intellectual maturity on the part of those who hold more conservative views.

A sensible response to such promiscuous usage would be to drop the term altogether. Elias (1999: 86) notes that, seen in one light, all Muslims would have to be described as fundamentalist, and suggests that the terms 'traditionalist' and 'Islamist' be used to describe the passive and active alternatives to those who would modernize the faith. Others have used 'revivalist', 'radical', militant' or 'extremist'. Some scholars have argued that no English term will do for the desire to regain a lost era of consensual faith and that we should instead use the French term 'intégrisme'. My feeling is that academics protest too much about language. If in our ordinary lives we manage to live comfortably with the complex meanings of terms such as 'car', I do not see why we should not be able to find words that allow us to say something useful about a range of religio-political movements. Although I accept all the reservations about 'fundamentalism', the term is now so firmly established in common parlance that we are unlikely to dissuade people from using it. Anyway, as Marty and others have suggested, there are enough common features in many fundamentalisms to justify pressing on with its use. I will briefly describe these before turning to the detailed case studies.

In general, fundamentalisms rest on the claim that some source of ideas, usually a text, is complete and without error. Protestant fundamentalists believe that the Bible is the revealed word of God, correct in every detail and in need of no addition. Islamic fundamentalists similarly see the Qur'an as 'God's literal and eternal word' (Elias 1999: 86), although they add to it as a major source of inspiration the Hadith – the record of the sayings and actions of the Prophet and his companions. The original sources provide a perfect guide. Of itself this feature shows us the relative novelty of fundamentalism. All traditions have at some time been questioned; there are always arguments over interpretation and application. But the particularly bitter battles that we now see over foundational texts and traditions seem particular to literate cultures and to cultures where, however vaguely articulated, some notion of

a *hermeneutic* principle is abroad. What I mean is this. In the Middle Ages most people naively accepted the Bible as a special and magical book: witness the convention of making oaths particularly dreadful by having them sworn on the Holy Book. In the nineteenth century it became common for scholars to use historical and comparative studies to claim insight into what the original authors meant. Combined with the idea that people's interests and background influence how they interpret any text, this opened up the possibility that no universally correct reading of a text was feasible: there could only be competing, equally plausible, versions. The modern combination of challenges to the idea of an authoritative version of the text and widespread literacy – which allows ordinary people to join in the argument – permits fundamentalism.

Along with the inerrant text, fundamentalists also claim the existence of some perfect social embodiment of the true religion in the past. Radical Protestant sects see themselves not as innovators but as advocates of a return to the Arcadian past of the early Christian church. For Muslims, that Arcadia is located in Mecca and Medina in the seventh century and, for some, elements of it are genetically transmitted through the bloodline of the Prophet.

Fundamentalisms arise in traditional cultures, but they are not traditional in any simple sense. Enough of the old religion needs to have been preserved to provide the inspiration and the symbolism for those who wish to reassert its domination. But fundamentalisms are not merely survivals, the past continued. They are radical revisions of the past provoked by changes that threaten the continuity of the tradition. In that sense, fundamentalisms are reactive. Their conservatism is not conservation but a creative reworking of the past for present purposes. Fundamentalisms are shaped both by the perceived threats to the tradition and by the nature of the opportunities to resist those threats. The goal of resistance is to recreate the excitement and commitment of the original believing community. As Marty and Appleby (1993: 3) rather awkwardly put it, 'the retrieved and updated fundamentals are meant to regain the same charismatic intensity today by which they originally forged communal identity from the formative revelatory religious experiences long ago'.

One further common feature of fundamentalisms is their social address. Lawrence plausibly argues of recruits to Protestant, Islamic and Jewish fundamentalism, 'All are marginalized male elites, coopting women by claiming to protect them as custodians of domestic space' (1990: 236). I shall take up the gender point in the next chapter, but 'marginalized' is important. Fundamentalists often occupy an ambivalent socio-economic status, either recently excluded from power or recently upwardly mobile but prevented from fulfilling their newly raised aspirations. As Mernissi puts it, Islamic fundamentalists are 'not the most wretched but those who have had some contact with the West, who understand the horizons of possibility denied them by the inequities of the world system' (1993: 237).

An ironic characteristic of fundamentalisms is that they often combine a commitment to a selectively imagined past with an easy facility with modern technology. Because the establishments which the fundamentalists oppose control the major forms of communication and the main social institutions, the dissidents are often at the forefront of exploring alternative technologies and social structures. In Iran the Shah had controlled radio, television, the press, the army, schools and political institutions. So while in exile Ayatollah Khomeini spread his teachings by audio-cassette and by loose networks created by enthusiastic supporters. Osama Bin Laden used fax machines and satellite telephones to control his international network of Islamic terrorists. The US Christian right built its networks with computerized direct mailing lists, toll-free telephones, and its own Christian cable television networks.

As all fundamentalisms are in good part reactive, a useful way to start the detailed exploration is to consider the changes that have provoked them, and that will be the purpose of the next chapter.

2
Modernity: The Great Satan

Fundamentalism is a radical reconstruction and redeployment of a tradition for contemporary purposes. The best way of adding flesh to those definitional bones is to explain just what it is about the modern world that fundamentalists find so objectionable. In the case studies in the next two chapters I shall consider the circumstances that dispose people to fundamentalism and encourage them to mobilize in organized movements. Here I shall concentrate on the general focus of fundamentalist ire. The problem will be taken in two parts. I shall first describe and explain the creation of a secular culture in the modern industrial democracies of the West. This identifies what irks fundamentalists in those countries. I shall then consider the focus of fundamentalism in non-Western societies. Some of the unacceptable changes are the same as those in the West. Although the pace of change is much accelerated, we can think of them as indigenous or naturally occurring. Some are directly imported from, or are imposed by, the West. Some are a product of the interaction between the developed and under-developed worlds.

We should note that starting with the West does not imply that its history sets the standard, either in the sense that it is particularly worthy of imitation or that what happened there must come to pass everywhere else. I begin here because it is where modernization first had its effect and because, as we shall see, the Western powers have exerted considerable

influence on the rest of the world. Where features of other religions are compared and contrasted with those of Christianity, this is not an expression of partisanship but a recognition that Christianity will be more familiar to most readers than any other religion, and it makes sense to work from the familiar to the unfamiliar rather than the other way round.

Modernization and the division of life

Life in Manchester or Birmingham after the end of the twentieth century is very different from life in the Merrie England of the first Queen Elizabeth. It would take a very large book to describe comprehensively the novel characteristics of the modern world. This account selects a few features of modernization that have had the greatest consequences for the nature and public position of religion and explains them in sketch form.

Part of what we mean by modernization is the fragmentation of social institutions into ever more specialized units and the division of social life into distinct spheres, each with their own values and procedures. In agrarian societies the family was a unit of production as well as the institution through which society was reproduced. In modern societies, economic activity is conducted in distinct settings that have their own values. We leave home to go to work and at work we are supposed to treat customers alike, paying attention only to the matter in hand, which we define very narrowly. We are not supposed to vary our prices according to the race or religion of the purchaser. We hire the best person for the job, not the most pious. While the public sphere is meant to be instrumental and rational, the private sphere is expressive, indulgent and emotional. At home we are supposed to behave in a discriminatory manner: to treat my wife and children like all other women and children is to miss the point.

In addition to the indirect effects to be described shortly, increased specialization has the direct effect of secularizing many social functions which in the Middle Ages were either the exclusive preserve of the Christian Church or were dominated by the clergy. Education, healthcare, welfare and social

control now have their own realms dominated by their own expertise, values and assumptions. Where religious institutions retain secular functions, they are discharged largely by lay professionals trained and accredited by secular bodies. For example, the Catholic Church in the United States provides various forms of residential social care, but its social workers are tested in secular expertise, not piety, and they are answerable to secular state, rather than church-determined, standards. Spiritual values may inspire Catholic involvement in university education, for example, but there is very little in the expression of that inspiration that distinguishes it from secular provision.

As the functions of society become increasingly differentiated, so the people also become divided and separated from each other. Although wrong in much else, Karl Marx was right that the economic growth implicit in modernization created an ever greater range of occupation and life-situation. Rural communities grouped together small numbers of people of every station in life. Like a fractionating column in a chemical refinery, industrialization separated out like-situated people and brought them together in large 'manufactories'. The emergence of social classes, defined more by occupation than by place in a feudal hierarchy, was usually accompanied by increasing class conflict; it was certainly accompanied by class avoidance. In feudal societies, masters and servants lived cheek by jowl. The master might ride while the servant walked, but they travelled together. In modern cities neighbourhoods have clear class identities and modern trains have first- and second-class compartments.

Modernization also meant ever faster change. The notion that there is a single God who made the world, material and social, is most plausible when the social structure that supposedly mirrors the supernatural world is relatively stable. With the proliferation of new social roles and increasing social mobility, traditional communal conceptions of the moral and supernatural order began to fragment. As classes became more distinctive, so each generated religious visions better suited to its interests. Feudal agricultural society had a hierarchical religion where the great pyramid of pope, bishops, priests and laity reflected the social pyramid of king, nobles, gentry and peasants. Independent small farmers or the rising

business class in the growing towns preferred a more democratic religion, hence their attraction to such early Protestant sects as the Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers.

However, modernization was not simply a matter of the religious culture responding to changes in the social, economic and political structures. Religious innovation itself was a cause of differentiation and influenced its shape. Belief systems differ greatly in their propensity to fragment (and, a point I shall consider in the final chapter, in their potential for fundamentalism). Much of the variation can be explained by the assumptions about ease of access to authoritative knowledge. To simplify the possibilities to two extremes, some religions claim a unique grasp of the truth while others allow that there are many ways to salvation. The Catholic Church claims that Christ's authority was passed to Peter, the first bishop of Rome, and was then institutionalized in the office of pope. The Church claims ultimate control of the means to salvation and the right finally to arbitrate all disputes about God's will. So long as that central assertion is not disputed, the Catholic Church is relatively immune to fission and schism. As the beliefs that one needs to abandon in order to depart from Rome go right to the heart of what one believed when one was a Catholic, such departures are difficult and are associated with extreme upheavals, such as the French Revolution. And they tend to be final. Thus in Catholic countries the social forces of modernization, which impacted later than in northern Europe, split the people into those who remained within the religious tradition and those who openly opposed it. So Italy, France, Spain and Portugal divided into conservative Catholic traditions and powerful left-wing movements.

In contrast, the religion created by the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was extremely vulnerable to fragmentation, because it removed the institution of the church as a source of authority between God and man. If, by reading the scriptures, we are all able to discern God's will, then how do we settle disputes between the various discernings that are produced? Being theists who believed in one God, one Holy Spirit which dwelt in all of God's creation, and one Bible, the Reformers could hope that the righteous would naturally agree, but history proved that hope false.

Tradition, habit, respect for learning or admiration for personal piety – all restrained the tendency to schism but could not prevent it. The consequence of the Reformation was not one Christian church purified and strengthened but a large number of competing perspectives and institutions. In Protestant countries social differentiation took the form, not of a radical divide between the purple of the Church and the scarlet of revolution, but of a series of schisms from the dominant traditions. Rising social classes were able to express their new aspirations and ambitions by reworking the familiar religion into shapes that better accorded with their self-image.

Modernization and the growth of society

In the pre-modern world, political units such as empires and monarchies could encompass large numbers of very different communities because they required little or nothing of the ordinary people. The linkages were only of small elites or were for very specific purposes such as trade. Most English people of the sixteenth century had little or no sense of being 'English'; they lived their lives and drew their sense of identity from their small village communities. The shift from a subsistence economy to a manufacturing one greatly increased communication and required a high degree of integration; there had to be a common language, a shared legal code, structures of social control powerful enough to prevent banditry and pillage, and so on. Life became increasingly enmeshed and organized, not locally but societally, with that society typically being the nation-state. As the subsistence farmer and the craftsman working for his immediate neighbours gave way to the commercial farmer, the factory owner and his workforce, so the closely integrated community was replaced by the modern state with its massive, impersonal bureaucracies, and the village was replaced by the town and the city.

Religion drew its strength from its roots in the community. The Christian Church of the Middle Ages baptised, christened and confirmed children, married young adults and buried the dead. Its calendar of services mapped on to the temporal order

of the seasons. It celebrated and legitimated local life. In turn it drew considerable plausibility from being frequently reaffirmed through the participation of the local community in its activities. When the total, all-embracing community of like-situated people working and playing together gave way to the dormitory town or suburb, there was little in common left to celebrate.

One consequence of this fragmentation was that the plausibility of any single overarching moral and religious system declined and was displaced by competing conceptions of the divine. While any of the many alternatives could address privatized individual experience, none could successfully shape the performance of social roles or the operation of social systems. In being relegated from the public to the private world, religion retained subjective plausibility for some people, but lost its objective taken-for-grantedness. Faith was no longer a matter of necessity; it was a choice and a leisure activity.

Again it is worth stressing the interaction of social and cultural forces. The fragmentation of the Christian tradition which resulted from the Protestant Reformation hastened the development of the religiously neutral state. Where there was religious consensus, a unifying national high culture could be provided through the dominant religious tradition. The clergy could continue to be the schoolteachers, historians, propagandists, public administrators and military strategists. Where there was little consensus, the growth of the state was secular. In Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, a national education system was created through the Catholic and Lutheran churches respectively. In Britain and the United States it was largely created by the state directly. However, even where a dominant church retained formal ownership of areas of activity, those still came to be informed primarily by secular values. Britain and then the United States enjoyed such a lead in economic and military power over the rest of the modernizing world that their culture came to predominate. The secular state became a model, even for countries that lacked the religious diversity of the United Kingdom or the United States; religious liberty came to be seen as simply part of what it meant to be a modern democracy.

Modernization and rationalization

While differentiation and societalization are essentially changes in the structure of societies, a third significant process – rationalization – concerns changes in the way people think and consequently in the way they act. Again, social and cultural forces interacted. Social changes rationalized culture, but they did so by amplifying existing rationalizing tendencies that had religious origins. Peter Berger has plausibly argued that the rationality of the West has Jewish and Christian roots (Berger 1969: 115). The religion of the Old Testament differed from that of surrounding cultures in a number of important respects. The religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia were profoundly cosmological. The human world was part of a cosmic order which embraced the entire universe, without any sharp distinction between the human and the non-human. Gods interfered to the extent of having sex with humans and producing semi-divine offspring! Such continuity was broken by the religion of the Jews. In the myths of ancient Rome and Greece, a horde of gods or spirits, often behaving in an arbitrary fashion and at cross purposes, made the relationship of supernatural to natural worlds unpredictable. First Judaism and then Christianity were rationalizing forces. By having only one God, they simplified the supernatural and allowed the worship of God to become systematized. Serving God became less a matter of trying to please a whimsical despot and more a matter of correct ethical behaviour. Judaism was also a rationalizing force in the second sense. By elevating him, it removed God from the world. He created it and he would end it but, between start and finish, the world could be seen as having its own structure and logic. This conception of God and the universe was carried over into Christianity and Islam.

As the Christian Church evolved, the cosmos was remythologized with angels and semi-divine saints. The Virgin Mary was elevated to mediate between God and humankind, almost on a par with Jesus. The belief that God could be manipulated through ritual, confession and penance undermined the tendency to regulate behaviour with a standardized

and rational ethical code. No matter how wicked your life, redemption could be bought by funding the Church. However, this trend was reversed as the Protestant Reformation demythologized the world, eliminated the ritual and sacramental manipulation of God, and restored the process of ethical rationalization.

Since what was pleasing to God could be codified, morality and ethics could become detached from the supernatural. The codes could be followed for their own sake and could even attract alternative justifications. For example, 'Do unto others as you would be done by' could be given an entirely utilitarian justification in a way that 'Placate this erratic God or suffer' could not. In that sense, the rationalizing tendency of Christianity turned against its progenitor.

A similar point can be made from the way in which people thought about various aspects of the social and material world. Science is not easy for cultures which believe that the world is pervaded by unpredictable spirits and divinities. Systematic exploration of regularities in the behaviour of matter requires the assumption that matter is indeed regular. It is hard to discover the laws of physics if one supposes that volume may be measured by the displacement of water one day but not the next. Such a culture may produce the odd Archimedes, but it retards the development of a community of scholars directing sustained effort to the study of the material world. In that sense the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, by simplifying a supernatural menagerie to one God and supposing him distant from the material world, made way for modern science.

The less that God was directly implicated in the day-to-day operations of the universe, the freer people were to explore that universe and elaborate theories of its operations that paid only lip service to the creator. Many early scientists assumed the existence of God and wanted to demonstrate the wonders of his creation, but the development of a healthy tradition of rationalistic scrutiny in time subverted what it had been intended to protect. By freeing the way for empirical enquiry, and for pragmatic and instrumental treatment of this world, the Judeo-Christian tradition created its own problems.

A related sense of rationalization involves the pursuit of technically efficient means of securing this-worldly ends. One

of its most potent forms is technology. Technically efficient machinery and procedures reduced uncertainty and thereby reduced reliance upon faith. The domain over which religion offered the most compelling explanations and the most predictable outcomes shrank. Innovating farmers found that crop rotations did more to clean the soil of weeds and parasites than did prayer. The growth of technical rationality gradually displaced supernatural influence and moral considerations from ever wider areas of public life, replacing them by considerations of objective performance and practical expedience.

The Reformation played a particular role in demystifying the world. Just as the medieval Church retarded and temporarily reversed the ethical rationalization inherent in Judaism and early Christianity, so the development of science was retarded by the Church's attempts to impose orthodoxy on all fields of thought. The ability of powerful religious institutions to prevent the growth of rational scientific exploration of the world will be considered again in the final chapter. All that needs to be said here is that the Reformation, by breaking the power of the Church, made way for a variety of thought and for the questioning of tradition which is so vital to natural science.

I have deliberately placed science and technology after structural and social differentiation in my explanation of secularization because I want to make clear the relatively small part played by science in displacing religion. Often science and religion are seen as competing systems of explanation and it is supposed that the latter was pushed out by the former. Of course, many of the beliefs of the early Christians have been shown to be wrong. The earth is round and not flat. The earth moves round the sun, not vice versa. The earth and human life are vastly older than the ages traditionally taken from biblical accounts. While scientists recognize that there are still huge gaps in our knowledge, there is a consensus that an evolutionary model along the lines of Darwinism offers a better explanation of the origins of species than does the account of divine creation in seven days given in the Old Testament book of Genesis. For all that, science probably did little direct damage to religion. Nineteenth-century arguments between Darwinists and church leaders may have gripped the middle classes, but they hardly penetrated to ordinary people.

Anyway, to insist that one set of beliefs lost popularity because another proved it wrong is to miss the difference between truth and plausibility. There are all sorts of ways in which we can insulate our beliefs from apparently contradicting evidence. We can avoid hearing the troublesome evidence or we can dismiss it by blackening the character of those who bring the bad news. For example, many American fundamentalists accuse evolutionists of being sexually promiscuous and left-wing. But such neutralizing strategies require social support. The isolate who stands against the consensus is a lunatic and will be treated as such. To maintain a shared belief system one needs a social strategy that organizes shared defences against the cognitive threats. Where such resources are available, new ideas, no matter that they might be better supported by the evidence, can readily be ignored or rejected. It is far less easy to avoid being influenced by widespread and powerful, but subtle, assumptions about the nature of the world.

The relationship between science and secularization can best be put this way: religion is challenged less by specific scientific discoveries than by the underlying logic of science (indeed, of rationality). Science and technology have given us a notion of cause and effect that makes us look first for the natural causal explanation of an event. When an aeroplane crashes with the loss of many lives we ask not what moral purpose the event had but what was its cause. And in so far as we keep finding those causes (a loose engine nut or a terrorist bomb), we are not prevented, but we are subtly discouraged, from seeking the moral or religious significance.

Science also undermines the notion of a fixed and unchanging truth. Where religion looks back, science looks forward. The fundamentalist seeks explanations of new events by prayerfully rereading the Bible or the Qur'an. The scientist constantly seeks to explain better what we thought we understood. The religious scholar derives benefit from reading the ancient books of his tradition. For the scientist, old books have value only as historical curiosities. Indeed, modern science is now developing so fast that it outstrips the pace of conventional publishing. Leading journals use the Internet and no longer produce paper editions. Although science is, strictly speaking, anti-relativist in that it supposes that we can rationally improve our knowledge and that it is possible to distinguish between good and bad explanations, science does

undermine the notion of an unchanging and authoritative knowledge. It makes truth provisional.

As David Martin (1969: 116) says, with the growth of science and technology 'the general sense of human power is increased, the play of contingency is restricted, and the overwhelming sense of divine limits which afflicted previous generations is much diminished'.

In the contemporary West, religion is most often and extensively used for the areas of human life over which control has not been established by technology: personal unhappiness, extreme stress and the like. When we have tried every cure for cancer, some of us pray. Even committed religious believers suppose that a scientific research programme is more likely than a mass prayer meeting to produce a cure for Aids. Our space for the divine is thus much smaller than that of pre-industrial man. This is not to trivialize the events and problems which still cause many of us to turn to God. The unexpected death of a loved one or the injustice of some act of suffering may be enormously important to us. In that sense the 'gaps' in our rational control and intellectual understanding of our world may loom very large. But they do so in an individualized manner, in legal language 'severally' rather than 'jointly'. They are personal, not social problems.

To summarize, I am suggesting that the effect of science and technology on the plausibility of religious belief is often misunderstood. The clash of ideas between science and religion is less significant than the change in their relative scope, the power technology has given us to resist fate and the more subtle impact of naturalistic ways of thinking about the world. Science and technology have not made us atheists. Rather, the fundamental assumptions that underlie them has made us less likely than our forebears to entertain the notion of the divine.

Modernization, egalitarianism and cultural diversity

One very important element of modernization has not yet been explicitly laid out: egalitarianism. The link between modernization and inequality is paradoxical. We need not

explore the many differences between modern and traditional sources of power to note that, at the same time as creating classes shaped by what Marx called the forces of production, industrialization brought a basic egalitarianism. As with all the previously mentioned social changes, it is important to recognize here the contribution of religious innovation. Although the Protestant Reformers were far from being democrats, one major unintended consequence of their religious revolution was a profound change in the importance of the individual. By denying the special status of the priesthood and by removing the possibility that religious merit could be transferred from one person to another (by, for example, the living pious saying masses for the souls of the impious dead), Luther and Calvin reasserted what was implicit in early Christianity: that we are all equal in the eyes of God. For the Reformers that equality lay in our sinfulness and in our obligations, but the idea could not indefinitely be confined to what we owed. Equality in the eyes of God laid the foundations for equality in the eyes of man and before the law. Equal obligations opened the way for equal rights.

Although the details of his case need not concern us here, Gellner (1991; 1994) has plausibly argued that egalitarianism is a requirement for industrialization; a society sharply divided between high and low cultures and frozen in a rigid social structure could not develop a modern economy. The spread of a shared national culture required the replacement of a fixed hierarchy of stations and estates by more flexible class divisions. Economic development brought change and the expectation of further change. And it brought occupational mobility. People no longer did the job they always did because their family always did that job. As it became more common for people to better themselves, it also become more common for them to think better of themselves. However badly paid, the industrial worker did not see himself as a serf.

Even if we do not believe that economic development *required* egalitarianism, there is no doubt that the former permitted the latter. The medieval serf occupied just one role in a single all-embracing hierarchy and that role shaped his entire life. A tin miner in Cornwall in 1800 might have been sore oppressed at work but in the late evening and on Sunday he could change his clothes and his persona to become a

Methodist lay preacher. As such he was a man of prestige and standing. The possibility of such alternation marks a crucial change. Once occupational status became freed from an entire all-embracing hierarchy and became task-specific, it was possible for people to occupy different positions in different hierarchies. In turn, that made it possible to distinguish between a role and the person who played it. Roles could still be ranked and accorded very different degrees of respect, power or status, but the people behind the roles could be seen as in some sense equal. To put it the other way round, so long as people were seen in terms of just one identity, the powerful could not accept that we were fundamentally the same. For a king to treat a peasant and his feudal superior alike threatened to turn the entire world upside down and destroy the position of kingship. But once an occupational position could be judged apart from the person who filled it, it became possible to maintain a necessary order in the factory, for example, while operating a different system of judgements outside the work context. The mine-owner could rule over his workforce but sit alongside (or even under) his foreman in the local church. Of course, power and status are often transferable. Being a force in one sphere increases the chances of influence in another. The mine-owner could expect to dominate the congregation but he would do so only if his wealth was matched by manifest piety. If it was not, his fellow churchgoers could respond to any attempt to impose his will by defecting to a neighbouring congregation.

To recap, the fragmentation of the all-embracing feudal order with its organic communities allowed the radical individualism inherent in the Protestant Reformation to emerge in three closely related ideas: that everyone was in some deep sense much of a muchness, that the individual was (at least in theory) autonomous and that societies would have to deal primarily with individuals and not communities. The practical consequences of these ideas were slow to be worked out and many changes came only with considerable struggle and blood-letting. The old elites were not keen to give up their powers, but gradually the principles of egalitarianism and individual autonomy gave birth to the rights to own property, to be free from the arbitrary exercise of power and to select one's political leaders. Sadly, on achieving liberty for

themselves many rising groups were less than keen to allow others behind them to benefit. Nonetheless, the modernization of the economy allowed the gradual expansion of the notion of rights and of the scope of those rights.

Modernization brought with it increased cultural diversity in three different ways. First, populations moved and brought their language, religion and social mores with them into a new setting. Second, the expansion of the increasingly expansive nation-state meant that new groups were brought into the state. But even without such changes in the population that had to be encompassed by the state, modernization, as I have argued above, created cultural pluralism through the creation of classes and class fragments with increasingly diverse interests. Especially in Protestant societies, where such class formation was accompanied by the generation of competing sects, the result was a paradox. At the same time as the nation-state was attempting to create a unified nation out of thousands of small communities and to impose a national culture, it was having to come to terms with increasing religious diversity. The result was that, for Britain and the United States, religion could no longer be at the heart of that new national identity. Or, more exactly, it could only occupy that position if it was stripped of most of its specific content. Thus the founding fathers of the United States could talk of 'one nation under God' but the God in question could not be that of any particular church or sect and within a century the God that the nation could plausibly be under could not even be Christian.

Egalitarianism is crucial to the story because it eliminates what was until very recently the most common human response to diversity. A society in which almost everyone shares a particular religion can give that faith pride of place in its operations. An authoritarian hierarchical society can ignore or suppress religious minorities (and even religious majorities). Dissenters need not be tolerated; they can be massacred or exiled. But a society that is becoming increasingly egalitarian and democratic and more culturally diverse has to place social harmony above religious orthodoxy. The result was an increasingly neutral state. Religious establishments were abandoned altogether (as in the case of the constitution of the United States) or were neutered in practice (the British

case). As already noted, this reduced the social power and scope of organized religion. While freedom from embarrassing entanglements with secular power may have allowed churches to become more clearly spiritual, their removal from the centre of public life reduced their contact with, and relevance for, the general population.

Once established, social innovations can become attractive in their own right, even in circumstances that do not possess the characteristics that made those innovations necessary. The gradual rise of religious liberty in Britain, the radical secularism of the French Revolution, and the combination of the two in the foundation of the United States, created the general notion that a modern state should permit religious liberty. Hence by the end of the nineteenth century one finds political reformers in the Lutheran countries of Scandinavia, which had very little diversity, nonetheless arguing for religious toleration as part of a package of democratic reforms.

The separation of Church and state was one consequence of diversity. Another, equally important for understanding secularization, was the break between community and religious world view. In sixteenth-century England, every significant event in the life cycle of the individual and the community was celebrated in church and given a religious gloss. Birth, marriage and death, and the passage of the agricultural seasons, because they were managed by the Church, all reaffirmed the essentially Christian world view of the people. The Church's techniques were used to bless the sick, sweeten the soil and increase animal productivity. Every significant act of testimony, every contract and every promise was reinforced by oaths sworn on the Bible and before God. But beyond the special events that saw the majority of the people in the parish troop into the church, a huge amount of credibility was given to the religious world view simply through everyday social interaction. People commented on the weather by saying 'God be praised', and on parting wished each other 'God speed' or 'Goodbye' (which we often forget is an abbreviation for 'God be with you').

The consequences of increasing diversity for the place of religion in the life of the state or even the local community are fairly obvious. Equally important but less often considered are the social-psychological consequences of increasing

diversity; it reduces the certainty that believers can readily accord their religion.

Any set of ideas is at its most convincing when the ideas are universally shared. Then they are not beliefs at all; they are just an accurate account of how things are. The elaboration of alternatives provides a profound challenge. Of course, believers need not fall on their swords just because they discover that others disagree with them. Where clashes of ideologies occur in the context of social conflict (of which more below), or when alternatives are associated with people who can be plausibly described as a lower order and thus need not be seriously entertained, the cognitive challenge can be dismissed. But as I noted with regard to science, such immunizing strategies only work for as long as they are widely shared. They are thus undermined by the same condition – diversity – they were designed to treat. And that condition is more virulent when religious diversity is internally produced through fragmentation within one society than when it comes through migration or state expansion. When it is your own people who deviate, it is less easy to demonize or dismiss them.

Once a common religious tradition fragments into competing alternatives that have some fairly obvious self-interested connection to the social classes that support them, then the human origins of religion become all too apparent. Even believers begin to suspect that they have chosen God rather than the other way round.

Modernization and gender roles

One of the most powerful and far-reaching consequences of increasing egalitarianism is the change in the social position of women. Pre-modern societies ascribe very clearly different roles and rights to men and women. For very many reasons, modernization undermined sex segregation. Once it became common currency, the language of democracy could not easily be confined to men. In a simple economy where the household is a major part of the social organization, a gender division of labour makes sense. It is less well suited to a world of towns and factories. Improved health and prosperity reduced family

size and created an ever larger proportion of women who were not yet, were no longer, or never would be, mothers. Later changes in the nature of modern work removed men's competitive advantage over women.

It is not just misogyny that explains why religious conservatives have had great difficulty in coming to terms with the change in gender relations. Or, at least, the misogyny has religious roots. We do not need to explain it (for that would take another book); we need only appreciate that all religions have at the heart of their social teachings a considerable, one might say obsessive, interest in sexuality and the family. Having spent centuries elaborating theological defences of particular patterns of gender relations, religions find it harder to change their stance on gender relations while insisting that nothing much has changed than similarly to change their attitudes to race or class. No major strand of Christianity has ever made it a core belief that only white people or rich people can be clerics; for most of their centuries-long histories Christian churches excluded women from the ordained ministry. No widely used Christian liturgy has required blacks or working-class people to accept domination by whites or by the bourgeoisie. The standard Christian marriage services did precisely that for wives and husbands.

That gender looms larger than race or class in religious considerations is hardly surprising. In most societies, race and class are shifting and ambiguous categories, of concern to only some people and in some places. But gender relations are of vital importance to almost everyone. Add to this the fact that the household is where one generation passes its faith to the next and we can readily see why fundamentalists are so particularly opposed to changes in the roles of men and women.

Modernization: a First World summary

I will recap the above by drawing out the more abstract principles that underlie the changes. One key feature of modern societies that fundamentalists find objectionable is the notion that people should be accorded the same freedoms irrespective

of their faith and their piety. We now take this for granted, but most religious traditions for most of human history have found abhorrent the notion that the godly and the ungodly, the righteous and the sinner, should be equally favoured.

Equally abhorrent is the idea that life can be lived in discrete compartments, that you may choose your spouse on the grounds of religion but not your workmates. Or that you may sing God's praises in church but not in school or at work. Even for those who accept it, the division between the public and the private creates difficulties because it requires agreement on where the boundary lies. We might agree that a large company or a state agency should not be allowed to pick its workforce by colour or creed and that individuals may choose their friends by any principle they like, but can we permit a football club such discrimination? We may accord a Mormon the freedom to raise his children without interference in his Mormon faith, but does that entitle him to practise polygamy? Does the principle of liberty in the private sphere allow him to object to school textbooks that are explicitly or implicitly critical of Mormonism?

Those are questions about how we reconcile conflicting imperatives within the basic division between the private and the public. But that division itself is anathema to religious conservatives because it shortens the reach of religion. The United States allows the Mormon to structure his private world around the principles of Mormonism but requires him to accept that the Mormon god does not rule in the public world. For those who place social harmony before religious imperatives, compartmentalization is the solution to the potential conflict inherent in cultural diversity. For those who would place obedience to God above all else, compartmentalization is the problem.

It has its cognitive parallel at the level of epistemology or theories of how we know the truth. It is possible to tolerate error without giving up the right to distinguish it from truth, to say that I am sure I am right but I do not mind your being wrong. But in practice the social grounds for tolerating competing views weakens our certainty and eventually our faith in the possibility of certainty. Modern societies are relativistic in two senses. Most obviously they have intellectual elites that argue that truth is impossible. Postmodernists insist that,

because we are incapable of freeing ourselves from our own cultural preconceptions, biases and interests, objective and neutral knowledge is simply impossible. First popular in the arts, where it was expressed as the assertion that one could not establish a correct interpretation of the text of a Jane Austen novel, for example, or rank works of art on some neutral scale of virtue, relativism has now spread. We can now find scholars arguing that scientific knowledge can have no claims to predominance because it is just yet another socially constructed cultural product. The influence of intellectuals is less than they think or wish, but self-conscious postmodernism is a symptom of the greater underlying change: the widespread acceptance of a vague relativism. This takes the form of supposing that it is somehow undemocratic to argue with others. Although it is rarely put so bluntly, it is an operating procedure of much social life that no one has the right to contradict anyone else. My views are as good as yours. If it works for you, then that is your truth. I may have a different truth but that is my business, not yours. Even those people who are charged with producing authoritative knowledge are often hesitant. Consider the nature of much mass-media reporting. Obviously there are many facets of life that are reasonably viewed as arenas for choice between equally valid contending views. It has therefore long been common for political reports to balance the pronouncements of the governing party with the ripostes of the opposition. But that notion of balance is now often applied to scientific and medical controversies. Rather than seek to discover the truth, reporters merely present alternatives. Although this may not be their intention, the result is to suggest that we cannot distinguish truth and falsehood; there is just opinion.

The practical attitude of relativism is obviously useful for culturally diverse societies that permit individual freedom. It greases the wheels of social interaction and reduces friction. But it is a major threat to all monotheistic religious traditions. Allowing that you can have your God and I can have mine prevents us having to argue about who is right, but for religious conservatives it is an unacceptable compromise because it effectively denies that any religion is true. This is the well-known paradox of liberalism. It is accepted as fair only by liberals and excludes conservatives who insist that there is a

truth and they have it. Practical relativism does not contest any particular interpretation of the Bible or the Qur'an. It does worse: it denies that such texts can have a correct interpretation. The committed humanist or rationalist at least does religion the credit of bothering to argue with it. The de facto modern relativist trivializes religion.

We should add to all of the above the final affront to the Christian fundamentalist: almost all the churches have colluded in the above changes. Like an army in slow retreat, they repeatedly tried to create new defensive lines, but by the middle of the twentieth century most Western churches and denominations had come to terms with the secular state, had accepted the public–private divide, had scaled down their truth claims and had become de facto relativists, and were well on the way to ordaining women. The focus of religious activity shifted from the social world to the individual self. The primary purpose of religion used to be to glorify God; personal contentment, happiness, good health and wealth were fortunate accidental consequences, to be hoped for but not necessarily expected. Now its primary purpose is therapy. Religion has been displaced and denuded, and the guardians of orthodoxy have either actively promoted the new order or acquiesced in it.

Modernization in the Third World

In the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a marked change in the attitude of western scholars to what has been variously called the Third or under-developed world. In the nineteenth century the white man's burden was to feel responsible for civilizing what he took to be the backward races. At the start of the twenty-first century, the burden of the white middle classes is to feel responsible for (in the sense of feeling guilty about) the manifest defects of the newly independent states. In the next chapter we shall see examples of the Western powers exploiting countries of the Middle East and insensitively imposing elements of their own cultures on those societies. But we shall also see examples of local elites deliberately espousing Western values and culture, and the sorts of changes

described above occurring spontaneously in new settings. I mention this because there is a danger that concentrating solely on the detrimental effects of Western imperialism may lead us to accept uncritically the claim of some Islamic fundamentalists that everything to which they object has an external cause.

Social change is usually so complicated that we cannot readily divide what happened in, for example, the Ottoman Empire (and the political entities that succeeded it) between 1900 and 1950 into things that occurred because of Western interference and things that would have happened anyway. Nonetheless we can be fairly confident that at least some of the social innovation in Islamic countries was indigenous. In many countries democratization has been accompanied by increasing religious tolerance. Economic development, at least for the elites, has been accompanied by a decline in religious orthodoxy. But the secular culture of the West has also been imported into, and intruded upon, the Third World. Changes that took centuries in the West and that occurred sufficiently slowly for them to appear natural have been imposed on the East in a few decades. In England the change from feudal monarchy to parliamentary democracy took two hundred years, if one dates it from the execution of Charles I in 1649 to Russell's Reform Bill of 1832, and a longer trajectory is plausible. In the 1800s, before they lost their nerve and became more interested in respectability than egalitarianism, the Methodists allowed women to preach. Women did not get the vote until a century later. In parts of the Arab world and Asia similar changes were compressed into a single life span.

Development in the Third World was thus not a slow process of social institutions adapting to economic progress or to changes in each other. Rather than proceeding evenly, it was frantic, spasmodic and abrupt. The distinction between natural and unnatural is easily exaggerated, but we can appreciate the point that Western interference, irrespective of motives, could be profoundly distorting. In the West religious toleration was a necessary accommodation to religious diversity. The signatories to the US constitution had learnt the value of religious toleration from the unhappy experience of the Puritans in England, from conflicts in the early colonies

and from the fact that, although most of the colonies had 'state' churches, they were not the same church. But where the vast majority of the population are, for example, Sunni Muslim and the ruling elites at least believe that their own tradition provides a satisfactory way of dealing with religious minorities within their boundaries, then Western notions of toleration will be seen as an unwarranted imposition.

Rapid social change will always be traumatic for some social groups. In stable societies expectations and explanations will correspond to opportunities and realities; notions of what life should be like will roughly fit with the actuality. Even those people who benefit from change will feel dislocated by it and will need to adjust their culture to accord with the new circumstances, and that is as true for change that is generated by indigenous forces as for change that is imposed from outside.

The simple point to be made in any comparison between the Western powers and the Islamic countries is that the latter for most of the twentieth century have suffered from a variety of additional difficulties that have created a market for radical reconstructions of the dominant culture. As my main purpose is to explain fundamentalism, it does not much matter where one lays the blame for these things.

In most Islamic countries there was (and still is) little scope for popular political participation. The structures of the modern state were borrowed from the West but operated by clan-based monarchies or military dictatorships. Increasing wealth was concentrated in the hands of very small ruling elites. Crucial to the 'great Western transformation' was the growth of an entrepreneurial middle class. Though we can argue the fine detail of the extent of social mobility in Britain or the United States, the basic fact of considerable mobility is undeniable. In most Islamic societies increasing national wealth simply increased the gulf between the now-very-rich rulers and the masses. The absence of a middle class was reflected in the very limited opportunities for higher education and professional training. As Saudi Arabia or Iran lacked universities and technical institutions, opportunities for their own people were limited and those people who were wealthy enough to afford such training for their children had to send them to the West, which was both a pointed reminder of their

under-developed status and a cause of the rapid intrusion of alien culture (Lawrence 1990: 237).

More will be said about this in the next chapter. The point to make here is that the many changes which religious conservatives in the West disliked also affected the rest of the world. And they did so in a manner which was much more disruptive because they occurred very rapidly and unevenly, so that social institutions did not have time to evolve in a manner which kept them in balance and cultures did not have time to adjust to accommodate the new order. In addition, the military and economic power of the West was such that, by the time the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918, the Islamic world was additionally burdened with being on the wrong end of an invidious comparison. As well as having the specific problems of being part of the Third World, it had the general problem of being aware of its relative under-performance.

It is worth adding one unusually specific element of friction between the West and Islamic societies to this general background: the establishment of the state of Israel. When Osama Bin Laden refers to the United States and European countries as crusaders, he is able to link across centuries an ancient and a contemporary battle. Although many Jews were sent into exile in the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries BC, the main dispersal dates to the Roman crushing of the Jewish revolt between 66 and 70 AD. The original Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were attempts by European Christians (especially the Franks) to regain Palestine for Christianity rather any attempt to promote the interests of the Jews. The current state of Israel has its origins in the migration of Zionist groups in the late nineteenth century and in the decision in 1917 of the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to encourage the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, a preference which became effective policy after the First World War, when Britain was given a League of Nations mandate to administer that part of the now-defunct Ottoman Empire. In 1939 the British attempted to restrain Jewish migration to Palestine, but already levels had reached a point that made peaceful cohabitation between Jewish incomers and Arabs unlikely. In the face of attacks by Jewish terrorists, the British abandoned the mandate, and in May 1948 the Jews declared the creation of the state of Israel.

Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq declared war that has more or less persisted, sometimes hot, sometimes cold, to this day. One reason for Arab and Muslim hostility to Israel is its control of two sites sacred to Islam, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, both located on the site of the first and second Jewish Temples. But the more pressing reasons are the displacement of almost a million Palestinians from Israel into the neighbouring states and the affront to Arab power, which has repeatedly failed to destroy Israel or even to force it back to its 1967 boundaries.

For most of the recent conflict, Palestinian resistance was led by the secular (and often left-leaning) Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Fatah party led by Yasser Arafat. Since the 1990s it has been increasingly displaced by Hamas (the name of which is an Arabic acronym meaning 'zeal' from the initials of the Islamic Resistance Movement). Hamas advocates jihad to destroy Israel and create an Islamic state in Palestine and, despite being Sunni and enjoying considerabe backing from rich Saudi Arabs, it is also funded by the Shi'ite regime in Iran.

For all that Islam in theory regards Judaism and Christianity as fellow religions, sharing a common descent from Abraham, Islamic fundamentalists are often anti-Semitic. President Ahmadinejad of Iran is far from alone in denying the fact of the Holocaust. The state of Israel is thus loathed because it displaced Arabs, because its survival shows the impotence of Muslim states, because it promotes the interests of Jews and, finally, because it is supported by the Great Satan. The United States not only gives vast sums of money to support Israel but it also acts as its protector of last resort. To which we might add that fundamentalist opposition, as examplified, for example by Osama Bin Laden, gains an additional emotional charge from the belief that the Arab states (and ultimately the Muslim religious leaders within those states who have acquiesced in this) have been corrupted by Western wealth and power into accepting Israel and abandoning the Palestinians.

Protestant fundamentalists have entered the field on the Israeli side. Many believe that crucial events of the end times (such as the battle of Armageddon) will occur on Israeli soil. Some hold that the building of the Third Temple in Jerusalem

will be a precursor to the Day of Judgement. Most others manage a general sympathy for the Jews. Although they have had little direct impact on US foreign policy, Protestant fundamentalists have probably played some part in reinforcing US commitment to Israel.

Thus a promise made almost absent-mindedly by a British politician in 1917 leads eventually to Islamic fundamentalists having a very specific focus for their hatred of the West.

Conclusion

We can trace two sorts of links between modernization and fundamentalism. The short route, which we shall illustrate with the example of Protestant fundamentalism in the United States, is a direct reaction to local and immediate change. Modernization creates the conditions for Islamic fundamentalism in two ways. Some of the social processes that have altered the nature and role of religion in the West have also affected Islamic countries; in that sense there are indigenous causes of Muslim fundamentalism. But modernization has also been thrust upon Islamic countries from the outside. That is, Islamic fundamentalism is a response both to the modernization of Islamic societies and to the influence of the West.

3
Islamic Fundamentalism

An excellent introductory book on Islam starts with a chronology of the major events in the religion's development and spread. The first item on the list was obvious: 'c. 570 CE Birth of the Prophet in Mecca'. The last was a surprise: '1998: Pakistan becomes the first Islamic country to test a nuclear weapon' (Elias 1999: 11). That stark sentence is a useful reminder of three things.

First, the relegation of religion to an inconsequential leisure pursuit is a peculiarly modern Western phenomenon. Religion used to matter a great deal and in most of the globe it still does. We will not understand Islamic fundamentalists unless we begin by remembering that Muslims once ruled large parts of the globe and that their domination was built on military power. Southern Spain in the eighth century was Islamic because Muslims from north Africa conquered it; it became Christian in the tenth century because Christians from northern Europe drove the Muslims out. Or, to make the point more generally, shifts in the distribution and popularity of the great world religions owe little to the modern notion of the converting individual and a great deal to coercion. Second, the reference to nuclear weapons reminds us of the attention-grabbing value of violence. Westerners became interested in Muslim fundamentalists when they took hostages and blew people up. Third, that Islam getting the bomb is deemed worthy of mention reminds us of the other ideologies that

already possessed it: capitalism and communism. The end of the twentieth century saw the collapse of the Soviet empire, and the disappearance of communism as a world force strengthened Islam in three ways. It removed one competitor, it gave an enormous morale boost to Osama Bin Laden and others who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan and it created the potential for a number of new Islamic nation-states.

A brief history of Islam

Islam is a founded religion. Just as the Christian faith claims to complete and supersede the religion of the Jews, so the divine revelations received by a merchant in Mecca in the seventh century are held by Muslims to supersede both Judaism and Christianity and to release God's revelations from the distortions of the two earlier versions. Islam is thus not just another religion; it is a religion fundamentally at odds with the religions of the Jews and the Christians. It claims the same history and many of the same sacred places, which, as we saw with the Dome of the Rock/Temple Mount site in Jerusalem, is a recipe for conflict.

Muhammad believed that he had been chosen as a prophet 'to bring a divine message to humankind about the existence of a unique, all-powerful God, a warning of an impending doomsday and judgement, and an encouragement to live a virtuous life' (Elias 1999: 33). When the citizens of Mecca became concerned about his increasing influence, he and his followers moved to Yathrib (later renamed Medina). There Muhammad rose to become the social, religious and political leader of an entire community. Three times the Meccans attacked Medina. With each battle Muhammad became stronger and in 630 AD Mecca surrendered to the Prophet.

Under the title of Caliph, the leaders of Islam after Muhammad combined the roles of high priest and king. Over the next twenty-four years, as Islam grew and spread outside the Arab world, there were three such leaders. However, the lack of an agreed method for selecting the Caliph guaranteed trouble and it came when the fourth Caliph – Ali, son-in-law of the

Prophet – was assassinated. His son Hassan made an ineffectual claim to succeed and then retired from politics. Nineteen years later, Hassan's brother Hussayn tried to succeed to the Caliphate but gained little support. With a small band of followers, mostly members of the Prophet's family, he was killed at Kerbala.

The majority of Muslims, the Sunnis, accept the legitimacy of the Umayyad dynasty that succeeded the Prophet. The minority Shi'ite strand insists that the proper succession should be traced through Ali, Hassan and the martyr Hussayn. The Shi'ites are further divided according to which of the subsequent Imams (or leaders) they accept. The Zaydis, named after the first serious challenger to the Umayyads (who died in the effort) are now strong only in Yemen. The Isma'ilis take their name from Isma'il, who they believe should have been the rightful seventh Imam. They became extremely powerful in north Africa in the tenth century, but are now fragmented into disparate sects. The best known in the West is that led by the Aga Khan. The major Shi'ite line is known as 'Twelver Shi'ism' because it believes that the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, did not die in 874, but went into some form of supernatural hiding from which he will return as the Messiah at the end of the world.

There are two features of Islam that are particularly important for understanding fundamentalism. The first feature is the lack of a clear division between spiritual and religious power. Unlike Christianity, Islam achieved political power in the lifetime of its founder, and the original charismatic community did not have to develop an image of itself isolated from, or set against, the secular powers. There was thus no theoretical division between church and state.

The second feature is the centrality of the law. The revelations of the Prophet, codified in the Qur'an and in collections of sacred stories about him – the Hadith – combine both faith and morals; they are both doctrine and law. Strictly speaking, Islam does not have a clergy. Rather it is led by jurists who specialize in the law or Shari'a. In common with the more radical branches of Protestant Christianity, no distinct sacramental status separates those who preach or who lead in religious rituals from the laity. Preachers may be expected to be more learned and more competent than most of their

audience, but, at least in theory, they are not set apart by having a clearly different spiritual status.

Alongside the various sectarian divisions is the split between what Gellner has called high and low Islam. High Islam is carried by urban scholars, recruited mainly from the trading classes, and it reflects the tastes of the middle classes: order, rule observance, sobriety, learning and an aversion to hysteria and excess. It stresses the uniqueness of God, is suspicious of saint cults that create mediators between humankind and God, and is generally puritanical and legalistic. Low Islam (like popular Catholicism) is very different (Berkey 2003: 248–57). It stresses magic rather than learning, and religious ecstasy rather than rule observance. Its characteristic institution is the local saint cult (Gellner 1992: 11).

To return to the history, the Caliphate gradually declined in importance as the military commanders nominally under the authority of the Caliph grew in power, became kings and eventually created three great empires: the Persian, the Mogul, and the Ottoman. Given that some radical Muslims now present Islam as being essentially anti-imperialist, it is worth remembering that these great Muslim empires controlled large areas of the then known world. If one has to choose a single starting date, the relative decline of Islam can be traced to 1498, when Vasco Da Gama opened up trade to India via the Cape of Good Hope. The West's primacy in maritime trade laid the foundations for colonization as small bodies of troops were sent to protect distant trading posts and gradually became a permanent presence that spread inland.

In 1550 the Ottoman empire stretched as far as Hungary, and Muslim troops threatened Vienna, a city now seen as the heart of 'middle Europe'. But increasing Western wealth and the superior military power provided by its advances in science and technology pushed the Muslims back. By the end of the eighteenth century the Ottomans were well aware of their inferiority, and within the ruling classes there was a clear desire for reform.

> Things changed towards the end of the nineteenth century as more of the products of Western technology and industry became available. The rulers wanted to 'modernise' their countries; first it was armies and modern weapons of war, then

> railways, then the amenities of domestic life such as electricity and running water, then automobiles and factory equipment, and finally all the new inventions of the twentieth century. (Watt 1988: 46)

In all these developments, the religious institutions, wedded to an insistence that the revelations given to the Prophet represented the final word and the unchanging truth, got left behind. To give one powerful example, the Jews and Christians of the Ottoman Empire had printing presses from the early sixteenth century, but the Muslim leaders prevented printing in Turkish or Arabic until 1784.

Contact with the West led to the creation of new institutions in parallel to the existing religious ones. In the European parts of the Ottoman Empire there was pressure for new legal structures to supplement the Shari'a courts, because non-Muslims were not permitted to be heard as witnesses in those courts. New activities created new needs; commercial courts were established. In a process that parallels the structural differentiation described in the previous chapter, the Islamic jurists lost power, not so much because they were deliberately confronted by secularists (that came later) but because they did not adapt to the new circumstances and hence left social space that was filled by new and specialized secular institutions. In Turkey and Egypt the religious courts were left to deal with matters of personal relationships and sexual morality; again, a shrinking of the reach of religion that parallels what happened in Europe.

In a similar manner most Islamic countries developed secular education systems. The first innovations were in military training and diplomacy. The Ottomans established modern secular training colleges for their soldiers. In 1868, an Imperial Ottoman Lycée was established in Galatasaray to train government officials and diplomats. The language of instruction was French. Gradually secular provision was expanded to provide the full range of primary, secondary and university-level education, and the madrasas (or religious colleges) were sidelined.

This modernization was not forced on Islamic rulers by Western exploiters (though there was much exploitation). Rather it was positively solicited by the rulers of the countries

2
Modernity: The Great Satan

Fundamentalism is a radical reconstruction and redeployment of a tradition for contemporary purposes. The best way of adding flesh to those definitional bones is to explain just what it is about the modern world that fundamentalists find so objectionable. In the case studies in the next two chapters I shall consider the circumstances that dispose people to fundamentalism and encourage them to mobilize in organized movements. Here I shall concentrate on the general focus of fundamentalist ire. The problem will be taken in two parts. I shall first describe and explain the creation of a secular culture in the modern industrial democracies of the West. This identifies what irks fundamentalists in those countries. I shall then consider the focus of fundamentalism in non-Western societies. Some of the unacceptable changes are the same as those in the West. Although the pace of change is much accelerated, we can think of them as indigenous or naturally occurring. Some are directly imported from, or are imposed by, the West. Some are a product of the interaction between the developed and under-developed worlds.

We should note that starting with the West does not imply that its history sets the standard, either in the sense that it is particularly worthy of imitation or that what happened there must come to pass everywhere else. I begin here because it is where modernization first had its effect and because, as we shall see, the Western powers have exerted considerable

influence on the rest of the world. Where features of other religions are compared and contrasted with those of Christianity, this is not an expression of partisanship but a recognition that Christianity will be more familiar to most readers than any other religion, and it makes sense to work from the familiar to the unfamiliar rather than the other way round.

Modernization and the division of life

Life in Manchester or Birmingham after the end of the twentieth century is very different from life in the Merrie England of the first Queen Elizabeth. It would take a very large book to describe comprehensively the novel characteristics of the modern world. This account selects a few features of modernization that have had the greatest consequences for the nature and public position of religion and explains them in sketch form.

Part of what we mean by modernization is the fragmentation of social institutions into ever more specialized units and the division of social life into distinct spheres, each with their own values and procedures. In agrarian societies the family was a unit of production as well as the institution through which society was reproduced. In modern societies, economic activity is conducted in distinct settings that have their own values. We leave home to go to work and at work we are supposed to treat customers alike, paying attention only to the matter in hand, which we define very narrowly. We are not supposed to vary our prices according to the race or religion of the purchaser. We hire the best person for the job, not the most pious. While the public sphere is meant to be instrumental and rational, the private sphere is expressive, indulgent and emotional. At home we are supposed to behave in a discriminatory manner: to treat my wife and children like all other women and children is to miss the point.

In addition to the indirect effects to be described shortly, increased specialization has the direct effect of secularizing many social functions which in the Middle Ages were either the exclusive preserve of the Christian Church or were dominated by the clergy. Education, healthcare, welfare and social

control now have their own realms dominated by their own expertise, values and assumptions. Where religious institutions retain secular functions, they are discharged largely by lay professionals trained and accredited by secular bodies. For example, the Catholic Church in the United States provides various forms of residential social care, but its social workers are tested in secular expertise, not piety, and they are answerable to secular state, rather than church-determined, standards. Spiritual values may inspire Catholic involvement in university education, for example, but there is very little in the expression of that inspiration that distinguishes it from secular provision.

As the functions of society become increasingly differentiated, so the people also become divided and separated from each other. Although wrong in much else, Karl Marx was right that the economic growth implicit in modernization created an ever greater range of occupation and life-situation. Rural communities grouped together small numbers of people of every station in life. Like a fractionating column in a chemical refinery, industrialization separated out like-situated people and brought them together in large 'manufactories'. The emergence of social classes, defined more by occupation than by place in a feudal hierarchy, was usually accompanied by increasing class conflict; it was certainly accompanied by class avoidance. In feudal societies, masters and servants lived cheek by jowl. The master might ride while the servant walked, but they travelled together. In modern cities neighbourhoods have clear class identities and modern trains have first- and second-class compartments.

Modernization also meant ever faster change. The notion that there is a single God who made the world, material and social, is most plausible when the social structure that supposedly mirrors the supernatural world is relatively stable. With the proliferation of new social roles and increasing social mobility, traditional communal conceptions of the moral and supernatural order began to fragment. As classes became more distinctive, so each generated religious visions better suited to its interests. Feudal agricultural society had a hierarchical religion where the great pyramid of pope, bishops, priests and laity reflected the social pyramid of king, nobles, gentry and peasants. Independent small farmers or the rising

business class in the growing towns preferred a more democratic religion, hence their attraction to such early Protestant sects as the Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers.

However, modernization was not simply a matter of the religious culture responding to changes in the social, economic and political structures. Religious innovation itself was a cause of differentiation and influenced its shape. Belief systems differ greatly in their propensity to fragment (and, a point I shall consider in the final chapter, in their potential for fundamentalism). Much of the variation can be explained by the assumptions about ease of access to authoritative knowledge. To simplify the possibilities to two extremes, some religions claim a unique grasp of the truth while others allow that there are many ways to salvation. The Catholic Church claims that Christ's authority was passed to Peter, the first bishop of Rome, and was then institutionalized in the office of pope. The Church claims ultimate control of the means to salvation and the right finally to arbitrate all disputes about God's will. So long as that central assertion is not disputed, the Catholic Church is relatively immune to fission and schism. As the beliefs that one needs to abandon in order to depart from Rome go right to the heart of what one believed when one was a Catholic, such departures are difficult and are associated with extreme upheavals, such as the French Revolution. And they tend to be final. Thus in Catholic countries the social forces of modernization, which impacted later than in northern Europe, split the people into those who remained within the religious tradition and those who openly opposed it. So Italy, France, Spain and Portugal divided into conservative Catholic traditions and powerful left-wing movements.

In contrast, the religion created by the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was extremely vulnerable to fragmentation, because it removed the institution of the church as a source of authority between God and man. If, by reading the scriptures, we are all able to discern God's will, then how do we settle disputes between the various discernings that are produced? Being theists who believed in one God, one Holy Spirit which dwelt in all of God's creation, and one Bible, the Reformers could hope that the righteous would naturally agree, but history proved that hope false.

Tradition, habit, respect for learning or admiration for personal piety – all restrained the tendency to schism but could not prevent it. The consequence of the Reformation was not one Christian church purified and strengthened but a large number of competing perspectives and institutions. In Protestant countries social differentiation took the form, not of a radical divide between the purple of the Church and the scarlet of revolution, but of a series of schisms from the dominant traditions. Rising social classes were able to express their new aspirations and ambitions by reworking the familiar religion into shapes that better accorded with their self-image.

Modernization and the growth of society

In the pre-modern world, political units such as empires and monarchies could encompass large numbers of very different communities because they required little or nothing of the ordinary people. The linkages were only of small elites or were for very specific purposes such as trade. Most English people of the sixteenth century had little or no sense of being 'English'; they lived their lives and drew their sense of identity from their small village communities. The shift from a subsistence economy to a manufacturing one greatly increased communication and required a high degree of integration; there had to be a common language, a shared legal code, structures of social control powerful enough to prevent banditry and pillage, and so on. Life became increasingly enmeshed and organized, not locally but societally, with that society typically being the nation-state. As the subsistence farmer and the craftsman working for his immediate neighbours gave way to the commercial farmer, the factory owner and his workforce, so the closely integrated community was replaced by the modern state with its massive, impersonal bureaucracies, and the village was replaced by the town and the city.

Religion drew its strength from its roots in the community. The Christian Church of the Middle Ages baptised, christened and confirmed children, married young adults and buried the dead. Its calendar of services mapped on to the temporal order

of the seasons. It celebrated and legitimated local life. In turn it drew considerable plausibility from being frequently reaffirmed through the participation of the local community in its activities. When the total, all-embracing community of like-situated people working and playing together gave way to the dormitory town or suburb, there was little in common left to celebrate.

One consequence of this fragmentation was that the plausibility of any single overarching moral and religious system declined and was displaced by competing conceptions of the divine. While any of the many alternatives could address privatized individual experience, none could successfully shape the performance of social roles or the operation of social systems. In being relegated from the public to the private world, religion retained subjective plausibility for some people, but lost its objective taken-for-grantedness. Faith was no longer a matter of necessity; it was a choice and a leisure activity.

Again it is worth stressing the interaction of social and cultural forces. The fragmentation of the Christian tradition which resulted from the Protestant Reformation hastened the development of the religiously neutral state. Where there was religious consensus, a unifying national high culture could be provided through the dominant religious tradition. The clergy could continue to be the schoolteachers, historians, propagandists, public administrators and military strategists. Where there was little consensus, the growth of the state was secular. In Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, a national education system was created through the Catholic and Lutheran churches respectively. In Britain and the United States it was largely created by the state directly. However, even where a dominant church retained formal ownership of areas of activity, those still came to be informed primarily by secular values. Britain and then the United States enjoyed such a lead in economic and military power over the rest of the modernizing world that their culture came to predominate. The secular state became a model, even for countries that lacked the religious diversity of the United Kingdom or the United States; religious liberty came to be seen as simply part of what it meant to be a modern democracy.

Modernization and rationalization

While differentiation and societalization are essentially changes in the structure of societies, a third significant process – rationalization – concerns changes in the way people think and consequently in the way they act. Again, social and cultural forces interacted. Social changes rationalized culture, but they did so by amplifying existing rationalizing tendencies that had religious origins. Peter Berger has plausibly argued that the rationality of the West has Jewish and Christian roots (Berger 1969: 115). The religion of the Old Testament differed from that of surrounding cultures in a number of important respects. The religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia were profoundly cosmological. The human world was part of a cosmic order which embraced the entire universe, without any sharp distinction between the human and the non-human. Gods interfered to the extent of having sex with humans and producing semi-divine offspring! Such continuity was broken by the religion of the Jews. In the myths of ancient Rome and Greece, a horde of gods or spirits, often behaving in an arbitrary fashion and at cross purposes, made the relationship of supernatural to natural worlds unpredictable. First Judaism and then Christianity were rationalizing forces. By having only one God, they simplified the supernatural and allowed the worship of God to become systematized. Serving God became less a matter of trying to please a whimsical despot and more a matter of correct ethical behaviour. Judaism was also a rationalizing force in the second sense. By elevating him, it removed God from the world. He created it and he would end it but, between start and finish, the world could be seen as having its own structure and logic. This conception of God and the universe was carried over into Christianity and Islam.

As the Christian Church evolved, the cosmos was remythologized with angels and semi-divine saints. The Virgin Mary was elevated to mediate between God and humankind, almost on a par with Jesus. The belief that God could be manipulated through ritual, confession and penance undermined the tendency to regulate behaviour with a standardized

and rational ethical code. No matter how wicked your life, redemption could be bought by funding the Church. However, this trend was reversed as the Protestant Reformation demythologized the world, eliminated the ritual and sacramental manipulation of God, and restored the process of ethical rationalization.

Since what was pleasing to God could be codified, morality and ethics could become detached from the supernatural. The codes could be followed for their own sake and could even attract alternative justifications. For example, 'Do unto others as you would be done by' could be given an entirely utilitarian justification in a way that 'Placate this erratic God or suffer' could not. In that sense, the rationalizing tendency of Christianity turned against its progenitor.

A similar point can be made from the way in which people thought about various aspects of the social and material world. Science is not easy for cultures which believe that the world is pervaded by unpredictable spirits and divinities. Systematic exploration of regularities in the behaviour of matter requires the assumption that matter is indeed regular. It is hard to discover the laws of physics if one supposes that volume may be measured by the displacement of water one day but not the next. Such a culture may produce the odd Archimedes, but it retards the development of a community of scholars directing sustained effort to the study of the material world. In that sense the three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, by simplifying a supernatural menagerie to one God and supposing him distant from the material world, made way for modern science.

The less that God was directly implicated in the day-to-day operations of the universe, the freer people were to explore that universe and elaborate theories of its operations that paid only lip service to the creator. Many early scientists assumed the existence of God and wanted to demonstrate the wonders of his creation, but the development of a healthy tradition of rationalistic scrutiny in time subverted what it had been intended to protect. By freeing the way for empirical enquiry, and for pragmatic and instrumental treatment of this world, the Judeo-Christian tradition created its own problems.

A related sense of rationalization involves the pursuit of technically efficient means of securing this-worldly ends. One

of its most potent forms is technology. Technically efficient machinery and procedures reduced uncertainty and thereby reduced reliance upon faith. The domain over which religion offered the most compelling explanations and the most predictable outcomes shrank. Innovating farmers found that crop rotations did more to clean the soil of weeds and parasites than did prayer. The growth of technical rationality gradually displaced supernatural influence and moral considerations from ever wider areas of public life, replacing them by considerations of objective performance and practical expedience.

The Reformation played a particular role in demystifying the world. Just as the medieval Church retarded and temporarily reversed the ethical rationalization inherent in Judaism and early Christianity, so the development of science was retarded by the Church's attempts to impose orthodoxy on all fields of thought. The ability of powerful religious institutions to prevent the growth of rational scientific exploration of the world will be considered again in the final chapter. All that needs to be said here is that the Reformation, by breaking the power of the Church, made way for a variety of thought and for the questioning of tradition which is so vital to natural science.

I have deliberately placed science and technology after structural and social differentiation in my explanation of secularization because I want to make clear the relatively small part played by science in displacing religion. Often science and religion are seen as competing systems of explanation and it is supposed that the latter was pushed out by the former. Of course, many of the beliefs of the early Christians have been shown to be wrong. The earth is round and not flat. The earth moves round the sun, not vice versa. The earth and human life are vastly older than the ages traditionally taken from biblical accounts. While scientists recognize that there are still huge gaps in our knowledge, there is a consensus that an evolutionary model along the lines of Darwinism offers a better explanation of the origins of species than does the account of divine creation in seven days given in the Old Testament book of Genesis. For all that, science probably did little direct damage to religion. Nineteenth-century arguments between Darwinists and church leaders may have gripped the middle classes, but they hardly penetrated to ordinary people.

Anyway, to insist that one set of beliefs lost popularity because another proved it wrong is to miss the difference between truth and plausibility. There are all sorts of ways in which we can insulate our beliefs from apparently contradicting evidence. We can avoid hearing the troublesome evidence or we can dismiss it by blackening the character of those who bring the bad news. For example, many American fundamentalists accuse evolutionists of being sexually promiscuous and left-wing. But such neutralizing strategies require social support. The isolate who stands against the consensus is a lunatic and will be treated as such. To maintain a shared belief system one needs a social strategy that organizes shared defences against the cognitive threats. Where such resources are available, new ideas, no matter that they might be better supported by the evidence, can readily be ignored or rejected. It is far less easy to avoid being influenced by widespread and powerful, but subtle, assumptions about the nature of the world.

The relationship between science and secularization can best be put this way: religion is challenged less by specific scientific discoveries than by the underlying logic of science (indeed, of rationality). Science and technology have given us a notion of cause and effect that makes us look first for the natural causal explanation of an event. When an aeroplane crashes with the loss of many lives we ask not what moral purpose the event had but what was its cause. And in so far as we keep finding those causes (a loose engine nut or a terrorist bomb), we are not prevented, but we are subtly discouraged, from seeking the moral or religious significance.

Science also undermines the notion of a fixed and unchanging truth. Where religion looks back, science looks forward. The fundamentalist seeks explanations of new events by prayerfully rereading the Bible or the Qur'an. The scientist constantly seeks to explain better what we thought we understood. The religious scholar derives benefit from reading the ancient books of his tradition. For the scientist, old books have value only as historical curiosities. Indeed, modern science is now developing so fast that it outstrips the pace of conventional publishing. Leading journals use the Internet and no longer produce paper editions. Although science is, strictly speaking, anti-relativist in that it supposes that we can rationally improve our knowledge and that it is possible to distinguish between good and bad explanations, science does

undermine the notion of an unchanging and authoritative knowledge. It makes truth provisional.

As David Martin (1969: 116) says, with the growth of science and technology 'the general sense of human power is increased, the play of contingency is restricted, and the overwhelming sense of divine limits which afflicted previous generations is much diminished'.

In the contemporary West, religion is most often and extensively used for the areas of human life over which control has not been established by technology: personal unhappiness, extreme stress and the like. When we have tried every cure for cancer, some of us pray. Even committed religious believers suppose that a scientific research programme is more likely than a mass prayer meeting to produce a cure for Aids. Our space for the divine is thus much smaller than that of preindustrial man. This is not to trivialize the events and problems which still cause many of us to turn to God. The unexpected death of a loved one or the injustice of some act of suffering may be enormously important to us. In that sense the 'gaps' in our rational control and intellectual understanding of our world may loom very large. But they do so in an individualized manner, in legal language 'severally' rather than 'jointly'. They are personal, not social problems.

To summarize, I am suggesting that the effect of science and technology on the plausibility of religious belief is often misunderstood. The clash of ideas between science and religion is less significant than the change in their relative scope, the power technology has given us to resist fate and the more subtle impact of naturalistic ways of thinking about the world. Science and technology have not made us atheists. Rather, the fundamental assumptions that underlie them has made us less likely than our forebears to entertain the notion of the divine.

Modernization, egalitarianism and cultural diversity

One very important element of modernization has not yet been explicitly laid out: egalitarianism. The link between modernization and inequality is paradoxical. We need not

explore the many differences between modern and traditional sources of power to note that, at the same time as creating classes shaped by what Marx called the forces of production, industrialization brought a basic egalitarianism. As with all the previously mentioned social changes, it is important to recognize here the contribution of religious innovation. Although the Protestant Reformers were far from being democrats, one major unintended consequence of their religious revolution was a profound change in the importance of the individual. By denying the special status of the priesthood and by removing the possibility that religious merit could be transferred from one person to another (by, for example, the living pious saying masses for the souls of the impious dead), Luther and Calvin reasserted what was implicit in early Christianity: that we are all equal in the eyes of God. For the Reformers that equality lay in our sinfulness and in our obligations, but the idea could not indefinitely be confined to what we owed. Equality in the eyes of God laid the foundations for equality in the eyes of man and before the law. Equal obligations opened the way for equal rights.

Although the details of his case need not concern us here, Gellner (1991; 1994) has plausibly argued that egalitarianism is a requirement for industrialization; a society sharply divided between high and low cultures and frozen in a rigid social structure could not develop a modern economy. The spread of a shared national culture required the replacement of a fixed hierarchy of stations and estates by more flexible class divisions. Economic development brought change and the expectation of further change. And it brought occupational mobility. People no longer did the job they always did because their family always did that job. As it became more common for people to better themselves, it also become more common for them to think better of themselves. However badly paid, the industrial worker did not see himself as a serf.

Even if we do not believe that economic development *required* egalitarianism, there is no doubt that the former permitted the latter. The medieval serf occupied just one role in a single all-embracing hierarchy and that role shaped his entire life. A tin miner in Cornwall in 1800 might have been sore oppressed at work but in the late evening and on Sunday he could change his clothes and his persona to be

Methodist lay preacher. As such he was a man of prestige and standing. The possibility of such alternation marks a crucial change. Once occupational status became freed from an entire all-embracing hierarchy and became task-specific, it was possible for people to occupy different positions in different hierarchies. In turn, that made it possible to distinguish between a role and the person who played it. Roles could still be ranked and accorded very different degrees of respect, power or status, but the people behind the roles could be seen as in some sense equal. To put it the other way round, so long as people were seen in terms of just one identity, the powerful could not accept that we were fundamentally the same. For a king to treat a peasant and his feudal superior alike threatened to turn the entire world upside down and destroy the position of kingship. But once an occupational position could be judged apart from the person who filled it, it became possible to maintain a necessary order in the factory, for example, while operating a different system of judgements outside the work context. The mine-owner could rule over his workforce but sit alongside (or even under) his foreman in the local church. Of course, power and status are often transferable. Being a force in one sphere increases the chances of influence in another. The mine-owner could expect to dominate the congregation but he would do so only if his wealth was matched by manifest piety. If it was not, his fellow churchgoers could respond to any attempt to impose his will by defecting to a neighbouring congregation.

To recap, the fragmentation of the all-embracing feudal order with its organic communities allowed the radical individualism inherent in the Protestant Reformation to emerge in three closely related ideas: that everyone was in some deep sense much of a muchness, that the individual was (at least in theory) autonomous and that societies would have to deal primarily with individuals and not communities. The practical consequences of these ideas were slow to be worked out and many changes came only with considerable struggle and blood-letting. The old elites were not keen to give up their powers, but gradually the principles of egalitarianism and individual autonomy gave birth to the rights to own property, to be free from the arbitrary exercise of power and to select one's political leaders. Sadly, on achieving liberty for

themselves many rising groups were less than keen to allow others behind them to benefit. Nonetheless, the modernization of the economy allowed the gradual expansion of the notion of rights and of the scope of those rights.

Modernization brought with it increased cultural diversity in three different ways. First, populations moved and brought their language, religion and social mores with them into a new setting. Second, the expansion of the increasingly expansive nation-state meant that new groups were brought into the state. But even without such changes in the population that had to be encompassed by the state, modernization, as I have argued above, created cultural pluralism through the creation of classes and class fragments with increasingly diverse interests. Especially in Protestant societies, where such class formation was accompanied by the generation of competing sects, the result was a paradox. At the same time as the nation-state was attempting to create a unified nation out of thousands of small communities and to impose a national culture, it was having to come to terms with increasing religious diversity. The result was that, for Britain and the United States, religion could no longer be at the heart of that new national identity. Or, more exactly, it could only occupy that position if it was stripped of most of its specific content. Thus the founding fathers of the United States could talk of 'one nation under God' but the God in question could not be that of any particular church or sect and within a century the God that the nation could plausibly be under could not even be Christian.

Egalitarianism is crucial to the story because it eliminates what was until very recently the most common human response to diversity. A society in which almost everyone shares a particular religion can give that faith pride of place in its operations. An authoritarian hierarchical society can ignore or suppress religious minorities (and even religious majorities). Dissenters need not be tolerated; they can be massacred or exiled. But a society that is becoming increasingly egalitarian and democratic and more culturally diverse has to place social harmony above religious orthodoxy. The result was an increasingly neutral state. Religious establishments were abandoned altogether (as in the case of the constitution of the United States) or were neutered in practice (the British

case). As already noted, this reduced the social power and scope of organized religion. While freedom from embarrassing entanglements with secular power may have allowed churches to become more clearly spiritual, their removal from the centre of public life reduced their contact with, and relevance for, the general population.

Once established, social innovations can become attractive in their own right, even in circumstances that do not possess the characteristics that made those innovations necessary. The gradual rise of religious liberty in Britain, the radical secularism of the French Revolution, and the combination of the two in the foundation of the United States, created the general notion that a modern state should permit religious liberty. Hence by the end of the nineteenth century one finds political reformers in the Lutheran countries of Scandinavia, which had very little diversity, nonetheless arguing for religious toleration as part of a package of democratic reforms.

The separation of Church and state was one consequence of diversity. Another, equally important for understanding secularization, was the break between community and religious world view. In sixteenth-century England, every significant event in the life cycle of the individual and the community was celebrated in church and given a religious gloss. Birth, marriage and death, and the passage of the agricultural seasons, because they were managed by the Church, all reaffirmed the essentially Christian world view of the people. The Church's techniques were used to bless the sick, sweeten the soil and increase animal productivity. Every significant act of testimony, every contract and every promise was reinforced by oaths sworn on the Bible and before God. But beyond the special events that saw the majority of the people in the parish troop into the church, a huge amount of credibility was given to the religious world view simply through everyday social interaction. People commented on the weather by saying 'God be praised', and on parting wished each other 'God speed' or 'Goodbye' (which we often forget is an abbreviation for 'God be with you').

The consequences of increasing diversity for the place of religion in the life of the state or even the local community are fairly obvious. Equally important but less often considered are the social-psychological consequences of increasing

diversity; it reduces the certainty that believers can readily accord their religion.

Any set of ideas is at its most convincing when the ideas are universally shared. Then they are not beliefs at all; they are just an accurate account of how things are. The elaboration of alternatives provides a profound challenge. Of course, believers need not fall on their swords just because they discover that others disagree with them. Where clashes of ideologies occur in the context of social conflict (of which more below), or when alternatives are associated with people who can be plausibly described as a lower order and thus need not be seriously entertained, the cognitive challenge can be dismissed. But as I noted with regard to science, such immunizing strategies only work for as long as they are widely shared. They are thus undermined by the same condition – diversity – they were designed to treat. And that condition is more virulent when religious diversity is internally produced through fragmentation within one society than when it comes through migration or state expansion. When it is your own people who deviate, it is less easy to demonize or dismiss them.

Once a common religious tradition fragments into competing alternatives that have some fairly obvious self-interested connection to the social classes that support them, then the human origins of religion become all too apparent. Even believers begin to suspect that they have chosen God rather than the other way round.

Modernization and gender roles

One of the most powerful and far-reaching consequences of increasing egalitarianism is the change in the social position of women. Pre-modern societies ascribe very clearly different roles and rights to men and women. For very many reasons, modernization undermined sex segregation. Once it became common currency, the language of democracy could not easily be confined to men. In a simple economy where the household is a major part of the social organization, a gender division of labour makes sense. It is less well suited to a world of towns and factories. Improved health and prosperity reduced family

size and created an ever larger proportion of women who were not yet, were no longer, or never would be, mothers. Later changes in the nature of modern work removed men's competitive advantage over women.

It is not just misogyny that explains why religious conservatives have had great difficulty in coming to terms with the change in gender relations. Or, at least, the misogyny has religious roots. We do not need to explain it (for that would take another book); we need only appreciate that all religions have at the heart of their social teachings a considerable, one might say obsessive, interest in sexuality and the family. Having spent centuries elaborating theological defences of particular patterns of gender relations, religions find it harder to change their stance on gender relations while insisting that nothing much has changed than similarly to change their attitudes to race or class. No major strand of Christianity has ever made it a core belief that only white people or rich people can be clerics; for most of their centuries-long histories Christian churches excluded women from the ordained ministry. No widely used Christian liturgy has required blacks or working-class people to accept domination by whites or by the bourgeoisie. The standard Christian marriage services did precisely that for wives and husbands.

That gender looms larger than race or class in religious considerations is hardly surprising. In most societies, race and class are shifting and ambiguous categories, of concern to only some people and in some places. But gender relations are of vital importance to almost everyone. Add to this the fact that the household is where one generation passes its faith to the next and we can readily see why fundamentalists are so particularly opposed to changes in the roles of men and women.

Modernization: a First World summary

I will recap the above by drawing out the more abstract principles that underlie the changes. One key feature of modern societies that fundamentalists find objectionable is the notion that people should be accorded the same freedoms irrespective

of their faith and their piety. We now take this for granted, but most religious traditions for most of human history have found abhorrent the notion that the godly and the ungodly, the righteous and the sinner, should be equally favoured.

Equally abhorrent is the idea that life can be lived in discrete compartments, that you may choose your spouse on the grounds of religion but not your workmates. Or that you may sing God's praises in church but not in school or at work. Even for those who accept it, the division between the public and the private creates difficulties because it requires agreement on where the boundary lies. We might agree that a large company or a state agency should not be allowed to pick its workforce by colour or creed and that individuals may choose their friends by any principle they like, but can we permit a football club such discrimination? We may accord a Mormon the freedom to raise his children without interference in his Mormon faith, but does that entitle him to practise polygamy? Does the principle of liberty in the private sphere allow him to object to school textbooks that are explicitly or implicitly critical of Mormonism?

Those are questions about how we reconcile conflicting imperatives within the basic division between the private and the public. But that division itself is anathema to religious conservatives because it shortens the reach of religion. The United States allows the Mormon to structure his private world around the principles of Mormonism but requires him to accept that the Mormon god does not rule in the public world. For those who place social harmony before religious imperatives, compartmentalization is the solution to the potential conflict inherent in cultural diversity. For those who would place obedience to God above all else, compartmentalization is the problem.

It has its cognitive parallel at the level of epistemology or theories of how we know the truth. It is possible to tolerate error without giving up the right to distinguish it from truth, to say that I am sure I am right but I do not mind your being wrong. But in practice the social grounds for tolerating competing views weakens our certainty and eventually our faith in the possibility of certainty. Modern societies are relativistic in two senses. Most obviously they have intellectual elites that argue that truth is impossible. Postmodernists insist that,

because we are incapable of freeing ourselves from our own cultural preconceptions, biases and interests, objective and neutral knowledge is simply impossible. First popular in the arts, where it was expressed as the assertion that one could not establish a correct interpretation of the text of a Jane Austen novel, for example, or rank works of art on some neutral scale of virtue, relativism has now spread. We can now find scholars arguing that scientific knowledge can have no claims to predominance because it is just yet another socially constructed cultural product. The influence of intellectuals is less than they think or wish, but self-conscious postmodernism is a symptom of the greater underlying change: the widespread acceptance of a vague relativism. This takes the form of supposing that it is somehow undemocratic to argue with others. Although it is rarely put so bluntly, it is an operating procedure of much social life that no one has the right to contradict anyone else. My views are as good as yours. If it works for you, then that is your truth. I may have a different truth but that is my business, not yours. Even those people who are charged with producing authoritative knowledge are often hesitant. Consider the nature of much mass-media reporting. Obviously there are many facets of life that are reasonably viewed as arenas for choice between equally valid contending views. It has therefore long been common for political reports to balance the pronouncements of the governing party with the ripostes of the opposition. But that notion of balance is now often applied to scientific and medical controversies. Rather than seek to discover the truth, reporters merely present alternatives. Although this may not be their intention, the result is to suggest that we cannot distinguish truth and falsehood; there is just opinion.

The practical attitude of relativism is obviously useful for culturally diverse societies that permit individual freedom. It greases the wheels of social interaction and reduces friction. But it is a major threat to all monotheistic religious traditions. Allowing that you can have your God and I can have mine prevents us having to argue about who is right, but for religious conservatives it is an unacceptable compromise because it effectively denies that any religion is true. This is the well-known paradox of liberalism. It is accepted as fair only by liberals and excludes conservatives who insist that there is a

truth and they have it. Practical relativism does not contest any particular interpretation of the Bible or the Qur'an. It does worse: it denies that such texts can have a correct interpretation. The committed humanist or rationalist at least does religion the credit of bothering to argue with it. The de facto modern relativist trivializes religion.

We should add to all of the above the final affront to the Christian fundamentalist: almost all the churches have colluded in the above changes. Like an army in slow retreat, they repeatedly tried to create new defensive lines, but by the middle of the twentieth century most Western churches and denominations had come to terms with the secular state, had accepted the public–private divide, had scaled down their truth claims and had become de facto relativists, and were well on the way to ordaining women. The focus of religious activity shifted from the social world to the individual self. The primary purpose of religion used to be to glorify God; personal contentment, happiness, good health and wealth were fortunate accidental consequences, to be hoped for but not necessarily expected. Now its primary purpose is therapy. Religion has been displaced and denuded, and the guardians of orthodoxy have either actively promoted the new order or acquiesced in it.

Modernization in the Third World

In the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a marked change in the attitude of western scholars to what has been variously called the Third or under-developed world. In the nineteenth century the white man's burden was to feel responsible for civilizing what he took to be the backward races. At the start of the twenty-first century, the burden of the white middle classes is to feel responsible for (in the sense of feeling guilty about) the manifest defects of the newly independent states. In the next chapter we shall see examples of the Western powers exploiting countries of the Middle East and insensitively imposing elements of their own cultures on those societies. But we shall also see examples of local elites deliberately espousing Western values and culture, and the sorts of changes

described above occurring spontaneously in new settings. I mention this because there is a danger that concentrating solely on the detrimental effects of Western imperialism may lead us to accept uncritically the claim of some Islamic fundamentalists that everything to which they object has an external cause.

Social change is usually so complicated that we cannot readily divide what happened in, for example, the Ottoman Empire (and the political entities that succeeded it) between 1900 and 1950 into things that occurred because of Western interference and things that would have happened anyway. Nonetheless we can be fairly confident that at least some of the social innovation in Islamic countries was indigenous. In many countries democratization has been accompanied by increasing religious tolerance. Economic development, at least for the elites, has been accompanied by a decline in religious orthodoxy. But the secular culture of the West has also been imported into, and intruded upon, the Third World. Changes that took centuries in the West and that occurred sufficiently slowly for them to appear natural have been imposed on the East in a few decades. In England the change from feudal monarchy to parliamentary democracy took two hundred years, if one dates it from the execution of Charles I in 1649 to Russell's Reform Bill of 1832, and a longer trajectory is plausible. In the 1800s, before they lost their nerve and became more interested in respectability than egalitarianism, the Methodists allowed women to preach. Women did not get the vote until a century later. In parts of the Arab world and Asia similar changes were compressed into a single life span.

Development in the Third World was thus not a slow process of social institutions adapting to economic progress or to changes in each other. Rather than proceeding evenly, it was frantic, spasmodic and abrupt. The distinction between natural and unnatural is easily exaggerated, but we can appreciate the point that Western interference, irrespective of motives, could be profoundly distorting. In the West religious toleration was a necessary accommodation to religious diversity. The signatories to the US constitution had learnt the value of religious toleration from the unhappy experience of the Puritans in England, from conflicts in the early colonies

and from the fact that, although most of the colonies had 'state' churches, they were not the same church. But where the vast majority of the population are, for example, Sunni Muslim and the ruling elites at least believe that their own tradition provides a satisfactory way of dealing with religious minorities within their boundaries, then Western notions of toleration will be seen as an unwarranted imposition.

Rapid social change will always be traumatic for some social groups. In stable societies expectations and explanations will correspond to opportunities and realities; notions of what life should be like will roughly fit with the actuality. Even those people who benefit from change will feel dislocated by it and will need to adjust their culture to accord with the new circumstances, and that is as true for change that is generated by indigenous forces as for change that is imposed from outside.

The simple point to be made in any comparison between the Western powers and the Islamic countries is that the latter for most of the twentieth century have suffered from a variety of additional difficulties that have created a market for radical reconstructions of the dominant culture. As my main purpose is to explain fundamentalism, it does not much matter where one lays the blame for these things.

In most Islamic countries there was (and still is) little scope for popular political participation. The structures of the modern state were borrowed from the West but operated by clan-based monarchies or military dictatorships. Increasing wealth was concentrated in the hands of very small ruling elites. Crucial to the 'great Western transformation' was the growth of an entrepreneurial middle class. Though we can argue the fine detail of the extent of social mobility in Britain or the United States, the basic fact of considerable mobility is undeniable. In most Islamic societies increasing national wealth simply increased the gulf between the now-very-rich rulers and the masses. The absence of a middle class was reflected in the very limited opportunities for higher education and professional training. As Saudi Arabia or Iran lacked universities and technical institutions, opportunities for their own people were limited and those people who were wealthy enough to afford such training for their children had to send them to the West, which was both a point

under-developed status and a cause of the rapid intrusion of alien culture (Lawrence 1990: 237).

More will be said about this in the next chapter. The point to make here is that the many changes which religious conservatives in the West disliked also affected the rest of the world. And they did so in a manner which was much more disruptive because they occurred very rapidly and unevenly, so that social institutions did not have time to evolve in a manner which kept them in balance and cultures did not have time to adjust to accommodate the new order. In addition, the military and economic power of the West was such that, by the time the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918, the Islamic world was additionally burdened with being on the wrong end of an invidious comparison. As well as having the specific problems of being part of the Third World, it had the general problem of being aware of its relative under-performance.

It is worth adding one unusually specific element of friction between the West and Islamic societies to this general background: the establishment of the state of Israel. When Osama Bin Laden refers to the United States and European countries as crusaders, he is able to link across centuries an ancient and a contemporary battle. Although many Jews were sent into exile in the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries BC, the main dispersal dates to the Roman crushing of the Jewish revolt between 66 and 70 AD. The original Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were attempts by European Christians (especially the Franks) to regain Palestine for Christianity rather any attempt to promote the interests of the Jews. The current state of Israel has its origins in the migration of Zionist groups in the late nineteenth century and in the decision in 1917 of the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to encourage the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, a preference which became effective policy after the First World War, when Britain was given a League of Nations mandate to administer that part of the now-defunct Ottoman Empire. In 1939 the British attempted to restrain Jewish migration to Palestine, but already levels had reached a point that made peaceful cohabitation between Jewish incomers and Arabs unlikely. In the face of attacks by Jewish terrorists, the British abandoned the mandate, and in creation of the state of Israel.

Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq declared war that has more or less persisted, sometimes hot, sometimes cold, to this day. One reason for Arab and Muslim hostility to Israel is its control of two sites sacred to Islam, the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, both located on the site of the first and second Jewish Temples. But the more pressing reasons are the displacement of almost a million Palestinians from Israel into the neighbouring states and the affront to Arab power, which has repeatedly failed to destroy Israel or even to force it back to its 1967 boundaries.

For most of the recent conflict, Palestinian resistance was led by the secular (and often left-leaning) Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Fatah party led by Yasser Arafat. Since the 1990s it has been increasingly displaced by Hamas (the name of which is an Arabic acronym meaning 'zeal' from the initials of the Islamic Resistance Movement). Hamas advocates jihad to destroy Israel and create an Islamic state in Palestine and, despite being Sunni and enjoying considerabe backing from rich Saudi Arabs, it is also funded by the Shi'ite regime in Iran.

For all that Islam in theory regards Judaism and Christianity as fellow religions, sharing a common descent from Abraham, Islamic fundamentalists are often anti-Semitic. President Ahmadinejad of Iran is far from alone in denying the fact of the Holocaust. The state of Israel is thus loathed because it displaced Arabs, because its survival shows the impotence of Muslim states, because it promotes the interests of Jews and, finally, because it is supported by the Great Satan. The United States not only gives vast sums of money to support Israel but it also acts as its protector of last resort. To which we might add that fundamentalist opposition, as examplified, for example by Osama Bin Laden, gains an additional emotional charge from the belief that the Arab states (and ultimately the Muslim religious leaders within those states who have acquiesced in this) have been corrupted by Western wealth and power into accepting Israel and abandoning the Palestinians.

Protestant fundamentalists have entered the field on the Israeli side. Many believe that crucial events of the end times (such as the battle of Armageddon) will occur on Israeli soil. Some hold that the building of the Third Temple in Jerusalem

will be a precursor to the Day of Judgement. Most others manage a general sympathy for the Jews. Although they have had little direct impact on US foreign policy, Protestant fundamentalists have probably played some part in reinforcing US commitment to Israel.

Thus a promise made almost absent-mindedly by a British politician in 1917 leads eventually to Islamic fundamentalists having a very specific focus for their hatred of the West.

Conclusion

We can trace two sorts of links between modernization and fundamentalism. The short route, which we shall illustrate with the example of Protestant fundamentalism in the United States, is a direct reaction to local and immediate change. Modernization creates the conditions for Islamic fundamentalism in two ways. Some of the social processes that have altered the nature and role of religion in the West have also affected Islamic countries; in that sense there are indigenous causes of Muslim fundamentalism. But modernization has also been thrust upon Islamic countries from the outside. That is, Islamic fundamentalism is a response both to the modernization of Islamic societies and to the influence of the West.

3
Islamic Fundamentalism

An excellent introductory book on Islam starts with a chronology of the major events in the religion's development and spread. The first item on the list was obvious: 'c. 570 CE Birth of the Prophet in Mecca'. The last was a surprise: '1998: Pakistan becomes the first Islamic country to test a nuclear weapon' (Elias 1999: 11). That stark sentence is a useful reminder of three things.

First, the relegation of religion to an inconsequential leisure pursuit is a peculiarly modern Western phenomenon. Religion used to matter a great deal and in most of the globe it still does. We will not understand Islamic fundamentalists unless we begin by remembering that Muslims once ruled large parts of the globe and that their domination was built on military power. Southern Spain in the eighth century was Islamic because Muslims from north Africa conquered it; it became Christian in the tenth century because Christians from northern Europe drove the Muslims out. Or, to make the point more generally, shifts in the distribution and popularity of the great world religions owe little to the modern notion of the converting individual and a great deal to coercion. Second, the reference to nuclear weapons reminds us of the attention-grabbing value of violence. Westerners became interested in Muslim fundamentalists when they took hostages and blew people up. Third, that Islam getting the bomb is deemed worthy of mention reminds us of the other ideologies that

already possessed it: capitalism and communism. The end of the twentieth century saw the collapse of the Soviet empire, and the disappearance of communism as a world force strengthened Islam in three ways. It removed one competitor, it gave an enormous morale boost to Osama Bin Laden and others who had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan and it created the potential for a number of new Islamic nation-states.

A brief history of Islam

Islam is a founded religion. Just as the Christian faith claims to complete and supersede the religion of the Jews, so the divine revelations received by a merchant in Mecca in the seventh century are held by Muslims to supersede both Judaism and Christianity and to release God's revelations from the distortions of the two earlier versions. Islam is thus not just another religion; it is a religion fundamentally at odds with the religions of the Jews and the Christians. It claims the same history and many of the same sacred places, which, as we saw with the Dome of the Rock/Temple Mount site in Jerusalem, is a recipe for conflict.

Muhammad believed that he had been chosen as a prophet 'to bring a divine message to humankind about the existence of a unique, all-powerful God, a warning of an impending doomsday and judgement, and an encouragement to live a virtuous life' (Elias 1999: 33). When the citizens of Mecca became concerned about his increasing influence, he and his followers moved to Yathrib (later renamed Medina). There Muhammad rose to become the social, religious and political leader of an entire community. Three times the Meccans attacked Medina. With each battle Muhammad became stronger and in 630 AD Mecca surrendered to the Prophet.

Under the title of Caliph, the leaders of Islam after Muhammad combined the roles of high priest and king. Over the next twenty-four years, as Islam grew and spread outside the Arab world, there were three such leaders. However, the lack of an agreed method for selecting the Caliph guaranteed trouble and it came when the fourth Caliph – Ali, son-in-law of the

Prophet – was assassinated. His son Hassan made an ineffectual claim to succeed and then retired from politics. Nineteen years later, Hassan's brother Hussayn tried to succeed to the Caliphate but gained little support. With a small band of followers, mostly members of the Prophet's family, he was killed at Kerbala.

The majority of Muslims, the Sunnis, accept the legitimacy of the Umayyad dynasty that succeeded the Prophet. The minority Shi'ite strand insists that the proper succession should be traced through Ali, Hassan and the martyr Hussayn. The Shi'ites are further divided according to which of the subsequent Imams (or leaders) they accept. The Zaydis, named after the first serious challenger to the Umayyads (who died in the effort) are now strong only in Yemen. The Isma'ilis take their name from Isma'il, who they believe should have been the rightful seventh Imam. They became extremely powerful in north Africa in the tenth century, but are now fragmented into disparate sects. The best known in the West is that led by the Aga Khan. The major Shi'ite line is known as 'Twelver Shi'ism' because it believes that the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, did not die in 874, but went into some form of supernatural hiding from which he will return as the Messiah at the end of the world.

There are two features of Islam that are particularly important for understanding fundamentalism. The first feature is the lack of a clear division between spiritual and religious power. Unlike Christianity, Islam achieved political power in the lifetime of its founder, and the original charismatic community did not have to develop an image of itself isolated from, or set against, the secular powers. There was thus no theoretical division between church and state.

The second feature is the centrality of the law. The revelations of the Prophet, codified in the Qur'an and in collections of sacred stories about him – the Hadith – combine both faith and morals; they are both doctrine and law. Strictly speaking, Islam does not have a clergy. Rather it is led by jurists who specialize in the law or Shari'a. In common with the more radical branches of Protestant Christianity, no distinct sacramental status separates those who preach or who lead in religious rituals from the laity. Preachers may be expected to be more learned and more competent than most of their

audience, but, at least in theory, they are not set apart by having a clearly different spiritual status.

Alongside the various sectarian divisions is the split between what Gellner has called high and low Islam. High Islam is carried by urban scholars, recruited mainly from the trading classes, and it reflects the tastes of the middle classes: order, rule observance, sobriety, learning and an aversion to hysteria and excess. It stresses the uniqueness of God, is suspicious of saint cults that create mediators between humankind and God, and is generally puritanical and legalistic. Low Islam (like popular Catholicism) is very different (Berkey 2003: 248–57). It stresses magic rather than learning, and religious ecstasy rather than rule observance. Its characteristic institution is the local saint cult (Gellner 1992: 11).

To return to the history, the Caliphate gradually declined in importance as the military commanders nominally under the authority of the Caliph grew in power, became kings and eventually created three great empires: the Persian, the Mogul, and the Ottoman. Given that some radical Muslims now present Islam as being essentially anti-imperialist, it is worth remembering that these great Muslim empires controlled large areas of the then known world. If one has to choose a single starting date, the relative decline of Islam can be traced to 1498, when Vasco Da Gama opened up trade to India via the Cape of Good Hope. The West's primacy in maritime trade laid the foundations for colonization as small bodies of troops were sent to protect distant trading posts and gradually became a permanent presence that spread inland.

In 1550 the Ottoman empire stretched as far as Hungary, and Muslim troops threatened Vienna, a city now seen as the heart of 'middle Europe'. But increasing Western wealth and the superior military power provided by its advances in science and technology pushed the Muslims back. By the end of the eighteenth century the Ottomans were well aware of their inferiority, and within the ruling classes there was a clear desire for reform.

> Things changed towards the end of the nineteenth century as more of the products of Western technology and industry became available. The rulers wanted to 'modernise' their countries; first it was armies and modern weapons of war, then

> railways, then the amenities of domestic life such as electricity and running water, then automobiles and factory equipment, and finally all the new inventions of the twentieth century. (Watt 1988: 46)

In all these developments, the religious institutions, wedded to an insistence that the revelations given to the Prophet represented the final word and the unchanging truth, got left behind. To give one powerful example, the Jews and Christians of the Ottoman Empire had printing presses from the early sixteenth century, but the Muslim leaders prevented printing in Turkish or Arabic until 1784.

Contact with the West led to the creation of new institutions in parallel to the existing religious ones. In the European parts of the Ottoman Empire there was pressure for new legal structures to supplement the Shari'a courts, because non-Muslims were not permitted to be heard as witnesses in those courts. New activities created new needs; commercial courts were established. In a process that parallels the structural differentiation described in the previous chapter, the Islamic jurists lost power, not so much because they were deliberately confronted by secularists (that came later) but because they did not adapt to the new circumstances and hence left social space that was filled by new and specialized secular institutions. In Turkey and Egypt the religious courts were left to deal with matters of personal relationships and sexual morality; again, a shrinking of the reach of religion that parallels what happened in Europe.

In a similar manner most Islamic countries developed secular education systems. The first innovations were in military training and diplomacy. The Ottomans established modern secular training colleges for their soldiers. In 1868, an Imperial Ottoman Lycée was established in Galatasaray to train government officials and diplomats. The language of instruction was French. Gradually secular provision was expanded to provide the full range of primary, secondary and university-level education, and the madrasas (or religious colleges) were sidelined.

This modernization was not forced on Islamic rulers by Western exploiters (though there was much exploitation). Rather it was positively solicited by the rulers of the countries

of the Ottoman Empire, who could see very clearly that the West was forging ahead and wanted to catch up.

It is not central to our concerns here, but we should note that the Ottoman Empire had a number of characteristics that weakened it in relation to the West. Its social structure and culture did little to encourage the growth of an entrepreneurial middle class: 'Ottomanism recognized only four dominant occupations, which were in government, religion, war and agricultural production' (Turner 1974: 131). The Ottomans compounded their economic weakness by disdaining foreigners and those who had much contact with them. As Weber pointed out, they shared the feudal contempt for 'bourgeois-commercial utilitarianism'. Feudal conduct 'leads to the opposite of the rational economic ethos and is the source of that nonchalance in business affairs which has been typical of all feudal strata' (Weber 1968: 1106). Hence trade and industry were increasingly left to non-Muslim subjects. Economic failure is a vicious circle. Once a country falls behind, the natural tendency of the rich is to buy in goods and services from more advanced economies, which in turn weakens native industries. In 1875 the Ottoman empire had to declare itself bankrupt.

Traditional Muslim thinking divided the world into two spheres. There was the sphere of Islam; the rest of the world was the sphere of war. It was the obligation of all Muslims to expand the former at the expense of the latter. Such a simple dichotomy made sense in the ninth or twelfth centuries, when Islam was on the rise and the sphere of Islam so large that very few Muslims had much contact with a non-Islamic world. It looked less simple in the nineteenth century, when the rulers of a decaying Ottoman Empire found themselves forced to recognize the economic, political and military superiority of the 'sphere of war'. In 1914 that metaphor became all too real with the outbreak of the First World War. In an attempt to free itself from dependence on the British and French, the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany, and a century of economic decline was ended with military defeat.

Out of that emerged the modern state of Turkey. Radical reformers led by Kemal Ataturk moved quickly to disestablish Islam and create a series of secular institutions. However, destroying the power of the religious institutions was about

the only part of the enforced modernization programme that worked. In Turkey, Egypt and other successors to the Ottoman Empire, formal democratic institutions struggled to become much more than a formality. A lack of native capital, the absence of an entrepreneurial culture and the unfavourable terms on which European capitalists were prepared to invest prevented the development of a healthy indigenous economy, and the response of the army commanders was to impose various forms of state control.

Iran

Iran is central to fundamentalism: its current Islamic Republic became a model for fundamentalists elsewhere and the genesis of its revolution shows starkly the social strains that can encourage a fundamentalist response.

Iran is unusual in that the strand of Islam that it follows is Shi'ite rather than Sunni. This is because at the start of the sixteenth century, Persia, the kingdom that forms the core of modern Iran, was conquered by a Shi'ite who encouraged the dispersed Shi'ite community to converge.

Iran was also unusual in the independence enjoyed by the religious leaders. In other Islamic states (such as twentieth-century Tunisia) religious taxes and endowments were controlled by the secular authorities, but the Imamites were able to maintain their political freedom because they first retained their financial independence. That practical advantage was underpinned by an element of Shi'ite thinking that accidentally created an unusually effective sort of social organization. Although in theory all Muslims are equal in the eyes of God, in practice those who were well trained in the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadith enjoyed considerable social influence. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the idea became widespread among Shi'ites that every Muslim should adopt a 'source of imitation', a Muslim scholar with the right to interpret the canon, and follow his judgements. Those leaders came to be ranked in an informal hierarchy of judicial insight. There thus evolved an all-encompassing but highly flexible hierarchy of authoritative religious leadership

that was able to provide an important counter to the power of the shahs of Iran. For example, in 1891 the Shah sold the tobacco concession to a British subject. The most influential 'source of imitation', Ayatollah Shirazi, declared that it was now unlawful for any Muslim to use or deal in tobacco. His lead was so widely followed that the monopoly had to be abandoned.

So Iran, unlike Turkey or Egypt, had a powerful religious institution. Iran was also different in the extent to which it had remained under-developed. Both Britain and Russia claimed influence over Iran and both were content to have it remain agrarian. Hence when in the 1930s its rulers began a programme of deliberate modernization, the speed of change was much greater than in many other Islamic countries. But the problem was one that was common to every country that bordered on or was in contact with the powers of the West. There were stark choices that mirrored the debates in nineteenth-century Russia between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. Should they admire or despise the power and wealth of their Western neighbours? If the former, should they seek to emulate the social organization and culture of the West in the hope of repeating its success, or should they turn their back on Western models and seek their own way forward through a revitalization of their traditional, religion-dominated culture?

Reza Khan, the army leader who became prime minister in 1921 and five years later made himself Shah, played off the secular nationalists against the religious traditionalists, but his preference was made clear when he chose the name 'Pahlavi' for his dynasty, a name that claimed links to the purported rulers of pre-Islamic Iran. The Shah was quickly successful in building a coherent nation-state. He expelled foreign troops from Iran's soil and established government control over what was, for its population, a vast country. The nomadic tribes were forced to settle permanently; when they protested, he turned the army on them. Resources were devoted to development projects such as the building of a trans-Iranian railway that both enhanced national prestige and consolidated a sense of national identity.

The Shah believed that economic development required social and cultural reform. He saw Arab dress as a sign of

backwardness, so he banned it. The chador was a sign of under-development, so he banned veiling. He established a network of secular courts and required that their judges hold a degree from his newly established Teheran University. He thus disbarred the graduates of the Islamic colleges. He further deprived them of income and social prestige by removing their power to notarize and register legal documents. When the religious leaders protested, he turned the army on them. In 1928, when Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Bafqi protested at the inappropriate dress of some female members of the royal household visiting the shrine at Qom, Reza Khan personally dragged the Ayatollah out of the shrine and beat him up. In 1935 Reza Khan sent the troops into a shrine at Masad to break up prayer meetings at which preachers were complaining about his modernizing schemes. Dozens of people were killed and thousands were injured.

By such actions the Shah thoroughly alienated the religious traditionalists, but his autocratic manner also alienated the secular nationalists who could have formed a popular support base. The power that he removed from the religious institution was not vested in secular democratic institutions; instead it was used to advance his royal prerogatives.

As the Ottoman Empire had done in 1914, and for the same reasons, the Shah backed the wrong side in the Second World War. The Shah's resentment at the power of Britain, the United States and Russia led him to support the Axis powers. Britain was worried that it might lose the Iranian oil that fuelled its ships; Russia was worried that the Germans might use Iran as the base for an attack on its southern flank. When the Shah refused the Allies the use of the trans-Iranian railway to supply the Red Army from the West, British and Soviet troops invaded and deposed the Shah, putting in his place his 22-year-old son, the second, and last, ruler of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The new Shah continued his father's programme of modernization and continued to be challenged by radicals. He was forced to accept Dr Mossadeqh as his prime minister, and in 1951 Mossadeqh nationalized the country's oil and removed it from the control of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. On its own, such a threat to Western interests might have been tolerated (though the British attempt to regain the Suez Canal by

force in 1956 suggests otherwise), but no one could remain neutral in the Cold War. The West was not prepared to see the Soviet Union extend its influence south to the Gulf. The Shah fled from his many opponents in 1953 and was restored to power by an army coup inspired and paid for by Britain and the United States. He pressed on with his 'White Revolution', ever more dependent on Western capital and political leadership. As the communists did in the Soviet Union and military leaders did in Egypt, Libya and Iraq, the Shah tried to create a series of all-embracing state-wide institutions of party, youth movement and women's movement. He wanted to replace Islam as the country's binding ideology with a secular nationalist movement with its own heroes, public holidays, slogans and songs. In 1975, the 2,500th anniversary of the Achaemmenids' pre-Islamic glory, he presided over an extravagant imperial spectacle at the palace of Darius and Xerxes in Persepolis (Smith 1997: 45). When these creations failed to win popular support, he became ever more dictatorial and repressive.

The impact of oil on the Islamic countries of the Middle East was paradoxical. Oil provided unprecedented wealth and that wealth could fund economic development, but it was always dependent progress: dependent on the goodwill and the skilled workers of the West. Oil could restore Muslim pride, but it also showed Muslims just how backward they had become since it could only be turned into wealth by co-operation with the Great Satan. With hindsight the impossibility of trying to do in one generation what had taken centuries in the West is all too obvious. The failure of the Shah's project was neatly captured by the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuciński:

> [T]he Shah is making purchases costing billions, and ships full of merchandise are steaming toward Iran from all the continents. But when they reach the Gulf it turns out that the small obsolete ports are unable to handle such a mass of cargo (the Shah hadn't realized that). Several hundred ships line up at sea and stay there for up to six months, for which delay Iran pays the shipping companies a billion dollars annually. Somehow the ships are unloaded, but then it turns out that there are no warehouses (the Shah hadn't realized). In the open air, in the desert . . . lie millions of tons of all sorts of cargo.

> Half of it, consisting of perishable foodstuffs and chemicals, ends up being thrown away. The remaining cargo now has to be transported into the depths of the country, and at this moment it turns out that there is no transport (the Shah hadn't realized) . . . Two thousand tractor-trailers are thus ordered from Europe, but then it turns out there are no drivers (the Shah hadn't realized). After much consultation, an airliner flies off to bring South Korean truckers from Seoul. Now the tractor-trailers start rolling and begin to transport the cargo, but once the truck drivers pick up a few words of Farsi, they discover they're making only half as much as the native truckers. Outraged they abandon their rigs and return to Korea. The trucks, unused to this day, still sit, covered with sand, along the Bander Abbas–Teheran highway. With time and the help of foreign freight companies, however, the factories and machines purchased abroad finally reach their appointed destinations. Then comes the time to assemble them. But it turns out that Iran has no engineers or technicians (the Shah hadn't realized). (Kapuciński 1985: 58–9)

The Shah had a natural reluctance to expand institutions of higher education in his own country: after all, they were hotbeds of sedition. So he spent millions having his young people trained abroad. Many did not come back. So he imported foreigners; after all, they were only there for the money and were hardly likely to plot against him. When the young Iranians did come back, many were carriers of the disease of 'occidentosis'.

Far more could be said about the White Revolution, but the problem is easy enough to describe. Oil wealth promised great material prosperity and delivered it to some, but it did so in ways that undermined socially significant parts of the traditional economy, in particular the small traders and craftsmen of the bazaar. Far from liberating Iran, oil increased its dependence on the West. Instead of promoting indigenous and sustainable development, it further distorted the economy. The failure of centrally directed development in Iran was more spectacular than in Nasser's Egypt, but it amounted to the same thing: statism had failed. And the Shah's response to increasing criticism was to strengthen the repressive state.

Religious opposition to Reza Khan and his son was slow to build and it was initially thoroughly self-interested.

Although they sympathized with the desire for national autonomy, the mullahs were not naturally on the side of the secular reformers. They were not democrats and were comfortable with authoritarian monarchs as long as they did not challenge the religious institution. The gradual expansion of the targets for religious opposition can be seen in the positions taken by Ayatollah Khomeini, a cleric of growing influence in the important spiritual centre at Qom.

Ayatollah Khomeini's first public criticisms were made in 1941, shortly after Reza Khan had been forced to abdicate. In 'The Unveiling of Secrets', he blamed the Shah's failures on his 'deliberate policy of ignoring Islamic principles and undermining the religious community' (Bakhash 1985: 23). Interestingly, at this stage he was not proposing that the religious leaders rule instead. He did not even suggest that they boycott the government: 'they consider even this rotten administration better than none at all' (Bakhash 1985: 23). The criticisms became more vehement and more wide-ranging in response to the Local Council law of 1962, which permitted women and non-Muslims to vote. The scholars of Qom mounted a campaign of opposition that forced the laws to be abandoned. What is noticeable about that campaign is Khomeini's elision of a number of traditional enemies. The new laws, he suggested, 'were perhaps drawn up by the spies of the Jews and the Zionists . . . The Koran and Islam are in danger. The independence of the state and the economy are threatened by a take-over of the Zionists, who in Iran have appeared in the guise of Baha'is' (in Bakhash 1985: 26). Understanding why the Baha'is should figure in such a list tells us a lot about fundamentalism. The product of an 1860s schism from the Iranian Shi'ite tradition, the Baha'is were the least troublesome minority in Iran, but they were particularly persecuted because they had once known the truth and abandoned it. They also gave a much higher position to women than most Islamic sects and discouraged polygamy.

I shall consider this further in the final chapter, but here we see clearly one of the hallmarks of fundamentalist thinking: the construction of a single enemy from a large number of separate irritants. The Shah's attacks on the *ulama*, the changes in gender relations, his tolerance of the Baha'is, the international weakness of Iran, the newly founded state of

Israel: all were construed as a single problem with a common cause.

The merging of enemies was made easier by the fact that they did sometimes come together in the world outside the imagination of the religious traditionalist. For example, in 1964 the Shah promoted the 'Status of Forces' law. Diplomatic immunity had long been a mainstay of international relations. So that they could without fear of reprisal represent the countries that sent them as ambassadors, small numbers of foreigners were granted immunity from the laws and customs of the host society. Under pressure from the United States, the Shah proposed to extend such immunities to large numbers of US and European soldiers stationed in Iran. The ayatollahs took this is an insult both to Islam and to national pride and sought to mobilize public opinion against the new law.

An important encouragement to militancy in Iran was the worldwide wave of movements for independence from colonial rule that shook Africa and Asia. Particularly influential in importing the international revolutionary spirit into Iran was Ali Shariati, who studied in Paris in the early 1960s and there met Franz Fanon and other intellectuals who were influential in the Algerian fight for independence from France. Shariati translated Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* into Farsi. On his return to Iran he was harassed by the regime but was able to lecture and spread his teachings by means of tape recordings for eight years before he was imprisoned by the Shah. Shariati's innovation was to radicalize Islamic revivalism by linking it to international anti-imperialism. He argued that the struggle for social justice was the true essence of Islam. Although this language had its dangers for them, the ayatollahs saw its advantage in allowing them to claim leadership of a spectrum of anti-Shah movements. Khomeini, for example, said, 'Islam is the religion of militant individuals who are committed to truth and justice. It is the religion of those who desire independence. It is the school of those who struggle against imperialism' (in Watt 1988: 135). For the ayatollahs, Western imperialism had triumphed, not because its technology and social organization had given it superior military and economic might but because Islamic leaders had betrayed the faith. As one put it,

> Islam was defeated by its own rulers, who ignored Divine Law, in the name of Western-style secularism. The West captured the imagination of large sections of our people. And that conquest was far more disastrous for Islam than any loss of territory. It is not for the loss of Andalusia [a reference to the Moors being driven out of Spain] that we ought to weep every evening – although that remains a bleeding wound. Far greater is the loss of sections of our own youth to western ideology, dress, music and food. (In Taheri 1987: 13)

The details of growing opposition to the Shah are complex, but the causes of unrest are simple. His White Revolution raised expectations, and threatened traditional occupational groups and networks, but failed ultimately to provide sufficient rewards to win popular support. The fundamentalists responded to the Shah's attempts to create a modern bureaucratically rational state by creating a national network of small groups, often meeting in private homes. That network became the framework within which the disaffected and uprooted could create a sense of self-worth. From that base the fundamentalists moved into the public sphere by taking over mosques and by promoting the role of youthful vigilantes who, often with none-too-subtle coercion, 'visited' people to ensure their mosque attendance and adherence to Islamic requirements. They also created alternative institutions: Islamic banks, sex-segregated student buses, and self-help groups. They persuaded people to bypass the state's secular courts and settle their disputes by the traditional appeal to the judgements of trusted Islamic jurists.

Iranian fundamentalism was not conservative or traditional. It was not a return to the past, the revenge of the countryside on the city. The fundamentalists used the past as a source of rhetoric and symbolism, but their religion was not the magical saint cults of the villages. Although the core of their critique of the Shah was that 'occidentosis' or 'westoxification' was a disease caused by forgetting the country's Islamic past, the fundamentalists did not seek to turn the clock back. Just as the Protestant Reformers had advertised what was in fact a radical programme as a return to the spirit of primitive Christianity, so the ayatollahs invoked the past while preaching a radical reform of Islam and promoting the society-wide imposition of puritanical high Islam. Iranian

fundamentalism was the equivalent of Oliver Cromwell's militant Protestantism (Gellner 1992: 15). A number of irreversible social trends – urbanization, political centralization, incorporation in wider markets, labour migration – were moving people away from their old world and weakening the local paternalistic social ties that sustained the old religion. Had the White Revolution succeeded in meeting the aspirations it raised, then Westernization might have succeeded (as it did to a much greater extent in Turkey, for example). It failed, and the Shah's only response was increased repression. People were in the market for a new analysis of, and a solution to, their problems. Their traditional leaders, the ayatollahs, provided it and they did so by reconstructing the past.

In retrospect what is striking about the Iranian Revolution is the brittle nature of the Shah's repressive regime. Through the 1970s, his secret police had been feared as being as brutal and as effective as anything created in communist Eastern Europe, but when the secular and religious opposition movement finally combined under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, then in exile in France, the state collapsed, and in 1979 the Shah of Shahs fled Iran.

As soon as the revolution succeeded the secular–religious coalition began to unravel. Once in power the fundamentalists turned against the secular radicals and against other Islamic groups that did not share Khomeini's commitment to the creation of a rigorously Islamic state. Their opposition movement had been built on a network of popular social ties that, in contrast to the bureaucratic state, could be described as 'civil society', but once in power they preserved the state structures created by the Shah and turned them into a vehicle for the imposition of the Shari'a.

> The fundamentalists' greatest services to civil society are rendered in opposition . . . they never envision the dismantling or gross enfeeblement of the state . . . one has to keep intact the essentials of state-centralized authority in order to transform it into an instrument for the implementation of Islamic law. (Sivan 1992: 107)

As has already been noted, a revitalized religious tradition was not the only possible response to the social strains of

under-development. An alternative was a secular pan-Arab nationalism that enjoyed some success in Egypt under Nasser in the 1950s and that was developed into Ba'athism, an ideology that combined pan-Arabism with lip service to Islamic culture. Although Ba'athism was intended as a unifying creed, when the armies of Syria and Iraq established Ba'athist regimes they quickly become chauvinistic. The pan-Arab rhetoric could not disguise a more conventional interpretation of nationalism. As about half of Iraq's Arab population was Shi'ite rather than Sunni, and had frequently provided a home for Iranian exiles, Iran's Islamic revolutionaries saw Iraq as the obvious next venue for their international revival of Islamic power. Their attempts to promote revolution foundered on the rocks of nationalism and in 1980 Iran and Iraq went to war. After seven years of inconclusive conflict the United States began to exert severe pressure on Iran, and in August 1988 Iran finally accepted a UN resolution that ended the war.

Almost twenty years later Iran was able to export its Islamic Revolution to Iraq, an unanticipated consequence of a clash of Iraqi, Sunni fundamentalist and US ambitions; the actions of Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden and George W. Bush combined to give Iran a quite unexpected opportunity. In 1990 Saddam invaded Kuwait, and many feared that he planned to also take the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. The following January a coalition of troops from thirty-four countries, led by the United States, expelled the Iraqis from Kuwait, but stopped short of toppling Saddam. At this time Bin Laden was still on close terms with members of the Saudi royal family; he had warned of Saddam's ambitions and, to discourage reliance on infidel aid, he had offered to repeat his Afghan success in raising volunteers against him. It is testimony to the consistency of his ideology that the United States' part in protecting Saudi Arabia did nothing to weaken his hatred of the crusaders (Wright 2006: 156–9). A decade after the first Gulf War Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four aircraft, flying two of them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. The first response of the United States was to attack Afghanistan, where Al-Qaeda had its centre and its greatest influence. The second was to plan the invasion of Iraq. There was never any significant connection between Iraq

and Bin Laden, but the general climate of the 'war on terror' offered US conservatives an opportunity to advance their plan to reconstruct the Middle East. The logic was this. The best defence against Islamic extremism was for Muslim states to become prosperous liberal democracies. 'Regime change', as it was politely termed, in Iraq would provide a model which its neighbours would emulate and everyone would live happily ever after (and, no small point, the West's access to Arab oil would be guaranteed).

In 2003, the United States and Britain, with token support from a handful of other nations, invaded Iraq and changed the regime. Unfortunately, the result was a rapid degeneration into what, if the violence had followed fewer fault lines, would be called civil war. The Americans were treated, not as liberators, but as oppressors. Former supporters of the Saddam regime started a guerrilla war against the occupying forces and attacked Kurds and Shi'ites. Groups such as Al-Qaeda joined in. It was hoped that the Shi'ites would welcome the US intervention: after all, it offered an historical opportunity to restore the balance after the Saddam regime had privileged Saddam's fellow Sunnis and members of his tribe. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani attempted to persuade the many Shi'ite parties and factions to form a common front for elections and to resist the temptation of retaliation against Sunni violence, but, when order was not restored and the perpetual violence produced some thousand dead every month, he gradually lost influence to more radical voices, such as that of the young cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. Al-Sadr comes from a powerful clerical dynasty; his father, the Grand Ayatollah Muhammad al-Sadr, was murdered in 1999 by agents presumed to be acting for Saddam. Al-Sadr wanted to create an Islamic Republic; al-Sistani took the more moderate position of arguing that simply allowing democracy to take its course would create a polity which would reflect the Islamic culture of the majority of its people.

If Iraq does manage to create a stable democracy within its 2006 borders, Shi'ites will be the largest religious bloc and clerics such as al-Sadr will enjoy considerable influence. If Iraq breaks up, Shi'ites will have their own state. In either case, Iran will have considerably expanded its power. It may also shortly acquire an effective nuclear weapon. Although

the government of President Ahmadinejad (who was a radical student leader at the time of the Revolution) faces considerable economic difficulties, the thirtieth anniversary of the Iranian Revolution will see the ayatollahs firmly in command.

However, it is worth remembering the spiritual agenda of the Revolution. The ayatollahs largely won the political battle, but their political success seems to have had the opposite of the desired impact on personal piety. Individual beliefs are always hard to measure and attendance at Friday prayers does not have quite the status for a Muslim that church attendance has for a Christian, but nonetheless mosque attendance is a useful measure and it shows a significant decline since the fevered days of the Revolution (Kazemipur and Rezaei 2003). Compared with Indonesia and Pakistan, where claimed weekly mosque attendance was over 50 per cent in 2003, Iran's 28 per cent is low; of Muslim populations studied in the World Values Survey, only Albania's participation rate is lower (Tezcur et al. 2006). The imposition of a theocracy seems to have generated considerable resentment of what is now seen as government meddling in private lives and to have created a society in which people grudgingly conform in public but defy the puritans in private (Elliot 2006).

Lebanon

The other country in which the Iranian Revolution had a major impact was Lebanon. The term 'Lebanon' was used during Ottoman rule to refer to a vaguely defined region centred on the Mount Lebanon range. Most inhabitants were Maronite Christians; there was a smaller population of Druze, adherents to an offshoot of Islam. The Greater Lebanese State was created by the Allied powers after the First World War, and was administered by France under a League of Nations mandate. In recognition of the deep-seated religious and ethnic differences, the French created a government that allocated parliamentary seats, government offices and civil service appointments to the main population groups in proportion to their size. When the various factions subordinated their

differences long enough to drive out the French, they repeated that model of allocation in their constitution for the new independent state. What destabilized it was the unevenness of economic development.

In the 1950s Lebanon prospered as the banking and commercial centre of the Arab world. The largely Christian elite amassed great fortunes but insisted on low levels of taxation and blocked social reform initiatives that would have redistributed some of that wealth to the predominantly Muslim poor. In the absence of a strong welfare state, most Lebanese continued to identify far more with their ethnic group and their traditional leaders than with the national society. In 1958 civil war broke out when the Maronite president, Camille Chamoun, rigged parliamentary elections and won himself an unconstitutional second term of office. Nasser's Egypt backed the left-wing and Arab nationalist rebels. US military forces intervened in the war and the Druze army chief, General Fouad Chehab, was installed as president. Chehab 'strengthened the educational system, built roads, and spurred economic development, giving priority to manufacturing over services. Most importantly he tried to build a sense of Lebanese national identity that transcended sectarian loyalties' (Paul 1993: 530). In that he failed. Although the economy boomed in the 1960s, there was little growth in national consciousness.

The second collapse of the state of Lebanon was triggered by the arrival of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Expelled from Jordan, the PLO established its headquarters in Beirut and expanded its guerrilla bases in southern Lebanon, close to the Israel border. With 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the PLO was a powerful force, deeply resented by conservative Lebanese who saw it as a threat to Lebanon's sovereignty and an encouragement to Israel to attack its northern neighbour. In 1975 civil war broke out, Muslims, Druze and Palestinians fighting the Maronites. In 1976 the Syrians intervened, first backing the Maronites and then turning against them. The Lebanese army broke up along sectarian lines. The state disappeared and rival militias divided the country into sectarian enclaves.

In 1978 Israel invaded southern Lebanon and set up a puppet army officered by Lebanese

area and protect northern Israel. In 1982 Israel again invaded and this time pushed as far as Beirut, where, with help from the Maronites, they attempted to destroy the PLO presence in the refugee camps in the southern suburbs. For two months, Israel bombarded the camps and inflicted massive civilian casualties. The United States brokered a ceasefire that saw the PLO fighters and leaders withdraw. For a time US forces were active in supporting a largely Maronite government as it tried to impose some sort of authority on the chaos, but, with Syrian support, the opposition groups forced the United States to withdraw. Gradually Syria extended its reach and imposed peace. In 1989, after fourteen years of civil war, massacres of civilians, car bombings and hostage taking, the United States and Saudi Arabia managed to arrange a settlement which retained the principle of a sectarian division of state power but shifted the balance so that Muslims were given half the seats in the parliament and the powers of the Muslim prime minister were increased to balance those of the Christian president. Although central government was slow to regain control and the sectarian warlords remained a powerful obstacle to the creation of a stable state, the ceasefires have held for a decade.

The Lebanese crisis offered the Iranian fundamentalists a perfect export market for their revolutionary Islam. Here was a large population of Muslims who believed that they were oppressed by Christians. The country was periodically invaded by Jews from the south. The Western powers, directed by the Great Satan, frequently interfered in its affairs.

In 1921, Shi'ite Muslims were about 19 per cent of Lebanon's population and their part in the sectarian division of power was correspondingly small. But between 1956 and 1975 they grew rapidly to form 30 per cent of the population. Originally concentrated in the Beka'a region of Lebanon, one of the poorest parts of the country, and later moving in large numbers to the slums of Beirut's southern suburbs, the Shi'ites benefited least from Lebanon's prosperity. When civil war broke out in 1975, Shi'ites formed a militia, Amal (Hope), under the leadership of professional middle-class people such as the American-trained lawyer Nabbi Berri. Amal was reformist, and when the Syrians imposed peace Berri took his place in the cabinet. But, inspired by the Iranian Revolution,

one faction of Shi'ites rejected Amal's reformism and retreated to the Beka'a valley, where, reinforced by a large contingent of Iranian Revolutionary Guards, they took over a Lebanese army barracks and transformed it into a well-armed fortress. This became the base for Hezbollah – the Party of Allah.

The Hezbollah manifesto declared that the movement 'abides by the orders of the sole wise and just command represented by the supreme jurisconsult who meets the necessary qualifications, and who is presently incarnate in the Imam and guide, the Great Ayatollah Ruhollah al-Musawi al-Khomeini' (Kramer 1993: 545). Its aim was not just to conquer Lebanon but to create an all-encompassing Islamic state. The urgency of this mission derived from the imminence of the end times. Kramer quotes one of Hezbollah's leading clerics as saying, 'The divine state of justice realized on part of this earth will not be confined within its geographic borders and is the dawn that will lead to the appearance of the Mahdi, who will create the state of Islam on earth.' And the key to that, according to the manifesto, is the destruction of the United States: 'We are proceeding toward a battle with vice at its very roots and the first root of vice is America' (Kramer 1993: 545).

What made Hezbollah remarkable was the commitment of its followers and the willingness of religious leaders to legitimate its acts of terror. Young men and women committed suicide in order to kill large numbers of people. In spring 1983, sixty-nine people were killed in a suicide car bomb attack on the US embassy in Beirut. In two attacks in October the same year, 241 marines and fifty-eight French paratroopers were killed the same way. Many of the volunteers were women. In March 1985 a teenage member of a female Shi'ite guerrilla group drove a car loaded with dynamite into an Israel army position in southern Lebanon; twelve soldiers were killed and fourteen wounded. Two months later, her mother and brother were invited to Iran, where they were received by Ayatollah Khomeini. A major street in Tehran was named after this heroine of Islam.

What motivated the rank-and-file Partisans of God seems clear enough: social deprivation and social chaos put them in the market for a new explanation of, and solution to, their troubles. Their lack of stake in the world, even in the small world of the Lebanese Shi'ite community, made a radical and

millennialist ideology attractive. Shi'ism, with its veneration of Ali and Hussayn, gave pride of place to the martyr and that status was open to anyone. The only requirement was piety; no one was excluded because they had not been born into the right family.

Hezbollah's clerical leaders were doubly excluded. As Kramer points out, they were drawn from a very narrow age band. Like their elders they had gone to study at the theology colleges of the shrine cities in Iraq, but they had been expelled in the 1970s without completing their education. When they returned to Lebanon without formal credentials they found themselves spurned by the Shi'ite religious leadership: 'they became a disgruntled mass, uncertain of their allegiance. When Iran's emissaries arrived in the Beka'a valley in 1982 and issued the clarion call to make a revolution, these young clerics rushed to pledge their loyalty to Khomeini and assume positions of leadership in Hezbollah' (Kramer 1993: 453). The home town of Sayyid Mohammed Hussayn Fadlallah, one of the most respected Hezbollah leaders, was close to the border with Israel and was frequently overrun. He moved to a Shi'ite slum in east Beirut, but lost his first pulpit to Maronite–Palestinian fighting in 1976 and moved as a refugee to the southern suburbs. There he built a new mosque with no help from the Shi'ite establishment.

During the 1990s Hezbollah built a strong base of popular support in southern Lebanon. Like the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Somali Union of Islamic Courts that drove the warlords out of Mogadishu in 2006, Hezbollah won over many people by its ability to provide the most basic function of a state where the nominal state had failed. It provided law and order. Like the Muslim Brothers in Egypt it provided basic social services where none existed. And in contrast to Amal, it was honest. In 2006, now led by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, it much enhanced its standing by fighting a month-long war with Israel, during which it fired some 4,000 rockets at target towns and cities in northern Israel. When the UN organized a ceasefire *The Economist* magazine put the words 'Nasrallah wins the war' on its front cover. Hezbollah immediately set its fighters (and its increased income from foreign donors) to rebuilding the villages flattened by the Israel army and air force, and started to campaign for a new

government in Lebanon that would reflect its new strength and popularity.

Constraints on the Revolution

The creation of an Islamic Republic in Iran, the victory of Hamas over the secular Fatah movement, the popularity of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the return of the Taliban to southern Afghanistan, the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the possibility of a Shi'a breakaway in southern Iraq may seem to signify great fundamentalist success and they are considerable achievements, but that success should not be exaggerated.

Islamic fundamentalism displays a number of weaknesses (some of which we shall see again in discussing Protestant fundamentalism in the next chapter) and faces a number of major obstacles that constrain the movement. First, there is the perennial problem for zealots of balancing their core wish for religious purity with the alliances and accommodations needed for political success in this world. To gain power, the zealots must often compromise their religious principles, which both alienates some potential supporters and causes considerable tensions within the activist core. To augment its strength against the Karzai regime (and its Western supporters) in Afghanistan, the Taliban in 2006 paid warlords to provide fighters – militarily sensible, but hardly expanding the ranks of the faithful.

Second, once in power, fundamentalists find themselves pressed by conventional security and foreign policy imperatives to compromise their principles. Iran and its Lebanese client Hezbollah support Syria, even though that country has a history of violently suppressing Islamist movements and of treating its Shia minority harshly (Dekmejian 1995: 108–12). At the height of the Revolution, Iranian radicals denounced all Muslim states for failing to live up to the fundamentalist's extreme standards. But in late 1984 the Ayatollah Khomeini announced that Iran should establish diplomatic relations with all states except the United States, Israel and South Africa (Halliday 1986: 104–5).

Third, there remains considerable tension between the ambitions of the activist core and those who support them. A historian of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt concluded, 'Although religion formed the basis of its ideology, it drew wider public support on account of its cultural outlook and socio-economic programme and its commitment to issues which appeal to national sentiments' (Bari 1995: 146). When success has been the result of being better at performing secular functions than their secular rivals, there is considerable potential for resentment and frustration. Many of the Palestinians who shifted from Fatah to Hamas in the 2006 elections to the parliament of the Palestinian Authority did so in appreciation of Hamas's greater anti-Israeli militancy and honesty and not because of a desire to live in an Islamic state.

These two points combine to remind us that zealots are not free of the burden of office. With power comes responsibility. The sacred purpose of the movement may trump all else for its activist core, but the mass of supporters will judge it by its success in delivering the mundane and material benefits it promised. Bin Laden can posture on behalf of the Caliphate but President Ahmadinejad and Hamas have to answer for their performance in office.

Fourth, fundamentalism is weakened by the internal divisions of Islam. Muslims are not all the same. Leaving aside competing social or national identities (of which more in a moment), Muslims are divided into, for want of a better word, sects and those sects do not always agree. Khomeini's treatise, 'Islamic Government', draws heavily on specifically Shi'ite sources of authority, which alienates Sunnis. Even when there is nothing of substance to separate sects on any specific issue, the fact that they are separate on others is often enough to prevent concerted action. The civil war in Iraq has seen Sunnis and Shi'ites slaughter each other with as much enthusiasm as either has attacked the Americans.

Being dogmatic and doctrinaire, fundamentalists exaggerate small differences. Or rather, for the fundamentalist few differences are small. Hence fundamentalist movements are always fissile. Terrorist organizations share the same tendency. Operating without the usual constraints of a legal system and being used to deploying fatal violence, terrorists

often become hysterical. The least suspicion of a colleague, the smallest insult or a personal quarrel are quickly seen as treason, and last year's hero of the Revolution becomes this year's traitor. Fundamentalism and terrorism together create a potent mixture: it attracts sacrificial levels of commitment but is highly volatile. In 1994 Munzer Hassan Rammal, a leading figure in Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, was reportedly assassinated by Iranian intelligence for maintaining contact with Islamic groups of which Iran disapproved. In 1999 a leading Algerian fundamentalist was murdered, apparently by colleagues unhappy that he was involved in peace talks with the government. Wright's detailed account (2006) of Islamic Jihad in Egypt and Al-Qaeda offers many examples of bitter rivalries and internal factionalism.

Natural tendencies to factionalism are amplified by national and ethnic rivalries. In principle, all the major world religions (with the exception of Judaism) are universalistic. Fundamentalisms are especially universalizing, in that they wish to reassert the primacy of religious considerations above all others, including those of ethnic and national boundaries. One of the failures the fundamentalist wishes to repair is the neglect of missionary work. Another is the insult to God of the true faith having to take second place to such mundane considerations as tolerating diversity. The true faith must supersede all else, including national or ethnic divisions. As Khomeini put it, 'As far as Islam is concerned there is no question of Kurds, Turks, Fars, Baluchi, Arab or Lor or Turcomen. Islam embraces everyone and the Islamic Republic observes the rights of all groups under Islamic justice . . . Everybody shall enjoy the protection of Islam' (Halliday 1986: 102). We might add that some populations – the Kurds, for example – enjoyed it a lot less than others. In practice Khomeini's universalism had more to do with consolidating Iran than subordinating the nation-state to the interests of universal Islam, which was firmly snubbed when the constitution for the Islamic state was drawn up: the president must be Iran-born of Iranian parents. In addition to the diversion of nationalism, fundamentalism is vulnerable to ethnic divisions. The first concerted Muslim opposition to the Afghan regime came from the Islamic Society of Afghanistan, which had been founded by Islamic jurisprudence teachers from Kabul University. In exile in Pakistan in

the late 1970s, the movement split along ethnic lines. One strand was led by a Tajik, the other by a Pashtun.

The natural tendency of extremism to fission, amplified by other sources of identity such as nationality and ethnicity, is encouraged by external manipulation. In the mid-1990s, the Afghan exiles in Pakistan were divided into some 170 armed groups. Pakistan used the offer of financial aid to simplify this to six groups. Under the pretence of trying to consolidate the opposition further, Saudi Arabia created a seventh (Wright 2006: 99–102). Iran backed its favourites.

Finally it is worth noting the resilience of the nation-state. It is true that many of the nations that emerged, first from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and then from the Western retreat from imperialism, were somewhat arbitrary creations – lines drawn on maps – but the power of the idea of the nation-state is such that remarkably few of those confections have collapsed, and when they have it has not been to merge into units that transcend nationalities but to fragment into smaller, more coherent, states.

Conclusion

In the words of one of the best studies of the Iranian Revolution, fundamentalism is a reaction to 'the dramatic reduction in the chances of the traditionalist milieu to reproduce itself culturally under conditions of rapid urbanization, industrialization and secularization' (Riesebrodt 1993: 9). To which we might add that external military intervention adds its own powerful anxieties. For success the environment needs to be fertile; there needs to be a popular religious culture. And there needs to be a strong, external, immediate stimulus. The former is a necessary condition. Consider Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the wars that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia, the Bosnians, refused weapons by the West, readily accepted financial and military assistance from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. A volunteer force of jihadis (mostly Saudis) was a useful addition to the Bosnian Muslims' fighting strength, but it failed utterly to Islamicize the Bosnians (Kohlmann 2004). The guns and the warriors were gratefully accepted; the

primary agenda of asserting the Shari'a or imposing the Caliphate was rejected.

And even in religiously traditional settings, responding to the immediate external stimulus is so powerful a part of the movement's appeal that it seems unable to transcend it. The southern Lebanese and the Shi'ites support radical Islamic movements because these serve a fairly conventional and secular need to defend or promote the interests of a people who are in part defined by their religion but who are also defined by tribal, ethnic, regional and national ties. Those local interests severely hinder the development of any sense of international fellowship. The universal mission is effective at the level of a small number of activists; a few thousand young men (many of them unusually rootless and alienated) are recruited from English and American suburbs for the jihad in Afghanistan, Bosnia or Iraq. It is accepted at the level of rhetoric; expelling the crusaders from the sphere of Islam and destroying the Zionist state are added to the language which justifies the many local wars of Islamic fundamentalism. A leaflet issued by Islamic Jihad during the Palestinian intifada in 1988 said, 'What is now taking place in the Holy Land is not just a battle for the Palestinian people alone. It is battle for the future of the entire Umma [all Muslims]. It is a battle against the foreign arrogance and colonial hegemony over the world' (Milton-Edwards 1996: 201). But national liberation struggles in the 1960s against imperialism failed to coalesce into an effective international movement, and what we can easily miss if we use the inflated language of a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996) is that the wars that create openings for fundamentalism remain largely local. In trying to make sense of their desperate circumstances the residents of Sadr city in Baghdad may be temporarily drawn to a fundamentalist analysis, but this is largely because they see the fundamentalist response as the most effective riposte. What they immediately want is peace, stability and order. In December 2006 the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia called on Muslim jihadis to join them in their drive to take over the entire country and to protect it against a possible Ethiopian invasion. That Ethiopia is primarily Christian may allow the Courts to attract some external Islamic support – an effect that Huntington called the 'kin syndrome' – but for the vast

majority of Somalis who support the Courts their ambitions extend no further than their borders.

The greatest constraint on fundamentalism is the unnatural character of fanaticism. As the Chinese Maoists discovered, permanent revolution is impossible. It is a commonly observed fact of life in revivalist religious groups and in radical political parties that radicalism wanes and revolutionary fervour becomes institutionalized (Bruce 1996: 78–80). Religion taken too seriously is too rich a diet for most people for long. Life has to go on. There are children to be raised, crops to be tended, oil to be pumped out of the ground and sold, goods to be manufactured and traded, and fish to be caught. Even zealots grow weary of living life at the edge.

4
Fundamentalism in the United States

Fundamentalism in the United States was first and foremost a religious movement. In the final decades of the nineteenth century the main Protestant denominations began to adjust their beliefs in order to bring them into line with modern scientific and social thought. Liberals argued that if the Bible was to retain intellectual credibility it could no longer be accepted at face value. The world was obviously older than any of the chronologies previously derived from the Bible. The Genesis account of its origins, with a creator God fabricating it in six days, was patently wrong. Eve could not have been created from one of Adam's ribs. The Bible would have to be treated not as an infallible store of facts but as a collection of metaphors. Its miracle stories would have to be read as the misguided attempts of primitive people to understand God's majesty. The modernizers also argued that the churches should place social improvement above individual piety. The evangelical reformers of the early nineteenth century believed that social evils would be cured by saved individuals engaging in personal philanthropy. A century later Protestant intellectuals argued that the vices of the modern world were too great for individual Christian charity and required state action.

Starting in 1910, religious traditionalists from a number of Protestant denominations authored a series of pamphlets defending the previous orthodoxy. 'The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Faith' gave the name to what gradually became

a distinct movement, and provided its most articulate ideological foundations. Initially the conservatives formed factions within their own denominations and met together in umbrella organizations such as the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, but as it became ever more clear that the modernist tide would not be stemmed, all the major Protestant churches split.

The new fundamentalist movement was marked by a number of specific beliefs and by an operating principle.[1] One distinct belief was the proposition that the Bible was the infallible word of God and hence that anything which challenged biblical teaching (such as Darwin's theory of evolution) was not just wrong but sinful. Another was pre-millennialism – the idea that the world would get worse before the probably imminent Day of Judgement. Although this was a theological argument, it was to have important implications for political action. If life was due to become ever less pleasant until the righteous were lifted out of the world at what was called 'the rapture', there was little point in engaging constructively with the world: better to remain pure and clean by remaining aloof.

The operating principle was separatism. They had developed their positions in aggressive controversy with liberals, and fundamentalists placed extraordinary importance on the clarity of their witness: everyone should know where the righteous stood. Fundamentalists spent more energy dissociating themselves from apparently similar Protestants than they did contending with Catholics, Mormons or Jews. After all, these last were so far beyond the pale that there was no need to dramatize the unacceptability of their beliefs. Some fundamentalists went so far as to promote double separation. It was not enough to avoid mixing with those who were in error; you should also avoid those who were not so scrupulous in their associations. This principle led to the creation of a series of alternative institutions: not only congregations and sects but also schools, colleges, publishing houses and radio stations.

The religious traditionalists were not just defending a religious culture. They were also trying to preserve a way of life. Industrialization undermined the economic environment in which traditionalism thrived. For the conservatives the family

was the bedrock of their culture. The pious head of the household took his dependants to church, enquired regularly after the state of their souls, and led daily prayers and Bible studies. Work was best organized by the small family firm led by the pious patron, as interested in the salvational status of his workers as he was in the spiritual condition of his children. Industrialization promised economic growth and increased prosperity, but the price was the replacement of the family firm, deeply rooted in the community, by the national and international company, operating on impersonal, rational criteria. Traditionalists felt themselves squeezed between the forces of international capitalism (which they often personalized as a Jewish conspiracy) and the trade unions (which they interpreted as atheistic socialism and communism). They also felt threatened by the increasing independence and freedom of women.

Sex was an abiding concern. One of the traditionalist objections to the theory of evolution was that it replaced the Bible's radical division between humankind and the rest of creation by a continuum. If Darwin was right, we were not much better than monkeys – an implicit encouragement to behave in a bestial manner. Like their Islamic counterparts, Protestant fundamentalists were fearful of the sexuality of women. Their interpretation of the Genesis story of Eve as the temptress, seduced by the Devil and in turn seducing Adam, served as a general warrant for supposing that women needed to be saved from themselves and men needed to be saved from women. J. R. Straton, a leading fundamentalist intellectual, went so far as to propose a national costume for women which, like the Muslim chador, would protect female propriety. If that now seems ridiculous, we should remember that he wrote at a time – the 1920s – when the heavy and body-covering dresses of the Victorians had (in advanced circles at least) been replaced by the revealing fashions of the flappers.

Although the religious traditionalists were not as obviously threatened by foreign influences as their Muslim counterparts discussed in the previous chapter, there was nonetheless a nationalist or nativist tinge to American fundamentalism. The new school of biblical interpretation had originated in Germany. Economic change could be blamed on the two

international conspiracies of Zionist capitalism and Russian communism (and the two could be made one by remembering that some leading communists were Jews). Social and religious criticism could be combined with ethnic competition by noting that the longer-established white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (or 'WASPs') embodied the respectable values of small-town and rural America, while the urban vices of poverty, heavy alcohol consumption and sexual impropriety were carried by later waves of Irish and southern European migrants, and they were papists.

So fundamentalists saw themselves losing control of their churches, their families, their working environments, their schools and their nation. Some devoted their efforts to building alternative sub-societies; others fought back. Battles to reassert the primacy of their culture were fought on the fields of temperance, Bible readings and prayers in schools, and, most memorably, over the teaching of evolution.

In 1925 Thomas Scopes, a biology teacher from Dayton, Tennessee, was charged with breaking a state law that forbade any teaching that contradicted the biblical view of creation (Moran 2002). He was represented by Clarence Darrow, then one of the foremost US trial lawyers. His prosecutor was William Jennings Bryan. Bryan was unusual among fundamentalists in that, while he believed in the literal truth of the Bible, he was a pacifist and a social progressive who, as a Democratic Party candidate for the presidency, had espoused populist economic and social policies that were well to the left of the consensus. And he was not a pre-millennialist. But he was a very old man and Darrow repeatedly humiliated him on the witness stand by forcing him to confront apparent anomalies in the inerrant text. Not surprising, given the jury, Darrow lost the case but the evolutionists won the war.

Fundamentalists also lost the argument for prohibition. Or, more precisely, they had the consumption of beverage alcohol made illegal but, instead of a reformation of social behaviour, prohibition produced Al Capone and organized crime. From the 1930s fundamentalism faded from public view as its leading figures concentrated on institution building and soul saving. In the 1950s the small number of fundamentalists still involved in political activity were concentrated in organizations such as the Christian Crusade, the League of America

and the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, all of which combined attacks on communism (international and domestic) with criticism of the ecumenical movement (Lipset and Raab 1970).

Although modernization proceeded apace, traditionalist strands of Protestantism remained strong, especially in the Deep South and other parts of the United States relatively untouched by economic progress. Liberal and secular elites defined mainstream American culture and social policy, but, in pietistic retreat and largely unnoticed by the mainstream, the fundamentalists were able to reproduce themselves, and, as secularization steadily weakened the mainstream denominations, they gradually became an increasingly powerful part of American religious life.

The Christian right: origin and nature

People are generally stimulated to protest by a conjunction of despair and hope; an intensification of what troubles them combines with some improvement in their circumstances to cause them to think that action might be effective.

The positive roots of the contemporary Christian right (CR) lie in the following. In the second half of the twentieth century the economy of the south (where conservative Protestantism was strongest) prospered while the north (with its heavy industry) declined. There was a shift of population and purchasing power. There was also a shift in political influence. Every elected president since John F. Kennedy has been from the south or the west. Lyndon Johnson was a Texan. Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan were from California. Jimmy Carter was from Georgia. Although members of an old New England family, George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush had their political base in Texas, and the man whose presidency separated them – Bill Clinton – was governor of Arkansas. Although it would be a mistake to say that the south had solved its race problem, the forced desegregation of the south had by the 1970s removed much of the stigma of racism and also made it clear that racial discrimination was not confined to the old Confederate states.

Within the sphere of religion, power had also shifted decisively to the conservative wing of Protestantism, which had been growing relative to the mainstream, especially in the 1960s. The separatist institutions established by fundamentalists in the 1920s and 1930s were bearing fruit. In particular, conservatives had made much better use than did liberals of the new technologies of radio and television to create audience networks of committed supporters of their distinctive religion and its associated social mores. They had also mastered the organizational virtuous circle. On air they solicited donations and offered free gifts to people who phoned in. From those contacts they built computerized mailing lists that could be used to solicit funds to buy more airtime to appeal for more funds and so on. It is not easy to estimate the televangelism audience, but Hadden and Swann (1981) suggest that in 1980 some 20 million people watched the top sixty-six syndicated religious television programmes and that the top ten shows attracted 15 million viewers (just under 7 per cent of the population) – a considerable reach by any standards and a powerful antidote to the sense of cultural inferiority that had plagued conservative Protestants since the 1920s (Bruce 1990; Frankl 1987).

The negative forces can be grouped under two headings. Fundamentalists were provoked into campaigning by cultural and social changes that reminded them of their increasing marginality: the black consciousness, feminist, anti-Vietnam war, gay rights and hippy movements; increasing sexual permissiveness and recreational drug use; mass media portrayals of sexuality; the legalization of abortion and the acceptability of divorce. All that would have been bad enough, but it came with the increasing integration of the United States. The federal state expanded and deepened its reach. Before 1960 there were twenty-seven federal regulatory agencies; by 1976 there were a further fifty (Janowitz 1978). The federal courts imposed the will of the centre on the peripheries by, for example, ruling as unconstitutional such locally accepted practices as beginning the school day with shared public prayers. Local media outlets were assimilated into national networks. Local newspapers were increasingly filled by syndicated national copy. Small family firms were bought up by large corporations. And, most importantly, increased

affluence made it possible for fundamentalists to join the cultural mainstream (by, for example, owning televisions and going to the movies) at a time when that culture was becoming thoroughly abhorrent.

What brought the CR to life was the stimulus of a group of professional right-wing lobbyists, who saw in the fundamentalist milieu the potential for a new right-wing movement based, not on the traditional concerns of low taxes and an assertive foreign policy, but on cultural concerns. Two Catholics and a Jew – Richard Viguerie, Paul Weyrich and Howard Phillips respectively – persuaded televangelists such as Jerry Falwell to use their television audiences and church networks to mobilize conservative Protestants in support of a series of single-issue campaigns. In the late 1970s a number of organizations such as the Moral Majority and Religious Roundtable promoted voter registration drives, raised money, targeted liberal candidates, ran advertising campaigns in support of moral conservatives, lobbied legislators, ran slates of candidates for school board and council elections, organized boycotts of media outlets that offended their values and in a variety of other ways sought to awaken a sleeping giant. What that list of activities shows is that the Christian right was concerned less with converting people to its value positions than with persuading a constituency which tended to opt out of public life that it should, and could, pull its weight.

In addition to being generally right-wing on the economy, defence and foreign policy, the Christian right was opposed to abortion, homosexuality and divorce. It was also opposed to schools teaching sex education and evolution. It was in favour of conservative gender roles, public prayer in schools and the teaching of the biblical account of the divine creation of the world. It also wanted tax relief for independent faith schools. In brief, like the Islamicists described in the previous chapter, the Christian rightists wished to reassert the primacy of their culture and remove obstacles to the successful transmission of that culture to their children.

The Christian right in the 1980s and 1990s was apparently very successful. It attracted a great deal of publicity and was credited by both its supporters and its enemies with considerable influence over American public life. It is not easy to assess

the impact of a diffuse movement that works on a variety of fronts, but I shall summarize the impact of the CR on the courts, on legislation, on elections and party politics, and on the general cultural climate.

Evaluation

Courts

The Christian right's socio-moral agenda raises profound questions about the balance between individual freedom and social order, and its wish to win public validation for its religion brings it into the reach of the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution (Gaustad 2003). As the justice system is intended to protect individual rights, it is a major determinant of CR fortunes.

The Christian right is generally opposed to the notion of minority rights. It has a majoritarian view of society and sees the rhetoric of minority rights as a threat to its historical hegemony and an insult to its values, which it assumes would be the view of the majority if they had not been hoodwinked by cunning liberals. Yet it is precisely when it has presented conservative Christians as a victimized minority that the CR has had most success in the courts (Garvey 1993). For example, in 1995 the Supreme Court found that the University of Virginia had been wrong to deny a Christian student group funding when non-religious groups had been funded. However, the oppressed minority appeal has worked only on very narrow ground. When a Tennessee court agreed with fundamentalist parents that their rights were infringed when their children were required to read books explaining objectionable beliefs, the Sixth Circuit Appeals Court overturned the verdict on the grounds that the lower court had not properly distinguished between knowing about something and being compelled or persuaded to embrace it. Parents could legitimately object to the latter but not to the former.

The argument that, if it is unconstitutional for the state to promote a religion, it must also be unconstitutional for it to promote 'secular humanism', has failed. Fundamentalists initially won their claim that the Alabama State Board of

Education had violated their rights by teaching their children non-Christian stuff. The Appeals Court overturned the judgement because it rejected the argument that all knowledge must be either Christian or secular humanist. It applied the narrower test of whether the textbooks at issue taught an identifiable philosophy of secular humanism, and concluded that they did not. The courts also rejected the parity argument when they ruled that the requirement to teach divine creation was unconstitutional. The Arkansas legislature had passed an 'equal time' bill: if evolution was taught, equal time had to be given to what was now presented, not as the first twelve chapters of the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, but as 'creation science'. To establish that creation science deserved such support, its promoters had to convince the court that a non-Christian would find the special creation case as convincing as the secular alternatives. They failed to mount a coherent, let alone a persuasive, case (Gilkey 1985). A similar bill from Louisiana was struck down by the Supreme Court by the wide margin of 7 to 2. In 2005 the decision of the School Board of Dover, Pennsylvania, to require that evolution be balanced by equal time for 'intelligent design' (as creation science was rebranded) was judged unconstitutional by Federal Judge John Jones III (interestingly a Republican appointed by President George W. Bush), who ruled, 'We find that the secular purposes claimed by the [School Board] amount to a pretext for the [School Board's] real purpose, which was to promote religion in the public school classroom, in violation of the Establishment Clause.'[2]

The CR has had little success in using the courts to promote its conservative socio-moral views. In one of the few decisions it has been able to claim as a victory, the Supreme Court in 1986 held that the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution (the basis for the general principle that the Bill of Rights applies not just to the federal government but also to state and local governments) did not protect homosexual sodomy. In so doing the Court explicitly returned the issue to the elected branches of government. There the tide has continued to run in a liberal direction despite the CR. By 2001 the anti-sodomy laws of twenty-six states had been repealed (and in eight of them the repeal came after CR groups started campaigning in 1978). Those of a

further nine states had been struck down by the courts and in a further four court cases are pending. And in response to the shift in public sentiment, the Supreme Court changed its views and in 2003 struck down a Texas law which banned sodomy and various other forms of sexual activity by a margin of 6 to 3. One of the three, Clarence Thomas, who described the Texas law as 'silly', dissented on the grounds that the Texas legislature should be allowed to pass silly laws if it wanted.[3] Generally speaking the courts have supported an expansion of the notion of gay rights (Pinello 2003). For example, companies have been forced to extend spouse benefits to same-sex partners, and in California and New England the courts have opened the door to same-sex marriage.

On abortion – the issue that attracts most support for the Christian right, because it adds Catholic support to its core fundamentalist base – the courts have nibbled at the edges. In the late 1980s the Supreme Court made three significant decisions. First, it expressed unhappiness about the time-limit rules laid down in the original *Roe* v. *Wade* decision of 1973; advances in medicine had altered the life chances for premature babies. Second, the Court allowed the government to restrict public funding for abortions. Third, it permitted states to require that a minor notify her parents before having an abortion. However, despite its conservative majority, the Court has very pointedly declined to outlaw abortion and it has protected the basic right to abortion where state laws have been too restrictive. Parental notification laws have only been permitted where there is a judicial 'bypass': a judge is able to waive the requirement if the minor is sufficiently mature or if telling a parent would not be in a young woman's best interest. In 1997, by 8 votes to 1, the Court decided that a Louisiana attempt to weaken the judicial bypass was undue interference with a girl's abortion rights.

Finally, a major part of the CR agenda is concerned with the public presence of Christian symbols. The CR wants public support for acts of religious worship and for the symbols of its distinctive religious culture. For most of the thirty years since the foundation of the Moral Majority, a majority of the nine justices of the Supreme Court have been the nominees of Republican presidents. In his eight years as president, Bill Clinton was able to appoint only two. Reagan

appointed three and Bush father and son appointed two each. Despite this conservative majority, the Court has followed the precedents of the earlier courts in permitting government support for Christian acts and symbols in only very constrained circumstances. In 2003 the Court required the removal of a large stone carving of the Ten Commandments from the Alabama courthouse of Judge Ray Moore. It was moved into a locked room; visitors who wished to refresh their memory could borrow the key. Two years later the Court ruled that the posting of the Ten Commandments in Kentucky courthouses was unconstitutional.[4] Equally noticeable is that the lower federal courts, heavily packed with conservatives by Reagan and the two Bushes, have proved little more sympathetic.

To summarize a large number of court cases: although the CR was astute in presenting itself as a minority seeking only fair treatment, it actually gained very little by replacing the rhetoric of being a moral majority with that of being a persecuted minority.

Legislation

As we can see from the cases that have found their way to the Supreme Court, Christian right organizations have succeeded in steering bills promoting creation science, vouchers for private schools, restrictions on abortion and public affirmations of religion through legislatures in states with strong conservative traditions (Cleary and Hertzke 2006), but they have made very little legislative headway in Congress. They have found no shortage of politicians happy to make sympathetic noises (especially at election time), but few senior politicians have invested much political capital in promoting CR causes. Even though Republicans have controlled both the House of Representatives and the Senate for most of the 1980s and 1990s, they have delivered little for their fundamentalist supporters. The eight-year presidency of Democrat Bill Clinton (1993–2001) acted as a block on CR ambitions, but the conservative Republican Ronald Reagan (1981–9), for all his willingness to court fundamentalist voters, gave very little in return beyond such cheap gestures as declaring

a 'Year of the Bible'. In part this reflects awareness that the courts would strike down as unconstitutional much CR pet legislation.

Elections and parties

It is not easy to judge CR impact on elections. Proponents of competing evaluations can readily list any number of contests from 1980 to the present to show that Christian right support helped win or helped lose seats. For example, we have spokesmen for the American Coalition for Traditional Values saying an Iowa conservative Republican lost his senate seat in 1984 to a liberal Democrat because he turned his back on the religious groups which had supposedly helped him win in 1978 (McLaughlin 1984). On the other side, we have reports that Virginia got its first black governor in 1990 because his white opponent was vocally anti-abortion until he discovered it was costing him the election (Brogan 1991). Abortion is also thought to have delivered the Western Massachusetts seat to a Democrat for the first time in its history; the Republican was against it. Liberal Republicans blame the failure of George H. W. Bush in 1992 and Bob Dole in 1996 to beat Bill Clinton on the fundamentalist platform that CR supporters foisted on the party. Movement conservatives argue that Bush and Dole lost because they showed insufficient commitment to that platform. But whichever explanation of defeat one prefers, the fact to be explained remains defeat and not victory, and in no presidential election has the CR's favoured candidate won the Republican nomination. Televangelist Pat Robertson failed in 1988. In 2000 the Republican standard was carried not by Gary Bauer or Pat Buchanan or any of the other CR favourites but by George W. Bush, who chose to present himself as a moderate 'compassionate conservative'. Below I shall consider two fields in which Bush did reward the CR – foreign policy and administration appointments – but in domestic politics he seems to have continued the Reagan tradition of paying lip service to CR values without actually doing much to advance the domestic agenda.

What the CR has done best is to infiltrate the Republican Party (Moen 1992). Falwell and others initially promoted the

movement as bipartisan, but it was obviously more popular with Republicans than with Democrats, and during the 1980s and 1990s many fundamentalists concentrated on taking over local branches of the party. But such entryism is of little value if the final product is rejected by the electorate as too extreme or too zealously focused on single issues. Consider the case of the Virginia Republican Party in 1994. Virginia is a divided state. The majority of its population is found in the northern suburbs, which includes the fringes of Washington DC: unusually affluent, socially liberal and with low levels of church involvement. But the state also has large concentrations of conservative Baptists and Methodists and is home to Falwell's Liberty University and Pat Robertson's Regent University and broadcasting empire. In the 1980s, Christian right groups moved to infiltrate the Republican Party, something made relatively easy by the fact that party candidates are selected at a nominating convention, which, like the Iowa caucuses, gives the advantage to any group able to mobilize committed supporters. In 1994 the convention nominated as its candidate for the Senate Oliver North. North was a former Marine Corps officer who had gained notoriety for his part in the Reagan administration's covert and illegal operation to supply arms to the right-wing Contra forces in Nicaragua, who were in conflict with Nicaragua's left-wing Sandinista government. North had spent years cultivating the Christian right and the gun lobby, and the support of those two groups of activists ensured him the nomination. A Republican senator, John Warner, was so horrified by his party's choice that he encouraged a more moderate Republican to run as an independent. Despite also being challenged by an independent, the incumbent Democrat Chuck Robb won an easy victory, one made all the more remarkable by two things. First, over the country as a whole there was a major swing to the Republicans. Second, Ollie North spent approximately US$20 million (about four times Robb's budget) and had the support of a vast army of conservative Christian volunteers (Rozell and Wilcox 1996).

President Richard Nixon, with thirty years' experience of winning and losing elections, pointedly said that Republicans had to run to the right in the primary and then to the centre in the general election (Blanchfield 2006). CR activists in the

party appear to have learnt only the first part of the lesson. In many areas the effect of their zealotry was to shift the party away from the middle ground that it needed to occupy if it was to win major elections.

One important change for which the Christian right can probably claim some credit is the major realignment in the US party system. As a result of the Civil War conservative southern whites rejected the Republicans as the party of Abraham Lincoln and aligned themselves with the Democrats – an awkward alignment given their dislike for the more 'radical' parts of the Democratic Party. Since the Reagan era this constituency has been shifting to its more natural home in the Republican Party. CR organizations, recruiting from white fundamentalist churches strong in the south and supporting Republican candidates in southern constituencies while denouncing liberal Democrats, have played a part in that reorganization. It may be that by tidying up the American party system the CR has strengthened the right, but it is unlikely that many people changed their values or principles in the process.

None of this is intended to deny the obvious point that in small political units where conservatives are numerous, the CR can achieve limited legislative and electoral success. However, as we move up from the city and the county to the congressional district and the state to the federal government we move to units of greater cultural, social and political diversity and we see the potential for such pressure groups as the CR steadily diminished.

A good example of 'small victory–large defeat' pattern can be found in the battle over creationism in Kansas. Members of the Kansas Board of Education have traditionally been elected on a very small turnout. In 1999 the Board, dominated by fundamentalists, approved a science curriculum that made no mention of Darwin or evolution. There was a public outcry, led by the presidents of the state's major universities and supported by editorials in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. On a much higher turnout, the fundamentalists were voted off the board the following year and evolution was put back on the curriculum (*New York Times* 2005).

One may argue, as Falwell and others have frequently done, that the CR re-established the respectability of

conservative socio-moral positions and the right of fundamentalists to be taken seriously. It is certainly the case that the 1980s saw considerable publicity given to CR activists and their views. However, while such exposure ensures a vigorous debate, it only guarantees to win that debate if it is the case that the previous liberal hegemony was achieved by stealth. But it was not. We can take examples from a variety of levels of the political system to make the point. When the televangelist Pat Robertson ran for the Republican nomination, the early impact of his highly committed supporters brought out liberal Republicans in such numbers that, despite spending unprecedented sums, he failed to win a single primary.

Socio-moral change

Finally we can look at the big picture. How has the United States changed since the late 1970s with respect to the CR's core socio-moral agenda? The CR is anti-homosexual, but homosexuals have not gone back into the closet. There are now openly gay politicians and major US television channels air shows in which homosexuals are portrayed as normal people. Within the mainstream churches the acceptance of gay relationships has reached the point where an openly gay clergyman can be elected to a bishopric of the Episcopalian Church. Gay marriage has proved extremely contentious, but the fact that some states are now seriously considering the option shows how far the climate has changed. Where the status quo was once to prohibit homosexuality, the most plausible current conservative position is to argue that some form of civil partnership should be allowed but that marriage proper be reserved for heterosexuals.

The CR is anti-abortion but the abortion rate has declined only slightly from its peak in 1985: it is now 70 per cent higher than it was in 1972 (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2000).

The CR is anti-divorce. The divorce rate in 1940 was 9 per cent. It rose to a high of 23 per cent in 1981 and then fell back slightly to 21 per cent in 1994. The US Census Bureau now estimates that at least 40 per cent of marriages will end in divorce. A survey of 2000 which showed born-again

Christians to have a higher than average divorce rate may have been an anomaly based on a small sample, but it seems likely that even among conservative Christians divorce is now commonplace (Barna Research Organization 2001). The CR wants a return to traditional gender roles. Women made up 18 per cent of the US labour force in 1900, 30 per cent in 1950 and 46 per cent in 1997: no sign of any reverse there (AFL-CIO 2001).

To conclude this very brief review, the CR began with a great many advantages. It had ready access to the mass media through the work of televangelists such as Falwell and Robertson. It had the mailing lists of televangelism organizations to reach its potential supporters. It was led by extremely skilled self-publicists. It was able to make use of the congregational networks of conservative Protestant pastors. Nonetheless, it failed to achieve significant progress on items which were specific to its agenda (as distinct from ambitions, such as increased defence spending, which are shared with mainstream conservatives). It is always possible to argue that the CR acted as a brake, that without it, the United States would have become more liberal and permissive. But, unfortunately, claims for influence of this sort are untestable and have to remain in the realm of speculation. All we can do is look at the wish list, look at what was achieved and compare the two. The conclusion must be that the CR failed to end abortion, curtail divorce, prevent mothers working, outlaw homosexuality, balance the teaching of evolution with that of creation science or restore the public primacy of conservative religion.

The advantages and disadvantages of zealotry

As political activists evangelical Protestants start with considerable advantages over their secular opponents. They are highly motivated and they are used to giving large amounts of time, money and energy to promoting the gospel. If the cause is tinged with the millennialist expectation that we are in the end times or that the return of the Messiah will be

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hastened by collective effort, religious zealots can deploy vast reservoirs of commitment. Once convinced that they could 'bring America back to God', the fundamentalists of the CR brought to political campaigns the sort of effort they habitually gave to church work. Hence where small numbers of highly committed people could swing an outcome, they had some success. In the 1988 Republican presidential primaries, Pat Robertson came a surprisingly close second in the Iowa caucuses because that contest is decided by activists massing in a hall.

But zealotry has corresponding disadvantages. The zealot divides the world into them and us, the godly and the ungodly – fine for missions or for holy war, but not helpful for building the alliances that are essential for political action in a complex and pluralist democracy. First, while the CR leaders could work with conservative Catholics, Jews and Muslims, many rank-and-file evangelicals could not set aside their sectarian religion. An Ohio chapter of the Moral Majority memorably preceded a meeting to discuss working with conservative Catholics with a lecture on the evils of Roman Catholicism (Wilcox 1987). Second, however much the zealots might have been willing to seek alliances, the groups they court have memories. The Catholic Church shares interests with the CR (in state funding for religious schools, for example, and on most socio-moral concerns) but Catholics can remember that fundamentalists used to be anti-Catholic. The black churches are conservative on moral issues, but are only too well aware of the segregationist backgrounds of many older CR supporters (such as Senators Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond) and are deeply suspicious of the free-market economics of the CR. Many Islamic groups would be at one with the CR on gender roles, temperance and personal sexual behaviour, but are excluded by the Christian ethos of the movement and by its support for the state of Israel. As, so it happens, are most Jews, because fundamentalists are only interested in Israel for the part they expect it to play in hastening the Battle of Armageddon! And conservative Christians have a very long history of anti-Semitism.

Finally, many non-CR conservatives are alienated by the deep message of the CR. Skilled operators such as Falwell and Robertson try to confine their fundamentalist message to their

core audience and speak more moderately to the wider public. But they often fail. For example, in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 atrocities, Robertson on his *700 Club* show asked Falwell who was to blame. To frequent approving 'amens' from Robertson, Falwell replied,

> [T]hrowing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. The pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and lesbians; the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]; People for the American Way; all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen'. (People for the American Way 2001)

Non-fundamentalist conservatives are thus periodically reminded of just how narrow is the CR's core vision.

People driven by divine imperatives are not good at trading losses in one area for gains in another. They are also not good at tolerating differences even within the camp of the faithful. There is also a problem with sustaining commitment. Zealots become quickly disillusioned. They are brought to politics by apocalyptic imagery which creates expectations of success every bit as unrealistic as the bogeymen which stir them to action. Hence they are ill-suited to the long haul. Religio-political mobilization thus tends to come in waves that are as short as they are intense.

Finally, there is a particular problem for religious zealots trying to win major elections in mature democracies. We see this most clearly in the United States, but it is also germane for many other polities. As politicians as diverse in ideology as Eisenhower, Kennedy, Carter, Reagan and Clinton have demonstrated, Americans do not like to elect politicians. They want to elect nice people. The key to success is to disguise ideology behind a front of almost apolitical easy-going affability. Zealots find this extremely difficult because they are not affable; they are driven obsessives. As a professional right-wing lobbyist put it to me, 'we need to look and sound like everyone's favourite uncle and instead we come across like a bunch of swivel-eyed obsessives'.

Structural advantages

Before we can draw any general lessons from the US experience, we need to note that the CR has benefited considerably from unusual features of the US polity. There are two senses in which the CR is a product of the open, diffuse and federal nature of the United States. First, conservative Christianity remains stronger in the United States than in any other modern industrial society because fundamentalists have been able to construct their own sub-societies to sustain their distinctive subculture. To an extent not found in any European country, American fundamentalists are able to inhabit insulated worlds, with independent Christian schools, colleges, universities, and television and radio stations, worlds in which their culture is taken for granted and the alternatives are seen only through the distorting prism of shared prejudices and stereotypes.

Second, in the following ways the structure of US politics allows interest groups easier entry into the political arena. In most European countries, political parties are powerful institutions that dominate the political process. The party chooses its candidates and determines its policy. Access to the mass media is free but allocated to parties, not to individual candidates. Spending on elections is constrained and it is limited by the parties, not the candidates. The party in power determines the legislative agenda and coerces its elected legislators to support it. The electorate recognizes the power of the party by voting for parties rather than for individuals.

The major US parties are relatively open. Candidates are selected locally and in diverse ways that allow small groups of activists to determine who shall represent the party. In many areas the candidate need not even be a member of the party. Hence the CR has been able to impose its candidates on an often reluctant Republican Party. With no effective cap on spending, elections can be extraordinarily expensive, and candidates will need funds well beyond what the party can provide. Successful candidates will thus end up being as (if not more) beholden to special interest groups as they are to their party, which makes party discipline hard to maintain.

In state legislatures and in both houses of Congress, individual legislators are free to initiate legislation. It will not be passed unless it can command widespread support, but people can pay back debts to interest groups by promoting pet issues. The weakness of the party in turn means that legislators cannot hide behind the party whip. How they vote on bills (no matter how frivolous) can be used against them at the next election, hence the favoured CR tactic of distributing the detailed voting records of liberals on rafts of bills that can (with varying degrees of plausibility) be construed as 'pro-family'. Party alignment is relevant in that there tends to be swings for and against that are based on perceptions of the effectiveness of the president, but candidates can run with or against their own parties.

Reforms to election funding in the 1970s strengthened the position of interest groups (Sabato 1984). Although they capped the amount of money that could be spent on behalf of a particular candidate, the rules did not specify how much could be spent on promoting general issue positions. So rather than have individuals give money, say, to Senator Jesse Helms in North Carolina, CR organizations could raise money to spend on advertising campaigns that promoted 'family values' in a way that made it very clear that anyone who shared those values should vote for Helms.

Many public offices that in Europe would be filled by appointment are in the United States filled by election, so there are many more elections and many of them attract very low turnouts. And major elected offices are for shorter terms than is common in Europe: members of the House of Representatives have to face the electorate every two years. That candidates are judged more on personal record than the standing of their party gives a considerable advantage to the incumbent, who will ensure that powerful interests are well served. But the need to be personally popular encourages gesture politics and causes timidity. The Arkansas state legislature passed the pro-creation science bill because it did not involve spending taxes and there are no votes in voting against God.

In short, such success as the CR has enjoyed owes a great deal to the structure of US politics.

Structural constraints

The CR has failed to bring America back to God. So if the above description of opportunity structure combines with the earlier points about the advantages of zealotry to explain the successes of the CR, what features of the opportunity structure combine with the disadvantages of zealotry to explain its failures?

The first point is simple: the Moral Majority was never a majority. As Rozell and Wilcox put it, 'The Christian Right represents 10 to 15 percent of the public, and its natural constituency among white evangelicals is an even larger segment. When this constituency is mobilized, it can swing close elections. Yet those who oppose the Christian Right are generally at least as numerous as those who support it, and if *they* are mobilized, the Christian Right usually loses' (1995: 256).

The CR has formidable opponents. People for the American Way, for example, very effectively countered Pat Robertson's political ambitions by ensuring that what he said to his core religious audience in his role as televangelist was broadcast to the wider audience to which he was pitching as an entrepreneur whose business just happened to be religion. Liberal pressure groups can outspend the CR. In the 2000 elections, nearly $250 million dollars were spent on television advertising. Sixty per cent of that was spent by political parties; the rest came from special interest groups, and those that were not business-related were the trade union organization AFL-CIO, Planned Parenthood (which promotes contraception and is pro-abortion), the League of Conservation Voters, Americans for Job Security, and Emily's List, which raises money to promote women candidates (Associated Press 2001).

The presence of opponents is also significant in the sense that making personal morality a focus of political debate encourages others to look closely at the personal behaviour of those whose claim to be especially virtuous. One of the most successful conservative US politicians of the 1980s, Newt Gingrich, was forced to resign from his position as Speaker of the House, partly because his election strategy failed to deliver results but also because media interest in his

income and his marriages threatened his claims to represent a particularly moral approach to politics. Minnesota Republican Jon Grunseth was building a strong candidacy for Congress on being pro-life and pro-family values until he was accused of sexual improprieties with teenage girls and a woman claimed to have been his mistress for nine years (Gilbert and Peterson 1995: 171). Just before the November 2006 national elections, Ted Haggard, pastor of a 14,000-member mega-church in Colorado and president of the National Association of Evangelicals, was exposed as a hypocrite who regularly took drugs and paid for gay sex (Darman and Murr 2006).

Of major significance for fundamentalists in a liberal democracy is the general attitude to single-issue candidates. While single-issue organizations are well placed to mobilize support, single-issue candidates tend to do badly because they are thought too narrow to be effective politicians. Even when the issue in question engages popular opinion (abortion, for example), there are two obstacles to successful mobilization. The first is often overlooked when people use opinion poll data to show that this or that CR agenda item has popular support. Many people may indeed dislike abortion but accord it a low priority. The second obstacle is that the salience of some issue is not just a matter of how strongly people feel about it (relative to how strongly they may feel about other things); it is also a function of public agenda setting. Turning a popular sentiment into political power depends on the public attention being given to that issue at the time when political choices are made, and the CR is not free to set public agendas. That lots of people share a position on abortion is of little use if abortion cannot be made the focus of an election. The relatively low priority that people give even to socio-moral issues about which they feel strongly is clearly illustrated by Bill Clinton's career. Despite massive negative campaigning by all the CR organizations, he won two elections on the economy, the first because people thought he would be better than George Bush Senior at managing the economy, the second because the economy was booming. Despite the sexual and financial scandals surrounding Clinton, his approval ratings remained at around 60 per cent. The 1998 elections marked the first time since 1934 that the party

of the president made gains in the House in mid-term elections (Jelen 2000: 105).

But perhaps the greatest obstacle to the CR has been the general reluctance of Americans to support a theocracy. With varying degrees of awareness, most Americans seem to appreciate the practical benefits of liberalism and tolerance. Some have a conscious commitment to the separation of church and state; others just have a vague sense that preachers should not be telling people what they cannot do. Survey after survey has shown that most Americans distinguish between morality and law. As the Barna polling organization summarized, 'Americans are comfortable legalizing activities – such as abortion, homosexuality, and pornography – that they feel are immoral' (Barna Research Organization 2001). A 1990 review of a series of polls showed that while three-quarters of Americans thought that homosexuality was immoral, a majority of those did not think that homosexual acts should be illegal (McKeever 1997: 37). A major survey sponsored by an organization in favour of greater religious influence on public life found that 58 per cent of the public thought it wrong for voters 'to seriously consider the religious affiliation of candidates'. When asked what they thought of faith-based charities receiving government funding for welfare programmes, 44 per cent were in favour, but a quarter of the sample thought that it was only a good idea if such programmes stayed away from religious messages. Nearly a third thought that it was a bad idea for the state to fund religious organizations for any purpose. Most telling were the responses to questions about public-school prayers. Only 12 per cent of evangelicals thought that such prayers should be specifically Christian and 53 per cent of evangelicals (the same as for the general public) thought that a moment of shared silence was the best solution (Pew Forum 2001). Perhaps the most significant piece of evidence that the CR has lost the war is the distribution of preferences by age. Young adults are more liberal than their parents, and that brings a steady shift in attitudes. In 1977 only 33 per cent thought that 'Homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal'. By 1996 that had become 44 per cent and by 2004 it has risen to 60 per cent (American Enterprise Institute 2004).

Although the above point concerns social values, I have placed it in this section on structural constraints because the centripetal nature of US politics and public administration brings this generally tolerant ethos to bear on the CR. Although the federal structure of the United States allows far more autonomy for cities, counties and states than is common in most European countries, the United States is in the end a single state, and its political structure forces the most important matters to be decided at the highest level. Any enthusiast may introduce a bill in the House of Representatives, but to have any chance of becoming law it must attract broad-based support. It must then pass the Senate, which, by giving two votes to every state irrespective of size, acts as a brake on regional and sectional interests. Because senators are elected by the entire state rather than by a small congressional district they are likely to temper their preferences with thought for what most voters in the state will accept. Finally, bills have to be approved by the president, who answers to a national electorate, and they can only get past his veto with two-thirds support from Congress.

As an aside, it is worth adding that the George W. Bush presidency has shown two areas in which the above limitation is weakened: administration appointments and foreign policy. The president can reward important but rather unpopular support groups by giving their people jobs in the administration; senior posts require enough support to pass congressional scrutiny, but junior posts are a presidential preserve. The president can also use his limited degree of administrative freedom to initiate pay-off projects. Shortly after taking office, Bush created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to channel government funds to the social-work activities of religious groups (DiIulio 2004; Kuo 2006). Foreign policy also offers the president pay-off opportunities, because it falls within his remit and because, short of wars, it is of far less interest to the typical American than any domestic matter. Bush was able to reward his CR supporters by imposing anti-abortion constraints on United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding (Kaplan 2004; Monkerud 2005).

To return to the general point that localism tends to be overruled by the centre, the state and federal court systems

are similarly centripetal. The CR had some successes in the lower courts but then saw the victories overturned as the cases were appealed upwards. Judges are generally bound by precedent, and many crucial decisions of the 1960s and 1970s were progressive. To justify an abrupt change, judges must persuade themselves that the existing law is patently failing to meet important public needs. Federal judges answer to a large 'imagined community', and the justices of the Supreme Court, which has the final say on most matters that concern the religiously motivated, make their judgments in the light of what they take to be the interests of the United States. This does not rule out ideologically motivated decisions, but the process of upward referral does usually blunt the impact of ideology.[5]

The same general point holds true for elections and party politics; in local elections with small constituencies (such as party selection meetings) the CR could do well but then see its preferred candidate defeated in a full primary or the full election; the examples of Pat Robertson and Ollie North have been mentioned.

Concluding thoughts on individualism

In his excellent *Culture Wars* (1991), James Hunter is careful to point out that behind the many specific arguments about school prayer, sex education, pornography in the arts and the like, there is a very general disagreement about the nature of authority. Although they may disagree on where it is located, conservatives share a common belief in the possibility of authoritative knowledge and guidance that transcends and constrains the individual. It may a sacred text, a venerated tradition or the official teachings of an organization, but there is some source that allows one group of people to denounce another in what Islam calls 'Commanding what is good and forbidding what is bad'.

The problem for moral conservatives in the United States (as elsewhere) is that such certainty is being eroded. Despite being replenished by immigrants from more traditionally religious cultures, the proportion of the US population actively

involved in religion is slowly declining. And within the church-, synagogue- and mosque-going population there is a visible shift from a conservative, authoritarian and dogmatic faith to increasingly individualistic and consumerist versions. Shibley (1996) documents this for new varieties of evangelicalism which, he points out, are world-affirming (rather than puritanical and ascetic), at ease with notions of individual freedom and place therapy and personal fulfilment ahead of dogma and doctrine. Hunter noted a creeping relativism among the young evangelicals he studied in the 1980s (1987). Conservative Protestants are no longer as sure as their parents and grandparents that God requires the same things of all people. As the sub-societies that most strongly support fundamentalism have prospered so the skins of their subcultures have become more permeable and their distinctiveness has eroded. The assertive consumerism that Americans live out in other parts of their lives has come to influence religion. And, of course, the majority of Americans who are not zealous members of any religious community are even less willing to subordinate themselves to anyone else's definition of what constitutes the good life.

European observers are often struck by the apparent success of the CR in building an influential political movement on a religiously inspired platform of socio-moral issues. In this section I have tried to draw attention to another lesson that can be drawn from the career of the CR. Even in circumstances that are highly propitious – a high proportion of the electorate committed to evangelical Protestantism and a remarkably open political structure – the CR has failed in its primary purpose of reasserting the primacy of a religious culture. Understanding why it has failed is important because it tells us a great deal about what, if we want to be formal, we can call *the functional prerequisites of a liberal democracy in a culturally diverse society with a basically egalitarian ethos*. Even many Americans who are personally committed to the religious culture that inspires the CR appreciate that social harmony requires a division between what individuals desire and what it is right for the state to impose.

What can easily be forgotten in using terms such as 'fundamentalist' to describe both Hassan Nazrallah's Hezbollah in Lebanon and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition is that

the religious zealots in the United States have accepted the essentially secular nature of public culture. They accept the rule of law. They attempt to achieve their goals by conventional electoral, legislative and judicial action. They do not assert that the law of God trumps the laws of man. In arguing for their values, US fundamentalists generally accept secular rules of engagement. They do not tell the courts that abortion should be banned because it offends God; they argue that it infringes the basic universal human right to life. They do not campaign for public prayers in schools by asserting that such is God's will. Instead, they use the language of human rights. In prosecuting the famous Scopes trial William Jennings Bryan, the great populist politician of the 1920s, boldly asserted that it was better to know the Rock of Ages than to know the age of rocks. Modern creationists cannot be so dismissive; they must argue that 'creation science', or 'intelligent design' as they now call it, fits the evidence every bit as well as the alternatives. CR activists may privately oppose homosexuality and divorce because they think them sinful, but in promoting their views they have to argue that these vices are socially dysfunctional. Whether fundamentalists clothe their religiously inspired values in secular garb because they are genuinely committed to a separation of church and state or because they accept that there is no alternative hardly matters. What matters is that two features of the United States place a powerful constraint on the realization in the public sphere of any distinctive religious culture: cultural diversity and egalitarianism.

Notes

1 For good general accounts of Protestant fundamentalism, see Marsden 1991 and 2006; Riesebrodt 1993; and Lawrence 1990.

2 The case was *Kitzmuller* v. *Dover Area School District*, and the judgment is available at http://www.pamd.uscourts.gov/kitzmuller/kitzmuller_342.pdf.

3 *Lawrence et al.* v. *Texas*, available at http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/02pdf/02-102.pdf.

McCreary County, Kentucky v. *ACLU of Kentucky*, available at http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/04pdf/03-1693.pdf.

It is also the case that appointment to the Supreme Court moderates the attitudes of most justices. They have a professional interest in maintaining the legitimacy of the Court and are thus reluctant to modify too drastically previous Court decisions. Richard Neely, the Chief Justice of the West Virginia Court of Appeals, pointed out to me in a private conversation in the early 1980s how precedent translates into workaday realities when he said that he guessed there would be little change on the basic church–state positions, because the courts had found a stance that was clear and reasonably effective. To suggest any great change would give hope to critics of the left and the right and generate a great deal of new court work.

5
Fundamentalisms: Causes and Consequences

This final chapter will draw together the themes of the case studies to consider why some religions are more likely to produce fundamentalist movements than others and why fundamentalisms differ in their attitude to democracy and violence. It will also examine a variety of social science explanations of the phenomenon. Finally it will offer some guesses about fundamentalism's future.

Do all faiths have fundamentalists?

All religions have conservative and traditionalist elements. Whether in Christianity or Buddhism, there will be those who consciously modernize, who alter their religious beliefs to make them fit what they take to be the spirit of the age. There will also be those who unthinkingly continue the old ways. In the first chapter I suggested that the term 'fundamentalist' is better kept for movements that are self-consciously reactionary, that respond to problems created by modernization by advocating society-wide obedience to some authentic and inerrant text or tradition, stripped of the debris it has accumulated, and by seeking the political power to impose the revitalized tradition. I now want to explore the possibility that

religions vary in ways that make them more or less likely to produce that sort of movement.

We should, of course, remember that the major world religions are each internally varied. An Iranian Muslim writing about Christianity would be hard pressed to find much beyond the recitation of the Apostles' Creed that unites Brazilian Catholics, Swedish Lutherans, Russian Orthodox, Texan evangelical Protestants and the Old Order Amish. Western Christians should appreciate that Islam contains just as much variation, and Hinduism and Buddhism more. However, while this suggests that we must be cautious in our comparisons and must recognize that the treatment here can only be suggestive, the complexity of the real world need not prevent us at least looking for general themes.

It seems unarguably the case that the major faiths do differ in their potential for fundamentalist movements. In the first chapter I gave examples from all the major religions, but it is no accident that the best known, because they are the most florid, come from Islam and from the evangelical Protestant strand of Christianity. These religions are monotheistic: they believe that there is just one God. They are also dogmatic: they believe that it is possible to express God's nature and will in specific propositions to which we must assent. Both of these things seem to be necessary conditions for fundamentalism.

There have been revival movements within Hinduism and Buddhism. There have been nationalist movements within states that are predominantly Hindu or Buddhist. Occasionally the two have combined to produce what looks rather like fundamentalism but in these cultures religio-political movements have never been as powerful as have Protestant or Islamic fundamentalism in theirs. The religious legitimation for Hindu nationalism, for example, has never seemed convincing or compelling (Embree 1994; Van der Veer 1994). The diffuseness of Hinduism, like that of Buddhism, makes it hard for any particular movement plausibly to present itself as representing the core of the faith. And we can trace the diffuseness of the tradition to the variety of gods or the variety of forms that the single divine essence can take. If, as I have argued, the main cause of fundamentalism is the belief of religious traditionalists that the world around them has

changed so as to threaten their ability to reproduce themselves and their tradition, then we are most likely to find it where a religion has a very clearly defined set of beliefs and rituals, and an accompanying notion of how life should be lived, that was once common (to a greater or lesser degree) to all members of that society. Hinduism might be better described not as a religion but as a loose collection of religions – Shaivites, Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Smartas and others – which share some common themes but which tolerate a huge variety of expressions of those themes. As those expressions can vary from village to village and caste to caste, there is little scope for enforcing conformity, criticizing laxity or vigorously rejecting moderate reconstructions of the tradition. Instead of the single Bible or Qur'an, there are large numbers of holy books and holy traditions. There is even a large element of Hinduism which has no god at all. Where there is a stark alternative that directly challenges the status or power of Hindu traditions (Muslims worshipping at a site claimed as sacred by Hindus, for example) Hindus can mobilize, but they share little generally accepted orthodoxy that can be offended by modernization.

This alerts us to an important qualification. Ideological cohesion is not a property solely of a belief system or religious tradition. It is a property that emerges from the interaction of the belief system and the external environment. Or, to put it another way, people's sense of identity depends on the circumstances in which they are asked to think about it and act on it. Although in essence Hinduism is more diverse than Judaism, Christianity or Islam and hence any large number of Hindus are less likely than any large number of Muslims to see themselves as similar, external pressure from a source that can be presented as anti-Hindu will increase the sense of common identity and common cause. The British Raj began the process of creating a common Hindu identity by making India a single geographical and political entity. The division at independence in 1948 into a largely Hindu India and a largely Muslim Pakistan, and all the subsequent conflict, have accelerated the growth of a common culture. When they are mobilized to see themselves as threatened by a Muslim enemy without and a Muslim 'fifth column' within, many Hindus can see themselves as sharing a common religious culture to

be defended. And we see the demands of group loyalty working through to core religious themes. It is noticeable that Hindu nationalists lean towards monotheism: the cult of Rama as a creator god simplifying the religious culture (Hellman 1996). If a people desires a religious base to their nationalism – to see themselves as a 'chosen people' – it helps to have a creator god who did the choosing.

However, there are three closely related reasons for not treating parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party or movement organizations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad as fundamentalist in terms of this essay. First, they have been provoked more by the perceived threat of Islam than by a decline in the religious observance of Hindus. Hence one central feature of fundamentalist thinking is largely missing – there is not the belief that the victories of the enemy are the result of laxity or treachery among the supposedly faithful. Or, to be more precise, the internal weakness that threatens the status of Hinduism is political compromise and accommodation rather than a decline in religious observance. In Islamic and Protestant fundamentalism a lack of political will is traced back to a departure from religious orthodoxy; in Hindu nationalism its origins are generally political. Second, Hindu nationalists are concerned more with expelling or subordinating foreigners (as they see most Muslims) than with revitalizing and purifying the Hindu faithful. There is little decline in orthodoxy to redress because there is little orthodoxy. Third, such movements are only tangentially a reaction to secularization. Although they are interested in these things, they are not as driven as Protestant and Muslim fundamentalists by changing gender roles, by the relegation of religious knowledge to the private sphere or even by the secularity of the state, except in so far as it tolerates various non-Hindu peoples. For those reasons Hindu nationalist movements (and the same could be said of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism) seem better described as expressions of ethnic and national conflict, where the ethnic and national identities in question are heavily informed by a shared religion, than as fundamentalisms.

While any shared religious identity can become the focus for political mobilization, the greater the existing cohesion (which we can see, for example, in the ease of talking about

orthodoxy and heresy) the more likely it is that adherents will produce a fundamentalist response to modernization. In that sense the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam offer much more fertile soil for fundamentalism than Hinduism and Buddhism. Because there is one God, whose nature and will is revealed in sacred sources, clear lines can be drawn between believers and unbelievers.

However, while dogmatic monotheism may be a necessary condition for fundamentalism, it is clearly not enough. Fundamentalism is not a characteristic of the Orthodox, Catholic or Lutheran strands of Christianity. In the 1970s there were various conservative movements within the Catholic Church that opposed the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. But the example of those who insisted that only the old Tridentine Latin mass was a valid sacrament can be used to work our way towards a crucial point. The general direction of change in the Catholic Church at the end of the twentieth century was that towards greater liberality and lay participation. Those who opposed such changes did so on the grounds that the old ways, the past, were more pleasing to God than the new ways. But this was paradoxical because central to the tradition was the authority of the papacy. As it was the institutional church, led by the pope, that was changing, it was inconsistent to oppose the changes on the grounds of papal loyalty. Few self-consciously traditionalist Catholics could persuade themselves that they knew better than the Vatican. And as the institutional church remained committed to its errors, the small fragments that opposed it had eventually to accept papal authority or to reject the Church.

This suggests a basic requirement for fundamentalism. It has to be possible for the fundamentalists plausibly to present themselves as the true guardians of orthodoxy. Catholicism and Islam differ from Hinduism and Buddhism in asserting that there is one single body of true doctrine, but they differ from each other in the crucial respect of ease of access to that truth. Evangelical Protestantism and Islam suppose that authoritative knowledge is democratically available. Any right-spirited person can discern God's will by reading the scriptures or studying the Qur'an. In practice this democratic spirit is compromised by the notion that the well-read and

learned or the especially devout are especially adept at discerning God's will. It is further compromised by the religious experts in ranking themselves (or being ranked by their followers) in some hierarchy of competence and piety: the great preachers and the grand ayatollahs. However, neither of these compromises is required by the religion or accorded much power by its any core beliefs. Catholicism is different. The Catholic Church asserts that its hierarchic structure is divinely ordained and that the pinnacle of the hierarchy has special access to the will of God. The Vatican maintains an office for determining what is truth and what is heresy. It is thus difficult to challenge the stance of the Vatican without also abandoning one's identity as a Catholic. Hence deviations from Catholic teaching tend to be abrupt and major schisms. The Reformation was one such; the French Revolution was another. Although the Orthodox and Lutheran traditions have a less exalted view of their church structures, they share with Catholicism a belief that church structures are more than just organizational convenience. They do possess sacramental power.

What further makes Catholic fundamentalism unlikely is that the Church has an international structure (as distinct from the rhetorical commitment to a universal mission found in evangelical Protestantism or Islam). The Vatican has, of course, to respond to local circumstances, but any reaction is always tempered by a desire to maintain cohesion and consistency across national boundaries. As I have tried to make clear, fundamentalism is primarily a response of religious traditionalists to local circumstances that threaten them. Hence it is most common where a group of zealots is unencumbered by an international bureaucracy in framing those local concerns.

If it is the case that Protestant and Islamic fundamentalism have appealed primarily to members of particular social strata who feel especially threatened, dispossessed or relatively deprived by modernization, then we should expect that such discontent will produce fundamentalism where the religious tradition allows popular reinterpretation. This is the case with Protestantism and certain forms of Islam; it is far less the case with Catholicism, where access to authoritative religious knowledge is controlled by a centralized bureaucracy.

Jihad

The aims of Islamic and Protestant fundamentalism are similar. Both movements wish to assert the primacy of their religious belief systems and the patterns of behaviour that they believe those belief systems require. Yet they differ in method. Islamic fundamentalists believe that coercion is proper. Many believe that it is required. They take 'jihad' in its most agressively confrontational sense seriously. They undertake 'martyr missions' that advance the cause by killing other Muslims queuing up for casual employment in a square in Baghdad or enjoying a wedding party in Amman. They pay their religious taxes to armed insurrection groups that use the money to buy guns and explosives. When a play or a book offends them they demand the death of the director or the author.

Protestant fundamentalists do not advance the faith by violence. There has always been a strong pacifist strand in Christianity (Martin 1997). Christ, after all, preached against the old law of 'an eye for an eye' and recommended instead that the person hit on one cheek should invite a corresponding blow on the other. Protestant radicalism has created militant sects (the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, for example) but it has also given risen to the conscientious objection of the Quakers. But even those who are not principled pacifists have generally been law-abiding and tolerant citizens.

Consider these divergent responses to male homosexuality. In Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, homosexuals were put to death. On one occasion Mullah Omar, effectively the country's prime minister, supervised as three men were executed by having a large wall toppled on top of them. The Taliban newspaper reported the event approvingly. Theologians argued whether the correct Shari'a punishment was being crushed by a wall or being thrown to death from a high roof (Rashid 2001: 115). When the American televangelist Jerry Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority, was accused by gay Christians of inadvertently encouraging anti-homosexual violence, he did not assert that this was perfectly justified. Instead he arranged to have a very public joint meeting with a leading gay Christian clergyman. He restated

his biblically based opposition to sodomy, but also apologized for any anti-homosexual violence that his comments might have encouraged and made it as clear as possible that Christians should 'hate the sin but love the sinner'. As he said,

> There is always room for us to do things better. We have looked very carefully at and will look more carefully in the future at any kind of rhetoric in our writings or preachments or whatever, that might lead someone to have hostility toward anybody, and that includes gays and lesbians. (Reuters 1999)

In three of four trials of men involved in murderous attacks on abortion clinic staff, the defendants tried to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Not one of them faced the court and said, 'I am proud of having done God's will.' Whether the insanity defence that some used was genuine or a ploy, it remains the case that religious legitimation for those killings was so utterly absent that to present motives in religious terms was to invite the judgement of insanity. When the entire religious community withholds its approval, religious motivation cannot be convincingly claimed.

Protestant fundamentalism's rejection of violence may have little or nothing to do with religion. There are two alternative sources of explanation: secular culture and mundane circumstances. It could be that, leaving aside its specifically religious components, Pashtun culture is just nastier than the culture of Virginia, and that if Falwell and his Protestant fundamentalists could have been raised in Kandahar (while still being evangelical Christians) they too would be crushing homosexuals under walls. Or it could be that culture is irrelevant. The material circumstances in which people find themselves explain behaviour, and religious beliefs are simply rhetoric that is called on after the fact to provide flowery justifications for what people would have done anyway. Fred Halliday, one of the leading commentators on Middle Eastern politics, approvingly cites an Islamic scholar who describes Islam as a sea in which

> it is possible to catch almost any fish one wants. It is, like all the great religions, a reservoir of values, symbols and ideas from which it is possible to derive a contemporary politics and

> social code: the answer as to why this or that interpretation was put upon Islam resides therefore, not in the religion and its texts itself, but in the contemporary needs of those articulating Islamic politics. (Halliday 1994: 96)

I have no difficulty accepting that the same limited repertoire of religious beliefs – like a three-piece suit, contrasting waistcoat and a few shirts and ties – can be combined in a variety of ways so that very different patterns equally well 'go together'. I also agree that one reason why people prefer one outfit to another is because it better fits their 'contemporary needs'. In chapters 3 and 4 I have repeatedly stressed the importance of this-worldly considerations (such as the distribution of political power). However, I cannot accept that, as a matter of principle, we should suppose religion to be without consequences. It would be bizarre if something that took up so much of so many people's wealth and time and that so dominated their cultures merely served as a cafeteria of convenient legitimation for any sort of behaviour. If it is the case that religion matters, then it should also be the case that differences in religions matter. Or to pursue the sea-and-fish metaphor, it is true that in any large sea you will find a variety of fish. But seas differ systematically in the species they can support. Warm and cold water, fresh or salt, deep or shallow: these create conditions in which one sort of fish will be abundant and another very rare or non-existent. The same is true of ideologies and institutions: some combinations are common, some nearly unknown and others impossible. There is no feudal democracy; capitalist democracies are two-a-penny.

The same criticism can be made of the secular culture argument. It is common for liberal apologists to displace responsibility for the less attractive features of their religions on to their secular cousins, so that it is not actually Islam that is homophobic and sexist; it is the non-religious bits of Pashtun or Arab culture. Given that the secular culture has had ten centuries to be influenced by the religion which the vast majority of the people claim to be the centre of their lives, this is a remarkably weak case.

There are two sorts of grounds which we can use to establish the centrality of religion against those who would make it marginal or peripheral. The first is the expressed motives

of the people themselves. The Afghans who put homosexuals to death and who attack unveiled women defend their actions in religious terms. Who are we to argue that they are mistaken about the roots of their actions? The second ground is systematic comparison. Unlike natural scientists, we cannot construct experiments which isolate just those characteristics which interest us and carefully alter them to see how the consequences change. We are confined to comparing naturally occurring phenomena, but that is the nature of all social science and it is no more difficult to examine the effects of faith than it is to examine the impact of social class, differential voting systems or contrasting tax regimes.

The difference between Protestant and Muslim fundamentalists in their attitudes to homosexuality is one example of such systematic comparison. There is not the scope here to offer many more, but the attitude of Northern Ireland evangelical Protestants to vigilante violence (and the implied contrast with al-Sadr's Mahdi Army in Iraq or Hezbollah in Lebanon) is instructive. The situationist explanation for the moderate behaviour of American fundamentalists is that the power and popular legitimacy of the US state is such that even if Falwell and his ilk wanted to wage jihad against the forces of evil, they would have to pretend otherwise. The minor civil war in Northern Ireland from 1970 to the late 1990s can test that logic, because it provides a setting where Protestants would not have found it hard to see themselves as being involved in a holy war. The conflict was heavily tinged with religion. Catholic political parties tried to advance 'Catholic' interests at the expense of those of 'Protestants'. Nationalist terrorists (who were almost without exception Catholic) murdered Protestants. The Catholic Church condemned the means but supported the end: the destruction of Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom, and its unification with the Irish Republic. It continued to bury nationalist terrorists with the offices of the Church. And the situation in the early 1970s was sufficiently volatile for many Protestants to fear that the state had lost control and that they were thus released from their obligation to leave the state in control of their defence.

So what is the record of Northern Ireland's fundamentalists? The evangelical Protestant cleric and Ulster unionist

politician Ian Paisley and his followers used various forms of street protest to press their political agenda. They sometimes broke the law on public assembly and defied bans on parades. They also periodically threatened to form private armies to defend themselves, but they never actually delivered on such threats. Throughout his career Paisley has vigorously condemned the murderous actions of loyalist (i.e. Protestant) terrorists. There is no evidence that he was ever involved in commissioning or condoning terror. He has repeatedly and very publicly said that loyalist killers are every bit as bad as their nationalist counterparts and has campaigned for the return of the death penalty for all terrorists. In the 1990s, when, as a reward for their ceasefires, the British government offered early release to convicted nationalist and loyalist prisoners, Paisley was as opposed to the release of the latter as he was to the release of the former. It could be, of course, that Ulster evangelicals are hypocrites. What does the record of their actions show? Despite there having been about 10,000 male members of Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church who could have become involved in terrorism, I can find fewer than ten who have been (Bruce 2007). The same point can be made even more clearly the other way round. Of some 500 or so members of loyalist terror organizations, only three claimed to be born-again Christians. The loyalist paramilitary milieu has always seen religion as a legitimate alternative to terrorism. Getting 'saved' has been widely accepted by the terrorists as a good reason for one of their number to leave.

In brief, the Northern Ireland troubles offered a fertile setting for a Protestant fundamentalist holy war, but Paisley's born-again Christians did not take up the opportunity.

The religious limits on toleration

One way of moving the situation-versus-religious ideology argument forward is to accept that a willingness to use violence to achieve any goal has a large situational component: most of us will do in war what we would not do in peace. But recognizing that does not make religious ideology

irrelevant, because it is a major factor in generating shared assessments of whether we are at war or not.

The role of religion can perhaps be better seen if we move from the highly emotive topic of violence to the more general theme of toleration. What lies behind the contrast between the responses of Mullah Omar and Jerry Falwell to homosexuality is the wider issue of the right to be wrong. Should we use our power to impose righteousness on the unregenerate? Or, to put it in constitutional language, should the state support the correct religion?

Contemporary arguments over whether Islamic societies can have democratic polities sometimes miss the point by focusing on the methods used to create governments. Having a fair and effective system of elections to turn popular will into political power is only part of what we mean by democracy. We need to consider also how the demos is defined and if (and how) its will can be constrained. It is on these points that Islamic fundamentalists depart from Western expectations. For example, Maulana Sayyid Abu Ala Mawdoodi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, is quite clear that democracy as conceived in the West is incompatible with Islam, which must always put the will of God first. The popular Egyptian preacher Muhammad al-Shaarawi argued the same. Hassan Abd Allah al-Turabi, the principal ideologue of the Sudanese Ikhwan movement, although he begins by arguing against imposing Islamic values on a reluctant populace and stresses that the state should represent the views of the people, nonetheless defines the people in terms of their commitment to Islam, and argues that all public life should be 'ultimately related to God' and that 'its function is to pursue the service of God as expressed in a concrete way in the shariah' (in Mahmoud 1996: 170).

The basic difference between the politics of Islamic states and those with a Christian heritage lies not so much in their formal political structures but in the underlying assumptions about individual liberty. Iran has elections and, unlike those of many Middle Eastern countries favoured by Western powers, the results are not known in advance of counting the votes. Nonetheless, Iranian democracy is patently less liberal than that of France because it operates within a theocratic culture. Only those people with the right religion can choose

the political leaders, who in turn must be of the right religion, and the laws of the state have to be checked by Islamic jurists to make sure that they conform to the requirements of Islam.

The key differences between Christianity and Islam in the political cultures they support seem to lie in one accident of history and one principle. The historical accident is this. The early Christian Church was a deviant minority movement in Jerusalem and within the wider Roman Empire. In AD 64 the emperor Nero tried to deflect attention from his political troubles by very publicly persecuting the Christians. It was not until a hundred years after Christ's death that Christianity began to recruit members of the upper classes. It was not officially tolerated within the Empire until AD 313 and it was sixty years later that Christianity became the Empire's official religion. So although it eventually achieved hegemony, Christianity had a long life on the margins in which to develop its attitudes to political power and central to those attitudes was the principle enunciated by Christ when the Pharisees tried to trick him by asking if it was lawful to pay taxes to Rome. He asked them to look at a penny and say whose face and name appeared on it. When they replied that they were Caesar's, Jesus said, 'Render therefore unto Caesar, the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's' (Matthew 22: 21). Although on close inspection it is thoroughly ambiguous, that text provided a convenient justification for accepting the existence of an earthly power distinct from the community of the saved; the world had two realms, not one. Despite achieving considerable worldly power, the Church periodically consoled itself with the same principle. In contrast, Islam came to dominate its environs during the lifetime of its founder and it subsequently spread by means of military conquest. The Prophet and subsequent caliphs were both spiritual and political leaders. Some of the later popes claimed the power of Caesar, but Christianity started with a religious leadership that was a very long way from the seats of power. Islam (especially in its Shi'ite line) has periodically had to accept impotence, but its general tendency is to wish temporal powers to be subject to the true faith. 'The distinction between church and state, so deeply rooted in Christendom, did not exist in Islam' (Lewis 1988: 3). As the

founder of the Muslim Brotherhood put it, 'Politics is part of religion. Caesar and what belongs to Caesar is for God Almighty alone' (Lawrence 1990: 216).

A theological distinction is also relevant. Although both themes can be found in Islam, its core is neither an inner spiritual experience nor cognitive assent to a body of doctrine. It is acceptance of the law. Although Protestant fundamentalists promote a lifestyle that they believe to be particularly godly, the core of Protestantism is correct belief, not correct action, orthodoxy rather than ortho-praxis. Hence one can find an American fundamentalist such as Bob Jones arguing against the Christian right on the grounds that imposed righteousness is worse than sinfulness; it will distract people from the need to be converted and will permit them to believe that the proper performance of ritual acts or the correct demeanour will win them salvation. While one can find similar arguments within Islam, a stronger tradition supposes that while a pure heart is better than an unclean one, outward obedience is still worth having, even if it is coerced. The experience of a man held hostage by Hezbollah is revealing:

> All our activities, from the way we slept to the way we entered a lavatory, were watched so that we would not violate the laws of Islam. Khomeini had written that on entering a lavatory a believer must put his left foot forward first. We were taken to task for violating that rule. (Taheri 1987: 135)

For Islam, religion is a matter of obeying the holy law. As what God requires is obedience to the law, then its imposition is not just acceptable but necessary.

A university friend of Osama Bin Laden recalled, 'Islam is different from any other religion: it's a way of life. We were trying to understand what Islam has to say about how we eat, who we marry, how we talk (Wright 2006: 79). Doubtless young fundamentalists at Falwell's Liberty University in Virginia ask themselves the same questions, but there is a major difference in the answers that can be given, and that brings us to the important issue of literalism. Protestant fundamentalists pride themselves on a literalist attitude to the Bible, but their self-description is misleading. All religions are metaphorical, of course, in that they try to express what is in

the final analysis inexpressible. But some of the obvious differences between Christianity and Islam can be traced to the centrality of metaphorical thinking. Some new religions (Scientology, for example) simply dismiss predecessors as false or ignore them and start from scratch. Others, Islam for example, accord a special status of 'vaguely useful but not quite the thing' to some predecessors. Christianity starts from the strange position of claiming to accept in its entirety a previous religion and then arguing against it in almost every specific. Rituals, dietary requirements, marks of belonging such as circumcision, the national basis of the faith – all were rejected. Christianity leaves the Old Testament as part of the Bible and then spends all its time saying, 'Actually, we don't mean this or that'. Or, as Christ puts it, 'It is written . . . but I say unto you . . .'. The huge flexibility given to a revealed religion which treats its foundational texts as metaphorical has obvious consequences for behaviour and hence for questions of social control and of what a dominant religion may require of unbelievers in terms of behavioural conformity. In trying to work out what their religion requires of them in this time, many Christians tend to ask 'what would Christ have done in this situation?', and the relatively scant material in the New Testament offers considerable opportunity for interpretation. Muslims can ask the same of the Prophet, but they can also consult the jurist for the correct interpretation of the stated rules. Legalism is possible in any religion, but it is much more common (and of much greater consequence) in those that have texts that can be treated literally.

This sociologic is important because, when combined with the contrast between religions of orthodoxy and religions of ortho-praxis, it explains the reactionary nature of certain cultures. We do not have to be uncritical progressives to appreciate that in many respects the social world has improved. Cruel punishments and entertainments which were commonplace in seventeenth-century Europe are now outlawed. We no longer own serfs or slaves. Women may own property, exercise the franchise and hold elected office. We do not stone adulterers to death. We have a panoply of safeguards for individuals against arbitrary power.

Any religion which begins its social thinking by supposing that a body of rules for the good life composed ten centuries

ago should serve the same purpose today (that is, a literalist orthoprax religion) will be less pleasant than one that supposes that we can now do better. This is widely recognized, and many Islamicists who advocate the Shari'a draw back from implementing certain punishments (such as amputation). My point is not that religions which require conformity to archaic rules cannot change; it is that such religions find it hard to change and so generate fundamentalist movements which resist change.

The assertion that orthoprax literalism has unpleasant consequences is not refuted by claims that most features of contemporary political Islam that Western observers rightly find reprehensible, including terrorism, can be found in the not-too-distant past of many Western countries. The Spanish Inquisition used vile methods that were common in its day; it did not use those of ten centuries earlier and claim that not just its cause but its specific methods were divinely ordained. Vileness is common. So is claiming religious justification. What is distinctive about the literalist orthoprax religion is the by-definition-archaic nature of what it seeks to impose for divine pleasure. No Christian fundamentalist, no matter how committed to sexual continence, suggests that an adulteress or an apostate should be killed. Many Muslims believe that their religion requires such punishments.

To prevent one common misunderstanding of my case, I should stress that I am not claiming that Christianity and Islam are essentially, inevitably, and for all time, unalike. At times in its history Christianity has been very firmly associated with temporal power. The crusades, which the Scottish philosopher David Hume described as 'the most signal and most durable monument of human folly that has yet appeared in any age of any nation' (Tyerman 2005: i), are an example of Christian holy war. Until the modern era Christian societies were generally intolerant of religious differences and some Muslim societies have tolerated religious minorities. However, that toleration generally took the form of ascribing second-class rights and ascribing them to religious or ethnic blocs of people, not to individuals. What was characteristic of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was where Western Europe was in the mid-seventeenth century. The Treaty of Westphalia, in bringing to an end the European wars of

religion, is conventionally taken as signalling one vital development – the idea that neighbouring kingdoms and principalities should accept each other's religious differences. There is not space here to detail the history of the expansion of that limited form of tolerance into the modern idea that individuals should be free to choose their own religion (or none). It is enough to note that the fragmentation of Western Christianity, that began with the Reformation and then accelerated as the non-Lutheran strand of Protestantism entered a long period of repeated schism, pretty well made theocracy impossible. Christians could not agree on which church the state should support. As usually happens, ideas were adjusted to conform to what was possible. Thus when the drafters of the American constitution met, they turned what was made inevitable by the different sectarian composition of the early colonies into a matter of principle: the state would not promote any particular religion. It was relatively easy for most Protestants to give up theocracy because their religion provided a clear justification for so doing: render unto Caesar. The history and theology of Islam does not provide that justification.

Mention of the American constitution reminds us of another vital consideration in understanding attitudes to tolerance and conformity: the nature of the modern state. Of necessity the great empires had to tolerate a great deal of cultural and religious diversity. The rise of the modern state has been accompanied by the notion that its members should all be alike. That has usually meant the imposition of the language and religion of the dominant ethnic group on those minorities within the state's boundaries (Gellner 1994). As we saw in the case of Iran, the creation of a powerful state apparatus has also meant unprecedented opportunity to impose orthodoxy and crush deviation. This is a gross simplification, of course, but we can note that many of the West's nation-states were created at a time when secular rationalizing forces were already powerful and when the egalitarian democratic spirit severely restricted the ability of the state to produce religious conformity. Thus, at the time it declared its independence from Britain, the United States was already so diverse that, in terms of a religious identity, the best it could claim was to be vaguely Christian, and the contemporary religious right has

to appeal to 'our shared Judaeo-Christian heritage'. Although many states in the Middle East began with formal constitutions that paid lip service to Western liberal democratic ideals, the reality is that they forged their sense of common identity at a time when most people were still orthodox Muslims. There was, of course, the pan-Arab alternative but once it failed the strengthening of national identities was bound to strengthen the position of Islam.

I shall now return to the comparison of the actions of Protestant and Islamic fundamentalists. As I have noted in the details of the case studies, there are obvious circumstantial explanations of why the former have generally been law-abiding and have framed their demands within the confines of liberal democracy, while the latter have frequently resorted to violence. Protestant fundamentalists operate in stable, legitimate and prosperous democracies that offer plentiful peaceful avenues to pursue their goals and ample compensation for failing to win their case. Most Islamic fundamentalist groups operate in poor countries with dictatorial regimes. Furthermore, Protestant fundamentalists operate in religiously diverse cultures with a very large proportion of non-believers; Islamic fundamentalists promote extreme versions of a culture that is generally supported by most people in their societies, hence they can find a more ready defence of their actions. But none of those situational differences detracts from the underlying theological difference between Christianity (especially in its Protestant form) and Islam. Christianity stresses the redemptive experience of the individual rather than obedience to the Law and thus more readily permits a distinction between church and state. Protestant fundamentalists can readily tolerate a difference between what morality requires and what it is proper for the law to demand, because their notion of how to attain salvation gives little role to public conformity to a body of rules.

Are fundamentalists insane?

To understand people we must see the world through their eyes. But in order to explain we may need to go beyond the

ways in which people understand themselves, and we may sometimes legitimately differ with them over the causes of their perceptions and actions. Fundamentalism can seem so bizarre and so much an inappropriate response that it is tempting to suppose that the real cause must lie somewhere other than where the actors place it.

One apparently bizarre feature of fundamentalism is its insistence on active agency. Fundamentalists have little time for the idea, common to most social science explanations, of unintended consequences. If things happen, they must have meaning and meaning is found in the conscious intentions of the person, group or organization who or which caused the act. For example, in explaining the twentieth-century change in gender roles, the social scientist would note the campaigning role of women's liberation groups but place greater weight on a combination of complex social changes: people living longer and getting married later, decreasing infant mortality, changes in the nature of work. US fundamentalist groups that desire a return to 'family values' blame this change on the political activity of feminists. And 'blame' is the right word, because by personalizing social change fundamentalists make it a moral matter. Bad things occur because bad people desire them.

A second characteristic of fundamentalist thought is that it consolidates the bad people. US fundamentalists do not see themselves as set against an array of different groups, operating with quite different and often incompatible agendas. Instead, television producers, liberal judges, advocates of free speech, sexual libertines, working women, Catholics and trade unionists are blended into a single, all-powerful and cunning enemy. In trying to understand why they find themselves at the losing end of political change in Northern Ireland, supporters of Ian Paisley lump armed republican groups, law-abiding Irish nationalists, apparently well-meaning liberal Ulster unionists, the British and Irish governments, the Irish lobby in the United States and the Roman Catholic Church together into one compound foe.

Different fundamentalist groups at different times have identified a different enemy. In the nineteenth century it could be the Illuminati (a supposed international secret society) or the Freemasons. In the twentieth century, it could be Interna-

tional Jewry or Communism. Those capital letters are deliberate. For US fundamentalists communism is not a general political philosophy promoted in very different ways by different political movements: it is a single conspiracy. Fundamentalists differ as to who is really behind it all. Some think that communists are really Jews; others think that Jews are really communists. In the 1980s, with communism obviously a spent force, and the Jews abruptly selected as allies, US fundamentalists hit on a new collective noun for their various enemies: 'secular humanists'. The Iranian ayatollahs suppose that US imperialism, Judaism, Zionism and Christianity are all the same evil thing.

A third mark of fundamentalist thinking is a fondness for decoding signs and discovering hidden connections. For example, Ian Paisley has argued that the Jesuits (and, by implication, all Roman Catholics) are not misguided Christians; they are actually pagans, and he knows this because, in the orthography of the time that wrote 'J' as 'I', the Jesuit badge 'IHS' (which the Jesuits say stands for 'Jesus Hominum Salvator', or 'Jesus, Saviour of Men') really stands for Isis, Heb, Seb – the gods of ancient Egypt. There is a long tradition in Protestant fundamentalism of decoding allegorical Bible passages. To find the date of the end of the world scholars would perform complicated sums with the numbers of hooves of the beasts in the book of Revelations and the like.

This style of thinking has some obvious values. It provides a 'one size fits all' explanation of troublesome aspects of the world. It also provides an all-purpose legitimation for almost any act. By amalgamating all the things they do not like into a single force, fundamentalists make it easier to defend any action or campaign, because they can transfer the horror of the greatest threat to the slightest. So the South Carolina mother concerned about unpleasant television cartoons can demonize them by claiming that they contain subliminal propaganda messages inserted by communists in Hollywood. Ulster Protestants can picket a Catholic church and harass worshippers because they believe that the armed terrorists of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church are really just one and the same movement. The ayatollah looking for ways to justify the mutilation of a woman who appears in public with her face bared can argue

that she is an agent of the Great Satan. By imagining that all the threats and irritants are one great enemy, the fundamentalist creates a very flexible and convenient way of constantly transferring justifications.

It is also useful as a device for creating consensus and demanding loyalty from supporters. If everything that the mullah wishes to oppose is actually the work of the Great Satan, not matter how small the apparent offence to the Prophet, then all good Muslims must follow the mullah in hating everything the mullah hates.

By adding that the single enemy is extremely cunning and can work in secret ways, the fundamentalist also has a convenient way of dealing with mistakes and failings on his own side. In describing the uncritical view of the Iranian Revolution held by Egyptian fundamentalists, Matthee says,

> As diffuse as it is self-explanatory, the enemy is at hand wherever explanations are sought and brought to the fore whenever exoneration and instant alleviation is needed. When apparent shortcomings and aberrations threaten to distort the ideal picture, a Muslim Brotherhood analysis manages to lay the blame on the relentless machinations of the enemy. (Matthee 1986: 257)

So we start by noting that specific fundamentalist explanations are unusual. It is then easy to suppose that fundamentalist thinking in general is strange. It is then a small step to assuming that fundamentalism is explained by faulty reasoning or by something that involves no reasoning whatsoever. There is a long tradition in the social sciences based on precisely that assumption.

Although they were more concerned with secular right-wing extremists than with the religious right, Theodor Adorno and his colleagues pointed the way for others with their study *Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). A refugee from the Nazis, Adorno believed that extremist right-wing politics attracted people with a certain type of personality: they were excessively submissive to those above them and excessively aggressive to those below. In a wonderful metaphor, the authoritarian personality was described as a cyclist: bending from the waist up but kicking out with his legs. Heavily influenced by Freudian ideas, the team located the

origins of that personality type primarily in child-rearing. Thus joining the racist and anti-Semitic Ku Klux Klan was not the reasoned act of a reasonable person (because such a person would see through the Klan's nonsense); it was the irrational response of an abnormal character.

The evidence in support of this explanation was remarkably slight. The links between patterns of child rearing, personality traits discovered in psychological experiments and participation in extremist movements were never established. Most importantly, even had such connections been well made, there would still have been a question of the direction of causation. Were authoritarians thus because they had been persuaded by authoritarian ideas or were they open to authoritarian ideas because they were in some deep and permanent sense authoritarian? But the lack of evidence did not stop the perspective becoming the stock-in-trade of analysts of right-wing movements.

Another variety of the 'fundamentalists as aliens' approach locates the origins of their behaviour not in their upbringing but in anxieties about their social status. Joseph Gusfield's *Symbolic Crusade* (1963) argued that those people who campaigned for the banning of alcohol in various temperance crusades at the end of the nineteenth century were not motivated primarily by the belief that the demon drink was a social evil that impoverished and debilitated the masses. Rather they were concerned to 'consolidate their middle class respectability through a sharpened distinction between the native, middle class life styles and those of the immigrant and the marginal labourer or farmer' (1963: 37). Although Gusfield begins by correctly identifying such movements as campaigns in defence of a culture, he shifts, with no pertinent evidence to support the slide, to supposing that they are really driven by threats to the social status of the campaigners. Curiously he fails to show either that status concerns figured in the reasoning of the temperance campaigners or even that they shared a common social status. His study shows that the moral crusaders came from a very wide variety of backgrounds and that the only thing they had in common was their commitment to a particular culture or lifestyle.

Gusfield's theory was adopted and developed by Zurcher and Kirkpatrick (1976) in an attempt to explain US anti-

pornography crusades in the 1970s. They argue that a traditionally dominant status group was challenged by rising social groups with contrasting beliefs and lifestyles. The threatened group chose pornography as a convenient symbol to dramatize this conflict. However, because they could not show that the conservatives did actually share a common social status, they shifted their ground to incorporate the idea of status inconsistency. The empirical basis for this idea is that the anti-pornography campaigners tended to 'an over-rewarded status inconsistency pattern of higher income and lower education and far lower occupation' (Zurcher and Kirkpatrick 1976: 266). What is being supposed here is that people in modern societies are ranked on a number of scales (such as income, education and occupational prestige). Those whose various statuses are in harmony (I have a prestigious job and a university degree and I get paid a lot) will feel secure in their social position. Over-rewarded people whose statuses are 'inconsistent' will feel insecure and anxious because they expect to be found out. They resolve those anxieties by investing their energies in defending a particular value against its liberal deriders. They appear to be concerned with one thing (the relative standing of a particular culture) but are 'really' concerned about something else (their own precarious position). Wallis (1979) identified a number of flaws in this argument. One is that it is not obvious that Americans who earn a lot without impressive formal qualifications or a prestigious job actually do feel anxious about their status. Another is that to arrive at this convoluted explanation, Zurcher and Kirkpatrick climb over a much simpler one. Affluent churchgoers from small towns who have not been to university have the right social background to have acquired a conservative culture and to have avoided later being socialized in the permissive and liberal culture of the universities and the knowledge professions. There is no need to try to connect aspects of the social structure to the beliefs people hold via some notion of disturbed or abnormal psychology, when one can more simply show that these people were raised to hold those sorts of belief.

Apart from being implausible, what the authoritarian personality, symbolic crusade and status inconsistency approaches have in common is the supposition that participation in reli-

giously inspired or extremist social movements is not what it seems. The clue is in the adjective 'symbolic' that precedes the noun 'crusade'. The protagonists misunderstand what really bothers them. In Marx's terms they are suffering from false consciousness. The campaign for school prayer, for example, is not really about school prayer at all. It is actually a disguised class struggle. The Gusfield theory at least does temperance crusaders the credit of supposing that they are motivated by some cause, even if it is self-interest rather than the one they thought they were promoting. The authoritarian personality and status inconsistency approaches deny our campaigners even that degree of rationality. They suppose that some deep-seated and unconscious psychological or social problem has addled the reasoning of our crusaders and made them vulnerable to recruitment for causes that are a diversion from the real business of life.

What makes such an explanation of fundamentalism tempting is that, as I showed above, fundamentalist thought is indeed rather strange. It grossly over-simplifies, imputes an underlying moral order to everything, readily demonizes its opponents and finds Reds (or whoever the conspirators are) under every bed. The temptation then is to take our analysis – the world as seen by the sort of people who study fundamentalists – as correct and suppose the fundamentalist vision to be so mistaken as to require an explanation quite different from the ones we would apply to ourselves. We are normal so they must be odd.

Tempting but wrong. The crucial test for abnormality is not whether a person's reasoning fits with ours but whether it fits with their own! Bizarre though it may seem to an outsider, fundamentalism is perfectly consistent with the logic of the religious tradition from which it grows. The idea that everything in the world must have been caused by somebody who wanted that to happen may be alien to the social scientist used to the frequency of unintended consequences, but it is a perfectly reasonable view for someone who believes that there is a creator god and a divine providence. It may seem strange to us to suppose that the history of the world (past, present and future) is divided into distinct 'dispensations', each with its unique ordained logic, but it is of a piece with the [illegible] the world in six days. Similarly, con-

spiracy thinking may seem odd to the secular rationalist, but regarding a multitude of enemies as being really a single agent is perfectly reasonable for someone who believes in Satan. That the mysteries can be decoded by the perceptive person with the hidden key is not such a strange notion to people who spend their time pondering the Revelation of John.

To put it simply, odd though the political analysis of fundamentalists might be, it is no odder than the central beliefs of the major religions. If one can believe that God sent his only son to be born of a virgin in a stable in Bethlehem or that the twelfth Imam is not dead but is in hiding, then anything else is easy.

This is not said in order to be flippant but to bring us to the heart of the matter. As I pointed out in chapter 2, most of what now passes for religion in the West is thoroughly secularized but that fact, not fundamentalism, is the oddity. In the broad sweep of human history, fundamentalists are normal. It is not the dogmatic believer who insists that the sacred texts are divinely inspired and true, who tries to model his life on the ethical requirements of those texts, and who seeks to impose these requirements on the entire society that is unusual. It is the liberal who supposes that his sacred texts are actually human constructions of differing moral worth, whose religion makes little difference to his life, and who is quite happy to accept that what his God requires of him is not binding on other members of his society, this is the strange and remarkable creature.

How, then, do we explain fundamentalism? The short answer is: in the same way in which we would explain anything else. Fundamentalism is a rational response of traditionally religious peoples to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world. Liberals may find the tone of fundamentalist polemic offensive but fundamentalists have not exaggerated the extent to which modern cultures threaten what they hold dear. Gender roles have changed. The status and rights now accorded children does reduce the power of parents and thus their ability to ensure that their children are successfully socialized into their culture. The world of work has changed; small businesses operating in local markets, where exchange and employment relations are based on enduring personal

relationships, have been replaced by large-scale impersonal enterprises trading in a global economy. The courts do now enforce the separation of church and state in a more rigorous manner than they did in the 1920s. Homosexuality is now accepted as a permitted lifestyle choice and is sometimes portrayed in the mass media in a positive light. The Ayatollah Khomeini did not invent the Shah of Iran or his failed attempts to westernize an Islamic country.

The explanation of fundamentalism must start with the social changes explained in chapter 2. Modernization confronts all religious traditions with a choice. The polar-extreme options are accommodation or resistance. Either they try to salvage fragments of their wrecked cultural ship while riding the social and cultural tide, or they try to fight back. There is no simple answer as to why any particular group of people goes one way rather than the other, but the elements of an answer are obvious enough. The strength of the religious tradition is one consideration; the extent to which social change bears directly on a population is another. So US fundamentalism began in the north-east, where the press of modernization was felt first, but found its stronghold in the southern states, where Protestantism was strongest.

The extent of the benefits of modernization and the manner in which they are distributed is also important. We do not have to suppose that people are cynical in order to recognize that response to change involves a trade-off. I have previously made the point that most American conservative Protestants, despite sharing many of the Christian right's objections to the culture of modern America, have been reluctant to support the more radical part of the Moral Majority or Christian Coalition programmes because they appreciate that there are many benefits of the present accommodation that might be lost were a theocracy to be actively pursued. They do not like to see a popular sitcom character 'come out' as a lesbian but they appreciate the value of tolerance. They dislike abortion intensely but accept that for some people in some circumstances it may be required. It is not hard to imagine that had the economic benefits of the Shah's 'white revolution' been more widely distributed, Khomeini's alternative would have been less popular. In other Muslim countries a liberal version of Islam might have triumphed had it not been for

'the unfortunate coincidence and association between imperialistic western domination and Islamic liberal theory' (Saiedi 1986: 193) and for the failure of the modernizers to deliver.

In summary, I am suggesting that we do not need an explanation of fundamentalism as such. In so far as the many movements discussed in this brief essay have much in common, the explanation of the phenomenon is that it is one possible response of traditionally religious people to social, economic and political changes that threaten their culture, particularly by weakening their ability to preserve that culture and transmit it to their children. Why some people respond by becoming fundamentalists while others do not is a matter for the particulars of each circumstance. There is simply no need and no warrant for construing fundamentalism as a gross psychological abnormality that deserves an explanation based on the idea of abnormality.

Fundamentalism and the future

This final section will engage in what could be presented as prediction, but might more honestly be called speculation. The case studies of chapters 3 and 4 gave a variety of reasons for supposing that fundamentalism may be more important as a symptom of modernization than as an effective response to it. In considering Muslim fundamentalism, I noted that the universalism of fundamentalism seems unable to override the imperatives of nationalism or supplant the interests of the nation-state. Islamic militants try to export their revolution, but they are regularly defeated. If we leave aside George W. Bush's 'war on terror' rhetoric and Huntington's clash of civilizations, we see Al-Qaeda for what it is: a small organization that opportunistically attaches its story of universal jihad to a myriad of local struggles. Even social units smaller than the nation-state (such as the ethnic group or the tribe) seem powerful obstacles to the promotion of a radical religious agenda. Second, for all that Islamic fundamentalisms have on occasion been able to embarrass Western powers, there is no chance of Muslim states (even if most of them followed the Khomeini model) becoming a serious threat to the United

States or its culture. Third, and this is highly speculative, I do not see that Islamic fundamentalism has yet developed a social order (as distinct from a religious culture) that will in the long run provide a viable alternative to Western liberal democracy. This should not be mistaken for some optimistic assessment that the benefits of Western liberalism and toleration of diversity are so obvious that they will win over the entire world. Rather I mean that if, as they hope, Islamic states prosper, they will continue to be faced with demands for greater personal freedom, greater egalitarianism and greater equality in gender roles. They may not be able comfortably to accommodate those demands, but nor do they seem to have designed a viable alternative. Fourth, although it is possible for specific local circumstances to isolate a society from the rest of the world (war being the classic case), any increase in prosperity must bring greater international integration. Despite the enormous pressure to do otherwise, many Iranians watch American and European television programmes, wish to travel and hope to enjoy the educational, professional and social opportunities available in the West. The Iranian Revolution was a temporary salve, not a permanent cure, for the disease of 'westoxification'.

Let us go back to that other contender for universal religion: communism. In response to Trotsky's ambition to export revolution, Stalin argued for 'communism in one country'. Actually, he did better than that with the creation of the Warsaw Pact. But the problem remained the same. For forty years the communist states of Eastern Europe tried to persuade their citizens that they lived happier and more prosperous lives than the exploited proletarians of the West. But the West proved too powerful and too attractive, and no wall proved high enough to prevent the appeal of the West amplifying the internal demands for change.

That Islamic fundamentalism is rooted in centuries-old religious traditions rather than resting on a modern secular faith gives it deeper roots and hence a better chance than communism of creating an alternative to the Western model of modernization, but the odds are still poor. A sensitively documented illustration of the tensions that arise can be found in an anthropological study in which a number of Jordanians who had studied and worked abroad and then returned to their

village were interviewed in depth (Antoun 1994). What that study shows is that in weighing up the benefits and costs of life in Europe or the United States and life in Jordan, the returnees were thoughtfully selective. They were able to talk with insight and self-understanding about differences in relations between men and women, and parents and children, and about the relative merits of individualism and communalism. One respondent who had trained as a doctor and worked in Germany had come home because he preferred the Jordanian model of family life to what he saw in the West. He also objected to the secular culture of the West, with its marginalization of religion and its separation of church and state. Nonetheless, in talking about how the Jordanian economy could be developed, he explicitly admired the Western stress on the primacy of science, and commended a system of differentiated roles, with differential training and a hierarchy of knowledge, and a system of credentials. He wanted secular science and technology and the rational bureaucracy that went with it, and thought that those were more important than the tribal and ethnic identities that played such a large part in Jordanian village life.

Mernissi uses the structure of time to illustrate the relative powerlessness of Muslim societies:

> Our whole life – the production of goods and services, political and economic decision-making, the circulation of people and ideas, the banks, the airports – runs on Coordinated Time . . . Since we are forced to live according to the Western calendar, our calendar now marks just the time of prayer, which still serves to anchor the humble believer to the trajectory of the stars . . . We no longer live according to the rhythm of the sacred calendar but we have not succeeded in creating the technological base that alone would guarantee access to the *kawn* (cosmos). (Mernissi 1993: 144)

Can a society adopt only part of the modernization package? Time will tell, but, for all the reasons outlined in chapter 2, I suspect not.

However, none of the above means that Islamic fundamentalism will soon disappear. Many of the above observations either explicitly or implicitly assume political stability and economic progress. The former may be hard to achieve and

there are good reasons for supposing that the latter will always be uneven, so that some social groups prosper while others fall behind, either in the absolute sense of becoming increasingly impoverished or in the relative sense of not doing as well as others. Class divisions are common to all societies, but those of Third World economies are particularly acute, because the ruling classes use their position as conduits for the wealth generated by contact with the West to advance themselves and their children well ahead of the rest of their people. In a context of increasing class divisions, where the differences in life chances are so clearly related to contact with the West, there will be considerable scope for Islamic fundamentalist parties to act as an enduring opposition, representing the interests of the deprived and dispossessed, and framing their problems as the work of the Great Satan. Such scope will increase if the United States and its allies continue to interfere in the affairs of Islamic countries in the utterly ill-conceived manner of the Iraq invasion.

Fundamentalism in the West has no chance of winning. As I showed in chapter 4, American fundamentalists have had some success in arguing that they deserve the social space accorded to other minorities, but they have made no headway in reasserting the right to public primacy of their religiously inspired social mores. The state and civil society have proved remarkably impervious to fundamentalism. Fundamentalists have had to accept secular rules of engagement. They have failed to impress when arguing from religious inspiration and have been forced to promote their preferences on the secular grounds that their model of the origins of the world is good science and that their social agenda is socially beneficial. In having to argue their cases on grounds that they do not themselves accept, they have already lost.

Less often remarked upon but equally important, American fundamentalists have been unable to resist many of the social trends they oppose. Feminists used to delight in pointing out that the largest movement to campaign against an 'equal rights for women' amendment to the Constitution and for a return to traditional family values was led by Phyllis Schlafly, an extremely successful full-time career woman. In a more disinterested fashion, I would note that fundamentalist [illegible] now almost as likely to work outside the home

as are non-fundamentalists. American fundamentalists have abandoned their critique of the economy. Populist critiques of international capitalism were common in fundamentalist circles at the start of the twentieth century; they are now unheard of. In patterns of consumption, fundamentalists are now quite normal. When fundamentalists were poorer than the average American they found it easy to suppose that godliness required various forms of abstinence. As they have prospered, asceticism has disappeared. Divorce is now as much a commonplace among fundamentalists as anywhere else. Apart from attitudes to sexuality, abortion and recreational drug use, it is very hard to find many respects in which fundamentalists are distinctive.

In the 1970s Franky Schaeffer was an extreme proponent of Calvinist theocracy, more extreme indeed than Falwell or others active in the Christian right. In the 1980s, disillusioned by the compromises of organizations such as the Moral Majority, he gave up Protestantism altogether and joined the Greek Orthodox Church. He denounced Protestant fundamentalism as a 'hybrid composed of fragments of ancient Christian faith and thoroughly modern, anti-traditional, materialist and often utopian ideas' (in Cox 1995). That bitter depiction contained an authentic social science truth that explains why fundamentalism will fail in the West. Protestantism is so committed to individualism that it cannot for long present a solid front against the modernizing trends outlined in chapter 2. A religion that not only permits but requires individual conscience cannot serve as the justification for a theocracy. Fundamentalists may argue that, as individuals dissenting from the dominant culture, their rights should be respected but they cannot persuasively argue to much constrain the rights of others. And even if they could, the democratic political culture that Protestantism inadvertently did so much to create would not allow them to succeed.