

September 11, bomb attacks in Madrid and London with hundreds of victims, burning automobiles, homes, police stations, and churches all over the world: Truth claims paired with violence or its justification yield fundamentalism. This phenomenon can be found in all religions and worldviews. And yet a critique is justified: The term 'fundamentalism' is often used unjustly as a polemical form against those who think differently. This absorbing book enlightens and sensitizes to a serious problem in our terminology which hinders really understanding the problem. As a sociologist the author defines fundamentalism as a militant truth claim and then finds corresponding currents in all religions and worldviews.



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Thomas Schirmmacher Fundamentalism



Thomas Schirmmacher

# Fundamentalism

## When Religion becomes Dangerous



WEA  
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE



**Thomas Schirrmacher**  
**Fundamentalism**



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# Foreword

## My Task

Throughout history religions have brought about wars and mass murders (as well as peace in small and large contexts and an attention to human rights). However, one can just as well justify wars and mass murders on the basis of a knowingly non-religious worldview, such as those demonstrated by Stalin and Mao. Likewise, most murders that take place daily throughout the world have no religious motivation. Murders are horrible things. People find politically motivated murder to be more terrifying, above all murder committed through terrorism. On top of that, if these acts are justified religiously, the instinctive repudiation increases all the more. In the public eye, religious fundamentalism is primarily connected with murder committed by Islamic terrorists. At the same time, this means that being charged with fundamentalism can result in social rejection for those concerned.

My task is difficult, since on the one hand I want to familiarize the reader with the various movements which are normally meant by the religious ‘fundamentalism’ catchword. At the same time, given decades of study and on the basis of discussions with leaders of fundamentalist movements and religious leaders, specifically in Indonesia, India, China, Tibet, Uyghuria, Uganda, Turkey, and Tunisia, I view the term fundamentalism very critically. On the other hand, when I use the term, I have arrived at my own definition, which is certainly unavoidable. This is due to the fact that there is nowhere anything approaching an homogeneous definition of ‘fundamentalism.’

I have decided not to present the specific movements in the major religions in their own chapters one after the other. Rather, I want to use them as examples for particular questions or phenomena that occur in multiple religions.

Within the issue, there are many topics that will be addressed or discussed, such as ‘modernity,’ terrorism, colonialism, missions, freedom of religion, or the relationship between church and state. I have elsewhere delved further into these issues, but in the effort to put it in a nutshell, I have had to reduce them.

On the discussion regarding ‘modernity,’ I would like to refer the reader to the volume entitled *Postmodernism* by Ron Kubsch. The question of social coexistence between different cultures and religions within a country is described in my volume entitled *The Multicultural Society*. Problems of



religious freedom are addressed in my volume *Persecution of Christians Today*, and nationalism and religious racism in *Racism*. In *Koran and Bible* I address the different understandings of scripture found in Islam and Christianity. Additionally, outside of this series, I describe in detail both a Catholic fundamentalist movement and an Evangelical fundamentalist movement in my books *Concept of an Enemy – Islam* and *The Beginning and End of Christian Reconstruction*, respectively.

Since fundamentalism used to denote the view that the Bible is without error, I have to refer those who expect this work to include a discussion of the correct understanding of the Bible to the *Koran and Bible* volume. Only in the fourth chapter in the book before you do I address the role Holy Scripture plays in all religions.

What remains to be mentioned is that a separate volume entitled *Islamism* by Christine Schirrmacher will shortly appear in this series. That work will go into detail and historically work through what can only be briefly sketched in this volume.

# 1. History of the Term 'Fundamentalism'

The English word 'fundamentalism' was first coined in 1920 by C. L. Laws in the *Baptist Watchman-Examiner* in order to describe a movement formed to oppose liberal theology in the USA. The movement had become known through a series of books under the title *The Fundamentals*.

Between 1910 and 1915 A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey published a series of booklets under the title *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*; free mass distribution in the form of 3 million copies was financed by two brothers who were Texas oil millionaires. In these writings world-renowned theologians as well as revival preachers from around the globe and from a wide range of churches protested against liberal theology. They viewed the inerrancy and authority of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus Christ, his virgin birth, his death for the sins of men, and his bodily resurrection and personal return as central to the Christian faith. Of course, these are all teachings which were also essential for the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church at the time. Political demands were completely absent.

If one looks at the almost 1,500 page reprint of the 1917 full edition of the articles in 4 volumes, which are often indiscriminately taken in today's literature to be the epitome of everything that is evil about 'fundamentalism,' one finds an enormous breadth of authors, topics, and positions. Among them are the globally well-known theology professors such as Benjamin B. Warfield of Princeton University and James Orr from Scotland. The tone is, on the whole, a moderate one. The issuers and financiers were dispensationalists. They held to a special end times teaching that originated with the so-called Plymouth Brethren, which believed political Israel was to rise again. However, the eschatological peculiarities of the Plymouth Brethren were not made a topic of discussion. Numerous non-dispensationalists are among the authors of the articles. Several authors criticize the theory of evolution, and others defended so-called theistic evolution. The enormously negative presentation found in literature is not deserved. It does not appear that many authors who begin their history of fundamentalism with these books have ever taken a look into them.

In his classic *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, George Marsden sets the epoch of early fundamentalism at 1875-1925. The 'fundamentals' were therefore less the beginning than the climax or end of a movement. With the decision in the 1925 'monkey trial' against the teaching of evolution in schools – which was understood as interference on the part of the state in family matters – the zenith was surpassed. To be sure, the funda-

mentalist movement continued. However, increasingly it was only a small wing of Evangelicals who, after World War II at the latest, accounted for the majority and went its own way. Admittedly, the World's Christian Fundamentals Association was founded in 1919 in Philadelphia, but it did not last long. (The International Council of Christian Churches, founded of 1948, which in a sense could be viewed as a late successor, likewise remained largely limited to the USA. Neither group had German members.) From 1930-1970 this sort of fundamentalism withdrew from society as it sought a life pleasing to God. There was an explicit opposition to political activity. Gradually a differentiation developed between fundamentalists who self-consciously called themselves such and separated themselves from all other churches, and the bulk of (neo-) Evangelicals, who admittedly held similar theological positions but were in favor of cooperation between churches and who advocated participation in the democratic process, as well as in issues relating to religious freedom and human rights.

One can distinguish five phases in the public use of the word 'fundamentalism' from 1920 up to the present.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning in 1920 the term was initially used as a way to identify oneself and then as a designation of all those Protestants in the USA who were against liberal theology and held to the foundations of the Christian faith and to the divine inspiration of the Bible. However, the movement and the use of the term fundamentalism ebbed in the years up to World War II. It is to be noted that at this point fundamentalism was used within Christianity as a term of self-designation, having to do with a movement in the USA with small offshoots in several western countries.<sup>2</sup> The term was used by opponents as a strongly pejorative theological term.

For decades after that point it was rather quiet. This goes for the term fundamentalism as well as for the groups it designated.

During the philosophical and epistemological debates of the 1960s, the term fundamentalism was the counterpart to the so-called fallibilism of critical rationalism in the wake of Karl Popper and his student Hans Albers. Fallibilism says that there is no such thing as true statements. Rather, there are only statements that are principally falsifiable (can be demonstrated to be false), but that have not been falsified up to now. Every philosophical position that assumes that there are justifiably true statements for certain questions or areas of thought was seen to be 'fundamentalist.' Fundamentalism was, then, every assumption starting from an indubitable po-

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Meyer, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 15-20; Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 56-58. More information about books and articles in footnotes can be found in the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> About Germany see Holthaus, *Fundamentalismus*.

sition of certain knowledge. It was thus a philosophical, strongly pejorative term, which above all was directed at other schools of thought, most of which were non-religious or even atheistic. Those who were so designated rejected the term.

Especially since the Iranian Revolution took place under the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, fundamentalism has become a political term for all violence-prone or violent, and often terroristic, Islamic movements, that are directed at the foundations of political theory in the West, such as democracy, human rights, and the separation of religion and the state. Just how the term fundamentalism became a catchword which captured the horror of terrorism within the Islamic world has up to this point, to my knowledge, not been investigated. In this context, fundamentalism was likewise a political term referring to Islam as a religion.

In 1979 the so-called 'Moral Majority' was founded in the USA by Jerry Falwell. For the first time, Evangelicals became politically involved on a grand scale, and at the same time there was cooperation with Catholic, Jewish, and other religious and conservative groups. Ronald Reagan's election victory in 1980 was attributed to this group. This is accurate insofar as it is correct that there was a historical change at that time. Evangelicals had until then in large part voted for the Democratic Party, for instance in the election of the Evangelical President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981). Although the old fundamentalist movement in the USA had distanced itself from involvement with the Republicans, the term fundamentalism was conferred upon the new religious right in the USA. It was after 1977 that religious parties co-governed in Israel for the first time, and after 1979 the religious right in the USA was also designated fundamentalist.

The fourth phase concerns the adoption of the term in the purely political arena as a description of the wing of civilization-critical movements which rejected any sort of compromise with leading governments. In Germany this applies primarily to *Die Grünen* (The Green Party), who were elected into the German Bundestag for the first time in 1983. A distinction came to be made between *Fundis* (the German short form for 'fundamentalists'), who rejected any coalition with other parties, and the *Realos* (German short form for 'realists'), who were prepared to initially forego some of their demands in exchange for a participation in power. The most famous *Fundis* were Rudolf Bahro and Jutta Ditfurth, while the best known *Realo* is Joschka Fischer. The *Fundis* did not want to give up the leftist socialist ambitions of the student movement, unconditional pacifism, and a critique of technology. Fischer, a *Realo*, later became Foreign Minister and conducted war in Bosnia. The term was gradually also conferred upon other parties and political movements.

In the fifth phase the various meanings were combined. Since Islam also maintains that the Koran is God's word, some perceive a similarity be-

tween the Islamic Revolution and Christian fundamentalism in the USA. This actually does not fit, since in Islam all Muslims hold the Koran to be divine and inerrant, not only a particular wing as is the case with Christian fundamentalists in the USA. (Additionally, one might add that the traditions of Mohammed and his followers, known as the *hadith*, are likewise important, giving tradition a higher status than it has among Christian fundamentalists.) Furthermore, American fundamentalists have always been acquainted with international textual criticism and discussions regarding interpretation; Muslims have not had this same experience. This is related to the way in which Islam regards the tradition (*hadith*) as having equal value to the Koran. Besides, Christian fundamentalists have planned no violent revolutions and have advocated religious freedom.

There came a time when Christians and Muslims labeled as fundamentalists, who claimed to know the truth, were linked with the philosophical notion of fundamentalism, although this notion was precisely directed in large part against non-Christian schools of thought in philosophy. At that point it served more to spotlight so-called critical rationalism as the sole true enlightened school of thought and to dismiss all others across-the-board. In this manner, modern philosophers and traditionally pacifistic free churches suddenly, for all intents and purposes, found themselves in the same terminological boat with terrorists.

Finally, the green *Fundis'* lack of readiness to seek political compromise was added to the mix. If with Islam the term had become a political catchword for the politics of the day, used against disagreeable opponents, this applied all the more to party politics. The term had meanwhile been extended to the most diverse religious and political groups. Some counted every terrorist group or group that legitimized violence, others the most radical or most unpopular wing of a religion or party. Some counted everyone who defended a truth claim. Finally, others plain and simply counted everyone who was an opponent. Governments began to use fundamentalism to justify wars, to exercise coercive measures, and to impose restrictions on human rights.

That the notion of fundamentalism was forged together from completely different meanings that did not fit together is still noticeable to the present day. This is demonstrated by its enormous breadth of meaning and its enormous emotional power.

It was not until the end of the 1980s that the first scholars tried to crystallize the actual or alleged structural similarities within this movement, whereby, mind you, everyone had and still has his own catalog. At one point the first surge of book releases on the subject began. However, it was not until after September 11, 2001 that the term became a favorite word of the media and one found in various non-fiction book titles.

## 2. My Definition

### **Fundamentalism is a militant truth claim.**

In my opinion one should only speak of fundamentalism when violence is involved or a true danger for internal security exists.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, fundamentalists are understood by the public to mostly be radical, violence-prone, religiously motivated extremists or even simply religious terrorists. What is meant in common parlance with the word ‘fundamentalism’ is, however, *a militant truth claim*, and precisely that is what I find to be the shortest definition.

There are, in my opinion, only two possibilities for saving the term ‘fundamentalism’ for legitimate use. First, the term fundamentalism could be brought closer to its everyday linguistic usage and thus employed with respect to movements truly identified with violence. Alternatively, the direction of broader use of the term to apply to all sorts of movements could be desirable, which then means that the term urgently has to be demotionalized so that it achieves a neutral, non-pejorative meaning. For this to be achieved, there must be large scale action by experts opposing the mass media’s approach, which at the moment is an illusion.

In my opinion, those who warn the public about fundamentalist movements should limit themselves to those groups who are dangerous due to their basic justification for using violence. Additionally, warnings are warranted when it comes to movements demonstrating an inclination towards violence, of course also those using force, and lastly those from whom the danger is emanating that they might want to achieve political power over dissenters by the use of undemocratic means. For that reason my definition is as follows:

Fundamentalism is a militant truth claim which derives its claim to power from non-disputable, higher revelation, people, values, or ideologies. It is aimed against religious freedom and calls for peace; it justifies, urges, or uses non-state or state-based non-democratic force in order to accomplish its goals. In the process it often invokes opposition to certain achievements of modernity in favor of historical grandeur and bygone eras, and at the same time it uses these modern achievements mostly in order to extend and produce a modern variation of older religions and world views. Fundamentalism is the transformation of a religion or world view conditioned by modernity.

I agree with Christian Jäggi’s definition: “I assume that fundamentalist behavior is in the long run an unsuccessful – since it is always a defensive

and alongside that, forcible – attempt at backward focused rebellion against social alienation, ethno-cultural dislocation, world view homelessness and societal disintegration of the values of modernity and of post-modernity.”<sup>3</sup>

The social ethicist Stephan H. Pfürtner, in his book *Fundamentalismus (Fundamentalism)*, addresses *Fundis* in the green party (*Die Grünen*), Jim Jones’ People’s Temple sect, traditionalists in the Catholic Church who are against religious freedom, right-wing and left-wing fundamentalism, and even violence-prone football fans and hooligans, among others. He offers a definition: “Fundamentalism is a flight into radicalism, and it is often combined with violence, while refusing to accept an adequate perception of reality, of rationality, and of the unfolding of freedom for the individual and society.”<sup>4</sup> Hans-Gerd Jaschke counts leftist and rightist terrorism, the IRA, the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, or Basque Homeland and Freedom), and the RAF (Red Army Faction), inter alia, as violent fundamentalism in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The Oxford professor of religious studies (and former nun) Karen Armstrong views fundamentalism equally as “embattled forms of spirituality”<sup>6</sup> and “militant piety.”<sup>7</sup> According to that definition, the employment of violence would be a constitutive element of fundamentalism: “Fundamentalists have gunned down worshippers in a mosque, have killed doctors and nurses who work in abortion clinics, have shot their presidents, and have even toppled a powerful government.”<sup>8</sup> (It is a moot point that she does not consistently hold to the definition; rather, she also includes peaceful fundamentalist movements.)

One of the most significant advances of the modern constitutional state is that it alone has the monopoly on legitimate physical force and that this is out of the grasp of individual religious and world view communities. Fundamentalism offers recourse to final truths as the reason for acting against the legitimate use of force by the constitutional state.

Violence that is directed inwardly also counts as fundamentalist violence. It can be exercised against its own members so that they hold the line, or against those who opt out, whether by punishing or ostracizing them, or by using force to prevent others from pulling out. In this sense the

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<sup>3</sup> Jäggi, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 15-16 (emphasis removed).

<sup>4</sup> Pfürtner, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Jaschke, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 73-77.

<sup>6</sup> Armstrong, *Kampf für Gott*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Armstrong, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Armstrong, p. 9.

attitude of the medieval church was, from my point of view, fundamentalist. An individual could not leave the church without civil consequences. Up until the present day the Catholic view states that one cannot actually leave the Catholic Church since baptism remains effective. However, today that is only a theological assessment generally with no civil or political consequences. For that reason, we are not dealing with fundamentalism at this point.

Fundamentalism can also emanate from the state, when the state is under the control of fundamentalist powers. Along these lines, I see fundamentalism in Islamic states whenever defection from Islam occurs either upon the threat of death, the threat of state punishment, severe civil consequences, or expulsion from the family.

In one of the best contributions to this discussion, the religious scholar Gernot Wießner identifies fundamentalism in religious history wherever it has led to “a removal of taboos relating to life,” that is to say, whenever the inviolability and sanctity of life has been or is suspended. He therefore holds the view that “under the term religious fundamentalism those religio-political movements can be subsumed which remove the taboos relating to life. They legitimize the ideological justification for the removal of these taboos with their notion of the nature and workings of their religious counterpart, which in theistic religions is derived from their conceptions of God. This all serves to implement a basic order among people according to the binding guidelines of an authoritative revelation. A glance from the present into the past history of religions demonstrates that there has always been this sort of religious fundamentalism.”<sup>9</sup>

Other definitions of fundamentalism do not, in my opinion, go far enough in the direction of militancy: “Fundamentalism, generally viewed, is a conviction which takes for its justification a basis resting upon an ultimate authority. In the broadest sense, a religious or worldview movement is identified as fundamentalist if it calls for a reversion to the roots of a certain religion or ideology, which if need be should be asserted with radical and in part intolerant means.”<sup>10</sup> What does “if need be” mean? That is precisely what makes the difference in my opinion. If one leaves out the last part of the sentence regarding the means, then just about every religious community in the non-western world would be addressed by this definition. It is a question of the means that they choose to transport all of this into the world that really makes the difference.

The largest field study in the world on the topic of fundamentalism (“The Fundamentalism Project” by the American Academy of Arts and

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<sup>9</sup> Weißner, „Fundamentalismus,“ pp. 61-62.

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, accessed May 19, 2009.



Sciences, 1991-1995) has shown that by far the largest portion of fundamentalists, regardless of orientation, is not violence-prone and has little political ambition! Isn't it time to rethink the term fundamentalism?

For millennia religious convictions have served to justify war, oppression, and discrimination. This is the case regardless of whether religion itself was misused or whether religion misused politics (or both).<sup>11</sup> Hans Maier aptly writes in his book *Das Doppelgesicht des Religiösen: Religion – Gewalt – Politik (The Janus-faced Image of the religious Individual: Religion – Violence – Politics)*: “Religion is not a harmless thing. It has winsome and horrible traits, attractive and repulsive sides.”<sup>12</sup> And Susanne Heine describes the ‘Janus-faced image of religion’ similarly: “Religion has a dubious reputation. It can be a source of love and peace, but it can also be a source of hate and war.”<sup>13</sup>

The caste system of Hinduism gave racist oppression of lower castes a religious legitimization, the theology of indulgences financed the crusades, the anti-Semitism of medieval Christianity made the persecution of Jews legitimate, and the completely different religions of the Babylonians, Incas, and Ottomans legitimized violence against women such that the ruler could by force choose any woman he desired and make her a concubine.

Examples can be mentioned from all geographical areas, from all eras, all cultures, and from all religions to show that religious convictions, above all in an interplay with political power, have led to and can lead to legitimizing and using unjust force against others. For millennia wars have been better justified through religious legitimization, so much so that up to this day secular nations are *also* found to display the use of religious language in the case of war (one only has to think of George W. Bush with respect to the war against Iraq). This should be beyond dispute in historical scholarship and religious studies. There is probably not a single religion that has not at least occasionally or among several of its own branches been the cause of repugnant violence. This applies to all great world religions, nature religions such as the religions of the Mayas or Aborigines, and all religions of antiquity.

As an example: Astrology is, as a general rule, a private affair. If it is used to counsel politicians who then follow it, or if it leads adherents to use violence, for instance in alleged preventive measures, then it can become fundamentalist.

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<sup>11</sup> S. Maier, *Doppelgesicht*; Heine, *Liebe*.

<sup>12</sup> Maier, *Doppelgesicht*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Heine, *Liebe*, p. 15.

*The Advance of global Fundamentalism 1977 – 1980, according to Gilles Kepel:*<sup>1</sup>

1977: The Labor Party in Israel suffers a severe defeat in parliamentary elections; for the first time national religious parties participate in the running of the government, and they are supporters of the violent settlements movement.

1978: With the selection of the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtila as Pope John Paul II, the conquest of communism and the proselytization of Europe become central topics; morally the ethical positions of pre-conciliar theology are solidified.

1979: With the revolution in Iran, that country becomes the first one in which Islamic fundamentalists gain full power and under state sanction are able to carry this revolution out into the entire world.

1979: The founding of the “Moral Majority” in the USA leads to Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election victory.

As a basic matter, based on my definition, I doubt that fundamentalism is actually a modern phenomenon. And I find that to be the case regardless of the interesting parallels among the numerous movements of the 1970s and 1980s. No one has in my opinion demonstrated this better than Gernot Weißner in his article „Der Fundamentalismus in der Religionsgeschichte“ (“Fundamentalism in Religious History”).

There has always been a connection between ethnicities and religion, the justification of one’s own superiority through a better religion, and the religious justification of racism. Violent religious wars were often justified with fundamentalism on both sides. And even if one takes modernity as an analogue, many violent, socially revolutionary movements have been religiously justified. Religion has also often been positioned against disagreeable innovations by protectors of religion’s vested rights. ‘God wills it so’ was used by Catholic princes and Martin Luther for the armies fighting against the peasants. In opposition thereto, Thomas Müntzer also utilized ‘God wills it so’ in those same Peasants’ Wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. And when India gained its independence, millions died because Hindus from Pakistan fled to India and Muslims from India to Pakistan.

Throughout history there have always been self-named religious and sect leaders who claimed the lives of parts of their community.

*Prominent Mass Suicides commanded by Sect Leaders:*

In 1978 the Peoples Temple sect under Jim Jones in Guyana committed murder and suicide; 923 followers, among them many children, died.

In 1993 the Branch Davidian sect, under the direction of its prophet David Koresh, entrenched itself in Waco, Texas; when the FBI sought to storm the site, 86 people simultaneously committed suicide, among them 17 children.

In 1994 there were 53 members of the Order of the Solar Temple who committed suicide and murder around their 'grand master' Luc Jouret in Switzerland; additional followers killed themselves in 1995.

## **Why is there such a focus on Islamic fundamentalism?**

In 1969 the Australian Dennis M. Rohan set fire to the Al-Aksa Mosque, and the ensuing blaze was only able to be extinguished after a number of hours. Rohan stated that Jesus was not going to be able to return until the Temple area was free. Since that time the most diverse Jewish and Christian extremists have attempted to conduct attacks on the Temple area. There is now an Israeli unit of several hundred men and women dedicated to guarding the Temple area.

Mahatma Gandhi died at the hands of a Hindu, Yitzhak Rabin was killed by a Jew, and Indira Gandhi was killed by a Sikh. All three of the perpetrators were fundamentalists who sought revenge for what had allegedly been done to their community.

If fundamentalist violence can be legitimized or generated in all religions, how is it that nowadays in the media, and through subjective perception, Islam stands in the center? For me there are three reasons.

1. Only Islam and Christianity are truly global, widespread religions. Even if Christianity is not free from the possibility of fundamentalist violence (see the examples below regarding Serbia and Northern Ireland), it is still limited to local trouble spots, while in the case of Islam one encounters violence around the world.

2. The violence conducted by Christians, Buddhists (Sri Lanka), Hindus (India), Sikhs (India), or Jews (Palestine) and others either only effects individual countries or effects western countries less than it does their own. Islamic violence, on the other hand, is found in countries as diverse as China, Russia, USA, Nigeria, France, and Thailand, as well as in all Islamic countries themselves.

3. The sheer numbers: The actual number of deaths from present day fundamentalist violence is very slight in Christianity. In Hinduism the number is 100 annually at most. In the case of Buddhists, Sikhs, Jews, and others the number is even more minimal (on a percentage basis indeed higher since these religions have significantly fewer followers). The absolute majority of those who die on the basis of fundamentalist violence do so at the hands of Islamists. (In the process, Islamists at the moment pri-

marily kill Muslims and Christians.) The number of deaths from terrorist attacks such as those on September 11, 2001 or the Madrid suburban train attack (190 deaths) and the London underground attack (50 deaths) have in no way been achieved by any other groups. Islamist attacks with between 15 and 35 deaths take place practically every week at least somewhere in the world, and not only in Iraq or in Israel but also in places such as Buddhist Thailand (where police stations have been attacked by Islamists).

(I differentiate between 'Islamism' as a global movement where Muslims return to personal religious life under a comprehensive, determinative societal Islam and 'Islamic fundamentalism,' where Islamists do not want to achieve their goals peacefully or democratically but rather via violence or by taking over state power.)

Islamic fundamentalism has been a concept ever since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The precursors of thought with respect to Islamism, however, go farther back, for instance to the Egyptian Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), and the Pakistani Abdul ala Maududi (1903-1979). The causes reach even farther back. The background is the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the protector of holy sites of Islam and the epitome of the unity of political power and religious leadership within the caliphate. After the gradual destruction by western powers, Turkey was secularized under Kemal Atatürk and by the abolishment of the caliphate in 1924. Next to this the defeat of the Arab states in the Six-Day War against Israel in 1967 and the conquest of Sinai played a central role.

*Important Dates and Developments in Islamism since 1970:*

- *Since the Six-Day War* in 1967 Islamism has gradually replaced Arab nationalism.
- 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s  
Iran and Saudi Arabia struggle for dominance and sovereignty in interpreting Islam.  
The governments in Islamic countries advocate Islamism as a bulwark against socialism.
- 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran.
- 1979 The Red Army invades Afghanistan; militant Islamists fight against the conquering forces with the support of the USA and Arabic states.
- 1979 Islamists storm the holy mosque in Mecca in opposition to the Saudi royal family.
- 1981 The Egyptian President is assassinated by Islamists.

- 1980s  
The Gulf War between Iraq and Iran renews the estrangement between Sunnis and Shiites.
- 1989 The Islamic Hamas supplants the PLO's supremacy in Palestine.
- 1989 The election victory by Islamists in Algeria leads to a military coup and to their suppression.
- 1989 The Red Army withdraws from Afghanistan
- 1989 Islamist coup in the Sudan.
  
- 1990s
- 1990 Iraq invades Kuwait and splits the Muslim World League; Saudi Arabia and other states gradually end their support of Islamists. Islamists begin to fight primarily against Islamic governments and against Muslim civil populations. Arabic terrorism grows beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Islamism becomes the ideology of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida ('the base'), primarily in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bosnia.
  
- 2000s
- 2001 Attack on the World Trade Center in the USA.
- Since 2002 The USA and other western states conduct war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- Since 2003 The second Gulf War leads to a strengthening of Islamic terrorism and its radicalization.

*Distinguishing Features of Islamism according to Christine Schirrmacher:*

1. The unity of what is today a fragmented Islamic community has to be restored. This should occur according to the model provided by the first Muslim community from the time of Mohammed.
2. Scholars of Islam are still today permitted to interpret the Koran and tradition (hadith) and to apply it to modern issues (Arabic *ijtihad*), without just having to exactly copy the behavior of the first Muslims. In this manner there is a way to judge and classify all things that have appeared in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (from television and technical accomplishments to trends of thought, fashion, gender behavior, etc.) into two categories, namely into the correct, good, Islamic manner of behavior and appearance or into incorrect, corruptive, and un-Islamic behavior and appearance.

3. Allah's revelations given to the prophet Mohammad represent the sole connection between God and mankind. The founders of the various Islamic legal schools, according to the opinion of fundamentalists, do not assume any special position.
4. The commands of Islam are absolutely valid for all times in history and in all areas of societal life, politics, and commerce. For this reason, taking on 'western' innovations is rejected. An adaptation of Islam to modernity would bring about a corruption of its pristine nature. Islam is, in contrast, equivalent to progress and advancement.
5. The present government of respective Islamic states is not in accord with the original teachings of Islam as preached by the prophet Mohammed. A goal of fundamentalist movements is for that reason the transformation of society, so that the behavior ('*sunna*') of Mohammed and the 'pious forefathers' can again be lifted up as the binding precepts of thought and action and thereby lead to a unification of religion and the state (Arabic '*din wa daula*').
6. With all of this in mind, fundamentalist Islam is not primarily against the west. Rather, it is an internal Islamic challenge against alleged godlessness in one's own country. It is only secondarily against the western world.

## Religion and religious Freedom

I hold the view that a religious and world view community, which stands for, propagates, and in practice respects freedom of religion cannot be fundamentalist and should not be called fundamentalist! The reverse also applies. The rejection of religious freedom is a clear indicator of a fundamentalist direction, albeit not the sole indicator.

I would be able to become comfortable with the following definition. However, several groups would have to be taken out of the traditional canon of fundamentalism: "Fundamentalism means an absolute truth claim, with no separation between church and state. Even more, it means no separation between politics and religion."<sup>14</sup>

In the same way I also hold the position that a religious and world view community that stands for, propagates, and in practice respects classic human rights cannot be fundamentalist and should not be called fundamentalist! However, this is not so easy to achieve, just as is the case with religious freedom. The reason is that the term human rights has more and more moved from the classic sense of human rights and has been expanded to stand for inflated demands. If abortion is defined as a human right, then

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<sup>14</sup> Páramo-Ortega, *Fundamentalisten*, p. 17.

most religious communities are dealt some bad cards, because they still assess the rights of the unborn to be valued as highly as those of the mother, or at least that they should be borne in mind.

But back to religious freedom: What more can a person demand from a religious community in a ‘modern’ democratic state than that it advocate religious freedom so that there is a religious neutrality to the state as well as a separation of church and state, or that there is a neutral religious structure which at the same time respects other religions and worldviews?

Karen Armstrong writes the following about fundamentalists: “They have no room for democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, peacekeeping, freedom of speech, or the separation of church and state.”<sup>15</sup> The real world is indeed somewhat more complicated, and her list does not match these reality parameters. And after all, this would mean that a movement sharing the mentioned values would not be, by definition, fundamentalist.

I certainly would like to point out that peaceful mission and the public presentation of one’s own religion is seen everywhere as an integral part of religious freedom. This applies to missions as an expression of freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press (as they for instance also apply to the non-religious but strongly missions oriented organizations such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International) as well as to the special religious freedom of publicly expressed religion, which would not be true freedom if it is limited to individuals’ minds or living rooms.

**Positive Example 1:** In 2009 I met with **leading Islamic scholars** from around the world. They advocate complete religious freedom and a repeal of the prohibition against apostasy from Islam upon the threat of the death penalty. These scholars included, for example, Abdullah Saeed from the Maldives, Abdelwahab El-Affendi from Great Britain, and Recep Sentürk from Istanbul. The Koran commentator, Abdullah Saeed, who is from the strictly Muslim Maldives, is presently a professor for Islamic studies in Australia. His Koran commentary is conventional, and on the basis thereof he is normally designated a fundamentalist. In my opinion he is no fundamentalist. In calling upon the Koran and the hadith, he maintains that one could allow a turning away from Islam without infringing upon a basic teaching of Islam. Of course, apostasy from Islam is now more strictly punished than during most of Islamic history. Additionally, in today’s globalized world, nothing else is to be expected than that a number of people will change religions. With respect to Turkey, he represents the view that 5,000 converts from Islam to Christianity over the course of many years would hardly endanger Turkish culture and identity. Saeed presented his opinions in his 2004 book *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam*.

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<sup>15</sup> Armstrong, p. 9.

**Positive Example 2: Evangelicals**, for whom the separation of church and state, freedom of religion, and subordination to a God-desired state are constituent elements, are nonetheless often designated as fundamentalists. In the process the Worldwide Evangelical Alliance has, since its founding in 1854, strongly advocated religious freedom, most recently in 2008 at its general assembly in Pattaya, Thailand with a very clear declaration involving religious freedom and religious dialogue between religions.<sup>16</sup> In his book *Freeing God's Children*, the American sociologist of religion Allen D. Hertzke traces in detail that Evangelicals in the USA and around the world are forerunners for religious freedom along with Jewish and other partners.

**Negative Example 1:** Recently the Catholic **Society of St. Pius X**, which was founded by the schismatic Arch Bishop Marcel Lefebvre, was described as an exemplar of a fundamentalist group. Lefebvre incited the French public by making sharp attacks against the French Revolution and by calling for the reinstatement of the French monarchy, a sacrilege in France. He also supported Jean-Marie le Pen and his right-wing nationalist party. In 1977 the Pius Brotherhood illegally occupied a church that was under state control. Up to the present day, France has not forcefully brought about evacuation, though it has prevented the occupation of additional churches. It is difficult to determine whether statements of individual leaders are typical or not, such as those made by Bishop Richard Williamson. (He expressed uncertainty about whether there really were gas chambers in Auschwitz and that Pope Benedict XVI proclaims heresies.) Franz Schmidberger held the position of general superior from 1982-1994. From 1979-1982 as well as since 2006 he has been the district superior for Germany. Similar to the Pius Brotherhood, he takes a stand against ecumenism and religious freedom. Indeed no one may be forced into a religion, but in the public sphere the Christian state has to impede other religions from missions and other activities. He rejects state religious neutrality. Furthermore, democracy should be restrained insofar as only a selected portion of citizens should be allowed to vote. Additionally, a Catholic-Christian set of laws should be specified, including, for instance, a prohibition on divorce.

**Negative Example 2: Hinduism:** “A separation of state and religion is inconceivable for Hindu fundamentalists. I would like to make a reminder at this point that the self-understanding of Hinduism is that it is a religion that permeates all areas of human existence from the moment of conception all the way up to death and beyond. The equal treatment of all religions that is guaranteed by the Indian constitution is especially viewed by the politically oriented fundamentalists as a betrayal of Hinduism. For that

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<sup>16</sup> For the text see [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu).



reason one of its most significant goals is to make Hinduism the predominant and sole determinant religion in India.”<sup>17</sup> In the 1990s Hindu nationalism experienced a great upsurge. This is in part explained by the problems and mistakes of the Congress Party, which for decades went politically unchallenged. However, it is also explained in part by the rapid economic modernization of the country. The BJP party, which defends the claim that India belongs only to Hindus, grew in the 1990s into the strongest political power in India. In 1998 the BJP received 23.3% of the vote and was thereby the second strongest party. Between 1998 and 2004 it formed the government in India with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee before it recently experienced an election defeat at the hands of the secular Congress Party in 2009. One reason for the defeat of the BJP is considered to be that in the states it controls, most recently Orissa, there has been intense persecution of Christians with many deaths as well as the displacement of tens of thousands of people.

Gottfried Küenzlen sees the following as a characteristic of fundamentalist movements: “The direct validity claim that uses **religious** truth for **political** action.”<sup>18</sup> However, he immediately adds that the present day world situation cannot be understood if one does not see that politico-religious truth claims, since they determine the lifestyle of believers, have again become a factor in history.

In light of the views of Küenzlen, I would make a differentiation: In rejecting violence and coercion for the implementation of religious ideas, in accepting religious and worldview freedom, and in pursuing a local and international discourse, I ask myself the question: Why should the political opinions of religious people per se be excluded from the public discussion that takes place in democracies? Indeed, such a situation means that a substantial portion of people are to no longer share in the democratic process. In India and Turkey, religious people are almost all one finds. In such a case, what is at stake is learning to live peacefully together with people who think differently.

**Example:** What do the details matter with respect to why and who voted in the California referendum against **homosexual marriage** (“Proposition 8”)? A cluster of people who referred to the Bible, the Pope, the Book of Mormon, the Sharia, civil religion, the results of (atheistic) science, family values, American patriotism, and which to a great extent were African-Americans and Latinos, achieved a narrow majority of 52.8% over those who in part spoke out against religious values. However, to some extent those who voted to allow homosexual marriage also referred to the Bible or

<sup>17</sup> Ceming, „Hinduismus,“ p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Küenzlen, „Fundamentalismen,“ p. 4.

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civil religion (the percentage of Americans who would have voted so on that basis if one were to have looked at the entire USA would have been 57%). Jewish groups, for instance, spoke out for both positions. On the one side were the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and on the other the Anglican and some Protestant churches. Should a separation into two sides be made in advance into those who have a religious justification and those who have a quasi-religious justification? And does humanism count as a religion or not? (See in this connection the section “Truths that bind Democracy?” p. 107). Whoever wants democracy must accept that when voting, people are defined by very different convictions.

*How to protect yourself (primarily for Christians but also for others) from fundamentalism?*

- Renounce all types of subjugation of other people.
- Renounce blind obedience. Higher laws and ordinances should be discussed calmly, and one should ask about the reasons for them.
- Be critical when it comes to authoritarian leaders. What is good and ‘true’ is never discovered by one individual only.
- Question others when they receive commands from God about you.
- Stand up and intervene when other people are enslaved or in your opinion are exploited.
- Clearly differentiate between God, God’s revelation, and fallible interpretation by us as individuals.
- Occupy yourself extensively and intensively with different possible interpretations of texts of Scripture.
- Always be willing to listen to people who hold other opinions. Become a pleasant discussion partner.
- Self-criticism is the beginning of all religiosity. Maintain a self-critical viewpoint of your life, your thinking, your strengths, and your weaknesses.
- “. . . do to others what you would have them do to you . . .” (Jesus)
- “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Paul)
- Inform yourself thoroughly about the situations people are in and points of view people have in other cultures and countries – become a citizen of the world.
- Avoid the combination of religion and nationalism.
- Reject and combat all types of racism.
- Consider precisely which personal moral values should bind the state.
- Pass on your faith and your view of things with good argumentation in order to convince others; however, avoid all coercion, pressure, threats, not to mention violence.
- Wherever it is possible, advocate religious freedom.
- Differentiate between the discussion about truth in religion and the desire for peaceful political life together. Do not insinuate that peaceful discussions between religious communities are simply syncretistic intentions.

*Other Definitions*

In order not to appear one-sided and to inform the reader about other definitions on the market, here are the distinguishing marks of fundamentalism as assembled by two projects or researchers who map out fundamentalism without reference to violence or politics. I can principally agree with them, but it appears that in this manner almost all religions and movements such as communism or anthroposophy are included. It is not until there is a threat to others from such movements that they become dangerous as fundamentalism.

Distinguishing Marks of Fundamentalism according to the “Fundamentalism Project”<sup>19</sup>

1. Reactionary Stance
2. Selectivity
3. Moral Manichaeism and Dualism
4. Absolutism and Infallibility of Scripture and Tradition
5. Millennialism and Messianism

Organizational Characteristics:

6. The Community of the Chosen
7. Sharp Boundaries over against Outsiders
8. Authoritarian Organizational Structure

Distinguishing Marks of Fundamentalism according to Alfred Rammer<sup>20</sup>

- “Intransigency: The ‘others’ are the evil ones; alien opinions have the stigma of being immoral, and differentiation does not take place.”
- Isolation – They are not the elite within their own religion, but rather the only true church.
- Authoritarianism – Personality cult, childishness in the face of hierarchy
- Dualism – Separation into good and evil
- Reductionism and single mode salvation
- Inability to conduct discourse due to being in possession of the truth

<sup>19</sup> Almond, Appleby, Sivan. “Religion”; by the same authors, “Fundamentalism.” Manichaeism is an extinct religion that separates the world into light and darkness. Millennialism is a teaching regarding the future perfect reign of God on earth.

<sup>20</sup> Rammer, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 246-247.



### **3. Theories regarding the Danger associated with the Fundamentalism Concept**

When ascribing fundamentalism to a specific situation, there are always two dangers: use of a false concept of fundamentalism and the application of the concept of fundamentalism to the wrong groups. I will address both.

A Defeater par excellence

Fundamentalism has advanced to being the defeater par excellence. “Fundamentalism has actually become a swear word. It is always the other person who is fundamentalist.”<sup>21</sup>

Who has not been called a fundamentalist! One thing is always clear: whoever is called a fundamentalist is not a discussion partner, is presumably dangerous, and is violent. “Fundamentalism has become an across-the-board stigma for an attitude that is hostile to enlightened thinking, reason, and progress,”<sup>22</sup> whereby those who use the term are themselves excused from suspicion of such medieval forms of thinking. It is so simple: An individual uses the shibboleth ‘fundamentalism’ and one saves himself from any arguments, because the reader or the hearer considers those vilvanized to be dumb as well as highly dangerous. For this reason the distinguished Islamic scholar Peter Antes writes: “Talk about religious fundamentalism is a creation of journalists . . .”<sup>23</sup> He completely rejects the use of the term, as do many experts. This is a congenial position, if it were realistic to enforce.

Let us note several statements of researchers on fundamentalism insofar as their words relate to “inflating speech about fundamentalism,”<sup>24</sup> a concept “which in public life today is in equal measure inflationary as well as vague and generally associated with radicalism, intolerance or ideological narrowness . . . and yet as a general rule serves as a catchword and / or shibboleth.”<sup>25</sup> “Certainly the specter of fundamentalism is also a phantasm.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Grünschloß, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Antes, „Gibt es ...“, p. 199.

<sup>24</sup> Kienzler, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Meyer, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 8.

“If one speaks about fundamentalism, then one is almost always standing trial or standing in the dock. The charge is directed towards the suppression of freedom, a betrayal of personal responsibility, a rebellion against modernity, or an alliance of irrationality. Maybe we also have to change our thinking here.”<sup>27</sup> “Whoever begins to speak about the topic of ‘fundamentalism’ is going out on slippery terrain. This is due to the fact that the more the flood of literature surges, the term and substance become all the more unclear.” The “downright inflationary use of the word and the expansion of the term is, in the meantime, something that is conspicuous.” Indeed: “In the meantime someone who holds to a fairly firm position in academic discussions can encounter the reaction that one has argued quite ‘fundamentalistically.’”<sup>28</sup>

Bernhard J. Hofer writes: “Fundamentalism has become common parlance, and in particular in western society it is associated with negative feelings and ‘friend or foe’ images. The term has found its entry into western semantics and has reinforced – especially through its unreflective use – Huntington’s black and white depiction.”<sup>29</sup>

All of these authors, however, continue to happily use the term, and quite a few of them also continue to use it with a polemical and pejorative undertone. All of this is in spite of the fact that “there is a generally recognized lack of an acknowledged fundamentalism concept”<sup>30</sup> within scholarship, since the term “leads to unsure terrain both empirically and theoretically.”<sup>31</sup>

On account of this I would like to initially deal critically with the concept. In the process, however, I want to introduce a number of examples from the world of religions.

‘Fundamentalism’ is often a shibboleth of everyday politics, not a serious term derived from research.

For Michael Hochgeschwender the term fundamentalism has “degenerated from an ordering concept within theological and religious studies to a shibboleth of everyday politics.” “Whoever is called a fundamentalist is excluded from any kind of reasonable dialogue from the outset.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Lehmann, „Fundamentalismus“, p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> All quotations from Küenzlen, „Fundamentalismen“, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Hofer, „Konzeption“, p. 43; comp. Rammer quoted subsequently by Hofer.

<sup>30</sup> Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 60.

<sup>31</sup> Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, p. 15.

**Example: Martin Luther King**, with his religious pathos against the injustices perpetrated against African-Americans, would surely have been considered a fundamentalist by the American government if the term had existed at that time. After all, while he only advocated civil disobedience, the actions still had to do with what was often illegal or even ‘criminal’ – according to the standards of that time. As a matter of fact, however, ‘fundamentalist,’ socially revolutionary movements have helped to force through many modern accomplishments.

**Example: Buddhism:** In **Japan** Nichiren Buddhism, named after its founder Nichiren (1222-1282), is charged with being fundamentalist and heretical. Those concerned contest this vehemently. One of the offshoots of this school of thought, the New Komeito Party (the ‘justice’ party), is at present a participant in the Japanese government, for which reason the charges are of direct importance for everyday politics.

**Example: Christianity in Germany:** The ecclesiastical commissioner for world view issues, Hansjörg Hemminger, has often critically but respectably conducted disputes with Evangelicals. He has written recently that political parties at the left end of the spectrum in Germany had discovered “Evangelical bogeymen” and their fundamentalism, since they were all courting the same group of potential voters critical of religion.<sup>33</sup>

**Example:** The **Serbs** justified their war against and murder of **Bosnians** by claiming that they were, among others, Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>34</sup> Actually the Serbs embodied a more rarely found form of fundamentalism in the Orthodox tradition, which falls into the broader group of Christian denominations.

**Example:** Mark Juegensmeyer, in a thought provoking essay entitled “Anti-Fundamentalism,” compiled many examples of the way in which the concept of fundamentalism is used by governments in order to limit the human rights of fundamentalist groups. In the process, aim is not only taken at those who perpetrate violence, but harmless citizens as well. He names as examples, for instance, genocide that earlier communists committed in 1993 against the elected Islamic government of Tadjikistan, the Serb’s war against the Bosnians, the prohibition of Hindu organizations in India or Israel’s treatment of some Palestinian groups. It is always typical to assume that alleged peaceful ‘fundamentalists’ are only pretending when they act peacefully. At this point the concept of fundamentalism becomes a

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<sup>33</sup> Hansjörg Hemminger, „Feindbild Evangelikale,“ *Materialdienst der EZW* 72 (2009) 8: 283-284.

<sup>34</sup> Stephanie van de Loo, „Religion als Kriegsgewand?“ pp. 225-244 in Hildebrandt, *Religionen*.



self-starter. *A fundamentalist is not someone who is a fundamentalist, but rather whoever is called one!*

Often the charge of fundamentalism today means de facto criminalization, stigmatization, exclusion, indeed demonization, and should actually only be utilized with the greatest care.

When one considers the devastating effects of being termed a fundamentalist, it is indeed astonishing just how much the term gets thrown about and how few experts stand by groups which are wrongly (or out of transparent motives) called fundamentalists. Is it not so that “every rash demonization of fundamentalist movements could also be driven by an interest to conceal the threatening tendencies of a protean ‘quicksand society’?”<sup>35</sup>

The concept of fundamentalism is mostly used in an emotional manner and even in the case of researchers is often charged with additional emotional vocabulary.

Typical for fundamentalist literature is how it aggregates various emotional and negative notions, which are mostly not further elucidated but are rather elastic and very strongly dependent on the assessment of the beholder. These are words such as ‘extreme,’ ‘radical,’ ‘intolerant,’ ‘militant,’ ‘aggressive,’ or ‘narrow.’ What is found to be ‘radical’ is more a psychological or emotional variable, or it is something that is measured on the basis of the majority’s attitude towards life. What is today called radical can thus tomorrow already be normal or even law. One can still understand the emotional reaction when religiously motivated terrorists are involved, but not with peaceful movements which have neither called for nor used violence.

**Example:** Markus J. Prutsch sees “clear parallels” between the totalitarian systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Mussolini, Hitler, or Stalin and today’s fundamentalist movements and is of the opinion that they “on the whole served as a model and had an effect on contemporary fundamentalist movements.”<sup>36</sup> In the process, the emotional disapproval is, of course, enormously heightened. However, he does not bring forward any pieces of evidence, making the statement itself deceptive. One can think about Bin Laden whatever one wishes, but to think that he studied National Socialism or Stalinism and is now copying it is not comprehensible without some

<sup>35</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, „Seele,“ p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 90.

concrete evidence. The fact that peaceful movements are nevertheless included is all the more incomprehensible.

The business of fear: fundamentalism = danger for the society.

Among the general public, the concept of fundamentalism is always emotionally connected with ‘danger.’ By lumping all fundamentalists together (including those simply declared to be fundamentalists) and charging them with phobias, above all charging them with having a fear of modernity and its uncertainty, there is continual stoking of the fear of fundamentalists. In the meantime, this fear is often fomented merely by using the word. There are only a few scholars who appear to have an interest in disclosing the emotions that resonate with the fundamentalist concept, much less debunking them, bringing them under control, or even refuting them.

Thus one reads: “Fundamentalist groups try repeatedly to profit from the fear of life and fear of the future that many people have.”<sup>37</sup> In the first place, there is a complete lack of proof that fundamentalists purposely do this. Secondly, there is no indication that this also applies to many people, companies, the media (‘this is how to protect yourself from . . .’), and scientists, when they justify their research funding with horror stories about climate change or the spread of epidemics. And thirdly, the question must be asked: Are fears about life and the future simply pulled out of the air and irrational? Can they be taken care of simply by maintaining that they do not matter to a modern person because they appear to be philosophically unnecessary?

I have met enough fundamentalist leaders to know that some are not scared of anything. ‘Fear’ is often a variable with which western observers alone find themselves able to explain such phenomenon. However, it is not the result of detailed on-site investigations. ‘Fear’ can be a motive for many fundamentalists, but by far not for all of them!

**Example:** In the film “Terror on the Orient Express” (2001), the billions demanded by terrorists as ransom were to be used for “the fundamentalist revolution.” It is not revealed which religion is involved here, even if from the details it is suggested that it is Islam. The description, however, is sufficient to move the viewers to fear and horror.

**Example:** Martin Riesebrodt is of the opinion that all fundamentalists are “hostilely” pitted against democracy. “True fundamentalists are never democrats on the basis of principle, but rather always on the basis of opportunism.”<sup>38</sup> That, however, cannot be proven by historical or empirical

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Gutdeutsch in <http://muenchen.neue-akropolis.de/content/view/449/53/>.

<sup>38</sup> Riesebrodt, *Rückkehr*, p. 89.

investigations. The history of democracy, at the beginning of which many fundamentalists are to be found, does not prove him correct.<sup>39</sup> Nor does the present. An individual has to look at each group separately if one wants to judge their capacity for democracy. If, for example, an individual takes the works on ethics by evangelical theologians – which are according to Riesebrodt's definition fundamentalists, even if they would see that differently – one finds that they all defend democracy,<sup>40</sup> and that is certainly not merely a show.

A typical problem becomes clear at this point. For starters, if someone is identified as a fundamentalist, it is clear that he is only feigning ('only out of opportunism'). How should he then convince others of the contrary point of view? The concept becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The fundamentalism discussion is a field day for all sorts of definitions.

When using the term, "it is suggested that its analytical value mostly takes a back seat to its polemical use."<sup>41</sup>

**Example:** For Friedhelm Hengsbach, S.J., fundamentalism is an **orientation towards abstract statements** without a connection to reality. In order to be able to judge that, Hengsbach would have to know 'reality' and then be able to make a conclusive judgment about who does not have this connection.

**Example:** For Lüder Gerken fundamentalism is the **opposite of freedom** and elevates principles that others, perhaps under the threat of force, have to accept. So, are thoughts concerning human rights good? That is to say, is the thought that in order to maintain human rights, freedom has to be limited and the state has to forcibly ensure human rights, not also a form of fundamentalism? At this point highly complex questions and problems – for instance what freedom even is – are reduced to a simple common denominator, which is precisely what otherwise fundamentalists are charged with doing.

**Example:** Hubertus Mynarek<sup>42</sup> sees **prohibitions on thought** as the core of fundamentalism and for this reason as something rooted in religion. Primarily, however, he sees it in the monotheistic religions, which he primarily explains using the example of the Catholic Church (at the same time also with respect to Eugen Drewermann). However, he also views Stalin-

<sup>39</sup> For details see Schirmacher, „Demokratie und christliche Ethik.“

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Bockmühl, Georg Huntemann, Helmut Burkhardt, Horst Afflerbach and Thomas Schirmacher could be mentioned in Germany.

<sup>41</sup> Giancarlo Collet in *Jahrbuch Mission* 27 (1995), p. 85.

<sup>42</sup> Mynarek, *Denkverbot*, p. 48.

ism, Hitlerism, and Maoism as fundamentalism, which indeed emerged from non-religious roots and yet took on a religious character. “Every fundamentalism has religious roots or unavoidably takes on a religious character.” What emerges for him is the question of “whether religion as such, or whether each religion is already at its root, inevitably fundamentalist . . .”<sup>43</sup> I can discuss all of that, save the one simple denominator ‘prohibition on thought.’ Does not *every individual* have his or her smaller or greater prohibition on thought? Is not that, for example, a typical problem between the generations that has existed for millennia? And does that not oversimplify the issue, because the definition assumes an unknowing, completely slavish adherent and follower, and not the mentors who spearhead and develop fundamentalist movements? One finds that the fathers of Islam, for instance, are often enormously well read, are well versed in the literature of other religions and knowledge of the west, and are perceived to be intellectually brilliant. In all fundamentalist movements there are, next to the nominal members and people who parrot, prominent scientists, scholars from the humanities, and theologians. It is too simple to explain fundamentalism as a lack of thinking.

**Example:** “Fundamentalism is . . . a religious way of being that manifests itself as a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group.”<sup>44</sup> This claim provides no evidence or comprehensive investigations as to whether the members of various fundamentalist movements view themselves as being under a “state of siege,” whatever that might mean. Additionally, the great potential for conversion within fundamentalist movements presents a problem for this definition, because prior to conversion the converts did not even belong to the group. If for instance a German atheist not only converts to Islam but rather becomes an Islamist, goes to a training camp in Afghanistan, and returns to Germany as a terrorist – which identity is he attempting to save in the process?

In much literature there is a lot of twisting and turning of the definition until the desired result is achieved. It looks like the definition sets from the start what one is going to find.

One can twist and turn the definition as long as it takes to be left with the groups that one wants to criticize, and no group is considered that one does not want to tangle with (for instance Islam as a whole, or large churches). This means that the result is received that one knows and confirms the

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<sup>43</sup> Mynarek, p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> Marty/Appleyby, *Glory*, p. 34.

prejudices of the mass of the population or is ‘politically correct.’ Thus, just as the Americans spared Saudi Arabia from criticism after the September 11, 2001 attacks (from which most of the suicide bombers originally came) and marched into Afghanistan, many authors also choose examples where approval is assured and gently neglect others examples.

What one typically finds is the occasional hopeless attempt to mark off fundamentalism from traditionalism, because one would otherwise have to count a large part of the world’s population as fundamentalist. For Lars Göhler fundamentalism is “excessive traditionalism.”<sup>45</sup> What one is dealing with, then, are religions or political movements “which purport to call upon traditional elements (fundamentals) and to stand for these without compromise.” On what basis can it be determined whether or not traditionalism is harmless?

**Example:** The “Fundamentalism Project” distinguishes between **conservatives and traditionalists** when it comes to fundamentalists. The former group attempts to withdraw or rather to limit influence from outside (such as is the case with the Amish or Orthodox Jews), while fundamentalists, however, strike back.<sup>46</sup> Given this definition, the early Protestant fundamentalists in the USA would actually not have been fundamentalists. Early protestant fundamentalism was non-political and lived in separation from the evil world and from liberal churches. Additionally, all of the Catholic groups such as Arch Bishop Lefebvre and the Society of St. Pius X, mentioned above, would not have been fundamentalists, since they were truly traditionalists and simply wanted to recover Catholic liturgy and theology from the time before 1962.

**Example: Me’a Sche’arim** (“a hundredfold” according to the hundredfold blessing in Genesis 26:12) is one of the oldest districts outside of the old part of Jerusalem in the western part of the city. Only strongly orthodox Jews have settled here since 1881, coming primarily from Hungary and Poland. Its inhabitants are interested in holding to as literal an interpretation of the Torah and the Talmud as possible and are broken down into numerous and very different religious communities. Far-reaching unity reigns with respect to the strict adherence to the Sabbath rest, to the rites associated with Jewish holidays, and to the rejection of the secular state of Israel. On all streets approaching the area, tourists are advised of the ruling dress and behavioral guidelines, whereby only individual tourists are allowed to cross the district with courteous regard. On the Sabbath all electric devices that a person might otherwise have to operate, including bank

<sup>45</sup> Lars Göhler, „Indologe und Philosoph,“ MSN Encarta 2009, [http://de.encarta.msn.com/text\\_761563370\\_\\_0/Fundamentalismus.html](http://de.encarta.msn.com/text_761563370__0/Fundamentalismus.html).

<sup>46</sup> Marty/Appleyby, *Glory*, p. 7-10.

automated teller machines (ATMs), cell phones, and cameras have to be turned off. Is all of this a withdrawal from the society or an aggressive battle against it? Are we dealing with fundamentalists or traditionalists here?

**Example:** The historian Klaus Herbers is of the opinion that the Crusades which began in 1095, were not a fundamentalist movement, above all because it actually was a larger reform movement that was attempting to adapt Christianity to changes in society.<sup>47</sup> But that is precisely what many fundamentalist movements are nowadays: Reform movements which want to adapt the religion to the changes in society and in the process unfortunately call for the use of violence.

**Example:** As we have already seen, the philosopher Hans Albers has likewise used the fundamentalism concept for all philosophical trends which assume certainty of knowledge. For him that is everything except for Karl Popper's so-called critical rationalism, according to which there are no truths but rather only the possibility of demonstrating falsifiability (fallibilism). Here it can be shown that often within the charge of fundamentalism other modern world views – themselves beyond religious justification – are also rejected, though with quasi-academic justification.

The charge of fundamentalism can deflect suspicion about one's own fundamentalism. The others are always the fundamentalists.

Charging others with fundamentalism is a way that many people can easily produce evidence (at the cost of others) that they are themselves modern, tolerant, open for discussion, and not dangerous. It is no wonder that such representatives frequently charge others with fundamentalism, while they are themselves under the same suspicion by other people.

**Example 1: The Central Council of Muslims in Germany**, in which there are organizations as members that are classified by the government as working against the constitutional order of Germany. The council complains that the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD or *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*) is infiltrated and influenced by fundamentalists. This is demonstrated, so goes the claim, by Evangelicals' having cooperated in efforts to produce a new declaration on Islam, entitled "Being Clear and Being a Good Neighbor" (*Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft*). The media has eagerly seized upon this, as did many within the church who do not

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<sup>47</sup> Klaus Herbers, „Christlicher Fundamentalismus im europäischen Mittelalter?“ pp. 9-40 in Helmut Neuhäuser (ed.), *Fundamentalismus* (Erlangen: Univ.-Bund Erlangen-Nürnberg, 2005). Comp. in contrast Weißner, „Der Fundamentalismus in der Religionsgeschichte.“

share the position of the Evangelical Church in Germany. This was done in spite of the fact that the Chairperson of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Bishop Wolfgang Huber, vigorously denied the charges. The charge of fundamentalism saves the one side from further inquiry about groups within its own ranks, and the other is spared from disclosing any far reaching dissent from within 'liberal' theology in its interaction with Islam. Without the concept of fundamentalism, the discussion between the different wings could take place in a significantly more fruitful fashion.

**Example 2:** In my book *Islam: A Stereotypical Enemy* I have shown how the Catholic-fundamentalist small Christian party 'Das Zentrum', which advocates a Germany without freedom of religion, has completely shaped its propaganda in the form of a warning against Islam.

**Example 3:** In Catholic publications it is popular to distance oneself from Protestant fundamentalists. However, in questions of divorce, contraception, or the role of women, much more unyielding positions are defended. Furthermore, the infallibility of the papal teaching office and its strictly hierarchical top-down structure is asserted. Protestant churches, on the other hand, are uniformly democratically structured. This issue will be addressed in more detail below under the topic of 'Scripture.'

**Example 4:** The Latin American Catholic liberation theologian Leonardo Boff writes, "Catholic fundamentalism is the attempt to recover the old order, which is based on the (incestuous) marriage between the throne and the altar, namely between political and ecclesiastical powers."<sup>48</sup> As is so often the case, it is neither he nor liberation theology that is fundamentalist, though the latter could be understood as an attempt to bring religious convictions directly into politics, which is fundamentalist. It is his inner-religious opponents who are guilty of fundamentalism. He goes on to name the Vatican declaration *Dominus Jesus* from the year 2000, which carries the signature of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as an example of "doctrinaire fundamentalism."<sup>49</sup> It declared anew that complete salvation is only to be found in the Catholic Church. To begin with (according to Boff's definition), the declaration has nothing to do with politics.

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<sup>48</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 15.

The charge of fundamentalism made against religious groups can emerge from non-religious groups trying to line their pockets. It often becomes the 'politically correct' way of classic (and old) criticism of religions when a general criticism of religion is no longer desirable.

One often has the sense that the charge of fundamentalism is a last rear-guard action by representatives of secularization who do not want to accept that outside of Western Europe the thesis of secularization has long since been rejected as wishful thinking. (This will be discussed further below.) For instance, Gottfried Posch always sees fundamentalism as something religious, and religious fundamentalism as "an outlook that may not be challenged, since the statements made are allegedly of a divine nature."<sup>50</sup> However, that applies to practically all religions, from the divine nature of the Dali Lama to the lifestyle of Japanese syncretistic religions. Rainer Hermann sees fundamentalism as holding to eternally valid norms. Thus all people who lived in earlier centuries would be fundamentalists as well as the major portion of humanity nowadays. The term would basically be identical to 'religion.'

If we were to hold up a definition of religion for sake of contrast – specifically one by my teacher Karl Hoheisel that finds broad consensus – it becomes clear that such authors actually describe all religions: "There are hundreds of definitions and many of them are mutually exclusive. It is all the same which one a person decides upon, whether it is a psychological, sociological, functional, theological or otherwise normative orientation, the complex issues relating to religious phenomena are constantly unduly simplified. . . . Since no concrete single religion can be a model for the whole of religion, including Christianity, only the common denominator of as many different and unanimously acknowledged religions as possible stands at one's disposal. *This is composed of a relationship of individuals and groups to transcendent values or higher powers, which stand for the foundation pillars of that which is held to be reality, and for that reason guide thought and action as the final point of orientation.*"<sup>51</sup>

If one compares this definition with the literature about fundamentalism, it can be established that many, perhaps in a disguised manner, use their definition of fundamentalism to describe every convinced religiosity!

**Example:** If one looks at the lecture "Fundamentalism and Religious Fanaticism in Today's World" by Helmut Steuerwald of the humanistic

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<sup>50</sup> Posch, „Fundamentalismus.“

<sup>51</sup> Karl Hoheisel, „Religion in der wissenschaftlich-technologischen Welt,“ Akademie Forum Masonicum Jahrbuch 1986, pp. 157-158.



Association for Intellectual Freedom,<sup>52</sup> it quickly becomes clear that what is at issue here is simply a humanistic-atheistic point of view. Furthermore, all religions are suspect, and the indication is that with notions from past centuries none of today's problems can be solved (as if humanism is something new and not as old as many religions). What is suspect above all else is the belief in one deity, from which other religions have conceivably learned their fanaticism. (How, then, were large parts of Asia conquered militarily by Hinduism and Buddhism, long before Christianity and Islam appeared?) Humanism, in contrast, is presented as supposedly free from dogmas and constantly adapting to reality in the light of scientific progress.

**Example:** The book *Mission Gottesreich* (English title translation: *Mission for God's Kingdom*) by two ARD journalists (ARD is a German state television channel) uses the following definition: "Fundamentalism means first of all to live without compromise according to certain religious or political principles. Fundamentalists maintain that their form of belief or their ideology is the only correct and true one."<sup>53</sup> According to this definition, there are likely more fundamentalists than non-fundamentalists in the world. Actually, however, it is, arbitrary whom one understands to be 'uncompromising' and dogmatic and whom one does not find to be so. In my opinion, scientific categories will not suffice.

**Example:** I do not share the political views of the British Marxist of Pakistani origin, Tariq Ali. However, he is correct with the thesis of his book *The Clash of Fundamentalisms – Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. He holds that among the truly globally powerful fundamentalisms which rule the world or want to rule the world one should include imperialism, and anti-imperialism, the Islamic empire and Zionism, capitalism, and socialism, such that one does not need a revealed religion in order to be a fundamentalist.

**Example:** There is a classical **humanistic-atheistic fundamentalism**, which in its present-day academic form wants to prescribe to the state how to act coercively against religion. It is not a matter of coincidence that ethics instruction in Berlin was put in the place of religious instruction. The justification for the action was that it was better and more socially appropriate. Besides that, atheism has been the state religion in such various countries and times as France during the French Revolution, Uganda under the reign of terror of Idi Amin (and similarly in other African states), and, of course, in the communist states under the influence of the Soviet Union and China. The ideology of North Korea demonstrates not only the

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<sup>52</sup> Lecture on November 16, 2001, [www.bfg-bayern.de/ethik/Stichwort/fundamentalismus.htm](http://www.bfg-bayern.de/ethik/Stichwort/fundamentalismus.htm).

<sup>53</sup> Lambrecht/Baars, *Mission*, p. 8.

straightforward forcible oppression of dissenting thought, but also a fully expressed fundamentalist ideology. As regards content, this ideology rejects every objection and particularly opposes certain religions such as Christianity.

**Example: Atheistic Fundamentalism:** The Oxford scientist and theologian Alister McGrath, whose book *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine* has reaped significant endorsement, is a solid answer to Richard Dawkins *The God Delusion*. The German newspaper *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote in this connection: “*The Atheist Delusion* seeks to be a timely correction and refutation of a number of Richard Dawkins’ theses (*The God Delusion*) and in its form holds strictly to the accepted rules of scientific argumentation. Unlike his opponent, who works with all the means of raw polemics, McGrath attempts to hold to decorum. He even gently addresses the prejudices and theological and historical errors of religion as if he were among gentlemen in a colloquium of scientists and theologians.”

Additionally, it is seldom mentioned in this connection that religion is not only in the position of justifying fundamentalism. Rather, it can justify the opposite as well! The Bonn professor of education Volker Ladenthin has pointed out that secularization has also brought about various forms of religion-like totalitarianism and that religion often had been a protection against such developments. “The belief that only God is in possession of any final meaning makes all earthly solutions appear quite temporary . . . religiosity can therefore be a protection against totalitarianism or even fundamentalism.”<sup>54</sup>

In fundamentalism research all religions are subjected to a massive degree of evaluation, and the authors generally do not reveal their starting point.

The hermeneutics of the academic study of religions require that religious (and other) texts be understood on their own merit and on the basis of their own use of a system of symbols. An individual is not to come to the assessment with a preconceived viewpoint of another religion or world view or to impose a prefabricated picture of its prior history, its value, or consequences. The religious studies scholar Frank Usarski has made it clear with the example of folk religion that this also has to apply when the corresponding belief system is tainted with a negative history. It also has to ap-

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<sup>54</sup> Volker Ladenthin, „Die Relationen der Varietäten,“ p. 11-15 in Ladenthin et al. (ed.). *Interkulturelle Verstrickungen – Kulturen und Religionen im Dialog*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2006.

ply for the case where one can come to a variety of distortions as long as one secretly introduces value systems into religious studies research.<sup>55</sup> As much as the individual religious studies scholar introduces or has to introduce his ethical assessment when outside the confines of religious studies, religious studies itself can neither produce such an assessment nor can it decide on the basis of an overarching value that stands above all religions.

Religious studies is more aware than it used to be of how dependent it is on cultural and contemporary historical factors. For example, a religious studies scholar or cultural anthropologist who questions a tribe's mythical fabric when researching it, knows that the research influences the development of the religion by the very action of probing. My teacher Karl Hoheisel has shown this in examples with far-reaching consequences in his article "Repercussions of Western Religious Research on Recent Developments in World Religions."<sup>56</sup> Many religious studies publications are utilized by adherents of respective religions for educational or missionary purposes and can trigger a renaissance of certain schools of thought. In India or Sri Lanka completely new schools have emerged on the basis of new groupings which researchers produced under colonialism. The fundamentalist debate among scholars does not only register religious movements; it also changes them.

Fundamentalism researchers give ample advice to religions as to what a religion should change or what it is allowed to believe. In that sense it plays a role of 'super-theologian' to multiple religions at the same time.

It is astonishing how many scholars take for granted they should issue advice to religions as to which theological direction those religions should follow. Liberal theology as well, which is often commended to all Christian denominations, remains a distinct theology. How can enlightened philosophers explain how they suddenly know which Christian – or Islamic or Jewish or Hindu – theology is the better one? They become *de facto* theologians or even religious founders who prescribe how the ideal religion

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<sup>55</sup> Frank Usarski, „Das Problem religionswissenschaftlicher ‚Verzerrungen‘ am Beispiel ‚völkischer Religiosität,““ pp. 40-55 in Stefanie von Schnurbein, Justus H. Ulbricht (eds.). *Völkische Religion und Krisen der Moderne: Entwürfe „arteigener“ Glaubenssysteme seit der Jahrhundertwende*. Königshausen & Neumann: Würzburg, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Karl Hoheisel, „Rückwirkungen abendländischer Religionsforschung auf neuere Entwicklungen in den Weltreligionen“ pp. 262-275 in Gunther Stephenson (ed.), *Der Religionswandel unserer Zeit im Spiegel der Religionswissenschaft*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1976.

should look: A religion that as much as possible demonstrates that they are correct and one that at the same time is as little convinced of its position as possible.

The choice of examples for fundamentalism are often selective and arbitrary and apparently follow sympathy for, or antipathy towards, certain positions more than they demonstrate clear academic criteria.

**Example:** Evangelical **Christian private schools** in Germany and Switzerland are often labeled fundamentalist in literature and in the media, though I have been unable to find a single similar example for **anthroposophical Waldorf schools**. Those Evangelical schools, however, completely follow existing educational guidelines and mostly only have additional devotions and topics included that extend beyond the topics of government schools. This means, for instance, that in addition to the prescribed theory of evolution a manner of creationism is presented in a some (not all!) schools. However, this mostly occurs in religion class. For this reason, studying at these schools leads to state-recognized qualification for university entrance (*Abitur*) and other qualifications without difficulty. From a legal point of view, they are ‘substitute schools.’ The majority of the pupils in the schools often do not come from Evangelical families and are not forced in any way to participate in Evangelical religiosity. Many parents and students associated with such schools clearly reject the Evangelical viewpoint. Waldorf schools, on the other hand, have a curriculum that so strongly deviates from what the government prescribes that they only receive the designation of ‘supplementary schools.’ There is no state awarded degree which is obtained as a student there. Any potential degrees have to be acquired externally via government officials. The anthroposophical world view permeates the entire course of instruction, that is to say, the student is largely graded according to anthroposophical developmental theory. The content of study follows the contents set in Rudolf Steiner’s standards. The anthroposophical dance, the eurhythm, is practically the school sport. It is close to impossible to study at a Waldorf school if one basically rejects anthroposophy. The difference between ‘modern’ guidelines and Waldorf schools is incomparably greater than is the case with respect to Evangelical schools. Why are the Waldorf schools never called ‘fundamentalist?’

**Example:** The Catholic teaching office and with it many Catholics around the world (as well as most Evangelical Christians) are often labeled fundamentalist because they hold the practice of **homosexuality** to be a sin. In publications on the topic of fundamentalism, however, I do not find a reference that in many Islamic countries the death penalty is still applied

for the practice of homosexuality (e.g. in Yemen, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Mauritania) or that long periods of incarceration can be given. While Catholics and Evangelicals go at the problem from a pastoral point of view and as a matter of principal are against violence against homosexuals (and there is no supporting evidence that they exercise violence against homosexuals), as ‘fundamentalists’ they are on worse terms than Islamic countries or those Islamic movements or individual Muslims who concretely utilize state sanctioned or individual violence against homosexuals. The Dali Lama also considers homosexuality wrong and not compatible with the essence of Buddhism. According to my knowledge, no one has called him a fundamentalist for this fact.

**Example: USA:** Catholics and Mormons represent the standpoint that their **churches** alone provide **access to salvation**. Evangelicals are almost always mentioned as the only fundamentalists, and they continually change churches and actually view membership in a particular denomination very loosely, from both theological and practical points of view. Additionally, Mormons as well as the Catholic Church in the USA have both become more conservative over recent decades. The media, however, only conveys the impression that this is the case with Evangelicals, where the opposite development is rather the case. Catholic bishops in the USA are much more conservative than they were 30 years ago, when deviations from papal positions were still widespread. Viewed as a whole, Evangelical leaders are more liberal and more ecumenical than they were 30 years ago.

**Example:** Why for instance are the origins of Protestant fundamentalism in the USA from 1910-1915 and classic fundamentalism of the time from 1870-1925 repeatedly mentioned, while the somewhat earlier parallel Catholic developments, including the declaration of papal infallibility in 1870/1871, the Lamentabili Decree, and the Pascendi Encyclical from Pope Pius X in 1907 as well as the anti-modernist oath in 1910, are not mentioned? In the process, the latter developments were binding for a much greater number of people worldwide, whereas the American movement only influenced other countries in a very limited manner. Is that because the Catholic Church surmounted this? And Evangelicals did not? Is the Catholic Church is now ‘more modern’ than Evangelical churches? Does this, for instance, apply to the structure (here absolutist and there democratic), the liturgy, or the question of contraception?

The few examples which are zeroed in on by the mass media internationally are often arbitrary, while many examples remain unmentioned.

Martin Stöhr has written: “Fundamentalism is more present and closer to all religions, world views and political concepts than many of its represent-

atives are conscious of or comfortable with. The step to a fundamentalist understanding of belief is as small (or large) as the step to an ‘enlightened faith.’”<sup>57</sup> Christian Jäggi writes: “Fundamentalism has been too little recognized as a global phenomenon, which can be observed throughout all religious and ethno-cultural world views.”<sup>58</sup>

On account of this, it is problematic to only cite the same favorite examples. It is, however, apparent with journalists, but also with many scholarly authors, that there is practically the same canon of groups to which repeated reference is made almost reflexively. Through this readers and hearers receive an almost one-sided impression.

The charge of fundamentalism is often only made of religious groups which support right-wing parties and not those which support left-wing parties.

I allow myself this judgment after the study of thousands of books, professional articles, and media reports.

**Example 1:** Jewish Zionists, who support right-wing or even radical right-wing parties in **Israel**, are suspicious. Those who are politically on the left and seek to implement a socialist utopia – as is for instance the case in the Kibbutz movement (and it is to be noted that Zionist socialism has not been free of violence throughout its history) – are not called fundamentalists.

**Example 2:** As long as **Evangelicals in the USA** as a majority voted traditionally for the Democratic Party, they were not accused of being fundamentalists. This last occurred in the obvious case of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), a typical southern Evangelical who received the vote of the religious right against Gerald Ford. With Ronald Reagan’s election victory in 1980 this changed. The majority of Evangelicals shifted their loyalty to the Republican party. Since that time this has been considered a sign of their fundamentalism, although 40% of US Evangelicals still voted against George W. Bush.

**Example 3:** In the **Arab world** or, say, with the Palestinians, violent ideology was a mixture of Islam, socialism, and pan-Arab nationalism, and one did not speak of fundamentalism. Since socialism has moved into the background, it is now different. (See on this topic the history of Islamism above, p. 19)

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<sup>57</sup> Martin Stöhr, „Identität und Leben,“ *Jahrbuch Mission* 27 (1995), pp. 45-55, here p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> Jäggi, Krieger, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 15.

**Example 4:** In his book *Facism and Fundamentalism*, Hartmut Krauss counts National Socialism and Italian and Spanish fascism as fundamentalism, and he makes parallels between fascism and Islamism. Fundamentalism is for him – and I could agree with him – the selective politicization of religion for the purpose of justifying, implementing or recovering authoritarian and repressive ruling structures.<sup>59</sup> There is only one thing: As a socialist, he does not call any movement from the left side of the spectrum fundamentalist, although Stalin and Mao would fit well here.

In the discussion there are far too many dilettantes who are more interested in their audience rating than in the consequences for groups who are considered fundamentalists. In the fundamentalist discussion there are too many unproven claims.

Considering a movement to be fundamentalist can no longer be shrugged off as a harmless exercise. It often has far-reaching consequences, for which responsibility has to be taken. For this reason adequate opportunity should also be provided for those involved to present arguments to defend themselves.

The Hudson Institute in Washington has recently documented in detail in its book *Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion*<sup>60</sup> that many journalists treat many religious topics exceedingly superficially. This is due to the fact that given their work methods, they do not penetrate into actual religiosity and can barely keep the many different religious positions apart.

**Example:** It is repeatedly maintained that **Islamism** and the terrorism that emerges from it is primarily directed **against western countries** and that it is a war of Islam against the west. In reality, from the outset Islamism has above all directed itself against governments in Islamic countries charged with having forsaken true Islam. Western countries came and come into play because their alleged decadent lifestyles have misled Islamic governments or because western states have rushed to aid Muslim rulers. The USA became a great enemy of Iran because the Shah was brought to power and kept in power by the CIA (the ambassador from the USA in Iran in 1978 was, for instance, a former CIA boss). The alleged cultural threats originated with the Shah and were disseminated through various forms of media and multinational companies. In the Arab world the USA primarily became an enemy of Islamism since it aided Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in

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<sup>59</sup> Krauss, *Faschismus*, p. 162.

<sup>60</sup> Marshall, *Blind Spot*.

their opposition to Saddam Hussein. Experts agree that terrorist attacks against tourists and hotels in Islamic countries are not intended to touch western countries. They are, rather, to have an impact on the economies of Islamic countries when as a result of terrorist attacks tourists stay away. Additionally, they result in increased media coverage.

**Example:** There is no evidence that there is a connection between **right-wing radicalism and Evangelicalism in the USA** as is often maintained. The Ku Klux Klan was founded around 1865, and at its high point the federal government declared martial law in 1923 in the state of Oklahoma. In 1870 the Ku Klux Klan had about 500,000 members and today a few thousand. There is admittedly a Christian undertone to the group, since from a nationalist-racist perspective the Christian God is the God of white people. However, there is no connection to any Christian church. There are also no connections to any Evangelical churches, especially not to the Evangelical movement in the USA to which many African-American and Latino churches belong. The Aryan Nations church, a violent militia which uses Christian patriotism with strong anti-Semitism in the cause of white domination, also has no connection to a Christian church. When in 1995 Timothy McVeigh used a car bomb to blow up a federal building in Oklahoma City and kill 168 people, he supposedly did that on behalf of God for the victory of the Aryan race. However, this was not done with any connection to a Christian church. In all of these cases one can speak about right-wing radicalism, but it is one of a very particular kind, that is to say, one without any reference to a Christian church.

**Example:** For instance the following statement about the *USA* is false: “Christian fundamentalists reject the strict separation of church and state.”<sup>61</sup> As a rule, this principle in the USA does not even go far enough for them. If one means those who specifically identify themselves as fundamentalists, many reject all involvement in politics. Does one mean the religious right or Evangelicals? For both of these the separation of church and state is a part of their religious ethic. When American Evangelicals come to Germany, they are mostly aghast at what is in their view the absence of a separation of church and state in Germany, or what in other European countries is the absence of a separation of church and state due to state church tradition. Church taxes, state religious instruction, state theological faculties, and much more shocks them.

**Example:** According to many authors, Evangelicals only think in terms of black and white, or good and evil, and they do not understand any nuances or semitones. If the authors had taken a look into the ethics books of Evangelicals, they would have found something else. Everything that is

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<sup>61</sup> Bauer, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 59.



known to me addresses the fact that in addition to the foundational ethics of norms and values, that there are situational ethics and ethics relating to personal decisions of conscience, in everything set forth in the Bible as well as in the long tradition of theological history. Luther's 'adiaphora' (questions which are not addressed by any basic ethical norm and to which a Christian cannot give a final answer) play a large role in Pietism and Evangelicalism. With respect to most questions in the secular world, Evangelicals, as is also the case with other Christian movements, do not have an answer that is closed to debate or indisputable. Rather, they have various points of view in their midst that are under discussion. The biblical statement: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22; see also 11:14, 24:6) is a favorite quotation among Evangelicals.

**Example:** In a book by two ARD journalists, six features are listed as to why "most Evangelicals" are fundamentalists, namely because they consider their religion to be the only true one, they have maxims for life and call transgression of such maxims sin, they believe in the return of Christ, they believe there is such a thing as evil, they want to change society, and they want to pass on their convictions.<sup>62</sup> Apart from the fact that one is dealing with an arbitrary compilation shaped by little specialized knowledge, this description applies to all Catholic and Orthodox Christians, as well as most Protestant churches around the world. In short, it is really Christianity that is standing in the pillory of the two journalists, not a certain orientation within Christianity. And the manner of describing fundamentalism in the evangelical movement is so vague that it even includes Islam, which believes in a return of Jesus.

*How does one arrive at the point that a harmless minority is considered dangerous?*

- Present them to be much bigger than they really are.
- Present them to be a growing group even when in reality their numbers are stagnating.
- Present them to be more influential than they actually are.
- Maintain that their influence is conducted via secret channels.
- Present them as a danger to public order, yet in a manner that keeps the population from stumbling upon the question as to why they do not experience this in everyday life.
- Describe them as fundamentalist and incorrigible.

<sup>62</sup> Lambrecht/Baars. *Mission*. pp. 13-15.

- Convey the idea that all adherents are potentially violent or already are violent.
- Present them as dumb and uneducated, in particular the academics among them, and give the impression that it does not serve any purpose to speak with them.
- Avoid honorable academic or other titles as well as descriptions of adherents which would underscore their merits.
- Never mention anything positive.
- Describe extreme actions and manners of thought conducted at the margins as if they represented the heart of the minority group.
- Find examples among them which are rejected by everyone in the population and act as if they were typical for everyone in the group.

The fundamentalist discussion tempts one to take individual acts within a movement and use them as evidence to ascribe fundamentalism to the entire movement. It also makes the adherents of a religious group liable for everything that adherents of the group in other countries do.

The question of the extent to which individual acts of violence are frequent occurrences, typical, and legitimized by the community of believers is something that is too seldom investigated. If it is the case that such violence is frequent and legitimized by a community, then one has to speak distinctly about it, and the state should prevent such violence. However, when it comes to the concept of fundamentalism, one must differentiate between lone perpetrators and millions non-violent members.

**Example:** Each **honor killing** can be used to refer to all **Muslims**. A differentiated examination addressing which oriental cultures see such killings as customary and permissible and which cultures do not, and why there are also these killings in other religions and in other cultures (only not so frequently), is for the most part not a topic that comes up when speaking about fundamentalism. Millions of Muslims in Germany, who would never harm a family member, are afflicted because they find themselves associated with a few thugs.

**Example:** Each of the rare **killings** of an **abortion doctor** (one in the last ten years) is selectively ascribed to all opponents of abortion from all religions, to Christianity in general (the Catholic Church is the leading force against abortion in the USA) and, for unknown reasons, especially to Evangelicals. This means that one billion Christians around the world, whether in Indonesia, Kenya, or Germany, are deemed guilty for one single act. This act has nothing to do with their faith and additionally was con-

ducted by a mentally disturbed individual in a country with an unfortunately high murder rate.<sup>63</sup>

The charge of fundamentalism can contribute to the clash of cultures or to serve to legitimize one's own authority or the use of force.

Ascribing fundamentalism can easily be the result of a lack of serious research interest. It can also have the goal of excluding others and above all of justifying measures to exclude others. That also often applies within a religion. "I absolutely agree with the criticism that people play fast and loose with the concept of fundamentalism. . . . Fundamentalism also becomes a political shibboleth which allows regimes to justify the oppression of opposition members that one describes as 'fundamentalists.' As a general rule, this does not require any additional justification for the west. With this being the case, fundamentalism has successfully taken on the position of communism's successor as the demon in political rhetoric."<sup>64</sup>

**Example:** In **India** the central government conducted war against the Sikhs in Punjab with the justification that they were fundamentalists. In this way they were able to not only move against the terrorists but also the Sikhs on the sidelines. (In another portion of the book there is more extensive discussion of the Sikhs.)

**Example: Buddhism/Dalai Lama:** The Dorje Shugden is a supernatural being who in Tibetan Buddhism has been venerated since the 17<sup>th</sup> century in part as a protective deity and in part as an evil spirit. Beginning in the 1970s the present Tibetan Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso has publicly spoken out against the worship of Dorje Shugden. From the middle of the 1990s onwards he has had an outright ban imposed on it. Through these actions the worship of Dorje Shugden in Tibet and among Tibetans in exile has been rolled back. On the other hand, the worship of Dorje Shugden is being advanced by the Western Shugden Society. The Dalai Lama and those around him have repeatedly confirmed that there are also extremists and fundamentalists within Buddhism, and those who worship Shugden are mentioned are described as the 'Taliban' of Buddhism. They principally refuse to conduct conversations with the Western Shugden Society.

Being charged with fundamentalism can easily be an excuse for – mostly European – antipathy towards certain cultures, at present most fre-

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<sup>63</sup> See the quote by Hochgeschwender below and details presented in Schirmmacher, „Gewalt.“

<sup>64</sup> Riesebrodt, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 51.

quently for a rejection of American and Oriental lifestyles and religious views.

Peter Antes has repeatedly criticized that within the fundamentalism concept the modern western, mostly European, lifestyle is taken as a matter of course, and any criticism of it is seen as religious backwardness. It is insinuated that religion is an irrational way of thinking, and that only the scientifically oriented modern way is rational. He writes “that the fundamentalism concept not only demonstrates quite a selective perception of reality. Rather, it also fulfills the function of safeguarding the path of modernization.”<sup>65</sup>

**Example:** Fritz R. Huth portrays the ‘Evangelical’ (= Protestant) Church in Germany (EKD) in the brightest of colors and sets it apart from the free churches, which find themselves unable to exhibit all the achievements of the EKD churches.<sup>66</sup> As a paid apologist of a Protestant EKD church he criticizes free church for being “fundamentalist,” even if Huth surely has better informed colleagues. However, it has little to do with scholarship. The reality is rather the following: EKD churches have many bright and dark sides, and the free churches do as well. There is little to be won by using the term ‘fundamentalist’ to describe the free churches (which are not dependent on the government). The use of the term ‘fundamentalist’ merely keeps old wounds open.

I often find in the specialist literature – in any event in the media – that there is boundless scorn from the side of European scholars and the media against people in the USA, in the Orient, as well as in completely different countries such as Singapore. Today the lack of understanding for people who think, live, and act differently from us in Europe may be greater than it ever has been (clad this time as a battle for modernity).

**Example:** According to most of the definitions of fundamentalism I know, practically all **Africans** are fundamentalists, regardless of whether they are Muslims, Christians, or adherents of nature religions or new religions in Africa. The supernatural world is for almost all Africans such a matter of course and so ever-present and bound up with everyday life that when they are not raised in the western education system, they find it difficult to acclimate themselves to the material European mentality which Christians in Europe also display.

**Example: Singapore:** It is not only through innumerable prohibitions and drastic penalties that the crime rate is maintained at a low rate in Sin-

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<sup>65</sup> Antes, „Gibt es ...“ p. 205.

<sup>66</sup> Huth, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 7.

gapore, but also each and every expression of violence or stirring up of violent emotions amid religions is suppressed. The crime rate is extremely low, and classical human rights are respected, but there are numerable individual freedoms (such as hanging laundry from the window) or western results of liberalization such as pornography that are limited for the sake of the common good. Most Germans are appalled at the situation. However, the party that implements such policies is regularly confirmed by being reelected with more than a three-quarter majority in completely free elections.

**Example:** In research it is an undisputed fact that the USA is only to be understood against the backdrop of a ‘civil religion’ that has existed since its founding. The country is considered ‘God’s own country,’ and on the currency the words “In God we trust” are found. All American presidents, whether they are from the left or the right, call incessantly upon God, e.g., Barak Obama in his inaugural address. Everyone seems to unanimously agree that an atheistic president would not be able to be elected. However, the god of civil religion is not identical with the god of a particular religion. As early as the founding of the USA, when Christianity was the prevailing religion, it was more the God of the founding fathers, the majority of whom were deists, nominal Christians, or Freemasons. In the case of acts of state, it is common that representatives of many religions (including Muslims and Evangelicals) pray alongside each other. However, they all conspicuously only address ‘God’ and not any entity that would be specific to their religion. Even the Bible is not only revered by Christians in the USA, especially not only by Bible-believing Christians. The Bible is a type of national treasure in the USA.<sup>67</sup> Otherwise there would not be 50% of Americans who hold the Bible to be infallible. Civil religion unites churches, sects, and conspiracy theorists of all types who cavort in the USA. Religious patriotism permeates the entire American society, and one could take it to an extreme and say: Every American has a mission. The only thing that varies is what it is that he or she wants to say or spread. Americans are reluctant about the theory of secularization and are, on the whole, more religious than ever. Why, then, do fundamentalist researchers and the media mostly single out only certain movements? Why is it that George W. Bush’s religious pathos is often presented and almost never that of Barak Obama? For her master’s thesis at the University of Bonn, the linguist Lisanna Görtz examined Bush’s complete radio messages and came to the result that Bush spoke less often about God than most of his predecessors in office. Religious echoes were only found in his addresses at Christian

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<sup>67</sup> See in particular Noll, *Christentum*, Brocker, *God Bless America*, and Pally, *Die hintergründige Religion*.

holidays such as Easter and Christmas, though many popular portrayals of the Bush presidency accused his administration of fundamentalism.

**Example: The Anglican Church** has been facing a worldwide split since a homosexual bishop was ordained in the USA. The majority of bishops in the global bishops' conference, who primarily come from non-western countries, consider homosexuality to be a sin (and that proportion is likely to be reflective of the baseline thinking among bishops), but even in the USA there have been many church congregations that have formed a new church structure. Are the majority of Anglicans thus fundamentalists, and the minority not? Where does that leave us? Is it a situation where if you do not follow western liberal theology, you are a fundamentalist?

The charge of fundamentalism has often come to replace the old defector term 'sect' and is, if anything, made more often against smaller religious communities rather than larger ones. It often thereby serves to stabilize the religious establishment.

Does the danger exist that today one might simply apply the name fundamentalism where one used to employ the unfashionable term 'sect' on account of the latter's pejorative meaning? The charge of fundamentalism often originates with powers interested in maintaining the status quo in society. We have already mentioned the example of the Dalai Lama, as well as the example of the relationship of the Catholic Church to Pentecostals. The Indian government's relationship to the Sikhs, addressed elsewhere, has similar characteristics.

**Example: The Saudi Arabian ruling family**, which has made Wahhabism, one of the strictest forms of Islam, into the state religion, has promoted Islamic fundamentalism in its own country. It did this as long as it was able to position Islamic fundamentalism against Arab socialism. But since Islamic fundamentalism began to stand up in the face of the government, and since Islamic fundamentalist attacks on the USA endangered economic relations, Islamic fundamentalism has been declared public enemy No. 1. As a free man or woman one would not want to live under the fundamentalism of Saudi leaders, who can 'legally' use force to enforce their religion, nor would one want to live under the fundamentalism of their 'wayward son,' Osama Bin Laden.

**Example: Are Mormons** inherently fundamentalist, or only some Mormon splinter groups?<sup>68</sup> For American researchers, where Mormons in Utah determine the state's underpinning and together account for one of the

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<sup>68</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon\\_fundamentalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mormon_fundamentalism).

largest religions in the USA, it is only the splinter groups which are called fundamentalist. Among European researchers, who only know Mormons culturally as a ‘sect’ and not as a discrete, large religion, it is Mormon belief *per se* that is fundamentalist.

It is often argued from a religio-sociological perspective that fundamentalists are smaller groups within a larger religion. Furthermore, they are seen as groups which break off from the majority because the majority has supposedly betrayed the basic principles of the religion. That is certainly often the case. But is that the defining factor? Can fundamentalism in a religion or culture not also become the majority position, as it is for instance with Islam in Iran, or in Sri Lanka in the case of Buddhism?

**Example:** In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Islamic fundamentalism has determined the political and religious leadership of the country. At the same time, it seems that the Islamic state finds, in principle, the support of a majority of the population. And when one looks at the most recent unrest in Iran, it only had to do with a somewhat centrist or more moderate variety of Islamic fundamentalism and with a conflict between different wings of the clergy.

The charge of fundamentalism portrays religious groups as mostly very one-dimensional and black and white – yet reality is for the most part less one-dimensional and rather more differentiated or even confusing.

If an individual only has a hammer in his toolbox, then the entire world is a nail. This proverb often applies to the charge of fundamentalism. It guides the search for a few features and topics in movements, and yet it rarely captures the actual breadth, history, and diversity of those movements. Everything sounds one-dimensional and logical when one only has one tool; in the reality of life religious movements are highly complex and even experts can describe them only circumstantially .

**Example:** The ‘**electronic churches**’ of the largest televangelists in the USA have brought about several large universities: Wheaton College (Billy Graham), Regent University (Pat Robertson), and Oral Roberts University (Oral Roberts). Why such large amounts of donations were invested here is difficult for experts to understand – universities do not fit with the message that the end of the world is near. At any rate these large universities have long since outgrown their original propagandistic intentions and have in part brought about considerable scholarly achievements and change to the original anti-intellectual communities from which they derived.

The charge of fundamentalism often throws all the various directions a religion may take into one pot.

To many readers and consumers of the media, the world of religion appears to be very homogeneous, although according to history it has been highly differentiated and is today more fragmented than ever. I would gladly agree with the distinguished scholar of Islam, Peter Antes, and yet am unwilling to do so because the term fundamentalism is simply at a stage where it can hardly be eliminated: “The tendencies are so diverse . . . that one cannot speak of a homogeneous religious fundamentalism. It exists neither as a universal phenomenon nor as an aspect within individual religions.”<sup>69</sup>

**Example 1:** The enormous diversity of Jewish orientations, groups, and ‘grouplets,’ whom to study requires far-reaching knowledge of the global history of **Judaism**, are manageably kneaded together. Reformed Judaism is good, and Orthodox and Ultraorthodox Judaism are evil in the media. That the settlement movement, with the Torah in hand, wishes to conquer greater Israel as God’s state and never relinquish it, is something that lands in the same pot with the Ultraorthodox in Mea Shearim, who with the Torah in hand want to deny Israel a right to existence only because the Messiah is to conquer the Holy Land after his advent.

**Example 2:** Even for insiders and especially for outsiders, it is practically impossible to distinguish the many varieties of **Buddhism**, often in connection with other eastern religions such as Hinduism and Taoism. In **Japan**, for instance, there are various religions which a western observer would gladly identify and catalogue; where he would willingly speak of ‘syncretism,’ the religions are so interwoven on various levels that even a statistical classification of Japanese people into different historical religions is practically impossible. Additionally, millions belong to ‘sects,’ as we clumsily render it. Which among them are fundamentalist and which are not is difficult to judge and mostly not palpable until it comes to the use of force. Such was the case with the Aum-Shinrikyo’-Sect, who with their poisonous attacks in the Tokyo subway found their way into the global press. Their leader had mixed Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, and other elements together and had praised death as something beautiful. Such fundamentalist ‘sects’ are to be found in Tibetan Zen Buddhism as well as in Mahayana Buddhism, which, as a classical majority religion, can also take on fundamentalist features, for instance in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>69</sup> Antes, „Gibt es ...“ pp. 205-206.



**Example 3: Islamism:** The teachings and emphases of individual Islamist currents are culturally, politically, and theologically distinguished from each other. In addition, in recent years there have been many movements in individual countries that have experienced enormous changes, with the result that knowledge about them that is ten years old is completely useless. For instance, whoever looks through an international reference book such as *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*<sup>70</sup> for information on Islamist movements will hardly be able to believe the breadth of Islamism and the theological, cultural, historical, and linguistic differences that come up. Next to that there are thousands and thousands of theologians and clergy with their own emphases, as is the case in practically all world religions.

**Example 4:** Muriel Asseburg has published a fascinating anthology entitled *Moderate Islamists as Participants in Reform?* The extent to which it has paid off for numerous countries to include Islamists in the democratic process is addressed in that book. There are positive examples such as Morocco and Turkey. There are negative examples such as Algeria. And finally there are also ambivalent examples such as Egypt. What is striking is how intensely Islamist movements can change their political orientation and their relationship to violence.

**Example 5: Evangelicals in the USA:** One expert writes the following about the approximately 50-80 million Evangelicals in the USA (as many people as Germany has inhabitants), who are often presented as a monolithic block: "It shows how difficult and multi-faceted the relationships of exceedingly different Evangelical streams are among themselves and in relation to the politico-social environment. . . . Since there are innumerable intermediate and transitional forms . . . Evangelicalism in the US can in no case be understood as a monolithic block, neither religiously nor politically."<sup>71</sup> We are talking about people who belong to hundreds of different churches and cover the entire political spectrum. They come from white, black, and Latino churches and from all layers of society.

**Example 6: Evangelicals worldwide:** According to the classic definition by David Bebbington,<sup>72</sup> the German word **Evangelikale** is a translation back into German from the English "Evangelicals" which dates back to the 1960s. These are Christians who **simultaneously** emphasize personal conversion, are missionally-oriented, and are diaconally very active. Furthermore, they defend Biblicism and a pronounced theology of the

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<sup>70</sup> Sfeir, *Dictionary*.

<sup>71</sup> Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>72</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London. 1989, p. 3.

cross.<sup>73</sup> They have emerged from numerous diverse revivalist movements and consist of a denominational mix of free churches and national churches. 250 million of them belong to churches which would describe themselves as generally Evangelical, and at least 100 million belong to older churches which are counted among the World Council of Churches. Several million of them belong to Catholic and Orthodox churches, and, finally, a fast growing number are completely independent congregations and members of the house church movement. The spectrum is immense.<sup>74</sup> What one sees is that the 300-400 million Evangelicals outside of the USA simply cannot be equated with Evangelicals in the USA. Around the world, Evangelicals split up politically into left-leaning and right-leaning Evangelicals, whereby the left-leaning Evangelicals in Latin America or India could almost be seen as falling within liberation theology. Also, in the USA with representatives such as Ronald Sider or Jim Wallis, they were among the sharpest critics of the politics of George W. Bush. James Barr<sup>75</sup> names five areas in which Evangelicals are broken down into several camps and where they strongly quarrel with and against each other: 1. Calvinism or Arminianism, 2. Millennialism (i.e., eschatology in general), 3. The stance towards the Pentecostal movement, 4. Modern Bible translations, 5. Neo-orthodoxy. I would add the question of social and political involvement and almost every ethical issue.

The charge of fundamentalism often throws movements which have nothing in common into a single pot. Above all, it frequently mixes peaceable movements with terrorists, which can have negative consequences for those involved.

**Example: Islamic Suicide Bombers and Christian Missionaries:** On “Frontal 21,” German state-owned television, it was recently maintained that the readiness of Evangelical missionaries to die for their faith does not differ from Muslim suicide bombers. Both are fundamentalists. That is cheap propaganda, since no connection has ever been made between Evangelicals in Germany and a terrorist act! As a matter of fact, since the first

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<sup>73</sup> Comp. on the international situation Donald M. Lewis (ed.), *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, Grand Rapids, 2004; for Germany see Stephan Holthaus, *Die Evangelikalen*, Lahr, 2007; Friedhelm Jung, *Die deutsche evangelikale Bewegung*, Bonn, 2006<sup>2</sup>; and Friedhelm Jung, *Was ist evangelikal?* Dillenburg, 2007.

<sup>74</sup> See for instance Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*; Larsen, *Dictionary of Evangelicals*.

<sup>75</sup> Barr, *Fundamentalism*.

century there have been Christians with strong convictions who have been prepared to die rather than deny their faith. They have even been prepared to help other people in cases where their own lives have been endangered. This meant (and means), however: 1. They never willfully seek death, 2. They never endorse suicide, and 3. They never entertain the thought that one could become a suicide attacker who kills other people! “Christianity since the time of St. Augustine has bid farewell to religious suicide. St. Augustine did not advocate being killed. Rather, he argued that what makes a martyr of an individual is answering for faith in God even up to the cost of one’s life.”<sup>76</sup> To throw the term ‘martyr’ – a victim of religious murder – into the same pot with murderers only shows that one views the other person as an enemy and hates him. Such action has little to do with serious reporting. Yet without the concept of fundamentalism and its inflationary application, it would never have come this far. (At the same time, however, one hears nothing in such cases about fundamentalist researchers putting up a fight against such cheap propaganda.) Someone who stands up against child slavery in dangerous areas should not be called a fundamentalist because he is prepared to risk his life or calls upon a higher set of ethics to justify his actions.

For a number of years, Evangelicals have been thrown into the same pot with violent Islamic fundamentalist terrorists by some members of the media and other societal powers. At least the president of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, who did that most recently, apologized for doing so. In typical fashion he had drawn a parallel between ‘Islamic fundamentalists’ and ‘Evangelicals.’ Among Muslims he made the difference between normal Muslims and dangerous one, but the one-half a billion Evangelicals, on the other hand, were dangerous without exception!

For years Islamic fundamentalists have been killing thousands, and we are nevertheless called upon – and rightly so – to differentiate between violent Muslims and the millions of peaceful Muslim neighbors. Furthermore, we are called to do this in spite of certain components of Islamic teaching permitting violence. For Evangelicals, however, such a differentiation is only rarely applied, and their ‘fundamentalism,’ if one wants to speak of it, excludes the use of violence. Viewed statistically, the 300-500 million Evangelicals worldwide belong to the most peaceful element of humanity. Who is scared of traveling to some country for vacation because there are Evangelicals who live there? Do German authorities have to conduct raids in Evangelical churches in order to get weapons stockpiles? Why do Evangelicals not appear in any reports by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution or any report of a secret ser-

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<sup>76</sup> Schneider/Hofer, *Ursachen und Wirkungen des weltweiten Terrorismus*, p. 41.

vice of a free country? Where are the Evangelicals who have threatened journalists or their families for having a different way of thinking? Where does Evangelical terror rule?

There is often a confusion between drastic inner-religious language and real fundamentalism.

There is a basic error frequently found in the relevant literature. This arises when authors automatically infer pragmatic fundamentalism from inner-religious and rhetorical fundamentalism. This is an error. A Catholic politician or a zealous adherent of the Dalai Lama can very well distinguish between what is owed the teaching office of the pope or the Dalai Lama and what he wants or can implement politically with other people, or what he accepts as democratic terms of reference.

A distinction between public law and private ethics belongs to the essence of democracy. Whether a citizen shares the respective moral foundations of a law is of secondary importance, as long as he holds to the law. Each individual can privately hold completely different moral standards to be correct, that is to say, for example, to be a vegetarian or a pacifist and to live as such privately. Why should the same not also apply to Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists?

Let us take the case when for instance a political scientist gives a presentation and voices something as aligning with the words of fundamentalist eschatology. It might be couched as follows: “Such a stance is potentially dangerous. This is due to the fact that no one can exclude the possibility that fanatical fundamentalists will get the idea of accelerating the alleged course of history . . .”<sup>77</sup> – what is meant is accelerating the course of history with violence. Thus the words “potentially dangerous” become elastic wording used against everyone. In actuality, however, one can definitely see in the history of religious and other movements who was of the opinion that a certain future would come on its own and who was of the opinion that a certain future had to be forcibly brought about.

**Example:** There are Evangelical Christians in Germany who see the European Union (EU) as a component of a negative eschatological program and connected with the so-called Antichrist. There are, however, no indications that this conviction has led to any activities against the EU, much less illegal or violent activities. In the best case they support EU-critical politicians such as Peter Gauweiler. By no means is everything that a religious person holds to be correct also something that such an individual wants to implement politically.

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<sup>77</sup> Lambrecht/Baars. *Mission*, p. 152.

**Example:** At the time of being received into the group, the **Freemason's oath** warns in a dramatic way about the danger to life and limb that comes with revealing any of the secrets of the Freemasons or of leaving the Masonic lodge. As a general rule the oath is used today in unchanged form. In reality, however, these secrets are no longer secrets, and there is hardly any evidence from the past or present that those who drop out are pursued. The oath of the Freemasons sounds unequivocally fundamentalist, but the Freemasons themselves are not, whatever else one might think of them.

**Example: Russian-German Christians in Germany** often do not even work with Evangelicals. Nevertheless, they predominantly stem from either the completely or partially pacifistic tradition of the Mennonites and Baptists and are for that reason, in terms of violence or misuse of politics, totally harmless churches. Their work ethic allows them to integrate extremely well economically, which the German Federal Statistical Office has shown. In a religious sense they might be fundamentalist, but in a political sense absolutely not. If fundamentalism means to reestablish the original condition of the religion as a counterpart to modernity, what one has with respect to Christianity, with its ideal of the completely apolitical early church model in Jerusalem, is a rather pacifistic movement.

The concept of fundamentalism can often hardly capture what is happening in areas where there is a great potential for violence.

**Example: Israel and the autonomous Palestinian territories:** What is it about the hostilities there that is the fault of religious fundamentalism? What is simply the fault of decades of violent conflict? And what is the fault of politicians who want to fulfill the expectations of their voters or devotees? There is no question that in this conflict Islamic fundamentalism plays an important role, as does Jewish fundamentalism within the settlement movement. And yes, Christian dispensationalist fundamentalism, predominantly out of the USA, plays a role. With hardly any direct involvement in violence, the latter does, however, support the view that greater Israel is only to belong to Jews and that no land may be given up to Palestinians. (This thought has also influenced American foreign policy.) However, these forms of fundamentalism are not the sole factors in what is apparently a hopeless situation highly charged with violence and closely entangled with world politics. One should not simply assume that the *dramatis personae* of the state who use violence are the good ones and the others are the evil ones.

Many other examples could also be introduced, such as the conflict between the Indian government and the violent independent movement of Sikhs in Punjab, the civil war between the majority Buddhists and the mi-

nority Hindus in Sri Lanka, the civil war between Russia and Chechnya, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Everywhere it is used, the charge of fundamentalism quickly suggests that conflicts are easier to explain if such religious terms are used, though the reality is more complex.

The concept of fundamentalism lightly whitewashes what is an overlay of religious conflicts with the battle for one's own cultural identity and with conflicts of national identity.

At the moment, religion often unfortunately and increasingly serves to intensify nationalism and ethnicism around the world. True Turks are Muslims, true Poles are Catholic, true Israelis are Jews, and true Indians are Hindus. Those involved in power politics willingly revert to a religious justification for their actions.

**Example: The Conflict in Northern Ireland:** In addition to cultural and economic aspects, the often violent conflict from 1969-1998 between the Irish and British in Northern Ireland had a religious component. Broadly speaking the northeastern regions are Protestant, and the western regions are dominated by Catholics. The northeast is much more strongly industrialized than the rural western region and reflects the contrast between the old-established Irish (who were poor, rural, and Catholic) and the colonizing Scottish (or English) settlers (affluent, industrial, Protestant). It is a disputed matter whether one is dealing here more with ethnicities than with religious communities, that is to say, the extent to which the IRA, (and especially splinter groups) which conducted bombings was determined by religious identity, i.e., Catholicism.<sup>78</sup> At least on the Protestant side, it was in part a question of classic fundamentalism, embodied in the person of Ian Richard Kyle Paisley (b. 1926).<sup>79</sup> With him a contemporary and unparalleled vehement anti-Catholic Protestantism came to an end. As a young pastor at the beginning of the 1950s, Paisley founded the Free Presbyterian Church and became the moderator of the synod. He was repeatedly reelected over a series of decades. In addition to that, he founded the largest Protestant-unionist party in Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and he was its chairman from 1971-2008. For decades he stood for the idea that as representatives of the Antichrist, the Catholics were to be driven out. When Pope John Paul II held a speech before the European Parliament in 1988, Paisley, as a member of the Parliament, stood up and called out:

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<sup>78</sup> See Bernhard Moltmann, „Die religiöse Dimension des Nordirlandkonfliktes,“ pp. 207-224 in: Hildebrandt. *Unfriedliche Religionen?: Das politische Gewalt- und Konfliktpotential von Religionen.*

<sup>79</sup> See Steve Bruce, *Paisley*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

“Antichrist, I condemn you and your false teaching.” In so doing he held up a poster that had the inscription “Pope John Paul II Anti-Christ.” Although Paisley rejected peace negotiations up until the end, he finally became First Minister of a Protestant-Catholic government in Northern Ireland in 2007 and developed a friendly tone towards his fellow ministers. He did this without giving up his theological position. In 2008, at the age of 82, he resigned from all political offices.

**Example: Buddhism in Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka was once a center of Buddhism. However, through colonialism and immigration it became a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country in which next to Buddhists (69%) above all Hindus who are mostly Tamils (15,5%), Muslims (9.6%) and Christians (7.5%) live. On both sides, the civil war between Buddhists and Hindus had, in addition to ethnic, political, and economic factors, a strongly religious fundamentalist component. Buddhism, as the state religion, is not only legally preferred. There is also a strong stream of interest to win back the entire island for Buddhism. Buddhist monks have occupied important Hindu shrines, which are today largely under state Buddhist control. Catholic as well as Evangelical Christians, as supposed heirs of colonialism, are persecuted by means of state laws enacted for that purpose, as well as by burning churches, torture, and an occasional murder. Buddhist theologians justify the use of force for the protection of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is seen as *dhammadipa*, as an island of *dhamma*, or of Buddhist teaching. Reference is made to the *Mahavamsa* writing, which in actual fact is not a canonical text but rather the central document that justifies the inseparable alliance between religion and the state. The Hindu Tamils respond with no less of a fundamentalist justification for their civil war, although their terror organization, LTTE, originates more from socialist roots.<sup>80</sup>

**Example: The Sikhs: fundamentalism and nationalism**

On May 23, 2009 there was shooting in a Sikh temple in Vienna in which 350 believers had gathered. Six men shot and killed the guru, who was a visiting preacher. The Sikh temple belongs to a body of Sikhs who are Dalits (formerly: ‘untouchables,’ ‘casteless’), who are from the lowest caste in India. The culprits came from a rival temple of Sikhs of a higher caste and were of the opinion that the guest preacher had no right to preach there. Here we have the case of a fundamentalist movement spilling over from India to Europe. However, the reality of it is more complicated. Reli-

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<sup>80</sup> Comp. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanaygan, „Wer und was ist die LTTE?“ pp. 118-141 in Kolnberger/Six. *Fundamentalismus*.

gion, nationalism, a struggle for independence, and criticism of a secular India all play a role in this incident, as does the undesired influence of Hinduism, to which such thinking in terms of caste is owed and which played a central role in this bloodbath.

Sikhs ('pupils') are adherents of a religious reform movement started at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in northern India (Punjab) by the wandering teacher Guru Nanak. The movement's concern was to unite Hindus and Muslims on the basis of an image-free monotheism. Under the fourth guru, the Golden Temple in Amritsar was built as the repository for the Adi Granth, the holy scriptures of the Sikhs. In 1966 the separate Indian federal state of Punjab was created for the Sikhs. There are 23.3 million Sikhs, and out of those who reside outside of India, 530,000 live in the USA and 230,000 in Great Britain. In Germany there are 5,000 Sikhs and in Austria 3,000.

In 1947 2.5 million Sikhs emigrated from Pakistan to Punjab, and in the reverse direction there were 1 million Muslims who left Punjab. 66% of Punjab, with 140 Sikh shrines, fell to Pakistan. It was not until 1966 that Sikhs at least received their own federal state for their support of the Indian army against Pakistan, but they did not receive their yearned for independence. The background of the emerging conflict was the so-called 'Green Revolution,' an enormous agricultural upturn in Punjab beginning in 1965 which made Punjab into the richest federal state. Many guest workers and seasonal workers came to Punjab as a result of the upturn. From the perspective of Sikhs and their political leaders, who lost voting power, Punjab had become infiltrated with too many foreign influences.

Growing nationalism and the general crisis associated with Indian secularism bestowed a great degree of popularity upon the Sikh separatists. In 1981 the conflict between Akali Dal, the Sikh's party in Punjab, and the central Indian government began. The goal was the unification of all Sikhs in a unified state. The negotiations were overshadowed by increasingly brutal terror attacks by Sikhs on Hindus. The lay preacher Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale placed himself at the head of the movement and called for an independent Sikh state of Khalistan which was to exist in absolute autarchy – independent and closed off from the world market. Bhindranwale entrenched himself in the Golden Temple in Amritsar in the middle of 1982 and from there called for armed conflict against the government and against Hindus. The entire situation escalated in 1984 with the storming of the Golden Temple by the Indian army, whereby hundreds of Sikhs (including Bhindranwale) lost their lives. Shortly thereafter, the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, lost her life at the hands of her Sikh bodyguard.

From 1983-1986 Sikhs from everywhere in India migrated to Punjab. Conversely, Hindus left the state. In 1987 Punjab was placed directly under



the regional government so that in spite of India's enormous paramilitary presence, one can speak of a de facto Khalistan. In 1991 the sale of alcohol, meat, eggs, tobacco, and cigarettes was prohibited. However, the regime only maintained itself through the use of terror, not through the support of the population. For the first time, in 1992, elections were held again, if only with a very low voter turnout. The Congress Party again took over the government. The Indian military finally conquered the terrorists, and the State of Punjab slowly recovered economically from many years of civil war.

### Example: The influence of Jewish fundamentalism on laws in Israel

Taking all the national religious parties in Israel together, at the moment they receive about 15% of the total vote. And yet, as small coalition partners, they have made astonishing gains in influence. By law, more and more Israelis have to live like the minority of Orthodox Jews envisage, although though some of the Orthodox Jews reject the existence of a State of Israel and for this reason are freed from military service. This is all the more astounding since most Jews in Israel do not want to share the religious laws, as they are even more liberal than Reformed Judaism or are only nominally Jewish religiously, i. e., belong to the religion for reasons of ancestry. Here are some of the laws which have been passed:

**Sabbath law:** The Sabbath rest is also being implemented more strictly by the state outside of Orthodox quarters. The airline El-Al is not allowed to fly into or out of the country on the Sabbath. A governmental institute developed robots able to conduct all types of work on the Sabbath that otherwise would be considered sins for people to do.

**Jewish dietary laws:** Hotels and restaurants have to pay 'kosher guards' who are to ensure that foodstuffs are not offered anywhere which do not conform to rabbinic guidelines of 'kosher' preparation and that pork is completely forbidden. These 'chaplains' are found in many areas of society, including the army.

**Marital law:** Jewish marriages may only be conducted by rabbis, and other religious marriages may only be conducted by representatives of the respective religions. There is no such thing as a civil marriage. That is tragic for interfaith couples, of which one always – at least feignedly – has to change his or her religion.

**Law of Return:** Whoever immigrates and is allowed to become an Israeli citizen is an issue decided according to strict Orthodox regulations. Reform Jews and especially Messianic Jews (Jewish Christians) are rejected as non-Jewish. Reform Jewish rabbis are not allowed to carry out reli-

gious activities, although internationally Reform Jews represent the largest wing of the Jewish religion.

**Medicine:** Autopsies and transplants are almost impossible according to law.

**Archaeology:** Excavations are forbidden where Orthodox officials suspect Jewish graves. Important planned excavations in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Tiberius are thereby affected.

This progressive takeover of Orthodox Jewish laws in state legislation is primarily being advanced by 'Agudath Israel' and the 'Shas' which emerged from it, in which the leaders of the Talmud schools (jeshivot) and Hasidic communities set the tone.

Researchers of fundamentalism often themselves do what they charge fundamentalists of doing.

I find it especially peculiar how often authors pin black and white and good and evil thinking on fundamentalism and in the process split the world clearly into the good and modern enlightened people and the evil, old school fundamentalists. Yet in reality the pure, unadulterated segment of each of these points of view represents only a small minority of the human population.

Typical are, for instance, the long comparisons between fundamentalist and 'modern' models of thought, such as in the cases of Raúl Páramo-Ortega<sup>81</sup> and Fritz R. Huth<sup>82</sup>

*Fundamentalists and Non-Fundamentalists according to Huth (critical summary)*

- The fundamentalist is scared of the complexity of reality, and the non-fundamentalist is able to face up to it.
- The fundamentalist makes the world simple and straightforward for himself, while the non-fundamentalist does not.
- The fundamentalist is unable to endure contradictions, while the non-fundamentalist can face up to them.
- The fundamentalist is 'caught up in his inner-psychoic reality,' while the non-fundamentalist is not.
- The fundamentalist opposes the achievements of the humanities such as sociology and psychology, while the non-fundamentalist does not.

<sup>81</sup> Páramo-Ortega, *Fundamentalisten*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>82</sup> Huth, „Fundamentalismus“ (selections).

**Example:** A pronounced **friend/foe model** is utilized as a feature of fundamentalism. I would surely like to impress upon the reader that such a friend/foe model, as incorrect as it may be, is by far not only typical for fundamentalism. Rather, it is something that in global politics can just as quickly arise between parties in a democracy. However, I find it depressing that the media and researchers of fundamentalism ultimately operate with such a model and contribute nothing to bridging the ugly trench that lies between them and the others. What those involved often have to read about themselves almost inevitably has to lead to breaking off every conversation that is the very precondition for overcoming the friend/foe model. I hear such complaints from Brahmins, Uighur leaders, and from the Maldives from peace loving ‘fundamentalists,’ who are all denied every possibility for dialog, not to mention the possibility for correcting the situation.

**Example: Creationism in the USA:** Stephen Glazier has pursued the complicated relationship between creationism and fundamentalism in the USA. Many fundamentalists there are not creationists, while many creationists, in contrast, are respected scientists who in all other areas are not fundamentalists.<sup>83</sup> There are atheistic creationists and fundamentalists who vehemently defend the theory of evolution. And yet people desire a picture that can be explained in a few words, not the complexity of reality. Therefore, many fundamentalist researchers deliver precisely that; ironically, reducing complex truth down to manageable prejudices is one of the very things that is a mark of fundamentalism.

Critics of fundamentalism often display an incredible arrogance.

Behind the critique of fundamentalism there often lies an incredible cultural arrogance as well as an intellectual and cultural imperialism. The world would be a better place if the way of the (European) West were to be adopted. Since a number of the protest movements take on a very violent tone (as if the West has never stooped to such actions), it is easy to reject them out of hand. However, it appears that a bit more self-criticism is called for. Modern Europe itself has come forth from wars and revolutions, and up to this day it is unable to achieve a situation where the Flemish and the Walloons in Belgium can willingly and amicably live together. However, on account of its overall long and extensive period of peace, it gladly plays the moral watchman in the world.

That we all tend towards a know-it-all attitude, that it is difficult for all of us to lay our presuppositions out in the open and let them be freely dis-

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<sup>83</sup> Stephen D. Glazier, “Creationism,” pp. 89-92 in Catharine Cookson (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Religious Freedom*, New York, London: Routledge, 2003.

cussed, and that we tend towards hasty judgments – although we have not occupied ourselves at all with certain subject matter – all appears to suddenly be blocked out in the fundamentalist discussion. To state it with some exaggeration: even in the case of a philosophy professor, it is generally enough to have a marriage on its way to divorce in order to have the noble (and correct) idea of a factual, open, and peace seeking public dialogue destroyed. We are not only what we theoretically want to be; rather, we are also how we actually behave.

Psychological profiles of large groups are all too frequently produced, even though they are not based on concrete on-site investigations or discussions with those involved.

Many definitions of fundamentalism are strongly psychologized, whereby researchers and journalists undertake the arduous investigation of psychological profiles of large groups using remote diagnostics (most clearly the case with, for instance, Raúl Páramo-Ortega in his work *It is always the Others who are Fundamentalists: Freud in an Age of Fundamentalism*).

**Example:** “The social basis of fundamentalist tendencies is to a large part made up of those . . . those who are disappointed and disillusioned.”<sup>84</sup> The individual who says this can do so because he can lean back relaxed, not being a part of what is happening, and intelligently work through disappointment instead of going to church. However: What is missing is first of all a definition of what a disappointed individual is (and what differentiates him from all other people). Secondly: the empirical investigations which document the situation are missing. Thirdly: there are sufficient examples that break the tendencies that are described. For example, Hindu fundamentalism is an attempt to protect vested rights by the ruling social class and does not represent disillusionment. And fourthly: there are hundreds of millions of people around the world who are uprooted, driven out, and their families and homeland dispossessed. Is it not presumptuous, from the standpoint of a well secured scholar in a western country, to note with the shake of the head that these people do not turn towards secularization and enlightenment but rather ask whether it is not also possibly ‘modernity’ that is guilty for their hardship and whether this is truly all the meaning that life has to offer? One does not have to accept everything that for instance Jean Ziegler, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, describes in his works that are critical of civilization. However, the suffering of those hungering, of the poor and those oppressed, often caused by western modernity, deserves more than a shake of the head about their propen-

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<sup>84</sup> Jäggi/Krieger, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 27.

sity for religion and fundamentalist conspiracy theories. When for instance a ‘Kentucky Fried Chicken’ restaurant is destroyed in Bangalore by Hindus and is rebuilt under massive police protection, I of course condemn the violence. However, I do not see the use of police protection as a solution, facilitating a situation whereby via such behemoths not only the gastronomic culture is lost but also thousands involved in small businesses in the food sector lose their jobs so that western shareholders can live better.

Behind the fundamentalist discussion there is often too little empirical research. The noble theories do not always have much in common with the lives of those involved in situ.

Only very few authors of books about fundamentalism have conducted empirical research, have listened to, and have studied under fundamentalists on site about how they actually live and think. “It would more readily correspond to the epistemological self-understanding of comparative religious studies to responsibly present that sort of formal clarification of basic phenomenological ideas . . . only after completing detailed individual empirical and historical studies with the social sciences.”<sup>85</sup> Yet what one finds is often a question of pure literary study. There can be a wide gap between what a culture generates in writing and how the culture actually lives. Indeed the interpretation of written sources by outsiders can be completely misleading. Ethnological research would in such case be impossible.

**Example:** An author critical of Islam was threatened on the internet with “**May God punish you,**” and Muslims were called to pray that God justly punishes him. The German Federal Criminal Police Office came to the conclusion that in this case it was not a question of a death threat. Rather, the group left the punishment to Allah and the adherents were *only* called upon to pray. This is different from the Iranian *fatwas* opposed to Salman Rushdie, who directly called for action and did not leave the issue to God.

**Example:** One can gather that there is a **rejection of each and every divorce and remarriage** in Catholic and Evangelical literature. In reality most Catholics act differently than prescribed by the church. In the case of Evangelicals, both divorced and remarried people belong to the everyday life of churches, and for the most part they are found in the same percentages as one finds in broader society, without being excluded in any way.

It is typical that experts quote each other in great profusion, but there are hardly any real studies about fundamentalists’ living environments. The last large-scale research project took place from 1990-1995 in the USA and brought much to light that was exonerating for most fundamentalists. The

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<sup>85</sup> Grünschloß, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 2.

researchers who are on site and conduct empirical research mostly determine that fundamentalist movements are strongly differentiated and strongly overlap with other, often non-fundamentalist movements. The result is that generalizing statements are very difficult. They also found the vast majority of movements they studied to be peaceful.

**Example:** Pastor Fritz R. Huth maintains, for instance, that in the **Fundamentals** from 1910-1915 the points at issue were a “return to an ideal time” and a “literal implementation of divine law.”<sup>86</sup> There is, within 2,500 pages, no point of reference for these points Huth mentions, and they are not distinguishable as characteristics of today’s fundamentalism in the USA. Neither is any sort of time mentioned which was ideal (at most the time of the founding of the USA!), nor does the ‘law’ play a central role. Additionally, the dispensationalists, who were in charge of their production (and then the Pentecostals), taught then and teach now that for the New Testament period the law no longer applies to Christians. Rather, an individual is led only by the Spirit. The ‘Christian Reconstruction’ movement counts as the only movement which theoretically wanted to make a Christian republic with Biblical laws in the sense of the original founding states of the USA. It has remained small, however, and has remained a purely literary movement, barely surviving the death of its founder and having never truly hit home in real political life or even within a single denomination.<sup>87</sup>

In the fundamentalist discussion shameless exaggerations are made in order to heighten the effect or to make the threatening scenarios more emphatic.

**Example:** “Christian fundamentalism in the USA” is allegedly attempting “not only to refute evolutionary theory but rather all of science” under “extreme pretences.”<sup>88</sup> This is naturally imaginary, and it is in itself an extreme pretence. Evangelicals are represented and recognized across the board in all of scientific life in the USA. A number of Evangelical universities are among the elite schools in the country. As much as one might regret the clash over creationism, it is limited to a number of specific questions. For instance, microevolution is widely undisputed in creationism.

**Example: Opponents of abortion:** An expert in American religion writes on this issue: “Certainly one has to beware of setting the proportion

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<sup>86</sup> Huth, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> For instance Pally, *Religion*, p. 55; for more detail see Schirmacher, *Anfang*.

<sup>88</sup> Posch, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 13.

of acts of violence within the neo-fundamentalist scene too high. At the absolute height of bomb attacks in 1994 four people died, and in the 1990s there were seven people in total who died in attacks on abortion clinics. Compared with the general level of violence in American society or even compared with potential violence from the extreme right in the USA, neo-fundamentalists hardly fall out of line. In addition, most perpetrators were pathological figures . . . The absolute majority of neo-fundamentalists, more than 95%, in light of all verbal militancy, conduct themselves in conformity with the societal system, and in spite of the tradition of extra-legal folk violence in the USA, they do not revert to terrorist violence. Religious fanaticism alone does not necessarily lead to terrorism. Stated more pointedly: There have been violent fundamentalists, but there has not been violent fundamentalism.”<sup>89</sup>

**Example:** Helmut Steuerwald, from the humanist **Bund für Geistesfreiheit** (Alliance for Intellectual Freedom)<sup>90</sup> even maintains the following: “Scientists are persecuted by creationists, humanistic and atheistic organizations above all vilified, and their representatives personally terrorized.” I could not find in the literature or elsewhere any sort of evidence of this, and in light of the superior power of the representatives of evolutionary theory in teaching, it is very improbable.

The term fundamentalism can radicalize fundamentalist movements.

**Example: Arab Islam:** The Islamic scholar Peter Antes writes the following in this connection: “Initially it was unintentional, but then the term ‘fundamentalism’ was consciously forced and has been misused through translation in the Arabic realm. It is resolved in Europe through the adoption of a foreign word in the respective language, but in Arabic the use of *uṣūliya* has a similarity with *uṣūl ad-din* (foundations, roots of religion, Islamic theologians’ dogmatic textbooks). Furthermore, the term *uṣūl ad-din* carries an extremely positive connotation and has nothing to do with religious extremism. The feeling of self-esteem which extremists have rises through this self-description and the verbal similarity with ‘roots of religion,’ and they feel they are a worldwide trend.”<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, p. 199; comp. details in Schirmacher, „Gewalt.“

<sup>90</sup> „Fundamentalismus und religiöser Fanatismus in der Welt von heute,“ Lecture on November 16, 2001, [www.bfg-bayern.de/ethik/Stichwort/fundamentalismus.htm](http://www.bfg-bayern.de/ethik/Stichwort/fundamentalismus.htm).

<sup>91</sup> Antes, „Gibt es ...,“ p. 202.

By using over-simplifications, one is robbed of the best allies.

It is often the friends of fundamentalists who have the most influence on them. If one throws these individuals into the same pot with the fundamentalists, or even with terrorists, one achieves precisely the opposite result of that which is desired.

**Example:** Around the world Evangelicals are displaying an enormous amount of discussion about the historically correct interpretation of biblical texts via scholarly commentaries series, their own journals, and conferences. In the process they often bring their fundamentalist friends into dire straits. However, if one throws these Evangelicals into one pot with violent fundamentalists, it unleashes an unnecessary apologetic, i.e., a defensive, reflex. Evangelical ethicists have for instance also successfully propagated among fundamentalists the thought of religious freedom on the basis of a biblical justification. This significantly and enduringly changes fundamentalists for the better, and it does so in a way superior to employing polemics. When for instance Gerhard Maier, a theology professor and bishop in the Evangelical church in Württemberg, is called a fundamentalist<sup>92</sup> on account of his sophisticated and ultimately Evangelical hermeneutics textbook, one overlooks the large counterbalancing influence men and women such as he have on actual fundamentalist circles. Whoever truly wants to desiccate true fundamentalism – also within churches – has to encourage people such as Maier, not shoot them down.

**Example:** I have already addressed Muslim theologians who advocate religious freedom but on account of their understanding of the Koran are nonetheless considered fundamentalists.

The opposite principle is shown in the following challenge: “A demonization of fundamentalism leads to intensified radicalization and self-isolation of fundamentalist groups, and it does not bring about a solution. This is the case even if it is significant that western culture, which advocates tolerance and dialog, establish a border to terrorist groups and systems. On the other hand, it is also necessary to respect the cultures of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and to allow them a right to their own identity. This especially applies where they seek to mark off a border to secularism, relativism, and the decay of moral values. Whoever differentiates and conducts a constructive dialog on an equal footing with pragmatic, moderately conservative groups, intent on a goal of constructive cooperation, pulls the rug out from under fundamentalism. Furthermore, not everything that is quickly stigmatized in popular speech as fundamentalist is bad. Many developments within recognized society, which pillories fun-

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<sup>92</sup> E. g. Kienzler, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 42-43.



damentalism, can rightly be scrutinized and not all values which fundamentalists defend are negative for that reason alone. In a lot of cases fundamentalism addresses problems that actually exist, at least for a certain group of persons – and it is at this point that fundamentalism has its potential for recruitment. At least for that reason the problems that fundamentalists take up should not simply be negated but rather taken seriously as problems and, where necessary, actively addressed.”<sup>93</sup>

Fundamentalists should receive a fair chance to provide a self-portrayal.

As a fundamentalist, one is today denounced rather than being given a fair chance to deal with charges within the framework of an academic dialog. At most academic symposia those who are the topic of discussion are not even represented by scholars from their own ranks. When it has to do with terrorists or pundits who glorify violence, it is understandable, but scholars should be in a position to expose themselves to genuine objections from the side of their ‘victims.’

For this reason Giancarlo Collet poses the question of whether the use of the fundamentalism concept does not carry with it the danger of not addressing the concerns of those criticized or even the desire to understand them. I would go further and say that the contents of many presentations containing a charge of fundamentalism hardly trace a correct, sophisticated picture of the groups involved. They do, however, divulge a lot about the respective authors.

Fundamentalists are best cured by collaborating with others in an open society and not by being excluded. The call for or use of violence has to remain the exception, against which the state, with its monopoly on force, has to move relentlessly.

No less than the distinguished ‘liberal’ theologian Jürgen Moltmann has written, “How strange Christian fundamentalists may act, it is wrong to exclude them or to give them the cold shoulder out of intellectual arrogance. For that reason we favorably receive their concerns and place our criticism in abeyance.”<sup>94</sup> He asks for instance whether in the atomic age

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.madeasy.de/1/Fundamentalismus.htm> (29.7.2009), Reiner Hofmann, corresponds to the 2004 status in Wikipedia.

<sup>94</sup> Moltmann, *Reich Gottes*, p. 151.

and in light of the failure of messianism, modernity truly is able to reject a priori each and every apocalyptic.<sup>95</sup>

“Wherever the modern world spreads, people lose their traditional identity and with it their culture and morality. The social ties shaped by their traditional ancestry, families, for example, vanish. The freedom of the individual and his free associations are the replacement. However, can the arbitrary diversity of options take the place of binding community and binding norms? Pluralism without community is without doubt anarchy and a ‘culture of narcissism,’ in which each and everyone only thinks of himself, destroying life.”<sup>96</sup>

Even Esther Hornung, who assumes the working definition of fundamentalism as anti-Enlightenment which I criticize below, confirms that democracy means ideologies can meet at one table. Fundamentalist representatives have also been among those who can meet at one table, and it has been shown that through collaboration on the pursuit of the common good they have been able to cooperate. For Esther Hornung, the Moral Majority in the USA is such an example.<sup>97</sup>

**Example: Jerry Falwell**, who founded the Moral Majority in 1979, introduced the return of fundamentalists to American politics and helped Ronald Reagan to election victory. Over the course of time, given the reality of political cooperation with those who think differently, Falwell made positive changes with respect to his anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, and racist stances.

**Example: South Korea:** In South Korea one-half of the inhabitants are adherents of Confucianism. Since Confucianism has only officially been recognized as a religion since 1995, the numbers are difficult to determine. Buddhism and Christianity, each with 26% of the population, are of equal size. Two-thirds of the Christians belong to fast growing Evangelical Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and other Evangelical churches. All of these religions live together peacefully in a democracy that is marked by religious freedom, and each has supplied a president. This is the case although democracy is rather young there (actually only since 1987). In addition to this, Buddhism and Christianity are very missions oriented in South Korea, and changes in religion are commonplace.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Moltmann, pp. 151-152.

<sup>96</sup> Moltmann p. 152.

<sup>97</sup> Esther Hornung, *Bibelpolitik*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 305-305.

<sup>98</sup> Donald N. Clark, “Protestant Christianity and the State” in: Charles K. Armstrong (ed.). *Korean society*, New York 2006<sup>2</sup>; David Halloran Lumsdaine (ed.). *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, New York – Oxford, 2008.

In spite of all the critique, one should not conceal the merits of fundamentalist movements.

**Example:** Martin Riesebrodt addresses the swelling of the **Pentecostal movement in Latin America** with its egalitarian structure as compared to the Catholic hierarchy as well as its attraction to the uneducated and the underclass.<sup>99</sup> Although he sees patriarchalism as a trademark of fundamentalism, he still admits that the extensive “opportunities women have to participate” play a role in the process.

**Example: Evangelicals against racism:** The abolition of slavery was achieved against modernity by religious fanatics who referred to the priority of economic considerations and had to bend sometimes in the moral considerations of reality. “It was thus not the enlightened and revolutionary France, but rather pious England that brought about the end of slavery.”<sup>100</sup> “Scientific racism of the explicitly or implicitly polygenetic kind did not take hold in England until after the mid-nineteenth century, mainly because of the strength of evangelical Christianity and its commitment to the belief that all human beings descended from Adam. . . . In France ethnological discussion was uninhibited by Protestant Evangelicalism and could take a more radical turn than in Britain or even the United States.”<sup>101</sup> “It was in the 1830s at the latest that more and more Evangelicals in the northern States became involved in abolitionism. **Uncle Tom’s Cabin** is the finest example, which was written by the daughter of a famous Evangelical revivalist preacher Lyman Beecher. The South – admittedly also on account of its Catholic dominance, which was made jointly responsible for slavery – became a term for the (enslaving) anti-Christ. The Evangelical abolitionists developed the doctrine of the ‘higher law,’ of a law that is higher than the US Constitution. What was meant was an idiosyncratic, vaguely applied mixture of biblicistic and natural law philanthropic arguments,”<sup>102</sup> which justified resistance against slavery. Nevertheless, as a general rule Evangelicals did not use violence. This, however, was not the case with other abolitionists who were more in favor of secession. According to Hochgeschwender, with respect to the evidenced 1,218 acts of violent unrest between 1828 and 1861, there were ten that probably were attributable to Evangelicals.

<sup>99</sup> Riesebrodt. *Rückkehr*. p. 101.

<sup>100</sup> Angenendt, *Toleranz*, p. 225.

<sup>101</sup> George M. Fredrickson. *Racism: A Short History*, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press 2002, pp. 66-67.

<sup>102</sup> Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, pp. 102-103; see pp. 101-104.

**Example:** I consider **Attac** and other organized opponents of globalization to be fundamentalist movements as far as they allow or legitimize violence. However, I would accord this status to every fundamentalist movement:

*In spite of violence, the following applies to movements critical of globalization:*

- Their concerns can have a large degree of or at least certain justification in spite of violence.
- Psychologizing them does not solve the problem.
- Deriding them, placing them off in a corner, or denouncing them does not solve the problem.
- Placing them in the same pot with terrorist bombers or with Islamists does not solve the problem.
- The large majority of peaceful adherents should not be muzzled on account of a small number of violent adherents.
- They have earned a fair debate, for which reason one should organize discussions with the peaceful wing.
- The state has to above all take action against those people exercising violence towards others, but not on account of their world view.



## 4. The Scriptures as a Foundation? Three Theories

If for sake of a definition one refers to the infallible Scriptures of early Protestant fundamentalism in the USA, it is not necessary to ask all religious movements which canonical writings they have and how they go about using them. Rather, the question is who or what is their respective ultimate, justifying authority and whether or not they consider it to be infallible.

If the concept of fundamentalism is to have anything to do with the word ‘fundamental,’ one has to ask every school of thought what they understand to be their primary fundamental and foundation, not to impose the concept found in one religious movement on all others.

If one strictly goes by whether the Scriptures are considered to be infallible, then all Muslims would be fundamentalists – (whereby one gladly blocks out that the written records of Mohammed’s sayings and his associates, the hadith, are likewise taken to be infallible and for instance are of great importance for the sharia). Perhaps the most important western historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, calls the application of the term fundamentalism to Islam unfortunate and misleading, since it was originally used with respect to Christianity. Use of the Protestant concept cannot be applied to Islam since the belief in the divine origin of the Koran is one of the foundations of the religion. For that reason every Muslims, insofar as the meaning of the word is concerned, would be a fundamentalist.

Under this scheme no Catholics would be fundamentalists, save those who reject the historical-critical method in contrast to the guidelines given by Rome, or save those lay people whose readings associated with the Bible are often undistinguishable from Evangelical standards.<sup>103</sup> In Judaism all Orthodox and Ultraorthodox Jews would be fundamentalists, since they either take the entire Torah or at least the commandments in the Torah to have been given directly by God to Moses. Alternatively they could all be seen as non-fundamentalist, since they take the rest of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, and interpret it very freely and with much variation. Practically all separate groups arising out of Christianity, such as the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but also all such novel eastern religions in which the founder left behind seminal writings, would be completely fundamentalist.

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<sup>103</sup> Primarily so in Kienzler. *Fundamentalismus*. p. 58.

Religions such as Bahai, which accept the writings of multiple world religions, would be harder to classify.

All eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism as well as all nature religions would be unassailable. This is due to the fact that they either have no writings or have a large collection of writings at their disposal, with no single writing standing out as particularly 'canonical.' If, however, a movement chooses a certain writing and holds it to be divine and inarguable, as is the case for instance in neo-Hinduism or in Sri Lanka's Buddhism, then they are automatically fundamentalist. Among revered writings are the Bhagavad Gita in Hinduism, the Sutta Pitaka in Buddhism, the Avesta in Parsism, and the Adi Granth in Sikhism. Within all of these religions there are movements which give these writings canonical position similar to the Bible or the Koran.

In short, if 'fundamentalism' is to have something to do with the word from which it originates, 'fundamentals,' this cannot be done by basing it on the question as to whether a religion uses the concept of canonical writings and whether such is held to be infallible. Instead, the question has to be asked about what the inviolable element is that justifies everything else. Then comes the question of whether this is used as a justification for violence against those who think differently, for political activities, or whether it is otherwise used in a fundamentalist manner.

**Example: Political Hinduism,** which seeks to make India into a purely Hindu state and does not refrain from either strict legal steps or violence against Muslims and Christians, is surely one of the newer 'fundamentalist' movements with grave consequences. One has to ask, however, to which degree can an individual speak about a 'fundamental' or a reversion to some sort of writings or truths in this connection? Hinduism is certainly not a uniform religion but rather an indescribable diversity of traditions, divinities, and points of view that does not possess anything that would approach a common dogma. Furthermore there is no religious leader or an organized church. Its idea pluralism always integrates other religions. In spite of that, it can wrest maintenance of an old Indian order, above all the caste system and religious practice, independent of its own justification. Furthermore, it decries the religiously neutral state as well as religious freedom. "At this point one has to mention a distinct difference from Islamic or Christian fundamentalism. In Hinduism we are confronted with a form that does not place a certain interpretation of dogma above all others and then declares these other interpretations to be wrong and invalid. Rather, it is one that holds religious practice to be unalterable. Hindu fundamentalism is based on the belief in the immutability of an all-determining dharma and a societal form that is tied to that, the caste system as well as the cultic differentiation between 'clean' and 'unclean.' Even Hindu fun-

damentalists have little difficulty with the universalistic and basic concept of their religion. They interpret Allah, God, and Ahura Mazda as manifestations of reality that are unable to be articulated. Every change in the existing system of order is a violation of the divine order, which receives negative sanctions or even has to be prevented at the outset. Hindu fundamentalism is for that reason a fundamentalism of orthopraxis and not one of orthodoxy.”<sup>104</sup>

**Example: Buddhism:** Buddhist theologians use the Mahavamsa writings to justify the exercise of force to protect Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which in actuality are not canonical texts but rather central writings which substantiate the inseparable connection between religion and the state. One could almost come to the conclusion that the role of these writings first gained untypical significance through their political use.

**Example:** In the *Compact Series* volume **Koran and Bible**, I compared the understandings of scripture found in Islam and Christianity, which could not be more different. If one only asks if God’s word exists, then one overlooks the profound differences that the formulation ‘God’s word’ has already had in each of these two religions for hundreds of years. At this point the term fundamentalism resembles the view when looking through a pair of glasses that give a blurry picture, and as such it is something that distracts from a true appraisal of the basics of a religion.

Among Christian denominations, fundamentalism should not simply be attached to the manner in which the Scriptures are dealt with. Rather, it should be tied to what acts as the final authority, for instance the papal teaching authority in the Catholic Church.

Gottfried Posch aggressively assails Evangelical groups, because they would seem to allow for an infallible basis. Regarding the Catholic Church, however, he says that due to the papal office (which does not let itself be outdone by zealots), an “underlying Catholic fundamentalism . . . according to its self-image, is conceptually excluded”<sup>105</sup> and can only exist in splinter groups. Here we see again: it is always the others who are fundamentalists, since he is unable to take off his Catholic glasses. It has little to do with academic propriety. And that the infallible pope is the guarantee against a set of fallible Scriptures, which after all are interpreted and discussed by millions of fallible Protestants, is sociologically incomprehensible.

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<sup>104</sup> Ceming, “Hinduismus,” p. 8 with a quotation from Gerhard Schweizer.

<sup>105</sup> Posch, “Fundamentalismus,” p. 9.



Karl Lehmann thinks that ‘Scripture fundamentalism’ in Catholicism is not very widespread.<sup>106</sup> How could it be? That was precisely the reason why Protestants broke away and why the Catholic Church condemned Protestants. In the Catholic Church what counts is not the Scriptures as they are interpreted by every individual, but rather the papal teaching office and its interpretation of Scripture and tradition.<sup>107</sup>

Wolfgang Beinert maintains that Catholic fundamentalism is in itself an utter contradiction.<sup>108</sup> He views fundamentalism as structurally heretical. This may be the expression of faith of a Catholic, but it is surely not a fair comparison from a religious studies point of view.

The Evangelical understanding of Scripture has led to an unbelievable diversity of opinions and groups, and among them are fundamentalist opinions and groups. In contrast, the Catholic view of the teaching office makes such a lay theological democracy impossible. For example, the Evangelical world discusses in a broadly exegetical and ethical manner how divorce and remarriage are to be assessed, and in the meantime has predominantly offered room for both in theology and the everyday life of the church. With respect to the Catholic renunciation of both of these issues, there is nothing to change as long as the papal teaching office does not undertake to do so.

What we are dealing with here is not a retrieval of Evangelicals’ honor (how does a person want to evaluate half a billion people?) or a cheap criticism of Catholics (the same applies to another half a billion people), but rather to show that the concept of fundamentalism can easily lead to a premature contortion of reality and covers up how everyday theology and faith really look.

*Confessional Foundations of Christianity that can be used in a fundamentalist manner*

- Traditional Protestantism: The Bible and confessional writings
- Evangelical Protestantism: The Bible (and Experience?)
- Pentecostal Protestantism: The Bible and direct divine inspiration (primarily to leaders)
- Liberal Protestantism: The results of theologians working in academia

<sup>106</sup> Lehmann, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> In particular it is Hochgeschwender who emphasizes that with respect to the concept of fundamentalism in Catholicism, the pope has to be compared with the Protestant Scriptures. Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, p. 19; Kienzler, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 56-58.

<sup>108</sup> Beinert, *Fundamentalismus*.

- Catholicism: The papal teaching office of the pope, which interprets the Bible and tradition
- Schismatic Catholicism: The teaching office of the pope in written documents prior to 1962
- Orthodoxy: The tradition found in the early centuries of Christianity as it interpreted the Bible
- Separate groups, e.g., Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons: the Bible and the writings of group founders

The opposite also applies: Not everyone who dogmatically holds to the infallibility of some sort of founding authority is for that reason a fundamentalist and guaranteed to be unprepared to find democratic solutions through discourse with others.

It is often the case that a ‘fundamentalist understanding of Scripture’ is in itself seen as a “danger.”<sup>109</sup> I consider that to be nonsense. The question of what justifies that viewpoint always has to be posed. There are pacifistic, completely apolitical groups who interpret the Bible literally. A person can *theologically* hold their attitude towards Scripture to be wrong, and yet they are politically and socially completely innocuous. Still, they are wrongly warded off together with terrorists with the use of a fundamentalist cudgel.

In addition to that, a person still has to ask what ‘infallible’ means in practice. For instance the Evangelical world traditionally holds the Bible to be infallible, and yet at the same time via hundreds of universities, thousands of researching and publishing biblical scholars, professional journals on the Old and New Testaments, and dozens of series of commentaries, there is a global and well organized continuous discussion about how the biblical texts are to be understood and applied. With this there is not a single question that is left untouched in the discussion. For instance the question of the ordination of women is an issue that is running rampant in the Evangelical movement, and it is being conducted with exegetical justification.

**Example: USA:** Naturally it is not understandable to a European to hear that 50% of Americans state that the Bible is God’s word that has to be literally interpreted, that is to say, a number which goes far beyond the number of Evangelicals there. Among these Americans, there are those who derive a justification of capital punishment from the Bible, and there are those against capital punishment who call upon the Bible as inerrant.

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<sup>109</sup> E. g. Kienzler, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 25.

There are those who directly find democracy in the Bible, and there are those who think that the Bible enjoins all political activity. In earlier times there were some southerners who found slavery in the Bible, and their opponents called even more vehemently upon the Bible.

**Example:** The Jehovah's Witnesses have perhaps the most literal and most radical understanding of the Bible, since there has not yet even been a discussion regarding interpretation. I consider them as completely fallacious, and from top to bottom I do not share their leadership style. I consider their style of mission to be offensive, and I know the psychological problems of individuals who have dropped out. Yet are they dangerous to society? Where have Jehovah's Witnesses ever conducted attacks or even made political demands? At this point, when compared to the old sect concept –which had appeared to be largely overcome – a much worse verbal cudgel was taken out of the bag: fundamentalism.

## 5. Is Modernity the Adversary?

### Anti-Modernism?

It has become part of the vernacular to view fundamentalism as an antonym to ‘modernity.’ For instance, when one hears statements such as the following: “Christian fundamentalism can also be understood as a counter-concept to modernity.”<sup>110</sup> “F. means the anti-modern return of the absolute to politics.”<sup>111</sup> “In fundamentalism we always find an ideology that is oriented towards past history and refers to world views that come from a time prior to the Enlightenment.”<sup>112</sup>

That might sound nice, but who or what is ‘modernity,’ since we have long been living in postmodernity or even in a time after that? Many authors do not even make the effort to describe what they actually mean by the term. And where is it stated in our national constitutions that ‘modernity’ is the fixed point from which we are not allowed to waiver?

Elsewhere one reads: “The answer of fundamentalism lies in the radical repudiation of modernistic relativism, individualistic self-actualization, and progress utopia as well as modern bureaucratization and tendencies toward objectification.”<sup>113</sup> On the one hand this is surely too sweeping. Even for Iran, a country that has been shaped by fundamentalism, a beautiful life is nevertheless promised to the voter, and without a modern bureaucracy such a thing would be unthinkable. However, one can also raise the question: Is every bit of unease associated with the five features named above wrong?

(At this point I would add a personal note: I am glad to live in ‘modernity,’ whatever that might be. I would not want to live in any other century. I own 20,000 books and am glad that in addition to that I am able to reach the opinions of thousands of others via the internet. Besides the point of view I have discussed with many friends, that is, that the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition created the world, there is hardly a theological assertion that I have not refined on numerous occasions. There are significant differences between my theology and my world view in 1985 and today. Moreover: I reject violence. The monopoly on force belongs to the constitutional state. Therefore there is freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and every person should propagate his opinion via discussions, example, argu-

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<sup>110</sup> Lambrecht/Baars, *Mission*, p. 10.

<sup>111</sup> *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, p. 73.

<sup>112</sup> Walter Gutdeutsch in <http://muenchen.neue-akropolis.de/content/view/449/53/>.

<sup>113</sup> Riesebrodt, *Rückkehr*, p. 93.

ments, and convictions and not via violence, coercion, pressure, or by means of political accomplices. This is mentioned so that no one can insinuate that I am writing the following as an enemy of a modern, pluralistic society, or as an adversary of a democratic political system, or as an opponent of globalization.)

A distinguished fundamentalism researcher has written: “Fundamentalists are always the others. Fundamentalism is eerie to the current consciousness that has been determined by the Enlightenment. This is above all the case because the course of history runs differently than faith in reason predicts. Instead of things developing like the enlightened paradigm predicted it, where religion evaporates increasingly and a secular explanation of the world makes all-enveloping headway, one has to admit in the enlightened part of the world that religious truth claims are again able to win power over people. And so it is that there is an amount of amazement associated with the topic of fundamentalism and the fact that religion is again becoming a serious matter. The meeting of a western liberal orientation with fundamentalism is also always the meeting with a dimension of religion that has always been a part of its essence. . . . The increase in importance which religion has experienced in recent decades can at least in part be justified by the explanation that the claims of secular culture have only partly and quite imperfectly been cashed in on. These secular cultures that have taken their leave of religious faith have not done so without a replacement. Rather, in the place of religious faith came another faith, faith in the power of reason, which . . . was to have ordered all the areas of human life to the satisfaction of everyone. In the place of religious promises of redemption and salvation came a type of ‘reason religion,’ which reinterpreted the history of the world into an intra-mundane history of salvation. The secular culture of modernity rests upon faith assumptions and in so doing has itself ‘fundamentalist foundations.’ One should be aware of this before one campaigns against every form of fundamentalism and indulges in total rationalism. Total rationalism is able to bring about just as much harm as fundamentalism. With this in mind, Bernhard Braun expresses understanding for fundamentalist departures, which he interprets as justified protests against a ‘rationalist deprivation of reality.’”<sup>114</sup>

## Distinguishing Marks of Modernity

Many people do not even take the time to define in any detail what they actually mean with the magic word ‘modernity,’ against which no opposition is allowed. They have faith that in western countries ‘modernity’ has a

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<sup>114</sup> Rammer, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 247-249.

very positive sound to it, while in contrast ‘fundamentalism’ has a very negative sound to it. For 250 years, ‘modernity’ has been a shibboleth against people who are said to be living in the past, something more of an ideology than a historical description.

It is somewhat peculiar, as modernity is difficult to tangibly grasp and is a broadly diverse phenomenon. It is only applicable to the western world, has long since been philosophically displaced by postmodernity and post-postmodernity, and is the subject of a far-reaching discussion in which innumerable definitions of modernism are found to compete with each other. And that is not to mention that ‘modernity’ can often simply mean ‘present’ as opposed to ‘former.’

Which modernity is at issue here? Is it the one from 2009 or from 2000 or from 1968? Is not modernity itself continually in flux? Is it not the case that the *bon mot* of the Anglican theologian W. R. Inge applies: “He who would marry the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower”?<sup>115</sup>

Markus J. Prutsch, in “The Modernity Project” and “The Politicization of Religion,” has traced how problematic the concept ‘modernity’ is as an antonym to fundamentalism. The Carolingian Epoch set itself up as *moderna* against antiquity. The French intellectuals in the 17<sup>th</sup> century dissociated themselves, as the *modernes*, from the *anciens*. Through Herder, Schiller, Schlegel, and others, ‘modernity’ almost became a salvific historical concept. For this reason it would be necessary for the purposes of the fundamentalist debate to first precisely say what is meant by the word ‘modernity.’

Martin Riesebrodt presents a similar criticism. Namely, he notes that from the standpoint of the philosophy of history, ‘modernity’ is often seen in its ideal form and not as it is in reality, as “truly existent modernity”<sup>116</sup> which ignites actual fundamentalist movements. That then leads to a situation where a comparison is made between radiant modernity (in its purely theoretical, ideal form and independent of real people) and the everyday political life of religious movements and real people.

If an individual picks up a classical compilation, he is made aware of the fact that ‘modernity’ is a mixture of central, welcome, banal, and potentially dangerous elements.

*Jürgen Habermas names the following twelve features of the modern world:*

- The importance of the empirical sciences.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Berger, *Far Glory*, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Riesebrodt, *Rückkehr*, p. 50.

- In moral and legal discourse one deals with generally recognized justifications for correct norms associated with human coexistence and social action.
- The freedom of the arts.
- Capitalistic enterprise.
- The bureaucratic state apparatus.
- All traditions lose their automatic validity and only apply when they can be justified with good arguments.
- Correct action does not follow from group patterns, but rather from universal norms of activity which every individual has to interpret in changing situations.
- The individual takes priority over the social environment.
- Religion is forced into the private domain.
- Wielding governmental power is rationally legitimized.
- Human rights.
- The sovereignty of the people.

***Features of modernity or rather modern times, according to John Dewey and Ernst Troeltsch:<sup>117</sup>***

- Naturalism: The supernatural is no longer determinant.
- Anthropocentricity: There is no subordination; instead, there is belief in the power of the individual mind.
- Optimism: Earlier times were times of darkness, and the golden age lies before us.
- Domestication: Nature is to be bound and made usable for society.
- Tendency toward standardization.
- Universalism due to the universal validity of natural laws and other rules.
- Realism and Objectivism: There are things that exist in reality outside of our consciousness.
- Rationalism: Human reason is the ultimate instrument for evaluation and clarification of issues.
- Dualism: Spirit and matter, objectivity and subjectivity, theory and practice.

<sup>117</sup> According to Kubsch, *Postmoderne*, pp. 24-27.

## Fundamentalist Modernity?

Against the backdrop of the Enlightenment-liberal definition where fundamentalism = anti-modern, Michael Hochgeschwender offers the criticism that it can be very problematic to assume something like irreversible elements in the chaotic flow of historical development and decay.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, if the characteristics of condemnation and advance judgments are manifest, one ends up arriving at a predetermined place.

‘Modernity’ gladly overlooks its own potentially fundamentalist character of extolling a religious validity claim. For that reason Gottfried Küenzlen, a critic of fundamentalism, asks: “Is it that the fundamentalists on the other side are not the problem but rather fundamentalist modernity itself?” Self-critique, however, is seldom found with Enlightenment-liberal researchers of fundamentalism.

Küenzlen writes: “. . . modernity itself, the history of its origin, and the course it has taken in history, was significantly determined by secular hopes of salvation and promises of redemption. . . . Secular modernity has its own history of faith as well as its secular history of religion. Putting it bluntly, it can be said that modernity itself rests upon ‘fundamentalist’ foundations. These can be subsumed in a triad: Belief in history as an intramundane history of progress, belief in science as a secular faith; belief in politics in the sense of a political messianism.”<sup>119</sup>

The Catholic cardinal Karl Lehmann, who principally sees fundamentalism as a rebellion against modernity, writes: “Doubt arises about the question of whether the often triumphal ardor rightly exists that enlightenment and modernization, through the restless dissolution of many traditions and settled ways of life, have produced brand new freedom. It should not be ignored that a new bondage could come with such freedom.”<sup>120</sup> His call is the following: No limits on questions or gagging of thought as boundaries of the Enlightenment. A problem he sees in modernity: “Mankind has all but hoped for everything from ‘scientification’ and continual reflection,”<sup>121</sup> but the high-strung expectations have in the meantime largely been disappointed.

Christian Jäggi and David J. Krieger state it even more clearly: “There is no qualitative difference with respect to violence and methods of force when it comes to the Enlightenment and fundamentalism. At best there is a

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<sup>118</sup> Hochgeschwender, *Religion*, pp. 21.

<sup>119</sup> Küenzlen, „Fundamentalismen“, pp. 7-8.

<sup>120</sup> Lehmann, „Fundamentalismus“, p. 28.

<sup>121</sup> Lehmann, „Fundamentalismus“, p. 29.



gradual difference. Stated with some exaggeration: Historically viewed, ‘the cultural and social laws of modern culture’ invoked by {Thomas} Meyer are in the final event the utilization of the technical, economic, and political advantages that the northern part of the planet has over the rest of the world population. This advantage is increasingly being questioned by those who ‘come up short’ in poor countries: Global migration movements, the indebtedness of entire continents . . . and ruthless ecological exploitation are only a few of the manifestations of this development. Only in this broad sense can fundamentalism at best be seen as a ‘reaction to modernity.’”<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to note that outside of the western world western ideologies and their outcomes are themselves often called fundamentalist.

**Example 1: Leonardo Boff** speaks about the “the fundamentalism of political-neoliberal ideology,” that is to say, the “fundamentalism of the capitalistic production system,” because it is “presented as a universal remedy for all countries and for all hardships within humanity.” Next to that, there is fundamentalism “in the modern scientific paradigm,” since this “rests upon the use of violence against nature.”<sup>123</sup>

**Example 2:** As we have already seen, the British Marxist **Tariq Ali**, in his book *The Clash of Fundamentalisms – Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, assumes that among the truly globally powerful fundamentalisms that rule the world or want to rule the world are imperialism and anti-imperialism, the Islamic world empire and Zionism, and capitalism and socialism.

## German Philosophers

The German language classic that contains a definition of fundamentalism induced by the Enlightenment is Thomas Meyer’s book *Fundamentalism: Rebellion against Modernity* (1989). In it one finds a definition that alludes to Immanuel Kant’s definition of the Enlightenment: “Fundamentalism is the self-inflicted departure from the impertinence of thinking for oneself, of self-responsibility, of the obligation to justify, of the uncertainty and openness of all claims of validity, of legitimization of authority and ways of life, to which thinking and life have been irreversibly exposed through the Enlightenment and modernity, into the security and closed nature of self-selected absolute foundations. Questioning has to stop in their presence, in order for them to be able to provide absolute stability. Everything gets relativized in their presence – especially human rights – so that they

<sup>122</sup> Jäggi-Krieger, *Fundamentalismus*. p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus.“ pp. 32-33.

evade relativization. Whoever is not standing on their soil should not receive any consideration for his deviating arguments, doubts, interests, and rights.”<sup>124</sup>

According to Meyer’s definition, in typical fundamentalist fashion, there are only two groups of people: The enlightened people and the others. Reality probably looks different and significantly more differentiated and complicated. There is probably no one who has no taboos, no one who is prepared to discuss everything anew every day, and no one who acts completely rationally. And there is probably not a single person who refuses to participate in all discussions, who never concerns himself with the thoughts of others, and who thinks he knows everything. We are all at the same time eager for knowledge and too lazy to think, ready to learn and arrogant, conservative and progressive, only in different proportions.

Thomas Meyer understands fundamentalism as “meta-politics, which lays claim to an absolute truth from above. Alternatively, from within, it claims the right to be suspended from the rules of democracy, political relativism, the sanctity of human rights, the laws of tolerance, pluralism, and the ability to be wrong.”<sup>125</sup> I would not want to object to his statements if he could admit that the “sanctity of human rights” specifically presupposes such meta-politics as are offered by democracy. Democracy also has to be established by something, surely not only a majority decision that is changeable at any time. This also applies in the case of the “sanctity” of human rights, a term which in Meyer’s manner of speaking should not even exist.

“Enlightenment is totalitarian,” as two prophets of modernity, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, have formulated it.<sup>126</sup> Indeed it does not stop at anything, and it willingly uses the coercion of politics for its purposes. Does that not mean, however, that the Enlightenment itself is fundamentalist, or at least that it could be – as indeed the French Revolution, with its extreme acts of violence, demonstrated all too well? Should it be surprising that the Enlightenment harvests comprehensive resistance? Meyer himself has said, “The first romantic period followed right on the heels of the first Enlightenment.”<sup>127</sup>

For this reason Hans G. Kippenberg has rightly criticized Meyer for the fact that his collision course is rather reminiscent of the Enlightenment’s religious criticism, while the mark of modernity is to learn to understand

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<sup>124</sup> Meyer, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 157.

<sup>125</sup> Meyer, p. 157.

<sup>126</sup> Meyer, p. 57.

<sup>127</sup> Meyer, p. 45.

social movements and foreign cultures without automatically endorsing them.<sup>128</sup>

After all, Thomas Meyer sees that postmodernity carries modernity to the extremes, makes common rules of life impossible, and is as incapable of addressing the future as is fundamentalism.<sup>129</sup> There is something I do not understand: How does he want to avoid postmodernity when every final commitment is thrown out as fundamentalism? At least he sees that ‘modern’ non-religious movements can be fundamentalist: “In actuality green fundamentalism, exemplarily embodied in the work and attitude of Rudolf Bahros, is principally an anti-modern and irrational way of making an instrument of and justifying ecological demands.”<sup>130</sup> There is only one question: Does this apply to Jürgen Trittins [a German politician] or who is it that determines at which point it is irrational?

For the philosophy professor Hubert Schleichert, all people are fundamentalists who are not reasonable, logical, and in serious discussion with opponents.<sup>131</sup> (It is taken for granted that he does this, but in reality every person has areas in his life where reasonable discussion is avoided.) It is not that the three requests are not reasonable, sensible, and to be taken to heart. On the one hand, however, philosophical logic is neither a sphere free of domination, nor is it a neutral space. Rather, it is an area in which philosophies charge each other with narrow-mindedness and fundamentalism. On the other hand, the point at which someone is considered ready to talk is more of a psychological and judgmental element than something measurable and neutral. I would assume after studying Schleichert’s book that he would have to consider everyone who is not a highly educated academic, that is to say, the large majority of normal citizens, to be fundamentalists.

Are all modern people who are not fundamentalists for that reason automatically enlightened? Is it not the case that many people simply follow along out of convenience? Are there not millions who get their world view from television and not from their own reflection? Are the fundamentalists the only ones who reject the modern tendency to continually question? Are they the only unteachable and lazy-minded people?

A person only has to listen closely in an election. What sorts of incontrovertible truth are defended? What about the self-messianism that is propagated? Are there not a lot of black and white sketches made? If the

<sup>128</sup> Kippenberg, „Fundamentalismus.“

<sup>129</sup> *Jahrbuch Mission* 27 (1995): pp. 17-18.

<sup>130</sup> Meyer, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 120.

<sup>131</sup> Hubert Schleichert, *Wie man mit Fundamentalisten diskutiert, ohne den Verstand zu verlieren*, München: Ch. Beck, 2005<sup>5</sup>.

others get into power, then the world will end. So let us take care of providing a perfect world (e.g., a ‘flourishing landscape’). Are German *Bundestag* (Federal Parliament) elections truly voted on based on ‘reason’? Do the sirenic calls and election promises of the campaigning politicians fall on deaf ears because voters spend weeks reviewing party programs to see if they are meant to be serious? Or do they spend time making international comparisons to see what is the best for Germany’s future? I consider democracy to be the best possible form of government, but I am not under any delusion as to the extent that voters can be influenced and the level of misinformation voters use.

Is it not so that often the enlightened scholar and the well traveled journalist are made to be the benchmark in the fundamentalist discussion, while it is not at the same time seen that in a ‘modern’ society a large portion of people simply follow others’ opinions?

## **A special Route for Europe**

We come to perhaps the most significant living German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. He has spent his life in the cause of opposing counter-enlightenment streams of thought in philosophy. Habermas is of the opinion that every modern society “has to create its normativity out of itself”<sup>132</sup> and find a principal that presents “something supposed to become effective in place of religion as the unifying power.”<sup>133</sup> Since 1985 Habermas has spoken of a new perplexity and has realized that modern societies are threatened with a loss of cohesion.

Since the end of the 1990s, Habermas has turned his attention to religious topics, above all the influence of Judeo-Christian tradition on western thought. He indeed desires to free religious tradition from dogmatic formulations, but he is of the opinion that for thousands of years religious traditions have maintained sensibilities for failed conduct in life. On the other hand, modern societies lack any sort of binding notion for a good life.

“Egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideas of freedom and social solidarity, of an autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, of the individual morality of conscience, human rights, and democracy” is for Habermas “the direct heir to the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love.”<sup>134</sup> The “post-metaphysical thinking” of modern secular soci-

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<sup>132</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985, p. 17.

<sup>133</sup> Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, p. 46.

<sup>134</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Zeit der Übergänge*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 175.

eties is “resistant to any generally binding concept of the good and exemplary life.” In the “Holy Scriptures and religious traditions” there are, in contrast, “articulated intuitions concerning transgression and salvation” that have been kept alive for millennia. For Habermas they represent “sufficiently differentiated expressions of and sensitivity to squandered lives, social pathologies, failed existences, and deformed and distorted social relations.”<sup>135</sup> The task of a modern philosophy should be to take the contents of religious tradition and succeed in “freeing cognitive contents from their dogmatic encapsulation in the crucible of rational discourse” in order to be “capable of exercising an inspirational force on society as a whole . . . .”<sup>136</sup>

In *Naturalismus und Religion* (published in English as *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*), Habermas declares that the Enlightenment is a separate European path that does not fit other cultural spheres!

One of the first who recanted on his earlier view of increasing secularization in all free societies has been the leading American sociologist of religion (and one of my teachers), Peter L. Berger, from the University of Boston. He recognized early that the complete uncertainty and ‘metaphysical homelessness’ of modernity would lead to a situation where people would make a renewed search for the feeling of security offered by religious communities. An object of Berger’s research has been the strong growth of the global Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal movement is for him the exemplar of a modern, individualistic movement based on individual experience and close local community, while at the same time being the epitome of globalization.

Berger has grappled with the ‘special European route’ as it relates to religion and with the investigation and assessment of religion. He smirks at the idea that European researchers consider the USA not to be modern because religion is so ever-present there. Hartmut Lehmann describes it similarly in his book *Secularization: Europe’s Special Religious Route*. One can pose the question as to who better represents modernity. Is it Europe with its encrusted state and semi-state churches, or is it the USA with its (skeptically judged for possible *theological* reasons) religious marketplace of a range of possibilities inside and outside of Christianity?

<sup>135</sup> Habermas, *Naturalismus*, p. 115.

<sup>136</sup> Habermas, *Naturalismus*, p. 149.

## Bureaucracy and undistilled Capitalism?

Via legislation and bureaucracy, but also through brochures and communiqués, the modern state is reaching deeper and deeper into the private lives of its citizens. There is increasing pressure from the media and from ‘political correctness’ as to how one should live. The state has never prescribed so much regarding ethics and had such a profound say about sexuality and family, but also about what concerns health and education, as it does now. Is the expectation that all of this is to be accepted in the name of ‘modernity’?

At this point I would like to impertinently maintain that those who prematurely speak about fundamentalism become gofers for the phenomenon of globalized mass consumption. Praising modernity can easily degenerate into a cheap defense of a global cultural imperialism.

Is the goal, then, the modern mass consumer? Someone who in streamlined fashion becomes engrafted into mass capitalism and who holds continually changing political and legal standards as wisdom’s final word? Someone who does not challenge the modern view of the world with anything? Is no one allowed any longer to speak about the ordinances of God? And yet the cleverly devised administrative directives of one’s state are not to be questioned? Is what counts as bondage not addiction, which after all in the form of chemical drugs is a child of modern research and modern alternatives as well as the progeny of the globalization of markets, but rather religious groups who actually help the drug addict out of his situation?

Global marketing of everything? Also of religion, as long as it is not considered fundamentalist? As long as it is offered alongside foodstuffs and computers as a service product which could be outdone tomorrow?

Are not the researchers of fundamentalism correct who claim that modern politics, the modern working world, and the media landscape share the blame for the crisis?<sup>137</sup> Even the Brockhaus Encyclopedia writes the following under the keyword ‘fundamentalism:’ “As optimism about European progress became less credible, and ecological consciousness awakened with respect to the destructibility of the natural means of livelihood through the uncontrolled expansion of technology, a wave of f. began primarily in the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian world at the beginning of the 1970s.”<sup>138</sup>

Is it not the belief in progress in modernity that has brought about environmental destruction and has to be kept at bay by higher values? Is our

<sup>137</sup> E.g., Jaschke, *Fundamentalismus*, pp. 54-76.

<sup>138</sup> *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, vol. 10, p. 75.

‘modern’ world nowadays so much better than it was 20 years ago that there is absolutely no reason to backpedal? Are only growth, efficiency, competition, and deterrence worthwhile?

When one sees the brutality with which McWorld has broken in on many cultures of the world, how clothing styles hundreds of years old are washed away overnight by a single color of pants from a particular brand, how languages and natural people groups die out, one cannot be surprised that not every person endures this without complaint. Should the cultural pluralism in the world disappear so that a couple of enlightened philosophers in the West can be happy and so that the alleged pluralism of thought in the enlightened West is the only thing that remains? Should Singapore end up no longer being Singapore, due to the fact that the way that democracy has been pursued with the support of the mass of the population does not appeal to western intellectuals and the media?

Benjamin R. Barber calls his book *Coca-Cola and Holy War: How Capitalism and Fundamentalism suppress Democracy and Freedom*. The only question is: Why does he only mention Islamism as fundamentalism? Is it not understood that the counterpart is as much motivated by world view concerns and that the economic conquest of the world is justified by the alleged happiness of a western lifestyle and the ethical priority of a liberal global market?

Could one not likewise charge Greenpeace or Attac with a fundamentalist desire to not accept modern reality? Are all opponents of globalization or of modernity’s market capitalism no longer desired?

Many researchers suppose the decline in value of the traditional social milieu to be the cause of fundamentalism. Surely there are prominent examples, but likewise also examples which do not fit. This is due to the fact that even more existing social situations and privileges find themselves defended, as for instance is the case with the Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. However, apart from that, and again without wanting to justify any violence: Do people have to accept the destruction of their languages, their cultures, their environment, their work, or their religion without any complaint or even to sing enthusiastically about it because it is a side effect of an ever so welcome ‘modernity’?

Finally, how are things for the unloved children of modernity, for example the national state and its special form of nationalism, which in many places is a reason for the renewed use of religious identity for political purposes or for racism? That is something long alleged to be scientifically justified though prior to the Enlightenment it was unknown.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> For more see Schirrmacher, *Rassismus*.

## Fundamentalist Movements are modern!

In my opinion an obsolete or at least exaggerated definition reads: “Religious fundamentalism is therefore often a profound attitude of protest against all achievements of the modern world.”<sup>140</sup> In such case the Amish people, who want to live in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, are the epitome of fundamentalism. Walter Gutdeutsch writes: “In fundamentalism we always find an ideology which in terms of history is directed towards the past and refers to world views that originated in pre-Enlightenment times.”<sup>141</sup> That may indeed serve as an affirmation of self, but in my opinion, due to its simplistic nature, it does not even apply to Iran.

**Example:** And even here it becomes difficult. A similar group in Bavaria, the so-called “**Twelve Tribes**,” known in the media as homeschoolers and who have received approval for a mini-school, are fundamentalist and pacifistic organic farmers marked by strict Christian dogma. They are in principal self-sufficient and support themselves through what are mostly pre-modern agricultural methods. In Germany they are allowed to exist as a group, the life of which most resembles a life in past centuries. What however was considered to be pre-modern in 1960 is suddenly ‘in’ and super-modern.

In the background is probably the most central discussion within fundamentalism research. Fundamentalist movements are considered to be an insurgence against modernity. Are they, then, anti-modern and reactionary or are they children of modernity who are constructing a modern alternative to modernity?

In research today one no longer assumes that fundamentalist movements are simply anti-modern. This is a contrast with earlier literature. As a rule these movements are themselves children of modernity and use parts of modernity very intensively (for instance the media, globalization, avoidance of class and racial differences). One thus has to very precisely define which aspects of modernity they reject.

Gottfried Küenzlen correctly emphasizes, for example, that fundamentalism is itself an occurrence of modernity, even of a modern anti-modernism.<sup>142</sup> Karl Lehmann calls fundamentalist movements children of the Enlightenment and modernity.<sup>143</sup> Martin Riesebrodt correctly says that

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<sup>140</sup> Kienzler, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 22.

<sup>141</sup> Walter Gutdeutsch in <http://muenchen.neue-akropolis.de/content/view/449/53/>.

<sup>142</sup> Küenzlen, „Fundamentalismus.“

<sup>143</sup> Lehmann, „Fundamentalismus.“



when such movements reject modernity, they reject only certain aspects of modernity. They do not signify a return to the Middle Ages.<sup>144</sup>

Just as the opponents of globalization are a part of globalization and are globally linked – indeed they even advance globalization when they organize large demonstrations with protesters from around the world for the international media – the same also applies to fundamentalism.

Prutsch has referred to the fact that specialist literature predominantly accepts that the notion that fundamentalism is not exclusively anti-modern. Put bluntly, one could “even maintain with some justification that anti-traditional elements prevail.”<sup>145</sup> He points to the fact that one needs to clearly distinguish between the respective claims about what is said to be the true religion from the time of its origin or the revitalization of the true essence of religion, and the *de facto* question of whether what is offered as religion is traditional, newly constructed, or adapted.

For that reason I would go a step further: Fundamentalism is a transformation of religion that has been determined by modernity! Gilles Kepel in particular understands fundamentalist movements to be modern movements which are authentic developments of modernity and make a central issue of problems in our time. They are to be understood as cultural conflicts of the present and not as a conflict between good (the present = what is modern) and evil (tied to the past = what is obsolete).

**Example: Nation of Islam: USA:** This African-American movement wants to capitalize on the success of the movement that took place under the leadership of Martin Luther King, only now not under the auspices of Christianity but rather under the auspices of Islam. It is actually “a mixture of Christian and Muslim myths along with a black superiority ideology”<sup>146</sup> as there never has been or could have been before.

**Example:** In light of the goal of reproducing **original Islamic society**, any knowledge about how it actually looked is downright scanty. Concrete investigation into the history of Islam is actually not the real concern of fundamentalist Islam. To declare that the original community up to the death of the fourth caliph (successor) of the prophet in the year 661 is the ‘golden age’ is done by definition as the ideal starting point and corresponds mostly to what one imagines the ideal state to be. It is emphasized that Islam at that time, in contrast to the present day, was pure and perfectly put into practice, but it is not stated how it actually looked.

<sup>144</sup> Riesebrodt, *Rückkehr*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>145</sup> Prutsch, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 91.

<sup>146</sup> Hans Hielscher, „Gott ist Zornig, Amerika“ – *Der Aufstieg des Schwarzenführers Louis Farrakhan*, Bonn: Dietz-Verlag, 1996, p. 21.

**Example: The Pentecostal and Catholic Church in Brazil:** In Brazil there are many thousands of Catholics (Spiritists, among others) who have moved into the Pentecostal movement (and into Evangelical churches). In the relevant literature Pentecostals are considered fundamentalists who spite modernity, and the Catholic Church is the victim. But in Brazil itself the reality looks just the opposite. The Catholic Church stands for the past, for a hierarchical church, a historical liturgy, and a traditional connection between the throne and the altar that has been officially relinquished but still is expressed via a close association with the upper class. The Pentecostal movement is highly individualistic, legitimates itself with present day religious experiences, contains modern music, new media, and a fascination for democratic structures in the church and the state. Additionally, it is a movement of the powerless.<sup>147</sup> Their only connection to the past is to call upon the Bible – about which there is a far-reaching discussion on interpretation. Otherwise, the Pentecostal movement has little which it can use to create a link to past history. No one less than the most significant religious sociologist of religion, Peter L. Berger, supports the idea that on the basis of his own studies in Brazil, the Pentecostal movement (and somewhat more muted with respect to the Evangelical movement) is not a protest against globalization and modernization. Rather, it is an important part of and even a motor for globalization. Furthermore, it is actually the first truly global religion, found in each country and in each culture on earth. The enormous growth of Pentecostals in Latin America, Africa, and Asia makes certain experiences with God available around the world, and at the same time it revolutionizes the most diverse local contexts where often, without force, old power structures are broken and removed.

**Example: The national churches in Germany,** with their truly pre-modern system of forced membership from birth, of appointing pastors from the top and a strong association with the state (church tax, theological faculties paid for by the state) are considered progressive. The system in free churches, which is born out of the idea of freedom of assembly, as an association where the members are members by their own decision and where leadership is elected democratically, is seen to be pre-modern. (So that no one misunderstands me: As a reformed theologian I stand *theologically* on the side of the Reformation and would like its legacy preserved. However, to say that the national church system is modern and free churches are anti-modern is something that for me, as a sociologist of reli-

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<sup>147</sup> Comp. Brand Arenari and Roberto Dutra Torres Júnior, „Religion und Anerkennung: Affinitäten zwischen neupfingstlicher Bewegung und politischem Verhalten in Brasilien,“ pp. 259-277 in: Thomas Kühn (ed.), *Das moderne Brasilien*, Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag, 2006.

gion, seems far too broad-brush and is, in many respects, simply wishful thinking.)

**Example: Suicide Attacks in Islam:** The justification of suicide attacks in Islamism is a modern and ongoing development. Indeed, in former times there was within Islam the notion of a martyr as a combatant dying in jihad. It is a concept that has never existed in Christianity (though somewhat similar ideas occurred in nationalistic garb in Europe and, for example, in Japan during the world wars). There has always been a call for war from a leader, be it for instance a caliph or a sultan: Death in battle against unbelievers occurred, but one naturally tried to survive as long as possible. Suicide was not promoted. (Assassins in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries comprise an exception but do not provide a thread to the present.) The terrorist attacks at the time of Yassar Arafat could hardly be justified religiously and did not comprise actual suicide attacks. It was not until modern Islamism that the concept of the suicide attack increasingly developed in stage after stage, something which anyone who has followed the last 25 years of reports in the media can understand.

*Stages in the Development of the Theology and Practice of Suicide Attacks over the last 25 years*

1. Jihad no longer has to be proclaimed. It is rather the case that military Jihad is a permanent condition against unbelievers. An individual can commission himself, or a small group can commission themselves. Whoever dies in the process goes to paradise as a martyr.
2. An individual is allowed to kill himself, if in the process unbelievers are also killed.
3. Male children are also able to be suicide attackers (initially in the Intifada).
4. It is also allowed if in the process, as collateral damage, Muslims also die (this occurred initially in Israel, and then on September 11, 2001).
5. An individual is also allowed to conduct a suicide attack if in the process almost exclusively or exclusively Muslims die but unbelievers are distraught (initially used in Iraq).
6. Women, who up until now have only appeared as proud mothers of suicide attackers, can also be suicide attackers (This is a very recent phenomenon).
7. In the most immediate past, girls have emerged as suicide attackers.

In short: A girl who kills other Muslims with explosives and, for that reason, is lauded as a martyr, used to be an unthinkable act in Islam. It is in fact a completely new theological and practical development that has little to do with pre-modern Islam.

**Example:** Ursula Spuler-Stegemann writes the following on *Islamic fundamentalism*: “While orthodox traditionalism has congealed and hardly uses what are by all means available opportunities for Islam to adjust to the modern world, Islamic fundamentalism is dynamic and future-oriented.”<sup>148</sup>

**Example:** Ironically, *Neo-Hinduism* took up a label used by the British colonial power as the basis of current day violent Hindu fundamentalism. It did this by appealing to ‘Hinduism.’ It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the British conflated the various religious traditions in India into the collective term ‘Hinduism.’ Before that time there was actually no appreciation for the idea that the diverse religious currents and practices found in India could form a common religion. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the classical, Brahmanic tradition of Hinduism has been newly formulated and emphasized (re-Hinduization), and Hinduism has also been used politically to bring about a tradition of solidarity (neo-Hinduism), whereby this is partly based on new interpretations of ancient religious writings in the Veda or in the great Indian epics (Mahabharata, Ramayana).

One example is the Rama cult, which has to do with the veneration of Rama as a royal incarnation of Vishnu and a form of worship which did not previously exist. Out of this arose the modern political idea of the Rama Rajya, which is Rama’s rule over all of India. Neo-Hinduism developed a new conception of history, in which there was no place for Islam and Christianity. Thus Hinduism now appears to be the original religion of the Indians in need of being cleansed from later developments. Indian history is correspondingly divided into periods. The Muslim and then the British invasions and defilement follow the first period, which was the golden age of Hindu rulers. Now India has to be reclaimed for Hinduism.

The community building element of Hindu fundamentalism is the belief in the uniqueness of Indian soil. Indian, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and large parts of Burma are all viewed as ‘holy land’ with central importance for world history and as a place of residence for the gods – a consequence of the common control of this area by British colonial lords. Although the politicization of Hinduism had already begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its influence was initially forced back by the idea of founding India as a secular state and the Congress Party’s long period of rule. Its longstanding violent side moved into the view of the world community when in 1922 Hindus destroyed the mosque in Ayodhya in order to build a temple for the Hindu divinity Rama on the same site.

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<sup>148</sup> Spuler-Stegemann, *Muslims*, p. 47.

*Political Hinduism's most important organizations*

- (1) The RSS (Rashtria Svayamsevak Sangh = National Volunteer Corps) is the mother organization of Sangh Parivar, which is the 'national community of all Hindus.' It was founded under the charismatic leadership of K. B. Hedgewar in 1925 and quickly developed into one of the leading organizations of political renewal in Hinduism. This paramilitary, hierarchical, and tightly structured organization has about 5 million adherents and maintains over 27,000 training camps (*shakas*) for fighters seeking a 'Hindustan.'
- (2) An offshoot of the RSS is the World Hindu Council (or VHP = Vishva Hindu Parishad), which was founded in 1964 in Bombay. In actual fact it is the worldwide cultural and religio-political mouthpiece of the fundamentalist spectrum. The VHP maintains social, charitable, religious, and journalistic institutions in India and around the world. The goal is above all to prevent the conversion of Hindus to Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity.
- (3) The party that has arisen out of the RSS is the All Indian People's Party (BJP = Bharatya Janata Party). It sees itself as the protector of the Hindu legacy and fights against the alleged preference awarded Muslims. It also combats the secularization of the Indian National Congress Party, which again has found its way into power. The BJP is the ruling party in a number of states, and for a number of years it has put forward the prime minister.
- (4) More radical, yet only regionally represented, is Shiv Sena, or the Army of Shiv. Under the tight leadership of its founder, Bal Thackeray, it has put forward, with some interruption, the mayor of the megacity Mumbai (formerly Bombay) since 1968. "The Shiv Sena thugs are not only present in the front line at almost all the bloody conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. They are also often pulling the strings and organizing the conflicts, as for example the bloody rioting in 1992 in Mumbai, when almost 1,000 people, predominantly Muslims, lost their lives."<sup>149</sup>

## Differences among Religions with Respect to Modernity

As a rule, Christian fundamentalists grow up in countries of western modernity and are a part of it. Evangelical music in the USA is a part of the modern music scene there, and Evangelical songs regularly land high in the charts. However, even Christianity in non-western countries is, given its

<sup>149</sup> Ceming, „Hinduismus,“ p. 13.

history, its theology, and its international interwoven nature mostly rather western oriented. It is in any case more western than its respective environment, which then often leads to persecution of Christians.

Additionally, modernity emerged in what were formerly Christian countries and was in part put into practice with world view components from Christianity and with some church support. At the same time, it was put into practice in partial opposition to the church, but the 200-year learning process has made a partly positive relation a virtue of necessity.

One can only understand Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist fundamentalists if one sees that western modernity was forced upon their regions through colonialism. Most of them did not grow up in the western world, or they grew up with a conscious distance to it. This deep reaching difference is rarely addressed in the relevant literature, and it is the reason why the conflict between western secular societies and Christian fundamentalists has been conducted so peacefully. On account of this, one will never see the same danger from Christian fundamentalist movements in the West as is seen in the conflict between other types of fundamentalism with modernity in non-western countries, even though representatives of the media may confuse the issues.

**Example:** According to a study by a university in Istanbul, 73% of Turkish people are of the opinion that the EU was formed to spread Christianity and that the EU is a Christian missions organization. This means they do not recognize the profound difference between a German Christian missionary and a German atheist. As absurd as this might seem, it shows that without some recourse to the history of colonialism, worldwide Christian missions, and non-western countries' economic and cultural westernization, one can hardly understand what causes fundamentalism and what it means outside of Christianity.

An additional example is intended to demonstrate that non-western Christianity, either out of conviction or due to centuries-long gradual habituation and adaptation, should be in a position to more peacefully adjust to modernity. This is regardless of whether one offers an explanation on the basis of the Christian history of a country or via the influence of western churches' missions work on churches throughout the southern hemisphere around the globe.

**Example: Brazil:** Who is voting for the **Brazilian Evangelicals essentially influenced by Pentecostalism?** According to investigations by the Brazilian sociologist Alexandre Brasil Fonseca,<sup>150</sup> in 2003, 25 of 57 Evan-

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<sup>150</sup> Alexandre Brasil Fonseca, *Evangeélicos e mídia no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: EUSF, 2003; by the same author "Religion and Democracy in Brazil," in: Paul Freston

gical congressional members belonged to the opposition party, and 22 belonged to the ruling labor party. They accounted for 11% of the congressional members and simultaneously just about the same percentage as Evangelicals in the general population. In Brazil it is possible to cumulate and split votes among certain candidates. In this Fonseca discerns a strong endorsement of democracy, which he does not always find on the side of the Catholic Church. The fact that *all* democratic parties are considered stations for Christian engagement shows him that the secular character of the state and of the parties has also been fully accepted. Obviously, if 50 million charismatics and Pentecostals in Brazil were truly all fundamentalist in the sense of being antagonistic to democracy, there would surely be more political unrest and even religiously motivated murder and violence, but this is not the case.

**Example 6:** Reinhard Hempelmann has documented his thesis that German Evangelicals are not predominantly fundamentalists and that Christian fundamentalism really has no base at all in Germany with the fact, among others, that small Christian political parties such as the Pentecostal **Partei Bibeltreuer Christen (PBC**, or Party of Bible-believing Christians) or the Catholic **Christliche Mitte** (Christian Middle) rarely receives votes.<sup>151</sup> Additionally, they are not supported by their respective churches to any extent. The reason is that Evangelicals have long lived in a democracy and vote for whom they wish. They look at a broad spectrum of issues and not the small spectrum that these parties address.

At this point one should briefly look at Bassam Tibi.<sup>152</sup> As a liberal Muslim who treasures western enlightened civilization, he produces brilliant investigations and assessments of Islamic fundamentalism. One can agree with his thesis that the west is paralyzed in the face of Islamic fundamentalism and again has to discover its worldview strengths, lest the vacuum be filled by Islamic fundamentalism. However, I miss his lack of any indication that the Enlightenment and democracy, indeed western civilization, originated in the Christian occident. No mention is made that the Enlightenment took up significant elements of Christianity or at least was able to emerge because the separation of church and state, individualism, and human rights were comparatively easy to bring into accord. This was even more easily done in the USA than in Europe. Tibi mentions the Roman and Greek roots of the Enlightenment, not the Christian roots, and nowhere

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(ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and democracy in Latin America*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>151</sup> Hempelmann, „Sind Evangelikalismus ...;“; Hempelmann, „Evangelikalismus ist nicht ...;“; Hempelmann, „Fundamentalismus;“ comp. Schirmacher, *Feindbild*.

<sup>152</sup> A number of his books are referenced in the bibliography.

does he demonstrate a profound knowledge of Christianity. If the west dismisses these religious and historical components, it will not be able to return to a truly convincing defense of the concerns it has.

What Tibi and other authors such as Thomas Meyer completely dismiss are the following: Sects, religious fanatics, and fundamentalist as well as religio-social revolutionary movements have often brought about the freedoms of modernity. The philosopher of religion Ernst Troeltsch<sup>153</sup> has defended the idea that human rights do not have the Protestantism of the established churches to thank but rather the free churches, sects, and spiritualists driven to the New World – from the Puritans to the Quakers. “It is at this point that the stepchildren of the Reformation finally had their hour in world history.”<sup>154</sup> Nowadays, with his religious pathos against the injustices perpetrated against African-Americans, Martin Luther King would surely have been considered a fundamentalist by many.

## Does ‘Truth’ cause Fundamentalism?

The liberation theologian Leonardo Boff writes: “Whoever thinks that they are in possession of an absolute truth cannot allow another truth but must, as a consequence, be intolerant. Intolerance, however, breeds disdain of others. Disdain leads to aggression, and this leads to war against error, which must be fought and eradicated.”<sup>155</sup> That is itself almost a fundamentalist causal chain, which fortunately is neither necessarily nor historically universally valid.

On the one hand, an argument against Boff’s view is the fact that there have been and are many wars conducted without being based on truth claims – after all, wars mostly have to do with power and money. Religiously justified murder accounts for – as bad as each individual murder is – only a fractional amount of all murders and only a fractional amount of politically motivated murders.

On the other hand, a second argument is the fact that presently there are billions of people living on earth who think that they know the truth and are peaceful. None of the Catholics in Germany, for whom the pope embodies the infallible teaching office of the church, and who for that reason hold to the dogmatic and ethical guidelines of this teaching office, have

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<sup>153</sup> Comp. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, „Puritanische Sektenfreiheit versus lutherische Volkskirche,“ *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologieggeschichte* 9 (2002): 42–69; Schirmacher, „Demokratie.“

<sup>154</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt*, München/Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1911, p. 62.

<sup>155</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 20.



ever conducted an attack or planned or worked in an effort to overthrow democracy. None of the fervent adherents of the Dalai Lama and none of the Jehovah's Witnesses do that. We recently invited a family over which follows a certain strict legal school of Islam and had a long discussion about our faith and our political values. They are glad to live in Germany and are happy neither an Islamic state, nor other Muslims, nor relatives prescribe how they are to live. There is no trace of anything that Boff describes.

With a truth claim it is possible for an individual to be intolerant, aggressive, and finally become violent or justify a war, but one does not have to become so. Furthermore, one can do all of that without invoking an absolute truth.

Once again Boff: "Fundamentalism does not have to be religiously motivated. All cultural, scientific, political, economic, and even artistic systems which assert a claim to be the exclusive bearer of truth and single solution for existing problems are all to be seen as fundamentalist."<sup>156</sup> Is it really so simple? Am I then a fundamentalist because I believe in the sanctity and universal validity of human rights – as presumably Boff also does?

A realistic solution for the future of the world will not be that all people abandon the truth claims of their faith, their ethics, or their political convictions – especially since one could only compel that externally and by force. Rather, it has to involve learning how peaceful coexistence among people of differing convictions, also among those with truth claims, can look in a globalized, pluralistic world.

Tolerance cannot mean, however, to propagate others' opinions which one holds to be wrong scientifically, argumentatively, ideologically, religiously, or otherwise wrong from a world view point of view. That would be the end of all sensible discussion. And why should different rules apply for the competition among religions than apply in the areas where political parties operate or where science is conducted?

The alternative in the future will not be whether we can bring every state and religion to completely forgo winning people to their religion – that is to say, whether we are successful in completely relinquishing missions as religious people have in mind (as though atheism is not spreading around the world in a missionary manner). The alternative will be whether we can win states and religions for the cause of enabling peaceful and reciprocal missions work and for renouncing all violent or societal pressure, or whether the spread and protection of religions takes place by force instead of by peaceful missions.

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<sup>156</sup> Boff, „Fundamentalismus,“ p. 32.

## Relativistic Ethics – absolutely predefined?

Relativism has its own world view, which in my opinion wants to achieve a cheap competitive advantage by charging other value systems with being fundamentalist. This advantage saves it from discussing with others or going into the details regarding ethics. Relativism says: There are no universally valid moral principles, that are valid for all people.

Relativism actually just says this about its own culture. Every culture has its own value system, which it may and must use. According to relativism, there are no overarching standards on the basis of which I can judge a culture's value system.<sup>157</sup>

Relativism would even have to systematically reject the universal validity of human rights, which it *de facto* readily invokes. Peter L. Berger has caricatured it as follows: “So you are a cannibal? How interesting! I think we could all benefit greatly if we understood your view more fully.”<sup>158</sup>

There is an additional point: No one can think outside of a tradition and some sort of reference scheme – also not, and especially not, in philosophy. Thinkers holding to a relativistic set of ethics are themselves a good example of the culturally bound nature of our thinking.

Thomas Meyer believes that there have never been cultures in human history which, like modern western societies, were able to place “their self-awareness and their norms on the unshakeable foundation of absolute certainties of faith and steadfastly valid traditions.”<sup>159</sup> In a certain sense he is certainly correct. However, I do not share his view that modern democracies can get along without truth!

If one for instance reads and hears with which emotional rhetoric the rejection of capital punishment and torture and the advocacy of democracy and universal human rights (all standpoints which I absolutely share) are defended and in which elevated tones the legacy of the Enlightenment is praised, one does not get the impression that the modern individual can abandon all conjoining and binding values and that pathos does not dine on tradition.

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<sup>157</sup> Rippe, *Relativismus*.

<sup>158</sup> Berger, *Far Glory*, p. 69.

<sup>159</sup> Meyer, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 21.

## **Whoever defines fundamentalism should name his fundamental values and his world view!**

Almost all academic authors attempt to convey the impression that one could virtually neutrally diagnose ‘fundamentalism’ in others without reference to one’s own world view. The bulk of authors are silent about the world view within which they operate and where they themselves stand religiously.

Neutrality at this point is, however, an impossibility. There are only a few American Protestants and several Islamists who characterize themselves as fundamentalists. The others refuse to accept being referred to as such, because they know what the devastating civil consequences would be if they were considered fundamentalists: their freedom of expression would be strongly limited and hardly anyone would be interested to hear their actual view of things in any detail.

“Whoever calls certain associations ‘fundamentalist’ implicitly refers to a value system and the conventions of an authority that has defining power to establish this classification.”<sup>160</sup> This power to define is normally assumed by either academics or more often the mass media. Among academics it is generally less frequently the actual specialists for such movements, such as religious scholars in the case of religion, cultural scientists in the case of culture, or political scientists in the case of political movements, who have this position. When for instance Thomas Meyer as a philosopher defines fundamentalism, this is palpably and especially a defense of his own philosophical position of Enlightenment liberalism more than it is particularly refined knowledge about a diverse group of relevant parties.

Furthermore, does the modern world actually want a lasting discourse, one in which all nonviolent ‘fundamentalists’ participate? Does it not prefer its peace and quiet with respect to questions of ethics, for instance when it comes to the topics of abortion, sexual morality, or market capitalism? I do not have the feeling that critics of fundamentalism generally have the intention and the patience to allow themselves to enter into a comprehensive dialogue.

In my opinion no one has better described how people need meaning and how the justification of meaning has increasingly been lost with the dissolution of boundaries than Peter L. Berger. He has done this, for example, in *A Far Glory: The Question of Faith in an Age of Credulity*, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, and with Thomas Luckmann in *Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning*. A person cannot live without mean-

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<sup>160</sup> Jaschke, *Fundamentalismus*, p. 28.

ing, so that what is at stake cannot be – as the thesis of European secularization would have it – that meaningful institutions such as the family or religion lose their function. Rather, the question is how they can go beyond the individual to provide meaning and define what is ultimately of value while coexisting peacefully with other perspectives on life.

“The afflictions of fundamentalism emerge wherever foundations break to pieces, which we as people find to be as necessary as daily bread in our respective struggles for existence.”<sup>161</sup> The postmodern individual has an identity problem with his pivotal dissolution of boundaries. A virtue now has to be made out of necessity. Good people are considered to be those who no longer know who they are. Those who find their identity in something binding (family, religion, the state) are denigrated.

### Truths that bind democracy?

The Catholic theologian William J. Hoye has rightly and candidly emphasized that rational discourse between all parties involved in democracies is based upon inviolable ‘truths.’<sup>162</sup> The German constitution “confesses” human rights, and the preamble of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 speaks of “recognition” and even of “faith” when it says: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,” and “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women.” Similar formulations, which presuppose the recognition of a prescribed, manifest and incontrovertible truth, are found in many human rights and constitutional texts, notes Hoye. German state constitutions speak of “esteeming” the “truth” and of an “ethos.” In the Constitution of Bremen (Article 26.3) mention is made of “education towards esteeming truth” and in the Constitution of the Rhineland Palatinate of “a free democratic ethos” (Article 33).

The thought that all people should share truth is inherent to democracy.<sup>163</sup> “Unlike other political systems, democracy is, in its essence, reliant upon philosophical thought.”<sup>164</sup> Even when the least democratic systems seek to impose their structure upon other countries, democracy is still a strongly missionary model that by no means is based on randomly won

<sup>161</sup> Müller-Fahrenholz, „Seele,“ p. 20.

<sup>162</sup> William J. Hoye, *Demokratie und Christentum: Die christliche Verantwortung für demokratische Prinzipien*, Aschendorff: Münster, 1999. pp. 29-33, 47-49.

<sup>163</sup> Hoye, p. 39.

<sup>164</sup> Hoye, p. 53.

votes but rather on final truths. And if a person scrutinizes these final truths, that individual is 'undemocratic.' One can see with what sort of ultimate commitment the superiority of democracies is presented by politicians, how the word 'democratic' is treated as the ultimate quality label, or how radical Muslims are called upon to submit to the constitution.

Does not the erection of an international court for genocide, before which heads of state have to answer for a crime which in their own country they could not be held accountable, imply that there is an ethic that transcends all states and all positive law? Is there not too little discussion about whether, from a secular point of view, there is just as much a presupposed comprehensive and universal ethos as there is from religious standpoints? Is not the secular point of view similar to what Christianity has known with Judaism's Torah, or what was once known as the natural moral law? Or what Islam has known with the Sharia in a much more concrete model and with a completely different significance? And wouldn't such a global ethic need to be as much subject to an intensive discussion about its final justification as Christianity or natural law has been subject to in their history? Do many not hide their lack of a final justification behind the pretext that they alone want to avoid arguing religiously or even fundamentally?

People often behave as if religions are, due to their truth claims, simply incapable of being democratic and that they subordinate the state to their own truths. However, is it really any different with secular humanism – if one were to rather bluntly contrast these opposite poles? Is not the dispute all too often one of the respective final truths held by both sides, that is, which truths should bind the state with respect to human rights?

Is it not correct of our countries to place religious and non-religious world views on a single plane when it comes to religion and freedom of expression? Does that not also mean at the same time that non-religious world views are just as lacking in neutrality as religions and should honestly describe what their final, non-challenged foundations are? In everyday life as well as in the academic world, it has been long observed that non-religious people – on account of their non-religiosity – are automatically viewed as more neutral, more committed to truth, and more rational, not even having to disclose the foundations to their thinking. On the other hand, religious people have the buck passed to them for being narrow-minded and biased. How fair, rational, and capable of dialog someone is, and how much he or she is committed to true research, is not to be found in whether the individual is religious or not.

Let us take the example of the permissibility of abortion. Both sides argue on the basis of rights that transcend the state, if for the moment we overlook the large spectrum in between that seeks a compromise. The teaching office of the Catholic Church and the larger portion of the Evan-

gical movement view unborn children as individuals with full human dignity and do not concede to any state the right to infringe upon this human life. The state is thus measured by religious truth, but the kind of truth which, according to the understanding of its proponents, should be openly accessible to every reasonable individual.

However, their opponents also do not only point to positive law, which rests upon the parliamentary majority decision in favor of the freedom to abort. If they did, they would have to accept that in Ireland, Poland, or in many non-western countries it is just as proper, on the basis of legal decisions made according to parliamentary procedure or by referendums, to declare that abortion is not permissible. At this point, however, those in favor of allowing abortion argue with rights for all individuals that transcend the state, such as the right of the woman to choose, or argue directly that there is a human right to abortion. To a degree, both sides measure the state in a fundamentalist manner on rights they will not give up or that bind democracies with 'eternal' values. Furthermore, they assume that out of base motives, and in spite of all reason, these values are not desired to be understood by other individuals.

In the end democracy cannot do without being tied to such higher values. Democracy is not an end in itself. It is notorious for the mechanisms that allow its representatives to be voted out of office. Only if and when democracy is able to better ensure higher values such as human dignity, rule of law, protection of minorities, justice, and social welfare is it superior to all other forms of state in the long term. How, for instance, would a democracy practice the protection of minorities if the opinion of the majority and the majority vote were sacred and inviolable?

It would be better if all proponents of democracy would lay out in the open which values and truths are of the greatest importance for democracy to defend. This is preferable to a situation in which some individuals act as if they are neutral while they really want to impose their truths upon democracy.



## 6. Literature

From the conspicuous flood of useful and useless books and professional articles, not to mention other media, a manageable number has been selected for the reader.

All web links were reviewed on August 3, 2009, for which reason no dates are provided hereunder or in the footnotes.

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# About the Author

## Books by Thomas Schirrmacher in chronological order (With short commentaries)

As author:

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*[The misunderstanding of Emil Brunner] A study and critique of Emil Brunner's ecclesiology and of the bibliology and hermeneutics of dialectical theology.*

Mohammed: Prophet aus der Wüste. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1984<sup>1</sup>, 1986<sup>2</sup>, 1990<sup>3</sup>, 1996<sup>4</sup>. VTR: Nürnberg, 2006<sup>5</sup>. 120 pp.

*[Muhammad] A short biography of the founder of Islam and an introduction into Islam.*

Theodor Christlieb und seine Missionstheologie. Verlag der Evangelischen Gesellschaft für Deutschland: Wuppertal, 1985. 308 pp.

*[Theodor Christlieb and his theology of mission] A study of the biography, theology and missiology of the leading German Pietist, professor of practical theology and international missions leader in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Thesis for Dr. theol. in missiology.)*

Marxismus: Opium für das Volk? Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1990<sup>1</sup>, 1997<sup>2</sup>. 150 pp.

*[Marxism: Opiate for the People?] Marxism is proven to be a religion and an opiate for the masses. Emphasizes the differences between Marxist and Biblical work ethics.*

Zur marxistischen Sagen- und Märchenforschung und andere volkskundliche Beiträge. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1991<sup>1</sup>, 2003<sup>2</sup>. 227 pp.

*[On the Marxist View of Sagas and Tales and other essays in folklore and cultural anthropology] 10 essays and articles on the science of folklore and cultural anthropology in Germany. Includes a critique of the Marxist interpretation of tales and sagas, and studies on the history of marriage and family in Europe from the 6th century onward.*

„Der göttliche Volkstumsbegriff“ und der „Glaube an Deutschlands Größe und heilige Sendung“: Hans Naumann als Volkskundler und Germanist unter dem Nationalsozialismus. 2 volumes. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2 volumes, 1992<sup>1</sup>, in one volume 2000<sup>2</sup>. 606 pp.

*[Hans Naumann as Anthropologist and Germanist under National Socialism] Discusses the history of German cultural anthropology and folklore under Hitler, especially the leading figure Naumann, professor of German language, whose scientific theory is shown to be very religious in tone. (Thesis for a PhD in Cultural Anthropology.)*

War Paulus wirklich auf Malta? Hänssler: Neuhausen, 1992, VTR: Nürnberg, 2000<sup>2</sup> (together with Heinz Warnecke). 254 pp.

*[Was Paul Really on Malta?] The book shows that Paul was not shipwrecked on Malta but on another island, Kephallenia, and that the report in Acts*

- is very accurate. The Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is defended with theological and linguistic arguments against higher criticism.
- Psychotherapie – der fatale Irrtum. Schwengeler: Berneck (CH), 1993<sup>1</sup>, 1994<sup>2</sup>; 1997<sup>3</sup>; 2001<sup>4</sup> (together with Rudolf Antholzer). 150 pp.
- [Psychotherapy – the Fatal Mistake] A critique of secular psychotherapy, showing that psychotherapy often is a religion, and that most psychotherapists call every school except their own to be unscientific.
- Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier: Eine alternative Sicht von 1. Korinther 11,2-16. Biblia et symbiotica 4. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1993<sup>1</sup>, 1994<sup>2</sup>, 1995<sup>3</sup>, 1997<sup>4</sup> 168 pp. Revised: VTR: Nürnberg, 2002<sup>5</sup>
- [Paul in Conflict with the Veil!?] *Exegetical examination of 1. Corinthians 11,2-16, following an alternative view of John Lightfoot, member of the Westminster assembly in the 16th century.*
- “Schirrmacher argues that from the biblical teaching that man is the head of woman (1 Cor 11:3) the Corinthians had drawn the false conclusions that in prayer a woman must be veiled (11:4-6) and a man is forbidden to be veiled (11:7), and that the wife exists for the husband but not the husband for the wife (11:8-9). Paul, however, rejected these conclusions and showed in 11:10-16 why the veiling of women did not belong to God’s commandments binding upon all the Christian communities. After stating the thesis and presenting his alternative translation and exposition of 1 Cor 11:2-16, he considers the difficulties in the text, presents his alternative exposition in detail (in the form of thirteen theses), discusses quotations and irony in 1 Corinthians, and deals with other NT texts about women’s clothing and prayer and about the subordination of wives.” (New Testament Abstracts vol. 39 (1995) 1, p. 154).
- Der Römerbrief. 2 vol. Neuhausen: Hänssler, 1994<sup>1</sup>; Hamburg: RVB & Nürnberg: VTR, 2001<sup>2</sup>. 331 + 323 pp.
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- [Ethics] Major Evangelical ethics in German covering all aspects of general, special, persocial and public ethics.
- Galilei-Legenden und andere Beiträge zu Schöpfungsforschung, Evolutionskritik und Chronologie der Kulturgeschichte 1979-1994. Biblia et symbiotica 12. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1996. 331 pp.
- [Legends of Galileo and other Contributions to Creation Science, Criticism of Evolution and Chronology of the History of Culture 1979-1994].
- Völker – Drogen – Kannibalismus: Ethnologische und länderkundliche Beiträge 1984 – 1994. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 218 pp.
- [Peoples – Drugs – Cannibalism] *A collection of articles on cultural anthropology, especially on Indians in South America, cannibalism and the religious use of drugs.*
- Die Vielfalt biblischer Sprache: Über 100 alt- und neutestamentliche Stilarten, Ausdrucksweisen, Redeweisen und Gliederungsformen. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1997. 130 pp.
- [The Diversity of Biblical Language] *A hermeneutical study, listing more than*

- 100 specific language techniques in the Bible with several proof texts for each of them.*
- Gottesdienst ist mehr: Plädoyer für einen liturgischen Gottesdienst. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1998. 130 pp.
- [Church Service is More] *An investigation into biblical proof texts for liturgical elements in Christian Sunday service.*
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- [Law and Spirit] *This commentary emphasizing the ethical aspects of Galatians wants to prove that Galatians is not only fighting legalists but also a second party of Paul's opponents, who were totally opposed to the Old Testament and the Law, and lived immorally in the name of Christian freedom, a view especially endorsed by Wilhelm Lütgert's commentary of 1919. Paul is fighting against the abrogation of the Old Testament Law as well as against using this Law as way of salvation instead of God's grace.*
- Law or Spirit? An Alternative View of Galatians. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001<sup>1</sup>; 2008.<sup>2</sup>. 160 pp.
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- God Wants You to Learn, Labour and Love. Reformation Books: Hamburg, 1999. 120 pp.
- Four essays for Third World Christian Leaders on Learning with Jesus, Work Ethic, Love and Law and Social Involvement.*
- Dios Quiere que Tú Aprendas Trabajes y Ames. Funad: Managua (Nikaragua), 1999<sup>1</sup>; 2000<sup>2</sup>; RVB International: Hamburg, 2003<sup>3</sup>. 70 pp.
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- 37 Gründe, warum Christen sich für eine Erneuerung unserer Gesellschaft auf christlicher Grundlage einsetzen sollten. Die Wende, 1999. 40 pp.
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- [The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All: Towards a Theology of Martyrdom] *70 thesis on persecution and martyrdom, written for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on behalf of the German and European Evangelical Alliance*
- World Mission – Heart of Christianity. RVB International: Hamburg, 1999<sup>1</sup>; 2008.<sup>2</sup>. 120 pp.
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- Eugen Drewermann und der Buddhismus. Verlag für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft: Nürnberg, 2000<sup>1</sup>; 2001<sup>2</sup>. 132 pp.
- [Drewermann and Buddhism] *Deals with the German Catholic Author Drewermann and his propagating Buddhist thinking. Includes chapter on a Christian Ethics of Environment.*
- Ausverkaufte Würde? Der Pornographie-Boom und seine psychischen Folgen. Hänssler: Holzgerlingen, 2000. (with Christa Meves). 130 pp.
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- Eine Sekte wird evangelisch – Die Reformation der Weltweiten Kirche Gottes. Idea-Dokumentation 11/2000. Idea: Wetzlar, 2000. 56 pp.
- [A Cult Becomes Protestant] *Detailed report on the reformation of the Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong) from a sect to an evangelical church.*

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- Human Rights Threatened in Europe: Euthanasia – Abortion – Bioethicconvention. RVB International: Hamburg, 2001<sup>1</sup>; 2008.<sup>2</sup>. 100 pp.
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- Aufbruch zur modernen Weltmission: William Careys Theologie. RVB. 64 pp.
- [Be Keen to Get Going: William Careys Theology] *First discussion of Carey's theology in length, explaining his Calvinistic and Postmillennial backround.*
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- Same book in English.*
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- [May Christians Take an Oath?] *On Swearing and on its meaning for covenant theology. Taken from 'Ethik', vol. 1.*
- Christus im Alten Testament. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 84 pp.
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- Wie erkenne ich den Willen Gottes? Führungsmystik auf dem Prüfstand. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 184 pp.
- [How to know the will of God] – *Criticizes the inner leading of the Spirit. Taken from 'Ethik'.*
- Love is the Fulfillment of Love – Essays in Ethics. RVB: Hamburg, 2001<sup>1</sup>; 2008.<sup>2</sup>. 140 pp.
- Essays on ethical topics, including role of the Law, work ethics, and European Union.*
- Mission und der Kampf um die Menschenrechte. RVB: Hamburg, 2001. 108 S.
- [Mission and the Battle for Human Rights] *The relationship of world missions and the fight for human rights is discussed on an ethical level (theology of human rights) as well as on a practical level.*
- The Persecution of Christians Concerns Us All: Towards a Theology of Martyrdom. At the same time Idea-Dokumentation 15/99 E. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 156 pp.
- 70 thesis on persecution and martyrdom, written for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on behalf of the German and European Evangelical Alliance*
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- Beiträge zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte: Heiligenverehrung — Universität Gießen — Reformation / Augustin — Böhl — Spurgeon — Brunner. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 200 pp.
- [Essay on the History of church and Dogma] *Articles on topics from church history like 'The beginning of the veneration of saints' and on the named theologians.*
- Weltmission — Das Herz des christlichen Glaubens: Beiträge aus 'Evangelikale Missiologie'. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 200 pp.
- [World Mission – Heart of Christianity] *Articles on the Biblical and systematic*

- fundament of World Mission, especially on mission as rooted in God's being, on 'Mission in the OT', and 'Romans as a Charter for World Mission.. Shorter version of German original 2001.*
- Säkulare Religionen: Aufsätze zum religiösen Charakter von Nationalsozialismus und Kommunismus. VKW: Bonn, 2001. 140 pp.
- [Secular Religions] Articles on the religious nature of National Socialism and Communism. Includes texts of prayers to Hitler.
- Paulus im Kampf gegen den Schleier!? VTR: Nürnberg, 2002<sup>5</sup>. 130 pp.
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- Hope for Europe: 66 Theses. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002
- Same book in English.*
- Also available in Czech, Dutch, Spanish, Rumanian, Portuguese, French, Russian, Italian, Hungarian, Latvian.*
- ABC der Demut. RVB: Hamburg, 2002
- [ABC of Humility] *Notes and bible studies on humility in alphabetical order.*
- Führen in ethischer Verantwortung: Die drei Seiten jeder Verantwortung. Edition ACF. Brunnen: Gießen, 2002
- [Leading in ethical responsibility] *An introduction into ethics for economic and other leaders for the Academy of Christian Leaders.*
- Der Papst und das Leiden: Warum der Papst nicht zurücktritt. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002. 64 pp.
- [The Pope and Suffering] A study of the writings of Pope John II. on suffering and an evaluation of their exegetical basis. Gives reasons why the pope does not resign.
- Erziehung, Bildung, Schule. VTR: Nürnberg, 2002. 88 pp.
- [Instruction, Education, School] The chapters on rising of children, example, education, and Christian school from 'Ethics'.
- Thomas Schirmacher, Christine Schirmacher u. a. Harenberg Lexikon der Religionen. Harenberg Verlag: Düsseldorf, 2002. 1020 pp.
- [Harenberg Dictionary of World Religions] In a major secular dictionary on world religions, Thomas Schirmacher wrote the section on Christianity ('Lexicon of Christianity', pp. 8-267) and Christine Schirmacher the section on Islam ('Lexicon of Islam', 'pp. 428-549).
- Studies in Church Leadership: New Testament Church Structure – Paul and His Coworkers – An Alternative Theological Education – A Critique of Catholic Canon Law. VKW: Bonn, 2003<sup>1</sup>; RVB: Hamburg, 2008.<sup>2</sup>. 112 pp.
- Contains the named five essays. The first essay is translated from vol. 5 of 'Ethics'.*
- Im Gespräch mit dem Wanderprediger des New Age – und andere apologetische Beiträge. VKW: Bonn, 2003. 210 pp.
- [In Discussion with the Itinerant Preacher of the New Age] Essays and reports on non-Christian religions, New Age, reincarnation, manicheism from two decades of apologetic debates.
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- [Secret Numbers in the Bible?] Essays and articles on Bible Numerics, the importance of Hebrew studies, Obadiah, the Psalms and other Bible related topics from 2 decades of studies.
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- of Jesus? How Political Parties in Germany misrepresent Islam.*
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- Bildungspflicht statt Schulzwang. VKW/VTR/idea: Bonn et. al., 2005. 90 pp.
- [Compulsary Education or Compulsary Schooling] *A scientific evaluation of homeschooling.*
- Der Ablass RVB/VTR: Hamburg, 2005. 144 pp.
- [The Indulgences] History and theology of the Catholic view on indulgences.
- Die Apokryphen RVB/VTR: Hamburg, 2005. 92 pp.
- [The Apocrypha] *History and theology of the Catholic view on the apocrypha and an apology of the Protestant position.*
- Scham- oder Schuldgefühl? Die christliche Botschaft angesichts von schuld- und schamorientierten Gewissen und Kulturen. Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2005. 99 pp.
- [Shame- and Guiltfeeling] *This study explains the difference between shame- and guiltoriented cultures and shows, that the 'Biblical' message emphasizes shame and guilt equally and thus can be applied to cultures in the West, the East, in modern and in Third World cultures.*
- Thomas Schirrmacher et al. Christ und Politik: 50 Antworten auf Fragen und kritische Einwände. VKW: Bonn, 2006. 125 pp.
- [Christians and Politics] *Schirrmacher and three members of parliament from Switzerland answer questions around the relation of church and state and the political involvement of Evangelicals.*
- Der Segen von Ehe und Familie: Interessante Erkenntnisse aus Forschung und Statistik. VKW: Bonn, 2006. 125 pp.
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## Biography

Prof. Dr. theol. Dr. phil. Thomas Schirmmacher, PhD, DD, (born 1960) is Ambassador for Human Rights of the World Evangelical Alliance, speaking for appr. 600 million Christians, chair of its Theological Commission, and director of its International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn, Cape Town, Colombo). He is also director of the Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and Austrian Evangelical Alliance. He is member of the board of the International Society for Human Rights.

Schirmmacher is professor of the sociology of religion at the State University of the West in Timisoara (Romania) and Distinguished Professor of Global Ethics and International Development at William Carey University in Shillong (Meghalaya, India). He is also president of 'Martin Bucer European Theological Seminary and Research Institutes' with small campuses in Bonn, Berlin, Zurich, Linz, Innsbruck, Prague, Istanbul, and Sao Paulo, where he teaches ethics and comparative religions.

He studied theology from 1978 to 1982 at STH Basel (Switzerland) and since 1983 Cultural Anthropology and Comparative Religions at Bonn State University. He earned a Drs. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Theological University (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1984, and a Dr. theol. in Missiology and Ecumenics at Johannes Calvin Foundation (Kampen/Netherlands) in 1985, a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Pacific Western University in Los Angeles (CA) in 1989, a Th.D. in Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary in Lakeland (FL) in 1996, and a Dr. phil. in Comparative Religions / Sociology of Religion at State University of Bonn in 2007. In 1997 he received an honorary doctorate (D.D.) from Cranmer Theological House, in 2006 one from Acts University in Bangalore.

Schirmmacher regularly testifies in the German parliament and other parliaments in Europe, in the EU parliament in Brussels, the OSCE in Vienna and the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

His newest books are on human rights (2012), human trafficking (2011), fundamentalism (2010), racism (2009), and in German only: persecution of Christians in Iraq (2009), HIV/AIDS as Christian challenge (2008), internet pornography (2008), and Hitler's religion of war (2007). His 92 books were published in 17 languages.

He is listed in Marquis' Who's Who in the World, Dictionary of International Biography, International Who is Who of Professionals, 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century and many other biographical yearbooks.